

Foreword

The manuscript for this unusual project arrived when the transcriptionist appeared in my office from thin air on his/her knees, a stack of paper before her/him. (Read “A Note on the Text” at the end of this book for more from the person’s divine experience.) At his/her side stood a luminous creature who identified herself as the Muse of History, Klio. She set her hand on the transcriptionist’s shoulder, and after a breath the transcriptionist looked to me and requested my help. I had not seen this person in the flesh for years. We have mutual respect and a playful rivalry built over decades as we worked for various houses in the course of our careers. The transcriptionist lifted the stack of papers from the floor and handed it to me. The stack crackled with energy. To handle it made one feel more alert, the colors of the world more vivid, sounds more melodic. The paper had a perfect whiteness yet it did not hurt the eyes to examine the inked longhand on its surface. The transcriptionist and Klio disappeared. Or maybe Klio disappeared and the transcriptionist exited through my office door. I was so engrossed in the phenomenon of this humming document in my hands that I noticed little else. I carried it to my desk and solemnly took out my red pen, turned the first sheet of paper, and went to work to help shape what you have before you.

Whenever my physical energy flagged during this process, I would set my hands on the stacks of the manuscript and its benevolent charge filled me with vim and renewed dedication and give the opera playing in my office a resonance not experienced since childhood. Resuming the work became a pleasure once more. In life’s most vulnerable and raw times art can be a sustaining nervous system and heighten your consciousness to remind you that you matter, as others matter, and that you are not alone.

Recent years have seen riots and deaths over depictions of religious figures in novels, films, and other entertainments. Such controversies even spill over into the written word and real estate disputes with furious cycles of violence. Even translators can get attacked and killed like animals or choked and burned in village squares. With understandable concern over security the transcriptionist has changed her/his mind many times over whether to have his/her name credited in the book. [Before publication, we need final confirmation with E about using the name.] I have a life with no dependents yet being associated with this project makes me nervous. We do this work because we believe in ideas and the power of the written word. Though my work to assist this project has been extensive, my risk and portion of the royalties will be significantly lower than the transcriptionist's.

With scarcely much effort, an attentive reader or sleuth can detect the identity of the transcriptionist. Zealots, thankfully, rarely examine works they protest. Any telltale signs of identity that exist past this Foreword may obscure the transcriptionist enough for safety. However this turns out, I am honored to share the risks of publication. The subject's life story is worthwhile and provocative. I hope believers and non-believers will explore it with open minds and hearts.

Michael Peterson, Editor

Chapter 1 — Universe

I, Zeus, King of the Gods, ask my daughters the Muses to help me tell of the world's creation and the wars to control the world and the rise of Olympus. To tell of our rule. To tell of the emergence of mortals and mingling with them. Transcriber, you see my daughter Klio sits here to translate my thoughts. Her other sister Muses listen and will intervene as needed. Early in this tale I expect Kalliope and Erato to help as I describe things told to me, but not seen by me. You will not see their intervention as you see Klio. Hopefully my daughters will lend grace and flourish to my memory's retention of deeds and simple details. Klio, translate everything as I say it, even when your memory differs from my telling. Beginnings are murky, sticky things for all but my memory knows best.

Chaos was first. Whether Chaos always existed or was generated is beyond knowledge as Chaos grew silent long ago, if it had a voice at all. All dark and bright and dank and dry things churned within Chaos. All materials that consist all things came from Chaos, which often separated then mingled then separated them again. By luck, Chaos generated Darkness and Night, and Darkness and Night dumbly fused together then peeled away from each other. In the new space between Night and Darkness emerged Light and Day. Darkness and Night paired and traveled within Chaos separate from the paired Light and Day.

In time, within Chaos coalesced then convulsed out great Mother Gaea. She could be touched. Gaea was the land and its waters. Gaea was awake and aware of her body and of life within her and the emptiness above and below and her fullness between. She was sustained by dull waters neither cold nor warm around her. Imagine coming to life and having nothing to speak to. Chaos never gave sign or word to her. Gaea had only her own voice for comfort. Then

life began to crawl from within her and walk her surface then retreat to lurk within her depths in the soil and the waters. Occupied by pets and parasites within, she loved and encompassed them all. Thoughts of existence beyond herself led to only coldness so she delighted in the awaking activity within her. She was all she knew.

Chaos then gave forth dumb, dull Tartarus. Upon his birth Tartarus murmured to Gaea, then slunk far below her. Her new brother's expanse matched Gaea's, but Tartarus lay much deeper, an anvil then falling from Gaea would take ten days to reach him. Gaea was pleased to have company. Though distant, she could sense him when he lay still. He always emitted a faint suffused heat into the vastness between them that she grew accustomed to. That change, though meager, was welcome relief from the silence and enveloping cold she had known.

Gaea could feel Tartarus' rumblings and chanting the rare times he stirred, but sensed nothing ever summoned from these few sounds.

Eros twisted and strained forth from Chaos next. Once free, Eros was nimble, crafty with words and loved folding schemes within schemes. Eros could inspire others with his wordless simplicity or great spoken flourishes. He could unsettle the nerves and bodies of all deathless gods and mortals and lesser creatures. Gaea was relieved by his company. Eros was engaging and could be understood, unlike low rumbling Tartarus. Eros would be lively, disappear, then re-emerge in an unexpected place which gave Gaea excitement. Eros understood Gaea, observed her, asked her questions. Gaea felt admired and attended to and eager to hear his voice. Time without his conversation was spent in wait, alert, anticipating his next arrival and where he may appear next. Thoughts of Eros extended Gaea's mind beyond herself. She was at times soothed by him, other times left wanting more.

Eros never spoke with Tartarus. He feared being trapped within Tartarus, never again to give anything the urge of creation or the yearning for destruction. Eros worried about the boredom of being stuck in Tartarus, that he would be left flitting and wisping in the walls of the pit, buried in darkness. Not knowing up nor down. No light. No cold. No breeze. Dullness. Stasis broken only by the rare rumblings of Tartarus chanting to himself to no result. A vibration with meaning impossible to discern. One could go mad trying to listen and understand Tartarus' rare low words. Perhaps it was profound, perhaps he was a simpleton. Eros and Gaea learned to ignore him.

Eros often spoke with mother Gaea and began to fill her heart with need for company. “Why, elder sister, are you content to lay here with dumb Tartarus below, and mischievous me flickering and rising and fading, with your warmth and fertility and all you possess neglected? You are solid and vast. Become great. Find your equal. Make your solace. Create yourself a mate to match. This existence is stagnant. You can change that.”

Mother Gaea said “Eros, you are right. You and I are the only ones speaking intelligible words. Something new is needed, something beyond our control and prediction.”

The suggestion from Eros flooded Gaea's belly, heart, and loins with aching. At first she sought to drown the yearning with her surface waters, drawing them within her. The aching became pointed. This pain, her want, was not from fire. The waters had swollen within her as her dry surface crackled. With great concentration she focused the swelling within her, rocking it back and forth, mixing with her own substance and forming its body surrounded by waters and darkness and aether and light.

Gaea felt this mass stir within her, and summoned the strength, her eyes yearning upward, to give a mighty heave. As Eros chanted around her head, Gaea expelled father Ouranos

into life. Ouranos rolled out damp on top of her and rested. Opening his eyes and rousing from her surface a mighty rain of mud and water fell from his body, restoring cracked Gaea to smooth lushness. After the mud and water fell away he shared nothing of her body save for the sparks and aether that made him. The stars of his body were fires of desire. Cold emptiness spanned between the fires save for the aether. Fully uncurled and arisen, Ouranos matched Gaea in vastness, and lifted himself fully above her and he then faced her body below him. And he had a voice, which pleased Gaea. Ouranos took to gazing at Gaea. Eros whispered in his ear, urging him to overtake her.

While Ouranos remained above as with Eros whispered more words, Gaea swelled up once again and brought forth Pontus in a mighty wave of waters. Pontus then took to the surrounding waters now under his command and stayed in the depths to observe.

Ouranos was aether and fiery stars, and saw Gaea was warmth and soil and wet. Ouranos ached to find relief within Gaea and slowly set upon her. As Gaea saw him approach she wanted him within, to shudder inside her unguardedly, withdraw and collapse in surrendered strength, taking some of her own strength back from him, then gather himself to master her again. Gaea saw the desire within Ouranos. Between them was neither Darkness nor Night, Light nor Day. Need and filling the other's want gave them new purpose and became all they desired.

Gaea loved him, and opened herself. In turn, from love Ouranos gave Gaea of his body. Where they touched clouds of dust rose and mingled with Ouranos' vastness, obscuring the depth of his body. But he stayed close, pressed against her, which was all the reassurance they needed if they could not see each other. Mountains, hills, trees, all brushed against the length of his body. Across her lands his stars burned her fields and forests. Her oceans and waters dampened him, made him heavy, and mixed with the clouds of dust to coat him, which in turn

put out her fires as they moved, yet their motions ignited new fires. Gaea marveled to see his body fallen and pressed over hers. He plunged within her marshes and waters and caverns, anywhere his blazing life could take relief. She felt full of light with him within, burned and cooled by his touches and admiring words. She eagerly received his wild sparks. When Ouranos could take no more, he burst a stream of searing stardust inside Mother Gaea and she clutched him and moaned to receive it and be filled as it scalded her within. Ouranos then lay still upon her and took time to catch his wits and then he rose to shake away the accrual of loam and waters to restore his body of its pure aether and distinct fiery stars. Before then, for a long while they took comfort in the stillness of their embrace.

Once Ouranos and Gaea recovered enough to listen, Eros whispered to each of them. Both roused once more. Ouranos once more gave his life back to Gaea who made him, she once more received his life and was glad to shine hot within. After this, Eros no longer needed to intervene for their couplings.

In these wordless times as Ouranos fell into her in a cascading spill of dust and light. Gaea turned inward. From her thoughts, from sparks of the pinpoints of his stars, from her dampest caves and marshes, emerged my ancestors, the Titans and their brothers the Kyklopes.

Eldest born of the Titans was dear, wise Oceanus, then Coeus and Crius, then Hyperion, Iapetus, Theia, my mother Rhea, Themis, thoughtful Mnemosyne, gold-crowned Phoebe, Tethys, and finally lusty, wily Kronos, my father. Their forms were fair, and they loved mother Gaea who gave them wisdom and sustenance. Father Ouranos and Mother Gaea delighted in their beauty and nobility and vigor. The Titans were full of questions and play.

Following them came the earthy Kyklopes of spirit, might, and craft. Their forms were brutish and they had only one eye set in the middle of their foreheads. They had coarse manners

and were overbearing, though in time they became more refined: Brontes the thunderer, Steropes the light-maker, and stubborn-hearted Arges the vivid one. Though I became their lord, my loyal uncle Kyklopes are dear to me. Through all of what was to come, to see them content in the forges with Hephaestus is among the many things that gladdens me. Fighting and keeping the order of the world to get them there is among the deeds that I am most proud of.

Brontes the thunderer, Steropes the lightener, and Arges the vivid one soon after their births built great devices and gamboled with their kin the Titans upon sustaining Gaea. Ouranos tried not to regard them. He regarded the Kyklopes as disappointments. Gaea loved them the same as the Titans.

As these Titans issued forth, Pontus emerged from the deep waters around mother Gaea and mated with her. Gaea gave birth to Nereus, beloved god of the seas. Pontus withdrew to the dark of the waters, yielding rule and tending of the waters to Nereus, who was wise, changeable, gregarious, and potent.

A season arrived that inspired the Titans to pair off and love in their own company as the brother Kyklopes toiled and honed their crafts in their fires within the mountains. The Kyklopes at times stepped away from their arts and observed the Titans in their loveplay and felt the stirrings of Eros as lust and love filled them with desire for their sisters and brothers. All overtures from the one-eyed Kyklopes to the beautiful Titans were rebuffed. At first, they turned their avidity back into their work, then to each other, but even to themselves their forms were repulsive with their hair and loud-breathing. They never could learn the honeyed speech and musical laughter. Their company in close times was rough, familiar, and reminded them of work, not of dreams nor escape from drudgery.

They bemoaned their state to mother Gaea. “Long do we behold the sweet, delicate games and pleasures of our kindred Titans, and greatly we yearn to share in their beauty. We have wrought temples and palaces, devices and armor and tools of great art and delicacy, and yet we do not enjoy our lives as do our leisurely kin. Please, mother, bring us love, bring us relief and solace as our brothers and sisters enjoy.”

Gaea said “I know how you yearn. Your forms are rough to behold and it is hard for any other than me to keep you close though your brothers and sisters love you. Let me take counsel with our lord Ouranos. I may lure his starlight to engender companions for you, beloved Kyklopeses.”

Mother Gaea approached Ouranos. His attention was fixed on the games and feats of his beautiful Titans, who had begun to contest each other’s might in jest, then lay and laugh with each other in playful gasps, taunts, and victories.

Ouranos first misunderstood Gaea, thinking she proposed mingling the glowing might of the Titans with the brute Kyklopeses, and roared “No. I will not allow the perfect forms to blend with those of beasts. The Titans are my pride and perfection. The Kyklopeses are your burden.”

As he hit this rage, Gaea began to plead, to praise the power of Ouranos, his dominion over her, the places he knew of her body that filled his great cold expanses and gave sweet relief to his points of fire, and thanked him for how he shook and shuddered within her and gave her joy. She pressed her breast to his and he reveled in the flattery. He saw on her generous body life and beauty and monsters and realms and felt how she was worthy of reverence. Ouranos marveled at this power. He shone to see the glory of his Titans, then grew rueful he had engendered the Kyklopeses. But the wide-ranging life he could see and hear teeming across Gaea far outspanned what he had sired. His small Titans playing on her vast fields were the mightiest

of all her children, but he felt diminished by their modest size compared to her and to him and retreated in his pride. Gaea felt her hope defeated and knew her Kyklopes would be heartbroken.

As his solitude and brooding seethed, Ouranos' stars churned and grew white hot. He then fell hard to the one relief he knew, Gaea. As he had been distant, but was close once again, Gaea received him with clutching and abandon and they coupled with a frenzy that shook sky and earth, and even broke the low chants of Tartarus beneath them. Titans and Kyklopes held fast. Three days the rancor and tumult lasted. Then spending himself with relief, Ouranos retreated and ascended again without words of parting to Gaea and resumed his distant brooding. Eros came to Gaea and gave comfort. Tartarus resumed his rumblings.

The last children of Ouranos and Gaea soon emerged: my uncles the Hekatonkhires with great strength in their hundred arms and fifty heads. Honorable Cottus and Briareus and Gyes. I know them well, and would in time owe them all. It is a challenge to converse with fifty heads. I admit to you I came to recognize them by stance and bearing more than individual faces. I can distinguish them by the patterns of their heads taken in full. If you presented me a picture of one head and asked whether I knew if it was Cottus, Briareus, or Gyes I would not be able to answer for each of their one hundred fifty heads. A failing, I know.

Their mother and the siblings of the Hekatonkhires loved them. Ouranos despised them and felt a shame even greater than before. Yet all of his children played together. The Kyklopes found ways to speak with the Hekatonkhires, who conveyed their simple thoughts to their single-eyed mighty brothers in the clamor of fifty voices at a time. Though hulking and strong, the Kyklopes had sharp ears for understanding. They could hear then tell these thoughts to the Titans. The Titans never mastered this brute, loud language, but found ways with gestures and

tones to share thoughts and jests with their new brothers. Titans and Kyklopes admired the virtues of strength and honor of the Hekatonkhires. All expressed gratitude to Ouranos for siring them, but saved their true reverence and awe for mother Gaea. This weighed on Ouranos' mind, and he grew envious as he continued to watch from a distance.

Still Ouranos could not be completely moved away in his affections. He loved the Titans. He learned to tolerate the Kyklopes, yet could not abide the Hekatonkhires. He hated to see them, hated to know they existed, and hated to hear the cacophony of their voices mingled with the simple words of the Kyklopes and high laughter and songs of the Titans. But he felt ashamed each generation of his spawn was more wild and less lovely than the preceding one. In a mad fit, Ouranos snatched the Hekatonkhires and crammed them deep into the plackets of the earth with such force that Gaea groaned. The Titans and Kyklopes cried in terror and wailed for their brothers. Gaea mourned above and around the pain and soreness to her body. Ouranos was silent, then retreated, eyes open but seeming to look at nothing. His breathing became steady and slow. Eventually he fell asleep, no longer staring and brooding, in satisfaction that the Titans would remain pure and beautiful, Kyklopes quiet and respectful of his tyranny, and the clamor of the Hekatonkhires had ceased. The only din came from the rumblings of Tartarus.

Gaea was first anguished over the banishment of her Hekatonkhires. Then she turned to rage. She summoned her children the Titans and the Kyklopes to her side. They listened as mother Gaea wailed over Ouranos' anger, his jealousy, and called out to her Titans and Kyklopes "Darlings, your tyrant father Ouranos has subdued and buried your brother Hekatonkhires fearing their strength and their love for me, and for you. An evil, painful deed and he shows no remorse. He hates me and what we have made and in time may destroy me. If you fall from his grace, he may do the same to you. He may hide you all within my realm, without

escape, or hurl you into joyless Tartarus. He must be defeated. I cannot go against him; so great is his might the lives of the mountains, plains, and oceans depend on me appeasing him. They would all perish if he struck against me. Within my body I have fashioned a sickle made of the might of the stars cooled and mixed with grey flint that I kept from him when he lay with me. The flint of the sickle is mingled with the strongest metals. Take arms against your Father Ouranos, for the cosmos should never harbor such hate. My heart will not mend until all of my children are restored to me.”

Mother Gaea set the sickle before them. The Titans feared Ouranos, and were content to remain at their games without challenging their father. The Kyklopes, who would not take arms on their own, fell in with their twelve Titan brothers and sisters satisfied to hide and craft if they would be left alone.

Kronos, the youngest of the Titans, was the brashest and felt Gaea’s call for vengeance. With assurance he took the grey flint sickle, gripped it tight, and laughed. His brothers and sisters stepped away, feigning to not know what was to come. Gaea knew. Gaea was proud.

Kronos hid within Gaea and lay in wait. Gaea made her waters and mud rise and welcoming to entice distant Ouranos.

Gaea called out “Touch me, mighty Ouranos. I ache to be filled by you. Let your cool expanses find solace in my warming body then nestle inside me. Take delight in me, lord Ouranos. Sweetly, not in rage. Let us share this mighty pleasure known only by us. Let us create beauty once more. Fill me with life to remember you by, my far Ouranos, to cherish, to mix with my waters and earth and churning heat and snows and let mingled lives and glory teem forth from my swollen body. To feel the sweet pain of birth and fire of life crawl and take shape to please you. A testimony to our love, your might, our fire stoked only by you. Add to me,

Ouranos. Let us be us. We were meant to be close, to create, to thrive and be magnificent. Enter me. Be strong. Give me all you have. No matter how hard we shake, shake us more, my hard and mighty Ouranos.”

Ouranos was stirred. Ouranos swelled and ached to enter her, the stars within him churning. He needed to seize and drive and recede himself within her, to set the star fires of his lust fast and deep, to have his desire light her from within, make her eyes shine, bring pride and gladness to his heart. To feel lost and protected and conquer and lose his cares after being summoned by his sweet sanctuary, Gaea, who knew him best.

As Ouranos approached swollen and strong and hard, Kronos emerged with zest and great strength and swung the sickle’s blade cleanly through Ouranos’ engorged genitals. Ouranos howled. Blood poured from the center of pain-mad Ouranos and mixed with the dirt of Gaea. The largest ponds of hot hate formed the blood-avenging Furies, winged beasts with the mangled, scowling faces of goddesses and the bodies of plump, terrifying birds. The Furies shook off the soil and took flight over the world to thereafter seek vengeance against blood crimes, punishing and torturing those who violated the bonds of family. Smaller drops of his blood on the earth formed great giants with gleaming armor and formed the Meliae, nymphs of ash-trees. Ouranos in great pain and draining vitality rushed away to the farthest height of the sky, crying and cursing his children, calling them breakers of the divine order and demanded vengeance upon on them, his son Kronos chief among them. The Titans and Kyklopes were terrified.

Kronos hurled the wadded mass of his father’s genitals into the sea. They landed in the sea off the shores of Cyprus. The blood and heat and flesh of Ouranos made steam rise from the waters, then a froth, then a pond of foam. Eros whispered and blew over this pond, and from the

foam and blood and flesh and water emerged Aphrodite. She was beauty and desire itself. As her sisters the Furies, she sprang from pain and blood, but the waters and fertile foam washed away the rage that suffused her dust-bonded, menacing, wild kin but she still kept power as great or greater than the Furies. Aphrodite stepped from the foam onto the shore, her lovely toes and feet pressed into the sand and flowers grew beneath them as she walked.

Only Eros could resist Aphrodite's wiles, and as he grew bored and felt his role as the urge of all primordial couplings had been fulfilled, he in time conferred his power to her. She became great, and Eros was content to retreat and observe the effects of desire and lust from a distance. With Gaea and Ouranos and Tartarus as his only peers in age and power, it puzzled me that he elected to pass along his charge. Though now I wonder if he knew that each reign overruns the one before it, and wanted to leave on terms that he set. Now that Aphrodite in this present time has mostly desisted from mortal matters, I wonder if Eros might quietly take power back to mingle or change the mortal realm, challenge the Olympians, or urge Gaea or Tartarus into action and new creation. He is an instigator. He is out there somewhere still.

The howls of the fleeing Ouranos fading as he flew away, Kronos shook blood off his hands and sickle, then washed them in the river Lethe. Then by his own hands he dug a hole for the sickle and buried it deep. Gaea then drew the blade farther within her. His brother and sister Titans circled closer around him. Kronos said to them "The rule of tyrant Ouranos has ended. Our time has begun. My fellow Titans, let us release our brothers the Hekatonkhires – mighty Cottus, Briareus, and Gyes – enclosed within Gaea. Let them join us in the glories of the earth and sun of the daytime and the wondrously dark and sparking nighttime skies."

After assurances from Gaea and Kronos that their father Ouranos was indeed diminished, the Titans and the Kyklopes set to recover their mighty brother Hekatonkhires from the deep

folded of the earth, to the relief of Gaea. She was thrilled by the courage of her son Kronos. When reunited with their brothers, the Hekatonkhires roared and embraced their kin with delight and love. It was now their time, and thus began the age of the Titans.