

# HESIOD

(8th or 7th c. BC, composed in Greek)

*The Homeric epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey, are probably slightly earlier than Hesiod's two surviving poems, the Works and Days and the Theogony. Yet in many ways Hesiod is the more important author for the study of Greek mythology. While Homer treats certain aspects of the saga of the Trojan War, he makes no attempt at treating myth more generally. He often includes short digressions and tantalizes us with hints of a broader tradition, but much of this remains obscure. Hesiod, by contrast, sought in his Theogony to give a connected account of the creation of the universe. For the study of myth he is important precisely because his is the oldest surviving attempt to treat systematically the mythical tradition from the first gods down to the great heroes.*

*Also unlike the legendary Homer, Hesiod is for us an historical figure and a real personality. His Works and Days contains a great deal of autobiographical information, including his birthplace (Ascræ in Boiotia), where his father had come from (Cyme in Asia Minor), and the name of his brother (Perses), with whom he had a dispute that was the inspiration for composing the Works and Days. His exact date cannot be determined with precision, but there is general agreement that he lived in the 8th century or perhaps the early 7th century BC.*

*His life, therefore, was approximately contemporaneous with the beginning of alphabetic writing in the Greek world. Although we do not know whether Hesiod himself employed this new invention in composing his poems, we can be certain that it was soon used to record and pass them on. Since the Homeric epics and Hesiod's works both came into form at this important time, they stood for the later Greeks at the very beginnings of their literary traditions. Because of this early and authoritative position in Greek literature, later authors looked to these two poets time and time again, quoting them as authorities, commenting on their views (both positively and negatively), and looking to them for inspiration.*

## THEOGONY

*Although the Theogony is our earliest surviving account of the origins of the gods from the Greek world, it must always be remembered that there were other contemporary accounts, and every indication suggests that they sometimes differed radically from Hesiod's version. Thus, the Theogony is merely the most important Greek poem on the subject, but it is not possible to say that it straightforwardly represents "what the Greeks believed" or even "what the Greeks of Hesiod's time believed." Despite the poem's status as a classic with special authority that derived from its early date and the greatness of its poet, the Greeks did not approach it with the same degree of reverence that modern revelation religions such as*

*Judaism, Christianity, and Islam approach their sacred books. The Greeks always kept in mind that Hesiod as poet had the choice to follow one tradition or another, or even to depart from all previous traditions, just as his audience had the choice to favor his account or not as the circumstances demanded.*

*In Hesiod's case we also have to concern ourselves with the question of influence from the civilizations of the Near East, which had older, elaborate creation myths of their own. To what degree these influences had been incorporated into Greek mythical thought before Hesiod is difficult to determine, but there is no doubt that many of the features that stand out in the Theogony derive from or are parallel to myths from the Near East. Because the poem is the sole surviving example of such Greek literature of this date, however, it is impossible to make categorical assertions.*

*Hesiod's Theogony (literally, "Birth of the Gods") is also a cosmogony ("birth of the cosmos"), because for Hesiod the physical universe was itself made up of gods. His poem, then, is a description of how the universe came to exist in the form his audience recognized; that process of evolution takes place through the birth of gods. First, there is simply Chaos, the space in which the creation takes place. Then Gaia (Earth) is formed, along with Tartaros, which is conceived of as a sort of underworld. Gaia will, in turn, produce Ouranos (Sky), then the mountains and the sea. Thus, one can trace the development of the physical features of the universe as successive gods come into being. For the Greeks, however, the universe is not only filled with places, but also with ideas and unseen forces, and Hesiod's account is concerned with these too. So Eros, the power of desire, comes into being along with Gaia and Tartaros, and Hesiod's audience learns of the creation of everything from night and day to justice and pain, each a divine figure.*

*The central figure in the Theogony is Zeus, and the whole poem can be read as an elaboration of the greatness of this god. Not only do the early gods ultimately give way to his rule, but he is also either the progenitor of the gods that come after him or the one who dispenses to them their privileges and functions. Although most of the physical creation in the universe occurs before Zeus' birth, he stamps the final impression onto the world as the Greeks knew it, and he fends off challenges to his authority (in the form of the monster Typhoios) to emphasize the permanence of his rule and to show that this eternal just rule and this particular ordering of the cosmos is the proper culmination of cosmogonic evolution.*

*The transition from the old order to the rule of Zeus is told in the stories where the kingship passes from Ouranos to Cronos and finally to Zeus. The basic structure of this succession myth is certainly derived from older theogonies of the Near East; the clearest parallels are found in the texts from the Hittites, a people of Anatolia (today central Turkey) whose civilization had thrived during the last centuries of the 2nd millennium BC. There we read about Anush (Sky) having his genitals bitten off by his son Kumarbi. Kumarbi, in turn, produces Teshub, a storm god, who eventually overthrows his father. This coincides so closely with the story of Cronos' castration of Ouranos and Zeus' subsequent rise to power that there is no doubt the Greek story is derivative. Still, we cannot know whether the early Greeks borrowed the story directly from the Hittites or whether the two traditions had a common ancestor in the myths of some other people. Nonetheless, as important as this insight is for the study of the history of myth, Hesiod's account is completely understandable in purely Greek terms.*

*Despite the central importance of the succession myth, Hesiod's poem is not solely concerned with the transmission of heavenly power from generation to generation. Because*

*the poet is interested in showing the overall evolution of the cosmos from the beginning of time to something recognizable to his audience, much has to be accounted for. To that end, long lists of the offspring of various divinities are given, most notably the list of the progeny of Night, Pontos, and other gods in lines 211–455. Hesiod also begins a list of mortal heroes born from goddesses at line 970, and the last two lines of the poem show that it was followed by the Catalog of Women, Hesiod's now mostly lost poem on the mortal women who produced children by gods. Since many aristocratic families and even entire cities traced their lineages back to these heroes, this extensive list acts as a bridge between the Theogony and the world of Hesiod's audience.*

*The poem begins with an invocation to the Muses (1–115). The first primordial gods (116–136) follow, along with the tale of the castration of Ouranos (137–187) and its outcome, including the birth of Aphrodite (188–210). After the lengthy genealogical digression (211–455), which includes an excursus on the nature of the goddess Hecate (413–455) that is difficult to account for (various theories have been proposed, but they need not concern us here), the birth of the older Olympians from Cronos and Rhea comes next (456–508). The story of Prometheus and the trick he played on Zeus at Mecone (509–572) is, at heart, an explanation for the ritual of sacrifice, but it also explains mankind's technical skills (the gift of fire), as well as the origin of women told in the story of Pandora (573–620). But Hesiod has gotten ahead of himself, for in the grand sweep of the poem Zeus is not yet king of the cosmos. The poet then returns (621–725) to that theme with the Titanomachy (“Battle with the Titans”), in which Zeus finally defeats Cronos. The defeated are thrown into Tartaros, which is described at some length (726–825). Zeus' power is challenged by the monster Typhoios (826–885). After his victory, Zeus begins a series of divine marriages, which, along with the matings of other gods, shows the continuing evolution of the universe (886–969). The poem ends with the list of goddesses who slept with mortal men (970–1028) and the transition to the Catalog of Women (1029–1030).*

### Invocation to the Muses

- Begin our singing with the Heliconian Muses,  
 Who possess Mount Helicon, high and holy,  
 And near its violet-stained spring on petal-soft feet  
 Dance circling the altar of almighty Cronion,<sup>1</sup>
- 5    And having bathed their silken skin in Permessos  
      Or in Horse Spring or the sacred creek Olmeios,  
      They begin their choral dance on Helicon's summit  
      So lovely it pangs, and with power in their steps  
      Ascend veiled and misted in palpable air
- 10   Treading the night, and in a voice beyond beauty  
      They chant:

<sup>1</sup> “Son of Cronos,” i.e., Zeus.

Zeus Aegisholder and his lady Hera  
 Of Argos, in gold sandals striding,  
 And the Aegisholder's girl, owl-eyed Athena,  
 15 And Phoibos Apollo and arrowy Artemis,  
 Poseidon earth-holder, earthquaking god,  
 Modest Themis and Aphrodite, eyelashes curling,  
 And Hebe gold-crowned and lovely Dione,  
 Leto and Iapetos and Cronos, his mind bent,  
 20 Eos and Helios and glowing Selene,  
 Gaia, Oceanos, and the black one, Night,<sup>2</sup>

And the whole eerie brood of the eternal Immortals.

And they once taught Hesiod the art of singing verse,  
 While he pastured his lambs on holy Helicon's slopes.  
 25 And this was the very first thing they told me,  
 The Olympian Muses daughters of Zeus Aegisholder:

"Hillbillies and bellies, poor excuses for shepherds:  
 We know how to tell many believable lies,  
 But also, when we want to, how to speak the plain truth."  
 30 So spoke the daughters of great Zeus, mincing their words.  
 And they gave me a staff, a branch of good sappy laurel,<sup>3</sup>  
 Plucking it off, spectacular. And they breathed into me  
 A voice divine, so I might celebrate past and future.  
 And they told me to hymn the generation of the eternal gods,

35 But always to sing of themselves, the Muses, first and last.

But why all this about oak tree or stone?<sup>4</sup>

Start from the Muses: when they sing for Zeus Father  
 They thrill the great mind deep in Olympos,  
 Telling what is, what will be, and what has been,  
 40 Blending their voices, and weariless the sound  
 Flows sweet from their lips and spreads like lilies,  
 And Zeus' thundering halls shine with laughter,

<sup>2</sup> Nyx.

<sup>3</sup> The laurel is associated with Apollo and so with poets.

<sup>4</sup> This apparently proverbial line seems to be a way of saying "Enough about that."

And Olympos' snowy peaks and the halls of the gods  
 Echo the strains as their immortal chanting  
 45 Honors first the primordial generation of gods  
 Whom in the beginning Earth<sup>5</sup> and Sky<sup>6</sup> bore,  
 And the divine benefactors born from them;  
 And, second, Zeus, the Father of gods and men,  
 Mightiest of the gods and strongest by far;  
 50 And then the race of humans and of powerful Giants.  
 And Zeus' mind in Olympos is thrilled by the song  
 Of the Olympian Muses, the Storm King's daughters.

They were born on Pieria after our Father Cronion  
 Mingled with Memory,<sup>7</sup> who rules Eleutheraï's hills.  
 55 She bore them to be a forgetting of troubles,  
 A pause in sorrow. For nine nights wise Zeus  
 Mingled with her in love, ascending her sacred bed  
 In isolation from the other Immortals,  
 But when the time drew near, and the seasons turned,  
 60 And the moons had waned, and the many days were done,  
 She bore nine daughters, all of one mind, with song  
 In their breasts, with hearts that never failed,  
 Near the topmost peak of snowcapped Olympos.

There are their polished dancing grounds, their fine halls,  
 65 And the Graces<sup>8</sup> and Desire<sup>9</sup> have their houses close by,  
 And all is in bloom. And they move in the dance, intoning  
 The careful ways of the gods, celebrating the customs  
 Of all the Immortals in a voice enchanting and sweet.  
 Then they process to Olympos, a glory of pure  
 70 Sound and dance, and the black earth shrieks with delight  
 As they sing, and the drum of their footfalls rises like love  
 As they go to their father. He is king in the sky,  
 He holds the thunder and flashing lightning.  
 He defeated his father Cronos by force, and he ordained  
 75 Laws for the gods and assigned them their rights.

<sup>5</sup> Gaia.

<sup>6</sup> Ouranos.

<sup>7</sup> Mnemosyne.

<sup>8</sup> Charites.

<sup>9</sup> Himeros.

Thus, sing the Muses who have their homes on Olympos,

The nine daughters born of great Zeus,

Cleio, Euterpe, Thaleia, Melpomene,  
Terpsichore, Erato, Polyhymnia, Ourania,

80 And Calliope, the most important of all,

For she keeps the company of reverend kings.

When the daughters of great Zeus will honor a lord

Whose lineage is divine, and look upon his birth,

They distill a sweet dew upon his tongue,

85 And from his mouth words flow like honey. The people

All look to him as he arbitrates settlements

With judgments straight. He speaks out in sure tones

And soon puts an end even to bitter disputes.

A sound-minded ruler, when someone is wronged,

90 Sets things to rights in the public assembly,

Conciliating both sides with ease.

He comes to the meeting place propitiated as a god,

Treated with respect, preeminent in the crowd.

Such is the Muses' sacred gift to men.

95 For though it is singers and lyre players

That come from the Muses and far-shooting Apollo

And kings come from Zeus, happy is the man

Whom the Muses love. Sweet flows the voice from his mouth.

For if anyone is grieved, if his heart is sore

100 With fresh sorrow, if he is troubled, and a singer

Who serves the Muses chants the deeds of past men

Or the blessed gods who have their homes on Olympos,

He soon forgets his heartache, and of all his cares

He remembers none: the goddesses' gifts turn them aside.

105 Farewell Zeus' daughters, and bestow song that beguiles.

Make known the eerie brood of the eternal Immortals

Who were born of Earth and starry Sky,

And of dusky Night, and whom the salt Sea<sup>10</sup> bore.

Tell how first the gods and earth came into being

110 And the rivers and the sea, endless and surging,

<sup>10</sup> Pontos.

And the stars shining and the wide sky above;  
 How they divided wealth and allotted honors,  
 And first possessed deep-ridged Olympos.

Tell me these things, Olympian Muses,  
 115 From the beginning, and tell which of them came first.

### The First Gods

In the beginning there was only Chaos, the Abyss,  
 But then Gaia, the Earth, came into being,  
 Her broad bosom the ever-firm foundation of all,  
 And Tartaros, dim in the underground depths,  
 120 And Eros, loveliest of all the Immortals, who  
 Makes their bodies (and men's bodies) go limp,  
 Mastering their minds and subduing their wills.

From the Abyss were born Erebos and dark Night.  
 And Night, pregnant after sweet intercourse  
 125 With Erebos, gave birth to Aether and Day.

Earth's first child was Ouranos, starry Heaven,  
 Just her size, a perfect fit on all sides,  
 And a firm foundation for the blessed gods.  
 And she bore the Mountains in long ranges, haunted  
 130 By the Nymphs who live in the deep mountain dells.  
 Then she gave birth to the barren, raging Sea  
 Without any sexual love. But later she slept with  
 Ouranos and bore Ocean with its deep currents,  
 And also: Coios, Crios, Hyperion, Iapetos,  
 135 Theia, Rheia, Themis, Mnemosyne,  
 Gold-crowned Phoibe, and lovely Tethys.

### The Castration of Ouranos

After them she bore a most terrible child,  
 Cronos, her youngest, an arch-deceiver,  
 And this boy hated his lecherous father.  
 140 She bore the Cyclopes too, with hearts of stone,  
 Brontes, Steropes, and ponderous Arges,  
 Who gave Zeus thunder and made the thunderbolt.  
 In every other respect they were just like gods,

But a lone eye lay in their foreheads' middle.

- 145 They were nicknamed Cyclopes because they had  
A single goggle eye in their foreheads' middle.  
Strong as the dickens, and they knew their craft.

And three other sons were born to Gaia and Ouranos,  
Strong, hulking creatures that beggar description,

- 150 Cottos, Briareos, and Gyges, outrageous children.  
A hundred hands<sup>11</sup> stuck out of their shoulders,  
Grotesque, and fifty heads grew on each stumpy neck.  
These monsters exuded irresistible strength.  
They were Gaia's most dreaded offspring,  
155 And from the start their father feared and loathed them.  
Ouranos used to stuff all of his children  
Back into a hollow of Earth soon as they were born,  
Keeping them from the light, an awful thing to do,  
But Heaven did it, and was very pleased with himself.

- 160 Vast Earth groaned under the pressure inside,  
And then she came up with a plan, a really wicked trick.  
She created a new mineral, gray flint, and formed  
A huge sickle from it and showed it to her dear boys.  
And she rallied them with this bitter speech:

- 165 "Listen to me, children, and we might yet get even  
With your criminal father for what he has done to us.  
After all, he started this whole ugly business."

They were tongue-tied with fear when they heard this.  
But Cronos, whose mind worked in strange ways,

- 170 Got his pluck up and found the words to answer her:

"I think I might be able to bring it off, Mother.  
I can't stand Father; he doesn't even deserve the name.  
And after all, he started this whole ugly business."

This response warmed the heart of vast Earth.

- 175 She hid young Cronos in an ambush and placed in his hands  
The jagged sickle. Then she went over the whole plan with him.

<sup>11</sup> So they are called the Hundred-handers.



And now on came great Ouranos, bringing Night with him.  
 And, longing for love, he settled himself all over Earth.  
 From his dark hiding-place, the son reached out  
 180 With his left hand, while with his right he swung  
 The fiendishly long and jagged sickle, pruning the genitals  
 Of his own father with one swoop and tossing them  
 Behind him, where they fell to no small effect.  
 Earth soaked up all the bloody drops that spurted out,  
 185 And as the seasons went by she gave birth to the Furies<sup>12</sup>  
 And to great Giants gleaming in full armor, spears in hand,  
 And to the Meliai, as ash-tree Nymphs are generally called.

### The Birth of Aphrodite

The genitalia themselves, freshly cut with flint, were thrown  
 Clear of the mainland into the restless, white-capped sea,  
 190 Where they floated a long time. A white foam from the god-flesh  
 Collected around them, and in that foam a maiden developed  
 And grew. Her first approach to land was near holy Cythera,  
 And from there she floated on to the island of Cypros.  
 There she came ashore, an awesome, beautiful divinity.  
 195 Tender grass sprouted up under her slender feet.

#### Aphrodite

Is her name in speech human and divine, since it was in foam<sup>13</sup>  
 She was nourished. But she is also called Cythereia since  
 She reached Cythera, and Cyprogenes because she was born  
 On the surf-line of Cypros, and Philommedes because she loves  
 200 The organs of sex,<sup>14</sup> from which she made her epiphany.  
 Eros became her companion, and ravishing Desire waited on her  
 At her birth and when she made her debut among the Immortals.  
 From that moment on, among both gods and humans,  
 She has fulfilled the honored function that includes  
 205 Virginal sweet-talk, lovers' smiles and deceits,  
 And all of the gentle pleasures of sex.

But great Ouranos used to call the sons he begot  
 Titans, a reproachful nickname, because he thought

<sup>12</sup> Erinyes.

<sup>13</sup> The Greek word is *aphros*.

<sup>14</sup> *Philommedes* means "fond of genitals." Aphrodite is elsewhere called *Philommeides*, "fond of smiles." The latter may have arisen as a polite alternative for the former. But the latter may be the original, and Hesiod may have altered it here to fit the context.

They had over-reached<sup>15</sup> themselves and done a monstrous deed  
 210 For which vengeance later would surely be exacted.

### Other Early Gods

And Night bore hateful Doom and black Fate  
 And Death, and Sleep and the brood of Dreams.  
 And sleeping with no one, the ebony goddess Night  
 Gave birth to Blame and agonizing Grief,  
 215 And to the Hesperides who guard the golden apples  
 And the fruit-bearing trees beyond glorious Ocean.  
 And she generated the Destinies and the merciless,  
 Avenging Fates, Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos,  
 Who give mortals at birth good and evil to have,  
 220 And prosecute transgressions of mortals and gods.  
 These goddesses never let up their dread anger  
 Until the sinner has paid a severe penalty.  
 And deadly Night bore Nemesis too, more misery  
 For mortals; and after her, Deception and Friendship  
 225 And ruinous Old Age, and hard-hearted Eris.  
 And hateful Eris bore agonizing Toil,  
 Forgetfulness, Famine, and tearful Pains,  
 Battles and Fights, Murders and Manslaughters,  
 Quarrels, Lying Words, and Words Disputatious,  
 230 Lawlessness and Recklessness, who share one nature,  
 And Oath, who most troubles men upon Earth  
 When anyone willfully swears a false oath.

And Pontos, the Sea, begot his eldest, Nereus,  
 True and no liar. And they call him Old Man  
 235 Because he is unerring and mild, remembers  
 What is right, and his mind is gentle and just.  
 Then Sea mated with Earth and begat great Thaumais,  
 And arrogant Phorcys, Ceto, her cheeks lovely,  
 And Eurybia, a stubborn heart in her breast.

240 To Nereus and Doris, her rich hair flowing,  
 Daughter of the perfect river, Ocean,  
 Children were born in the barren sea,  
 Divinely beautiful:

<sup>15</sup> Etymologizing the name from the verb *titaino* "to stretch."

Ploto, Eucrante, Amphitrite, and Sao,  
 245 Eudora, Thetis, Galene, and Glauce,  
 Cymothoe, Speio, lovely Halie, and Thoe,  
 Pasithea, Erato, and rose-armed Eunice,  
 Melite gracious, Eulimene, Agaue,  
 Doto, Proto, Dynamene, Pherousa,  
 250 Nesaia, Actaia, and Protomedeia,  
 Doris, Panope, and fair Galateia,  
 Hippothoe lovely and rose-armed Hipponoe,  
 Cymodoce who with Cymatolege  
 And Amphitrite (fine-sculpted ankles)  
 255 Calms winds and waves on the misty sea—  
 Cymo, Eione, and Alimede in wreaths,  
 Laughing Glauconome and Pontoporeia,  
 Leagora, Euagora, and Laomedeia,  
 Poulynoe, Autonoe, and Lysianassa,  
 260 Lovely Euarne, features perfectly formed,  
 Psamathe, graceful, and shining Menippe,  
 Neso, Eupompe, Themisto, Pronoe,  
 And Nemertes, who has her father's mind:

Fifty girls born to faultless Nereus,  
 265 And faultless all of their skills and crafts.

And Thaumás married deep-flowing Ocean's  
 Daughter, Electra, who bore swift Iris and  
 The rich-haired Harpies, Aello and Ocypete,  
 Who keep pace with storm winds and birds  
 270 Flying their missions on wings swift as time.  
 And Ceto bore to Phorcys the fair-cheeked Graiai,  
 Gray from their birth. Both the immortal gods  
 And men who go on the ground call them Graiai—  
 Pemphredo in robes and saffron-robed Enyo—  
 275 And the Gorgons, who live beyond glorious Ocean  
 On Night's frontier near the shrill Hesperides,  
 Stheno, Euryale, and Medousa, who suffered,  
 Being mortal, while her two sisters were deathless  
 And ageless too. The Dark-maned One<sup>16</sup> bedded her  
 280 In a meadow soft with springtime flowers.  
 When Perseus cut the head from her neck,

<sup>16</sup> Poseidon.

Great Chrysaor leaped out, and Pegasus the horse,  
So-called from the springs<sup>17</sup> of Ocean nearby.

Chrysaor is named from the gold sword<sup>18</sup> he holds.

285 Pegasus left earth, the mother of flocks, and flew  
Off to the gods, and there he lives, in the house  
Of wise Zeus, and brings him thunder and lightning.

And Chrysaor begot Geryones, with a triple head,  
After mingling with Callirhoe, Ocean's daughter.

290 Mighty Heracles stripped him of life and limb  
By his shambling cattle on sea-circled Erytheia  
The day he drove those broad-faced cattle away  
To holy Tiryns, crossing the ford of Ocean  
And killing Orthos and the herdsman Eurytion  
295 In that hazy stead beyond glorious Ocean.

And she<sup>19</sup> bore another monster, irresistible,  
Not like mortal men at all, or immortal gods,  
Bore it in a hollow cave, divine brutal Echidna:

Half dancing-eyed Nymph with pretty cheeks,  
300 Half horrible serpent, an iridescent monster  
Eating raw flesh in sacred earth's dark crypts.  
Her cave is deep underground in the hollow rock  
Far from mortal men and from immortal gods,  
Her glorious home, and there she keeps guard  
305 In underground Arima, grim Echidna,  
A Nymph immortal and all her days ageless.

This Nymph with dancing eyes mated, they say,  
With dreadnaught Typhaon, willful and wild,  
Got pregnant and bore him a brutal brood.

310 First she bore Orthos, Geryones' hound.  
Second, a monster that begs description,  
The carnivore Cerberos, Hades' bronze-baying hound,  
Fifty-headed and an irresistible force.  
And third, a Hydra, malicious and grisly,  
315 The Lernaian Hydra that the white-armed goddess  
Hera nourished, infinitely peeved with Heracles,

<sup>17</sup> The Greek word is *pegai*.

<sup>18</sup> In Greek *chryseion aor*.

<sup>19</sup> Presumably Ceto.

The son of Zeus (but of the house of Amphitryon)  
 Who used merciless bronze to despoil the monster  
 With Iolaos' help and Athena's strategy.

- 320 And she<sup>20</sup> bore Chimaira, who breathed raging fire,  
 And she was dreadful and huge and fast and strong  
 And she had three heads: one of a green-eyed lion,  
 One of a goat, and one of a serpent, a gnarly dragon  
 (Lion in front, dragon in the rear, goat in the middle)  
 325 And every exhalation was a breath of pure flame.  
 Pegasos did her in, and noble Bellerophon.

- She<sup>21</sup> was the mother of Sphinx, the deadly destroyer  
 Of Cadmos' descendants, after mating with Orthos,  
 And of the Nemean Lion, that Zeus' dutiful wife  
 330 Hera raised, to roam and ravage Nemea's hills,  
 A spectral killer that destroyed whole villages,  
 Master of Nemean Tretos and Apesas.  
 But Heracles muscled him down in the end.

- And Ceto mingled in love with Phorcys  
 335 And bore her youngest, the dreaded serpent  
 Who guards the apples of solid gold  
 In the dark earth's crypts at its vast outer limits,  
 And is last of the offspring of Ceto and Phorcys.

And Tethys bore to Ocean eddying rivers:

- 340 Nilos, Alpheios, and Eridanos swirling,  
 Strymon, Maiandros, and Istros streaming,  
 Phasis, Rhesos, and Acheloos silvery,  
 Nessos, Rhodios, Haliacmon, Heptaporon,  
 Granicos, Aisepos, and holy Simois,  
 345 Peneios, Hermos, and lovely Caicos,  
 Sangarios the great, Parthenios and Ladon,  
 Euenos, Ardescos, and divine Scamandros.

And she bore as well a holy brood of daughters

<sup>20</sup> Echidna.

<sup>21</sup> Chimaira, or perhaps Echidna.

Who work with Apollo and with the Rivers  
 350 To make boys into men. Zeus gave them this charge.

Peitho, Admete, Ianthe, Electra,  
 Doris, Prymno, and godlike Ourania,  
 Hippo, Clymene, Rhodeia, Callirhoe,  
 Zeuxo, Clytie, Idyia, Pasithoe,  
 355 Plexaure, Galaxuare, lovely Dione,  
 Melobosis, Thoe, and fair Polydore,  
 Shapely Cerceis, and cow-eyed Plouto,  
 Perseis, Ianeira, Acaste, and Xanthe,  
 Beautiful Petraia, Menestho, Europa,  
 360 Metis, Eurynome, and Telesto in saffron,  
 Chryseis, Asia, desirable Calypso,  
 Eudora and Tyche, Amphiro and Ocyrhoe,  
 And Styx, who is most important of all.

These are Ocean's and Tethys' eldest daughters,  
 365 But there are many more besides, three thousand  
 Slender-ankled Ocean Nymphs scattered everywhere  
 Haunting earth and deep waters, offspring divine.  
 And as many other rivers, chattering as they flow,  
 Sons of Ocean that Lady Tethys bore,  
 370 But it is hard for a mortal to tell all their names.  
 People know the rivers near which they dwell.

And Theia bore great Helios and glowing Selene  
 And Eos, Dawn, who shines for all upon earth  
 And for the immortals who possess the wide sky,  
 375 After Theia was mastered by Hyperion in love.

And Eurybia mingled in love with Crios,  
 And the bright goddess bore great Astraios and Pallas,  
 And Perses, who was preeminent in wisdom.  
 And Dawn bore to Astraios the mighty Winds,  
 380 Silver-white Zephyros and onrushing Boreas,  
 And Notos, after the goddess slept with the god.  
 Then the early-born Goddess<sup>22</sup> bore the Dawnstar  
 And the other shining stars that crown the sky.

<sup>22</sup> Eos.

And Styx, Ocean's daughter, made love with Pallas  
 385 And bore Vying<sup>23</sup> in her house and beautiful Victory,<sup>24</sup>  
 And Strength<sup>25</sup> and Force<sup>26</sup>—notable children she bore,  
 And they have no house apart from Zeus, no dwelling  
 Or path except where the god leads them,  
 And they dwell forever with deep-thundering Zeus.  
 390 For this was how Styx, Ocean's undying daughter,  
 Made her decision on that fateful day  
 When the Lord of Lightning summoned the gods  
 To the slopes of Olympos, and told them whoever  
 Fought along with him against the Titans  
 395 He would not deprive of any rights and honors  
 Among the deathless gods, or if they had none  
 Under Cronos before, he would promote them  
 To rights and honors, as was only just.  
 And Styx undying was first to come to Olympos  
 400 Along with her children, her beloved father's idea.  
 And Zeus honored her and gave her extraordinary gifts,  
 Made her what the gods swear their great oaths by,  
 And decreed her children would live forever with him.  
 And what he promised to all of them he absolutely  
 405 Accomplished, but he himself has the power and rules.

And Phoibe came to Coios, and in the sensual embrace  
 Of the god she loved, the goddess became pregnant  
 And bore Leto, robed in midnight blue, gentle always,  
 Mild to mortal men and to immortal gods,  
 410 Gentle from the beginning, the kindest being on Olympos.  
 And she bore auspicious Asteria, whom Perses once  
 Led to his house to be called his dear wife.

### Hecate

And she bore Hecate, whom Zeus son of Cronos  
 Has esteemed above all and given splendid gifts,  
 415 A share of the earth as her own, and of the barren sea.  
 She has received a province of starry heaven as well,  
 And is most highly esteemed by the deathless gods.

<sup>23</sup> Zelos.

<sup>24</sup> Nike.

<sup>25</sup> Cratos.

<sup>26</sup> Bia.

For even now when any man upon earth  
 Sacrifices and prays according to ancestral rites,  
 420 He calls upon Hecate and is greatly blessed  
 If the goddess propitiously receives his prayers,  
 And riches come to him, for she has the power.  
 She has a share of the privileges of all the gods  
 That were ever born of Earth and Heaven.  
 425 Nor did Cronos' Son violate or reduce  
 What she had from the earlier gods, the Titans.  
 She keeps what she had in the primeval allotment.  
 Nor does the goddess, since she is an only child,  
 Have any less privilege on earth, sea, or heaven,  
 430 But all the more, since Zeus privileges her.  
 Whom she will, she greatly aids and advances,  
 And makes preeminent in the assembly,  
 And she sits beside reverend kings in judgment.  
 And when men arm themselves for devastating war,  
 435 The goddess is at their sides, ready to give victory  
 And bestow glory upon whomever she will,  
 Good at standing by horsemen she wishes to help.  
 When men compete in athletic contests,  
 The goddess stands by them too, knows how to help,  
 440 And the triumphant victor wins a beautiful prize  
 For his prowess and strength, and praise for his parents.  
 And those who work the surly gray sea  
 Pray to Hecate and the booming Earthshaker,  
 And the goddess easily sends a big catch their way,  
 445 Or removes one in sight, as she wills in her heart.  
 She is good, with Hermes, at increasing stock in a pen,  
 Drove of cattle, herds of goats on a plain,  
 Flocks of wooly sheep—if she wills in her heart  
 She can multiply them or make them diminish.  
 450 And so although she is her mother's only child,  
 She is a privileged goddess among the Immortals.  
 And the Son of Cronos made her a nurse of the young  
 Who from that day on saw with their eyes  
 The light of Dawn that sees all. So from the beginning  
 455 She is a nurse of the young. These are Hecate's honors.

### The Birth of the Olympians

Later, Cronos forced himself upon Rhea,



And she gave birth to a splendid brood:

Hestia and Demeter and gold-sandaled Hera,  
 Strong, pitiless Hades, the underworld lord,  
 460 The booming Earthshaker, Poseidon, and finally  
 Zeus, a wise god, our Father in heaven  
 Under whose thunder the wide world trembles.

And Cronos swallowed them all down as soon as each  
 Issued from Rhea's holy womb onto her knees,  
 465 With the intent that only he among the proud Ouranians  
 Should hold the title of King among the Immortals.  
 For he had learned from Earth and starry Heaven  
 That it was fated for him, powerful though he was,  
 To be overthrown by his child, through the scheming of Zeus.  
 470 Well, Cronos wasn't blind. He kept a sharp watch  
 And swallowed his children.

Rhea's grief was unbearable.

When she was about to give birth to Zeus our Father,  
 She petitioned her parents, Earth and starry Heaven,  
 475 To put together some plan so that the birth of her child  
 Might go unnoticed, and she would make devious Cronos  
 Pay the Avengers of her father and children.  
 They listened to their daughter and were moved by her words,  
 And the two of them told her all that was fated  
 480 For Cronos the King and his stout-hearted son.  
 They sent her to Lyctos, to the rich land of Crete,  
 When she was ready to bear the youngest of her sons,  
 Mighty Zeus. Vast Earth received him when he was born  
 To be nursed and brought up in the wide land of Crete.  
 485 She came first to Lyctos, traveling quickly by night,  
 And took the baby in her hands and hid him in a cave,  
 An eerie hollow in the woods of dark Mount Aigaion.  
 Then she wrapped up a great stone in swaddling clothes  
 And gave it to Cronos, Ouranos' son, the great lord and king  
 490 Of the earlier gods. He took it in his hands and rammed it  
 Down into his belly, the poor fool! He had no idea  
 That a stone had been substituted for his son, who,  
 Unscathed and content as a babe, would soon wrest  
 His honors from him by main force and rule the Immortals.  
 495 It wasn't long before the young lord was flexing  
 His glorious muscles. The seasons followed each other,

And great devious Cronos, gulled by Earth's  
 Clever suggestions, vomited up his offspring,  
 [Overcome by the wiles and power of his son]  
 500 The stone first, which he'd swallowed last.  
 Zeus took the stone and set it in the ground at Pytho  
 Under Parnassos' hollows, a sign and wonder for men to come.  
 And he freed his uncles,<sup>27</sup> other sons of Ouranos  
 Whom their father in a fit of idiocy had bound.  
 505 They remembered his charity and in gratitude  
 Gave him thunder and the flashing thunderbolt  
 And lightning, which enormous Earth had hidden before.  
 Trusting in these he rules mortals and Immortals.

### Prometheus

Then Iapetos led away a daughter of Ocean,  
 510 Clymene, pretty ankles, and went to bed with her.  
 And she bore him a child, Atlas, stout heart,  
 And begat ultraglorious Menoitios, and Prometheus,  
 Complex, his mind a shimmer, and witless Epimetheus,  
 Who was trouble from the start for enterprising men,  
 515 First to accept from Zeus the fabricated woman,  
 The Maiden. Outrageous Menoitios broad-browed Zeus  
 Blasted into Erebus with a sulphurous thunderbolt  
 On account of his foolishness and excessive violence.  
 Atlas, crimped hard, holds up the wide sky  
 520 At earth's limits, in front of the shrill-voiced Hesperides,  
 Standing with indefatigable head and hands,  
 For this is the part wise Zeus assigned him.  
 And he bound Prometheus with ineluctable fetters,  
 Painful bonds, and drove a shaft through his middle,  
 525 And set a long-winged eagle on him that kept gnawing  
 His undying liver, but whatever the long-winged bird  
 Ate the whole day through, would all grow back by night.  
 That bird the mighty son of pretty-ankled Alcmena,  
 Heracles, killed, drove off the evil affliction  
 530 From Iapetos' son and freed him from his misery—  
 Not without the will of Zeus, high lord of Olympus,  
 So that the glory of Theban-born Heracles  
 Might be greater than before on the plentiful earth.  
 He valued that and honored his celebrated son.

<sup>27</sup> The Cyclopes.

535 And he ceased from the anger that he had before  
Because Prometheus matched wits with mighty Cronion.

That happened when the gods and mortal men were negotiating  
At Mecone. Prometheus cheerfully butchered a great ox  
And served it up, trying to befuddle Zeus' wits.

540 For Zeus he set out flesh and innards rich with fat  
Laid out on the oxhide and covered with its paunch.  
But for the others he set out the animal's white bones  
Artfully dressed out and covered with shining fat.  
And then the Father of gods and men said to him:

545 "Son of Iapetos, my celebrated lord,  
How unevenly you have divided the portions."

Thus Zeus, sneering, with imperishable wisdom.  
And Prometheus, whose mind was devious,  
Smiled softly and remembered his trickery:

550 "Zeus most glorious, greatest of the everlasting gods,  
Choose whichever of these your heart desires."

This was Prometheus' trick. But Zeus, eternally wise,  
Recognized the fraud and began to rumble in his heart  
Trouble for mortals, and it would be fulfilled.

555 With both his hands he picked up the gleaming fat.  
Anger seethed in his lungs and bile rose to his heart  
When he saw the ox's white bones artfully tricked out.  
And that is why the tribes of men on earth  
Burn white bones to the immortals upon smoking altars.  
560 But cloud-herding Zeus was terribly put out, and said:

"Iapetos' boy, if you're not the smartest of them all.  
So you still haven't forgotten your tricks, have you?"

Thus Zeus, angry, whose wisdom never wears out.  
From then on he always remembered this trick  
565 And wouldn't give the power of weariless fire  
To the ashwood mortals who live on the earth.  
But that fine son of Iapetos outwitted him  
And stole the far-seen gleam of weariless fire  
In a hollow fennel stalk, and so bit deeply the heart

570 Of Zeus, the high lord of thunder, who was angry  
 When he saw the distant gleam of fire among men,  
 And straight off he gave them trouble to pay for the fire.

### Pandora

The famous Lame God<sup>28</sup> plastered up some clay  
 To look like a shy virgin, just like Zeus wanted,  
 575 And Athena, the owl-eyed goddess,  
 Got her all dressed up in silvery clothes  
 And with her hands draped a veil from her head,  
 An intricate thing, wonderful to look at.  
 And Pallas Athena circled her head  
 580 With a wreath of luscious springtime flowers  
 And crowned her with a golden tiara  
 That the famous Lame God had made himself,  
 Shaped it by hand to please father Zeus,  
 Intricately designed and a wonder to look at.  
 585 Sea monsters and other fabulous beasts  
 Crowded the surface, and it sighed with beauty,  
 And you could almost hear the animals' voices.

He made this lovely evil to balance the good,  
 Then led her off to the other gods and men  
 590 Gorgeous in the finery of the owl-eyed daughter  
 Sired in power. And they were stunned,  
 Immortal gods and mortal men, when they saw  
 The sheer deception, irresistible to men.  
 From her is the race of female women,  
 595 The deadly race and population of women,  
 A great infestation among mortal men,  
 At home with Wealth but not with Poverty.  
 It's the same as with bees in their overhung hives  
 Feeding the drones, evil conspirators.  
 600 The bees work every day until the sun goes down,  
 Busy all day long making pale honeycombs,  
 While the drones stay inside, in the hollow hives,  
 Stuffing their stomachs with the work of others.  
 That's just how Zeus, the high lord of thunder,  
 605 Made women as a curse for mortal men,

<sup>28</sup> Hephaistos.

Evil conspirators. And he added another evil  
 To offset the good. Whoever escapes marriage  
 And women's harm, comes to deadly old age  
 Without any son to support him. He has no lack  
 610 While he lives, but when he dies, distant relatives  
 Divide up his estate. Then again, whoever marries  
 As fated, and gets a good wife, compatible,  
 Has a life that is balanced between evil and good,  
 A constant struggle. But if he marries the abusive kind,  
 615 He lives with pain in his heart all down the line,  
 Pain in spirit and mind, incurable evil.  
 There's no way to get around the mind of Zeus.  
 Not even Prometheus, that fine son of Iapetos,  
 Escaped his heavy anger. He knows many things,  
 620 But he is caught in the crimp of ineluctable bonds.

### The Titanomachy

When their father Ouranos first grew angry  
 With Obriareos,<sup>29</sup> and with his brothers,  
 Cottos and Gyges, he clamped down on them hard.  
 Indignant because of their arrogant maleness,  
 625 Their looks and bulk, he made them live underground.  
 So there they lived in subterranean pain,  
 Settled at the outermost limits of earth,  
 Suffering long and hard, grief in their hearts.  
 But the Son of Cronos, and the other Immortals  
 630 Born of Rheia and Cronos, took Earth's advice  
 And led them up back into the light, for she  
 Told them the whole story of how with their help  
 They would win glorious honor and victory.

For a long time they fought, hearts bitter with toil,  
 635 Going against each other in the shock of battle,  
 The Titans and the gods who were born from Cronos.  
 The proud Titans fought from towering Othrys,  
 And from Olympos the gods, the givers of good  
 Born of rich-haired Rheia after lying with Cronos.  
 640 They battled each other with pain in their hearts  
 Continuously for ten full years, never a truce,

<sup>29</sup> Elsewhere the name of this Hundred-hander is given as Briareos.

No respite from the hostilities on either side,  
 The war's outcome balanced between them.  
 Then Zeus gave those three all that they needed  
 645 Of ambrosia and nectar, food the gods themselves eat,  
 And the fighting spirit grew in their breasts  
 When they fed on the sweet ambrosia and nectar.  
 Then the father of gods and men addressed them:

“Hear me, glorious children of Earth and Heaven,  
 650 While I speak my mind. For a long time now  
 The Titans and those of us born from Cronos  
 Have been fighting daily for victory and dominance.  
 Show the Titans your strength, the invincible might  
 Of your hands, oppose them in this grisly conflict  
 655 Remembering our kindness. After suffering so much  
 You have come back to the light from your cruel dungeon,  
 Returned by my will from the moldering gloom.”

Thus Zeus, and the blameless Cottos replied:

“Divine One, what a thing to say. We already realize  
 660 That your thoughts are supreme, your mind surpassing,  
 That you saved the Immortals from war's cold light.  
 We have come from under the moldering gloom  
 By your counsel, free at last from bonds none too gentle,  
 O Lord, Son of Cronos, and from suffering unlooked for.  
 665 Our minds are bent therefore, and our wills fixed  
 On preserving your power through the horror of war.  
 We will fight the Titans in the crush of battle.”

He spoke, and the gods who are givers of good  
 Heard him and cheered, and their hearts yearned for war  
 670 Even more than before. They joined grim battle again  
 That very day, all of them, male and female alike,  
 The Titans and the gods who were born from Cronos,  
 And the three Zeus sent from the underworld to light,  
 Dread and strong, and arrogant with might.  
 675 A hundred hands stuck out of their shoulders,  
 Grotesque, and fifty heads grew on each stumpy neck.  
 They stood against the Titans on the line of battle  
 Holding chunks of cliffs in their rugged hands.  
 Opposite them, the Titans tightened their ranks



- 720 From their massive hands, and the stones they shot  
 Overshadowed the Titans, and they sent them under  
 The wide-pathed earth and bound them with cruel bonds—  
 Having beaten them down despite their daring—  
 As far under earth as the sky is above,  
 725 For it is that far from earth down to misty Tartaros.

### Tartaros

- A bronze anvil falling down from the sky  
 Would fall nine days and nights and on the tenth hit earth.  
 It is just as far from earth down to misty Tartaros.  
 A bronze anvil falling down from earth  
 730 Would fall nine days and nights and on the tenth hit Tartaros.  
 There is a bronze wall beaten round it, and Night  
 In a triple row flows round its neck, while above it grow  
 The roots of earth and the unharvested sea.

- There the Titans are concealed in the misty gloom  
 735 By the will of Zeus who gathers the clouds,  
 In a moldering place, the vast earth's limits.  
 There is no way out for them. Poseidon set doors  
 Of bronze in a wall that surrounds it.  
 There Gyges and Cottos and stouthearted Briareos  
 740 Have their homes, the trusted guards of the Storm King, Zeus.

- There dark Earth and misty Tartaros  
 And the barren Sea and the starry Sky  
 All have their sources and limits in a row,  
 Grim and dank, which even the gods abhor.  
 745 The gaping hole is immense. A man could not reach bottom  
 In a year's time—if he ever got through the gates—  
 But wind after fell wind would blow him about.  
 It is terrible even for the immortal gods,  
 Eerie and monstrous. And the house of black Night  
 750 Stands forbidding and shrouded in dark blue clouds.

- In front the son of Iapetos supports the wide sky  
 With his head and indefatigable hands, standing  
 Immobile, where Night and Day greet each other  
 As they pass over the great threshold of bronze.  
 755 One goes down inside while the other goes out,  
 And the house never holds both inside together,



But one of them is always outside the house  
 And traverses the earth while the other remains  
 Inside the house until her journey's hour has come.  
 760 One holds for earthlings the far-seeing light;  
 The other holds Death's<sup>30</sup> brother, Sleep,<sup>31</sup> in her arms:  
 Night the destroyer, shrouded in fog and mist.

There the children of black Night have their house,  
 Sleep and Death, awesome gods. Never does Helios  
 765 Glowing in his rays look upon these two  
 When he ascends the sky or from the sky descends.  
 One roams the earth and the wide back of the sea,  
 A quiet spirit, and is gentle to humans;  
 The other's heart is iron, unfeeling bronze,  
 770 And when he catches a man, he holds on to him.  
 He is hateful even to the immortal gods.

In front of that stand the echoing halls  
 Of mighty Hades and dread Persephone,  
 Underworld gods, and a frightful, pitiless  
 775 Hound<sup>32</sup> stands guard, and he has a mean trick:  
 When someone comes in, he fawns upon him,  
 Wagging his tail and dropping his ears,  
 But he will not allow anyone to leave—  
 He runs down and eats anyone he catches  
 780 Leaving Persephone's and Hades' gates.

And there dwells a goddess loathed by the Immortals,  
 Awesome Styx, eldest daughter of back-flowing Ocean.  
 She lives in a glorious house apart from the gods,  
 Roofed in towering stone, surrounded on all sides  
 785 With silver columns that reach up to the sky.  
 Seldom does Iris, Thaumás' swift-footed daughter,  
 Come bearing a message over the sea's wide back.  
 Whenever discord and strife arise among the gods,  
 Or any who have homes on Olympos should lie,  
 790 Zeus sends Iris to bring the gods' great oath  
 Back from afar in a golden pitcher, the celebrated water

<sup>30</sup> Thanatos'.

<sup>31</sup> Hypnos.

<sup>32</sup> Cerberos.

That trickles down cold from precipitous stone.  
 Far underneath the wide-pathed earth it flows  
 From the holy river through midnight black,  
 795 A branch of Ocean, allotted a tenth of its waters.  
 Nine parts circle earth and the sea's broad back  
 In silvery currents returning to Ocean's brine.  
 But one part flows from stone, woe to the gods.  
 If ever a god who lives on snowcapped Olympos  
 800 Pours a libation of this and breaks his oath,  
 He lies a full year without any breath,  
 Not a taste of ambrosia, not a sip of nectar  
 Comes to his lips, but he lies breathless and speechless  
 On a blanketed bed, an evil coma upon him.  
 805 But when the long year brings this disease to its end,  
 Another more difficult trial is in store,  
 Nine years of exile from the everlasting gods,  
 No converse in council or at their feasts  
 For nine full years. In the tenth year finally  
 810 He rejoins the Immortals in their homes on Olympos.  
 Upon this the gods swear, the primordial, imperishable  
 Water of Styx, and it issues from a forbidding place.

There dark Earth and misty Tartaros  
 And the barren Sea and the starry Sky  
 815 All have their sources and limits in a row,  
 Grim and dank, which even the gods abhor.  
 There are shining gates and a bronze threshold,  
 Deeply rooted and firmly fixed, a natural  
 Outgrowth. Beyond and far from all the gods  
 820 The Titans dwell, past the gloom of Chaos.  
 But the famous helpers of thunderous Zeus  
 Inhabit houses on Ocean's deep fundaments,  
 Cottos and Gyges. And Briareos for his bravery  
 Deep-booming Poseidon made his son-in-law,  
 825 And gave him Cymopoleia in marriage.

### Typhoios

When Zeus had driven the Titans from heaven,  
 Earth,  
 Pregnant by Tartaros thanks to golden Aphrodite,  
 Delivered her last-born child, Typhoios,  
 830 A god whose hands were like engines of war,

Whose feet never gave out, from whose shoulders grew  
 The hundred heads of a frightful dragon  
 Flickering dusky tongues, and the hollow eye sockets  
 In the eerie heads sent out fiery rays,  
 835 And each head burned with flame as it glared.  
 And there were voices in each of these frightful heads,  
 A phantasmagoria of unspeakable sound,  
 Sometimes sounds that the gods understood, sometimes  
 The sound of a spirited bull, bellowing and snorting,  
 840 Or the uninhibited, shameless roar of a lion,  
 Or just like puppies yapping, an uncanny noise,  
 Or a whistle hissing through long ridges and hills.  
 And that day would have been beyond hope of help,  
 And Typhoios would have ruled over Immortals and men,  
 845 Had the father of both not been quick to notice.  
 He thundered hard, and the Earth all around  
 Rumbled horribly, and wide Heaven above,  
 The Sea, the Ocean, and underground Tartaros.  
 Great Olympos trembled under the deathless feet  
 850 Of the Lord as he rose, and Gaia groaned.  
 The heat generated by these two beings—  
 Scorching winds from Zeus' lightning bolts  
 And the monster's fire—enveloped the violet sea.  
 Earth, sea, and sky were a seething mass,  
 855 And long tidal waves from the immortals' impact  
 Pounded the beaches, and a quaking arose that would not stop.  
 Hades, lord of the dead below, trembled,  
 And the Titans under Tartaros huddled around Cronos,  
 At the unquenchable clamor and fearsome strife.  
 860 When Zeus' temper had peaked, he seized his weapons,  
 Searing bolts of thunder and lightning,  
 And as he leaped from Olympos, struck. He burned  
 All the eerie heads of the frightful monster,  
 And when he had beaten it down, he whipped it until  
 865 It reeled off maimed, and vast Earth groaned.  
 And a firestorm from the thunder-stricken lord  
 Spread through the dark rugged glens of the mountain,  
 And a blast of hot vapor melted the earth like tin  
 When smiths use bellows to heat it in crucibles,  
 870 Or like iron, the hardest substance there is,  
 When it is softened by fire in mountain glens  
 And melts in bright earth under Hephaistos' hands.

So the earth melted in the incandescent flame.  
And in anger Zeus hurled him into Tartaros' pit.

- 875 And from Typhoios come the damp monsoons,  
But not Notos, Boreas, or silver-white Zephyros.  
These winds are god-sent blessings to men,  
But the others blow fitfully over the water,  
Evil gusts falling on the sea's misty face,  
880 A great curse for mortals, raging this way and that,  
Scattering ships and destroying sailors—no defense  
Against those winds when men meet them at sea.  
And others blow over endless, flowering earth  
Ruining beautiful farmlands of sod-born humans,  
885 Filling them with dust and howling rubble.

### Zeus in Power

- So the blessed gods had done a hard piece of work,  
Settled by force the question of rights with the Titans.  
Then at Gaia's suggestion they pressed broad-browed Zeus,  
The Olympian, to be their king and rule the Immortals.  
890 And so Zeus dealt out their privileges and rights.

- Now king of the gods, Zeus made Metis<sup>33</sup> his first wife,  
Wiser than any other god, or any mortal man.  
But when she was about to deliver the owl-eyed goddess  
Athena, Zeus tricked her, gulled her with crafty words,  
895 And stuffed her in his stomach, taking the advice  
Of Earth and starry Heaven. They told him to do this  
So that no one but Zeus would hold the title of King  
Among the eternal gods, for it was predestined  
That very wise children would be born from Metis,  
900 First the gray-eyed girl, Tritogeneia,<sup>34</sup>  
Equal to her father in strength and wisdom,  
But then a son with an arrogant heart  
Who would one day be king of gods and men.  
But Zeus stuffed the goddess into his stomach first  
905 So she would devise with him good and evil both.

<sup>33</sup> "Cunning Intelligence."

<sup>34</sup> Athena.

Next he married gleaming Themis,<sup>35</sup> who bore the Seasons,<sup>36</sup>  
 Eunomia,<sup>37</sup> Dike,<sup>38</sup> and blooming Eirene,<sup>39</sup>  
 Who attend to mortal men's works for them,  
 And the Moirai, whom wise Zeus gave honor supreme:  
 110 Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, who assign  
 To mortal men the good and evil they have.

And Ocean's beautiful daughter Eurynome  
 Bore to him the three rose-cheeked Graces,  
 Aglaia, Euphrosyne, and lovely Thalia.  
 115 The light from their eyes melts limbs with desire,  
 One beautiful glance from under their brows.

And he came to the bed of bountiful Demeter,  
 Who bore white-armed Persephone, stolen by Hades  
 From her mother's side. But wise Zeus gave her away.

120 And he made love to Mnemosyne with beautiful hair,  
 From whom nine Muses with golden diadems were born,  
 And their delight is in festivals and the pleasures of song.

And Leto bore Apollo and arrowy Artemis,  
 The loveliest brood of all the Ouranians  
 125 After mingling in love with Zeus Aegisholder.

Last of all Zeus made Hera his blossoming wife,  
 And she gave birth to Hebe, Eileithyia, and Ares,  
 After mingling in love with the lord of gods and men.

From his own head he gave birth to owl-eyed Athena,  
 130 The awesome, battle-rousing, army-leading, untiring  
 Lady, whose pleasure is fighting and the metallic din of war.  
 And Hera, furious at her husband, bore a child  
 Without making love, glorious Hephaistos,  
 The finest artisan of all the Ouranians.

<sup>35</sup> "Established Custom."

<sup>36</sup> Horai.

<sup>37</sup> "Lawfulness."

<sup>38</sup> "Justice."

<sup>39</sup> "Peace."

935 From Amphitrite and the booming Earthshaker  
Mighty Triton was born, who with his dear mother  
And kingly father lives in a golden palace  
In the depths of the sea, an awesome divinity.

And Aphrodite bore to shield-piercing Ares  
940 Phobos and Deimos, awesome gods who rout  
Massed ranks of soldiers with pillaging Ares  
In icy war. And she bore Harmonia also,  
Whom high-spirited Cadmos made his wife.

The Atlantid Maia climbed into Zeus' sacred bed  
945 And bore glorious Hermes, the Immortals' herald.

And Cadmos' daughter Semele bore to Zeus  
A splendid son after they mingled in love,  
Laughing Dionysos, a mortal woman  
Giving birth to a god. But they are both divine now.

950 And Alcmene gave birth to the might of Heracles  
After mingling in love with cloud-herding Zeus.

And Hephaistos the glorious Lame God married  
Blossoming Aglaia, youngest of the Graces.

Gold-haired Dionysos made blond Ariadne,  
955 Minos' daughter, his blossoming wife,  
And Cronion made her deathless and ageless.

And Heracles, Alcmene's mighty son,  
Finished with all his agonizing labors,  
Made Hebe his bride on snowy Olympos,  
960 Daughter of Zeus and gold-sandaled Hera.  
Happy at last, his great work done, he lives  
Agelessly and at ease among the Immortals.

To tireless Helios the glorious Oceanid,  
Perseis, bore Circe and Aietes the king.  
965 Aietes son of Helios who shines on mortals,  
Wed fair-cheeked Idyia by the gods' designs,  
Daughter of Ocean, the perfect river,  
And she bore Medeia with her well-turned ankles  
After she was mastered in love, thanks to golden Aphrodite.

### Goddesses and Heroes

970 And now farewell, all you Olympians,  
 You islands and mainlands and salt sea between.  
 Now sing of the goddesses, Olympian Muses,  
 Word-sweet daughters of Zeus Aegisholder—  
 The goddesses who slept with mortal men,  
 975 And immortal themselves bore children like gods.

Demeter bore Ploutos after the shining goddess  
 Had made sweet love to the hero Iasion  
 In a thrice-ploughed field in the rich land of Crete.  
 Her good son travels all over land and sea,  
 980 And into whosoever's hands he falls, whoever he meets,  
 He makes that man rich and bestows great wealth upon him.

And Harmonia, daughter of golden Aphrodite,  
 Bore to Cadmos Ino and Semele  
 And fair-cheeked Agaue and Autonoe,  
 985 Whom deep-haired Aristaios wed,  
 And Polydoros in Thebes crowned with towers.

And Ocean's daughter Callirhoe mingled in love  
 Of Aphrodite golden with stout-hearted Chrysaor  
 And bore him a son, of all mortals the strongest,  
 990 Geryones, whom the might of Heracles killed  
 For his shambling cattle on wave-washed Erytheia.

And Dawn bore to Tithonos bronze-helmeted Memnon,  
 The Ethiopian king, and the Lord Emathion.  
 And for Cephalos she produced a splendid son,  
 995 Powerful Phaethon, a man in the gods' image.  
 When he was a boy in the tender bloom of youth,  
 Still childish in mind, Aphrodite rose smiling  
 And snatched him away and made him a keeper  
 Of her holy shrine by night, a spirit divine.

1000 And Jason son of Aison led off from Aietes,  
 A king fostered by Zeus, Aietes' daughter,  
 By the eternal gods' will, after he completed  
 The many hard labors the outrageously arrogant,  
 Presumptuous bully, King Pelias, set for him.  
 1005 The son of Aison suffered through the labors

And sailed to Iolcos with the dancing-eyed girl  
 And made her his wife, and in her bloom  
 She was mastered by Jason, shepherd of his people,  
 And bore a child, Medeios, whom the centaur Cheiron  
 1010 Phillyrides raised in the hills. And Zeus' will was done.

Of the daughters of Nereus, the Old Man of the Sea,  
 The bright goddess Psamathe bore Phocos to Aiacos,  
 Out of love for him through golden Aphrodite.  
 And silver-footed Thetis was mastered by Peleus  
 1015 And bore Achilles, the lion-hearted killer of men.

And Cythereia, beautifully crowned, bore Aineias,  
 After mingling in sweet love with the hero Anchises  
 On the peaks above Ida's many wooded glens.

And Circe, daughter of Hyperion's son Helios,  
 1020 Loved enduring Odysseus and bore to him  
 Agrios and Latinos, faultless and strong,  
 And bore Telegonos through golden Aphrodite.  
 In a far off corner of the holy islands  
 They ruled over all the famous Tyrsenians.  
 1025 And the bright goddess Calypso bore to Odysseus  
 Nausithoos and Nausinoos after making sweet love.

These are the goddesses who slept with mortal men,  
 And immortal themselves bore children like gods.

Now sing of the women, Olympian Muses,  
 1030 Word-sweet daughters of Zeus Aegisholder. . . .

### FROM WORKS AND DAYS

*The ostensible subject of this poem is the dispute Hesiod had with his brother Perses over the unequal division of their inheritance. While Hesiod's outward motivation is to turn his brother from a life of injustice to that of a hard-working farmer, he takes the opportunity to delve deeply into many aspects of the laborious way of life in rural Greece. Though the Works and Days is not primarily a mythological text, the opening section of the poem excerpted below uses myths centered on the rift that developed between humankind and gods to explore the reasons why man must toil and struggle to make ends meet. Two major myths are treated here. First is the tale of Pandora, the first mortal woman, created as punishment for Prometheus' theft of fire, a story he tells somewhat differently in the*



Theogony (573–620). *Second he gives the famous account of the Five Ages of Mankind, developing a theme found in several Near Eastern traditions of a decline in human life tied to a scheme of metals of declining value (gold-silver-bronze-iron). Hesiod has, however, adapted this motif to a Greek context and innovated a fifth age, the Age of Heroes, to account for the great heroes who lived in the generations just preceding and during the Trojan War.*

Muses of the sacred spring Pieria  
 Who give glory in song,  
 Come sing Zeus' praises, hymn your great Father  
 Through whom mortals are either  
 5 Renowned or unknown, famous or unfamed  
 As goes the will of great Zeus.  
 Easy for Him to build up the strong  
 And tear the strong down.  
 Easy for Him to diminish the mighty  
 10 And magnify the obscure.  
 Easy for Him to straighten the crooked  
 And wither the proud,

Zeus the Thunderer  
 Whose house is most high.

15 Bend hither your mind,  
 Hand down just judgments,  
 O Thou!

And as for me,  
 Well, brother Perses,  
 20 I'd like to state a few facts.

### Two Kinds of Strife

It looks like there's not just one kind of Strife—  
 That's Eris—after all, but two on the Earth.  
 You'd praise one of them once you got to know her,  
 But the other's plain blameworthy. They've just got  
 25 Completely opposite temperaments.  
 One of them favors war and fighting. She's a mean cuss  
 And nobody likes her, but everybody honors her,  
 This ornery Eris. They have to; it's the gods' will.  
 The other was born first though. Ebony Night  
 30 Bore her, and Cronos' son who sits high in thin air

Set her in Earth's roots, and she's a lot better for humans.  
Even shiftless folks she gets stirred up to work.

When a person's lazing about and sees his neighbor  
Getting rich, because he hurries to plow and plant  
35 And put his homestead in order, he tends to compete  
With that neighbor in a race to get rich.

Strife like this does people good.

So potter feuds with potter  
And carpenter with carpenter,  
40 Beggar is jealous of beggar  
And poet of poet.

Now, Perses, you lay these things up in your heart  
And don't let the mischief-loving Eris keep you from work,  
Spending all your time in the market eyeballing quarrels  
45 And listening to lawsuits. A person hasn't any business  
Wasting time at the market unless he's got a year's supply  
Of food put by, grain from Demeter out of the ground.  
When you've got plenty of that, you can start squabbling  
Over other people's money.

50 Not that you're going to get  
Another chance with me. Let's settle this feud right now  
With the best kind of judgment, a straight one from Zeus.  
We had our inheritance all divided up, then you  
Made off with most of it, playing up to those  
55 Bribe-eating lords who love cases like this.  
Damn fools. Don't know the half from the whole,  
Or the real goodness in mallows and asphodel.<sup>40</sup>

### Why Life Is Hard

You know, the gods never have let on  
How humans might make a living. Else,  
60 You might get enough done in one day  
To keep you fixed for a year without working.  
You might just hang your plowshare up in the smoke,  
And all the fieldwork done by your oxen

<sup>40</sup> Plants considered food for poor people.

And hard-working mules would soon run to ruin.  
 65 But Zeus got his spleen up, and went and hid  
 How to make a living, all because shifty Prometheus  
 Tricked him.<sup>41</sup> That's why Zeus made life hard for humans.  
 He hid fire. But that fine son of Iapetos stole it  
 Right back out from under Zeus' nose, hiding  
 70 The flame in a fennel stalk. And thundering Zeus  
 Who rides herd on the clouds got angry and said:

"Iapetos' boy, if you're not the smartest of them all!  
 I bet you're glad you stole fire and outfoxed me.  
 But things will go hard for you and for humans after this.  
 75 I'm going to give them Evil in exchange for fire,  
 Their very own Evil to love and embrace."

That's what he said, the Father of gods and men,  
 And he laughed out loud. Then he called Hephaistos  
 And told him to hurry and knead some earth and water  
 80 And put a human voice in it, and some strength,  
 And to make the face like an immortal goddess' face  
 And the figure like a beautiful, desirable virgin's.  
 Then he told Athena to teach her embroidery and weaving,  
 And Aphrodite golden to spill grace on her head  
 85 And painful desire and knee-weakening anguish.  
 And he ordered the quicksilver messenger, Hermes,  
 To give her a bitchy mind and a cheating heart.  
 That's what he told them, and they listened to Lord Zeus,  
 Cronos' son. And right away famous old Gimpy  
 90 Plastered up some clay to look like a shy virgin  
 Just like Zeus wanted, and the owl-eyed goddess  
 Got her all dressed up, and the Graces divine  
 And Lady Persuasion put some gold necklaces  
 On her skin, and the Seasons (with their long, fine hair)  
 95 Put on her head a crown of springtime flowers.  
 Pallas Athena put on the finishing touches,  
 And the quicksilver messenger put in her breast  
 Lies and wheedling words and a cheating heart,  
 Just like rumbling Zeus wanted. And the gods' own herald  
 100 Put a voice in her, and he named that woman

<sup>41</sup> For the trick see the *Theogony* 537–572.

Pandora,<sup>42</sup> because all the Olympians donated something,  
And she was a real pain for human beings.

- When this piece of irresistible bait was finished,  
Zeus sent Hermes to take her to Epimetheus  
105 As a present, and the speedy messenger-god did it.  
Epimetheus didn't think on what Prometheus had told him,  
Not to accept presents from Olympian Zeus but to send any  
Right back, in case trouble should come of it to mortals.  
No, Epimetheus took it, and after he had the trouble  
110 Then he thought on it.
- Because before that the human race  
Had lived off the land without any trouble, no hard work,  
No sickness or pain that the Fates give to men  
(And when men are in misery they show their age quickly).  
115 But the woman took the lid off the big jar with her hands  
And scattered all the miseries that spell sorrow for men.  
Only Hope was left there in the unbreakable container,  
Stuck under the lip of the jar, and couldn't fly out:  
The woman clamped the lid back on the jar first,  
120 All by the plan of the Aegisholder, cloud-herding Zeus.  
But ten thousand or so other horrors spread out among men,  
The earth is full of evil things, and so's the sea.  
Diseases wander around just as they please, by day and by night,  
Soundlessly, since Zeus in his wisdom deprived them of voice.  
125 There's just no way you can get around the mind of Zeus.

If you want, I can sum up another tale for you,  
Neat as you please. The main point to remember  
Is that gods and humans go back a long way together.

### The Five Ages

- Golden was the first race of articulate folk  
130 Created by the immortals who live on Olympos.  
They actually lived when Cronos was king of the sky,  
And they lived like gods, not a care in their hearts,  
Nothing to do with hard work or grief,  
And miserable old age didn't exist for them.  
135 From fingers to toes they never grew old,

<sup>42</sup> From *pan* "all" + *dora* "gifts."

And the good times rolled. And when they died  
 It was like sleep just raveled them up.  
 They had everything good. The land bore them fruit  
 All on its own, and plenty of it too. Cheerful folk,  
 140 They did their work peaceably and in prosperity,  
 With plenty of flocks, and they were dear to the gods.  
 And sure when Earth covered over that generation,  
 They turned into holy spirits, powers above ground,  
 Invisible wardens for the whole human race.  
 145 They roam all over the land, shrouded in mist,  
 Tending to justice, repaying criminal acts  
 And dispensing wealth. This is their royal honor.

Later, the Olympians made a second generation,  
 Silver this time, not nearly so fine as the first,  
 150 Not at all like the gold in either body or mind.  
 A child would be reared at his mother's side  
 A hundred years, just a big baby, playing at home.  
 And when they finally did grow up and come of age,  
 They didn't live very long, and in pain at that,  
 155 Because of their lack of wits. They just could not stop  
 Hurting each other and could not bring themselves  
 To serve the Immortals, nor sacrifice at their altars  
 The way men ought to, wherever and whenever. So Zeus,  
 Cronos' son, got angry and did away with them  
 160 Because they weren't giving the Blessed Gods their honors.

And when Earth had covered over that generation—  
 Blessed underground mortals is what they are called,  
 Second in status, but still they have their honor—  
 Father Zeus created a third generation  
 165 Of articulate folk, Bronze this time, not like  
 The silver at all, made them out of ash trees,<sup>43</sup>  
 Kind of monstrous and heavy, and all they cared about  
 Was fighting and war. They didn't eat any food at all.<sup>44</sup>  
 They had this kind of hard, untamable spirit.  
 170 Shapeless hulks. Terrifically strong. Grapplehook hands  
 Grew out of their shoulders on thick stumps of arms,

<sup>43</sup> The wood of this tree was used to make spears.

<sup>44</sup> The Greek word means specifically food made from grain. The point is that the people of the Bronze Age do not practice agriculture.

And they had bronze weapons, bronze houses,  
 And their tools were bronze. No black iron back then.  
 Finally they killed each other off with their own hands  
 175 And went down into the bone-chilling halls of Hades  
 And left no names behind. Astounding as they were,  
 Black Death took them anyway, and they left the sun's light.

So Earth buried that generation too,  
 And Zeus fashioned a fourth race  
 180 To live off the land, juster and nobler,  
 The divine race of Heroes, also called  
 Demigods, the race before the present one.  
 They all died fighting in the great wars,  
 Some at seven-gated Thebes, Cadmos' land,  
 185 In the struggle for Oidipous' cattle,  
 And some, crossing the water in ships,  
 Died at Troy, for the sake of beautiful Helen.  
 And when Death's veil had covered them over,  
 Zeus granted them a life apart from other men,  
 190 Settling them at the ends of the Earth.  
 And there they live, free from all care,  
 In the Isles of the Blest, by Ocean's deep stream,  
 Blessed heroes for whom the life-giving Earth  
 Bears sweet fruit ripening three times a year.

195 [Far from the Immortals, and Cronos is their king,  
 For the Father of gods and men has released him  
 And he still has among them the honor he deserves.  
 Then the fifth generation: Broad-browed Zeus  
 Made still another race of articulate folk  
 200 To people the plentiful Earth.]

I wish

I had nothing to do with this fifth generation,  
 Wish I had died before or been born after,

Because this is the Iron Age.

205 Not a day goes by  
 A man doesn't have some kind of trouble.  
 Nights too, just wearing him down. I mean  
 The gods send us terrible pain and vexation.  
 Still, there'll be some good mixed in with the evil,  
 210 And then Zeus will destroy this generation too,

Soon as they start being born gray around the temples.  
 Then fathers won't get along with their kids anymore,  
 Nor guests with hosts, nor partner with partner,  
 And brothers won't be friends, the way they used to be.  
 215 Nobody'll honor their parents when they get old  
 But they'll curse them and give them a hard time,  
 Godless rascals, and never think about paying them back  
 For all the trouble it was to raise them.  
 They'll start taking justice into their own hands,  
 220 Sacking each other's cities, no respect at all  
 For the man who keeps his oaths, the good man,  
 The just man. No, they'll keep all their praise  
 For the wrongdoer, the man who is violence incarnate,  
 And shame and justice will lie in their hands.  
 225 Some good-for-nothing will hurt a decent man,  
 Slander him, and swear an oath on top of it.  
 Envy will be everybody's constant companion,  
 With her foul mouth and hateful face, relishing evil.  
 And then  
 230 up to Olympos from the wide-pathed Earth,  
 lovely apparitions wrapped in white veils,  
 off to join the Immortals, abandoning humans  
 There go Shame and Nemesis. And horrible suffering  
 Will be left for mortal men, and no defense against evil.