

INTRODUCTION

I. THE MYTH

Fire is essential to civilization for warmth, cooking, and even the most rudimentary technology. In pre-industrial societies all over the world, myths have recounted mankind's acquisition of this divine spark through a theft from the gods, usually performed by a bird or animal, sometimes by a man, or even one of the gods themselves.¹ For the Greeks, it was the pre-Olympian god Prometheus who was generally credited with this theft.²

Both the Hesiodic poems give a prominent role to P. In the *Theogony*, almost a hundred lines are devoted to the story of P. and Zeus (521–616): how, in the sacrifice-feast at Mecone, P. tried to trick Zeus into choosing the worse portion of meat, so that mankind would get the better; whereupon Zeus, in rage, retaliated against mankind by withholding fire;³ P. stole fire and gave it to mortals, but Zeus in turn penalized them by creating woman (570ff.), and punished P. by having him bound to a column, with an eagle eating his liver; eventually Heracles was allowed to win himself glory by killing the eagle (526–32); it remains ambiguous whether or not P. was actually released.⁴ The story is designed mainly to illustrate Zeus' supreme intelligence, and the futility of any attempt to outwit him (613 ὧς οὐκ ἔστι Διὸς κλέψαι νόον οὐδὲ παρελθεῖν): it is followed by the Titanomachy (617–720), demonstrating Zeus' irresistible might.

1. J. G. Frazer, *Myths of the origin of fire* (London 1930), and *Appendix* to Loeb ed. of Apollodorus (pp. 326–50). In the Indic *Rig-Veda* (3.9.5), a god (Mātarisvan) produced Agni, the fire-spirit, by rubbing, and then brought him down to earth.

2. The actual invention of fire was ascribed to Hermes (together with the institution of sacrifice, *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 108–37), or to Hephaestus (*Harporc. s.v. λαμπάς*). At Argos, the hero Phoroneus was credited with man's acquisition (Paus. 2.19.5).

3. Whether he *withdrew* it, or *refrained* from bestowing it, is left unclear (563 οὐκ ἔδιδου; cf. *WD* 50–2).

4. 528 ἐλύσατο δυσφροσυνάων, 533 παύθη χόλου, imply release; but 533 χαόμενος, and especially 614–16, indicate otherwise (ἐρύκει, present). See n. on P. *Lyomenos* frs. IX–XIV.

In the *Works and Days* (42–89), Hesiod introduces P. (and Pandora) by way of explanation for the hardness and misery of human existence: Zeus is punishing us for P.'s theft of fire; otherwise life would be easy and trouble-free. In both poems P.'s fore-thought⁵ and cleverness are of a short-sighted and petty kind, no match for Zeus' wisdom; and P.'s misguided efforts on behalf of mankind result instead in pain for them and for himself.

Hesiod does not explain *why* P. wishes to benefit mankind: it is simply taken for granted that he has a special relationship with them. (So P. appears elsewhere as creator of the human race, and as father of Deucalion, our common ancestor and re-creator.)⁶ But his relationship with the other gods, in literature and cult, seems to be more variable and enigmatic. Hesiod makes him a son of Kronos' brother, Iapetus, i.e. Zeus' cousin; but he is treated more like one of the previous generation of Titans, and he never appears to be really at home with the Olympians. He is frequently associated with Hephaestus and Athena, fellow workers with fire;⁷ but, outside Hesiod's poems, P. seems to have been a minor figure and to have played little part in the religious life of archaic and classical Greece.⁸ Athens was an exception: here he was patron-deity of

5. The derivation of Προμηθεύς, προμηθής (Doric Προμᾶθευς; in Attica, P. was also called Πρόμηθος) from προ + μητ/μανθ- ('plan, know') was accepted by the Greeks without question (hence 'Επιμηθεύς, 'afterthought'; cf. *Prom.* 85–6, 506nn.). It has been called into question by some modern scholars, who prefer an origin in e.g. Sanskrit *pramantha* ('firestick') or *Pramatih* (? 'forethinker', an epithet of Agni; see above, p. 1 n.1); or in Πραμανθεύς (epithet of Zeus, Lycophr. 537 with Tzetzes' n.). But it is probably correct; see V. Schmidt, *Z.P.E.* 19 (1975) 183–90, who compares λανθάνω/λήθη (Doric λᾶθα). The προ- element denotes primarily 'before' (temporal); but at times the sense 'on behalf of' may be present too (LSJ s.v. πρό A 13).

6. Creation of mankind out of mud is mentioned at Plato, *Prot.* 320d, Aristoph. *Birds* 686; woman is so created (by Hephaestus) at Hes. *Th.* 571–2, *WD* 60ff. P. is not explicitly attested as creator before Heraclides (fourth century B.C.); but the tradition is presumably much older, even pre-Hesiodic: P. is after all a potter. (At Epicharm. fr. 122 Deucalion creates men from stones.) See further Kraus, *RE* s.v. 696–7.

7. P. assisted at the birth of Athena (Eur. *Ion* 454ff., Apollod. 1.3.6). The cults of Hephaestus and P. were combined at Athens (Paus. 1.30.2, schol. Soph. *OC* 56 = *FGH* 244 F 147).

8. At Lucian, *Prom.* 14, P. complains that he has no temple in Greece. There was a cult of P. at Opus (Paus. 2.19.8), and perhaps at Panopeus (Paus. 10.4.4) and Argos (2.19.8); cf. too *Demeter Kaberaia* at Thebes (9.25.5–10).

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potters, and was honoured, like Hephaestus and Athena, with his own festival and torch-race, the *Promethia*.⁹

Between Hesiod and the fifth century there is almost no trace of P. in literature.¹⁰ He reappears as co-hero of Epicharmus' Sicilian comedy, *Pyrrha, or Prometheus* (frs. 114–22 Kaibel, cf. P. Oxy. 2427. 1–3).¹¹ Then Aeschylus in 472 B.C. produced his *P. Pyrkaeus*, dramatizing P.'s gift of fire to a Chorus of exuberant satyrs.¹² There is little here, any more than in Hesiod's sly rascal of Mecone, to prepare us for a tragedy on the scale of *Prom.*

The only other major literary figure of the fifth century who appears to have given a serious role to P. is Protagoras. In Plato, *Prot.* 320c–323a, the old sophist tells a creation myth, to explain how it is that all men share a certain basic modicum of virtue: 'Once upon a time (ἦν γὰρ ποτε χρόνος ὄτε . . .)', Epimetheus and P. were entrusted by the gods with creation of all living things. Epimetheus went ahead and gave different attributes to the different species to ensure their survival (μὴ τι γένος ἀστωθείη, cf. *Prom.* 232–3n.); but by the time he came to mankind, he

9. Harpocr. s.v. λαμπάς, schol. Aristoph. *Frogs* 131, ps.Xen. *Ath. Pol.* 3.4, *IG* 1².84 and 1138. The festival included choral competitions. (See too How and Wells on *Hdt.* 8.98.2.)

10. Only passing reference in Ibycus (*PMG* 342) and Sappho (207 LP = Servius on Virg. *Ecl.* 6.42); personified προμήθεια is mother of τύχη at Alcman, *PMG* 64. In art, on the other hand, representations of P.'s torment by the eagle, and/or his release by Heracles, are common in the archaic period: see Bapp 3086–93 with illustrations, L. Eckhardt, *RE* xxiii.1 (1957) s.v. 'Prometheus' 704–14, *ABV* 6.14, 7δ, 97.28–30, 104.124. P. is generally shown sitting, with hands tied and his back to a pillar or stake (cf. Hes. *Th.* 522: in some representations he looks rather as if he is impaled on it; see 26n.). In fifth-century Athens it is P. the Firebringer who is popular (see *ARV* Index s.v. 'Prometheus', and n. 12 below): only two red-figure vases represent him in any other role; one (*ARV* 1269.6) shows him with white hair and leaning on a stick, in the company of Athena and Leda (and perhaps Peitho); the other, by Douris, (*ARV* 438.133 = Bapp 3086 fig. 1) has him talking to the seated Hera.

11. See further Pickard-Cambridge, *DTC* 265–8 (with T. B. L. Webster's speculations on P. Oxy. 2427 frs. 1 and 27; he suggests a date after 469 B.C., following *Prom.*).

12. Aesch. frs. 205–7 N, 278 L–J, = 453–7, 342–50 M; see below, App. p. 281. Several vase-paintings from the last third of the fifth century apparently illustrate this play (or another satyric P. play produced c. 430 B.C.?); see J. Beazley, *A. J. A.* 43 (1939) 618ff., 44 (1940) 212, F. Brommer, *Satyrspiele* (2nd ed., Berlin 1959) 48–9 with nos. 9, 187–99.

had no attributes left. So P. had to help him out, by stealing fire from the gods and giving it, together with the skill to use it (*ἐντεχνος σοφία*), to mankind, who thence learned other arts of civilization; thus they were able to survive – up to a point: but, since they still lacked the social virtues, men could not organize themselves into groups for self-protection against wild beasts, until Zeus finally sent Hermes to give them *αἰδώς* and *δίκη*, so that cities could be founded and truly civilized life could begin. It is likely that Plato has modelled this speech on Protagoras' treatise *περὶ τῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ καταστάσεως*: but we have no way of knowing how closely he has reproduced it (even, for example, whether P. played any part in it, or whether he is Plato's addition, to give 'mythical' colouring, cf. 321c *μῦθον λέγων ἐπιδείξω*). In any case, there are some signs that the poet of *Prom.* has been influenced by this, or a similar, account of man's technical and cultural progress (7–8, 254, 450–506nn.), as he has set about his transformation of P. into a true tragic hero and champion of the human race.

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Synopsis: Zeus' agents bring P. in, and chain him to a rock, explaining that this is his punishment for giving fire to mortals (1–87). After a monologue of complaint from P. (88–127), a Chorus of Ocean-nymphs arrive, and P. informs them about the recent Titanomachy and his subsequent assistance of mankind against Zeus' will (128–283). Suddenly Ocean appears, offering to intercede with Zeus on P.'s behalf, if P. will moderate his behaviour; P. rejects his offer with scorn, and he retires (284–396). P. enumerates to the Chorus all his benefactions to mankind (397–525). The mortal Io rushes in, half in the form of a cow and pursued by a stinging fly; she describes her miseries as the result of Zeus' passion for her; then P. tells her about the rest of her sufferings, past and future, about her descendant, Heracles, who will eventually release P., and about the fatal marriage which Zeus may one day make, unless P. intervenes to warn him (561–886). After Io departs, P. repeats his predictions of Zeus' imminent downfall, first to the Chorus (907–43), and then to Hermes, who has been sent by Zeus to extract from P. the details of this fatal marriage; although Hermes predicts increased torments for him, P. refuses to divulge the secret, and is plunged into the depths amidst a raging storm (944–1093).

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In constructing this plot, the author has drawn heavily on the Hesiodic poems. But the transformation of Hesiod's morality tale into a drama of tragic tone and proportions has involved a bold process of selection, adaptation, and innovation. P.'s Hesiodic father, Iapetus, has been omitted, as have his disreputable brothers, Menoetius and Epimetheus (but the mighty Atlas is prominent, 347–50, 425–30; cf. App. p. 284), and P. is now himself a Titan, son of Earth (variously called here Ge and Themis, cf. 18, 209–10, 351–2, 874, 1091, with nn.), i.e. he is uncle rather than cousin of Zeus.¹³ Omitted too is any mention of the trickery at Mecone, the original cause of Zeus' anger according to Hesiod, or of the creation of woman (Pandora).¹⁴

Along with P.'s new parentage come two major innovations, both involving P.'s knowledge of the future. First, the dramatist has transferred to P. the role performed by Ge in Hesiod's Titanomachy, that of providing the crucial advice which enabled Zeus and the Olympians to defeat the Titans (199–221, with 219–21n.; cf. too 439–40n.). Secondly, P. is now endowed with a further piece of knowledge upon which the survival of Zeus' rule depends. The origin of this motif may lie in Hesiod's account of Zeus' marriage with Metis, and the birth of Athena, in which Ge again provided vital advice (*Th.* 886–900); but the more immediate source appears to be Pind. *I.* 8. 27ff. (cf. 768, 924–5nn.),¹⁵ where Themis saves Zeus and Poseidon from trying to marry Thetis, by telling them of the prophecy that Thetis will bear a son mightier than his father (so the gods marry her off to Peleus).¹⁶ In combining this motif with the story of P., the author of *Prom.* has added a

13. No father of P. is mentioned (18–20n.). Uranus is father of the other Titans (164–5, 205, cf. *P. Lyomenos* fr. VIII.2), as in Hesiod; but, just as P. is not actually called 'Titan' in this play (as he is at Soph. *OC* 56, Eur. *Ion* 455, *Pho.* 1122), so too he is distinguished from the others by the emphasis on his relationship to Ge-Themis – even the unusual identification of the two figures as one contributes to this (204–6, 209–10nn.). In Hesiod, Themis is herself one of the twelve Titans (*Th.* 135). See further Pohlenz, *Erl.* 30ff.

14. P. is also given an unHesiodic wife, Hesione, though she appears to be of no importance to the drama (558–60n.). On the possibility that Mecone and/or Pandora were treated in *P. Pyrrhoros*, see App. pp. 282–5, esp. dub. fr. iv.

15. It is possible that both Pindar and *Prom.* are drawing from a common source (e.g. a lost epic; see A. von Mess, *Rh.M.* 56 (1901) 167–74); but cf. Griffith, *Dionysiaca* 18–20.

16. Thetis often shows up in early Greek literature with extraordinary powers (e.g. Hom. *Il.* 1.396–406, 6.135–7, 18.394–405; see further L. Slatkin, *Thetis, Achilles, and the Iliad* (diss. Harvard 1979).

new dimension to the struggle between P. and Zeus: indeed, P.'s foreknowledge becomes the key to the resolution of the whole drama.

Throughout the play, the Hesiodic account of Zeus' rise to power and his conflict with P. should be in the back of our minds, as it undoubtedly was for the Athenian audience.¹⁷ We are constantly kept aware of the contrast between Hesiod's petty trickster and thief, who brought miseries on mankind by competing with Zeus, and this Titan, who has helped to bring Zeus to power, has rescued mankind from a destruction planned by Zeus (231–6),¹⁸ and now knows the secret which can save or destroy Zeus himself.

But apart from these modifications of the familiar elements of the P. myth, the dramatist has also given a most unexpected twist to the story by introducing Io, who belongs to an entirely separate tradition (561–886n.). Nothing in earlier Greek literature or art has prepared us for her presence in this play; but in the course of a long scene (occupying almost one-third of the play), the playwright manages to develop subtle and effective connections between the figures of Io and P., and skilfully to exploit the possibilities and uncertainties of their futures.¹⁹

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For a drama set at the end of the earth (2n.), near the beginning of time, and representing such a stupendous conflict of the gods, the playwright's choice of characters was somewhat restricted. The two main characters in his plot are P. and Zeus: but Zeus can hardly be brought

17. Further Hesiodic elements (some with altered significance) include: the role of Kratos and Bia (1–87n.); the concealment of fire in the fennel stalk (109–10n.); P.'s responsibility for the presence, or absence, of Hope among men (250n.); Zeus' treatment of the defeated Titans (219–21n., cf. fr. v n.); the fates of Atlas (347–50n.) and Typhos (351–72n.). Of course, we should bear in mind that Hesiod himself doubtless shaped *his* versions of the P. myth for his own purposes (above all, to glorify Zeus): there may well have been a more sympathetic role for P. in the pre-Hesiodic tradition, and this tradition may have survived in various local forms even after Hesiod's poems had become the 'authorized versions'. But evidence is almost totally lacking.

18. The motive and means of this destruction are left unspecified: they may perhaps have been derived from the Hesiodic *Catalogue* (fr. 204 M–W, cf. 232–3n.).

19. See further p. 12 and 561–886n.

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on stage himself.²⁰ Instead, his agents, Kratos and Bia, appear at the beginning of the play, and Hermes towards the end, their ugly manners and ruthless treatment of P. well designed to reflect the character of their young master (1–87, 941–1093nn.). For the Zeus of this play turns out to be a very different figure from the just and impressive ruler of Hesiod's universe. He is described as a harsh and selfish despot (35, 322–4, 941–2nn.), who rules by force rather than law (150–1, 404–5nn.), angrily crushes all opposition without mercy (29, 79–80, 82, 163–5, 184–5, etc.; cf. too 663–72), suppresses freedom of speech (49–50, 178–80nn.), mistrusts and mistreats his supporters (224–5, 304–6, 439–40nn.), threatens the annihilation of the human race (232–3n.), and wrecks the life of the innocent Io through his lust (737–40; cf. 561–886n.). In sum, he displays all the traditional characteristics of the 'bad tyrant' (10, 736–7nn.).²¹ Of course, many of the details of this picture of Zeus are provided by his enemy, P., or by his uncomprehending victim, Io: but the more neutral characters, Hephaestus, the Chorus, Ocean, say nothing to change our opinion (cf. 34–5, 150–1, 322–4, 402–5, 552, 759, and 669–82n.); nor do Kratos or Hermes, Zeus' whole-hearted supporters (cf. 49–50, 77; 952, 968–9, 1074–9). Yet the reasons behind Zeus' harsh and arbitrary behaviour are clearly presented, and provide clues that a change for the better is not out of the question. Once again, comparison with Hesiod's account is enlightening. The *Theogony* presented Zeus' rise to power as the culmination of an inevitable progression from chaos to order, from the elemental wildness of Uranus, through the savagery of Kronos and the Titans, to the settled rule of the Olympians.²² *Prom.* shows us a regime that has only just fought its way to

20. It is possible that Zeus appeared in Aesch. *Psychostasia*, or in Soph. *Inachus*; but see *contra* the arguments of Taplin 431–3. It is not uncommon for an absent figure more or less to dominate a tragedy: thus e.g. Agamemnon in Aesch. *Ag.* is present for less than one-eighth, Xerxes in *Pers.* less than one-fifth, of the play; Heracles only appears after more than half of Soph. *Tr.* has passed.

21. See especially Hdt. 3.80.5; further Thomson, (ed.) 6–10 and *C.R.* 43 (1929) 3–5, Grossmann 19–24, Podlecki (1) 103ff.; also Herington (transl.) 11–12. Attempts to push the parallels further, and see Zeus as allegorically representing Hieron of Syracuse (E. G. Harman; cf. G. Méautis, *L'authenticité du Prom.* (Neuchâtel 1960) 46–7), or Xerxes (G. Baglio), or even Pericles (J. A. Davison, *T.A.P.A.* 80 (1949) 66–93, and further *Ancient Society and Inst.* (*Studies* ... Ehrenberg, ed. E. Badian) 93–107) are unconvincing.

22. Solmsen 3–75.

power, and still sees itself threatened by forces which may topple it in turn (165–6, 357, 520, 755–6nn., cf. 764, 907ff., 956–7).²³ We are constantly reminded that Zeus is young, and his government newly established (35, 309–10nn.); and, although there is no sign of his relenting in this play – indeed his treatment of P. grows even harsher (1014ff.) – we are told that he will somehow be reconciled with P. in the end (192, 771nn.).²⁴ So too, his present oppression of Io will be offset, at least in part, by the peace and honour which she will attain through union with him in the future (848–51, cf. 648–9, 654, 833–5nn.).

Against this unseen, but all-seeing and ever-threatening Zeus, the dramatist has pitted a hero of unusual stature.²⁵ Hesiod's P. was a crafty, grinning rogue (*Th.* 511, 546–7, *WD* 55; cf. *Prom.* 18n.), 'foresighted' enough to warn Epimetheus never to accept any gift from Zeus (*WD* 86–8), but no real threat to Zeus, whose intelligence (cf. esp. *Th.* 550–1, 613, *WD* 83) and power are immeasurably superior. In *Prom.*, P.'s knowledge and cleverness appear to rival or excel Zeus'. Without P., Zeus would not have known how to defeat the Titans (199–221), and without his advice in the future, he will fall from his throne.²⁶ P.'s prophetic powers are constantly emphasized (cf. 101–5, 209–21, 522–5, 589–95, 755–75, 873–4, 913–15), and Zeus is well aware of his need of them (947ff.). P. may be criticized for his 'mistakes' (8–9, 999–

23. J. A. K. Thomson, *H. S. C. P.* 31 (1920) 1–37 points out that many of the attributes necessary for a successor to Zeus are contained in such figures as Dionysus (especially among the Orphics) and Heracles.

24. It is almost certain that, if *P. Desmotes* was part of a trilogy, Zeus appeared in a different light in one or both of the other plays. The fragments of *P. Lyomenos* offer evidence that his anger at the Titans abated, and his rule became more gentle (frs. v, xvi nn.). Whether his character matured with the ages, or (more likely, from what we know of Greek attitudes) his assessment of the political climate had by then changed enough to admit compromise and liberality, we cannot judge. (See below, p. 33 n.105).

25. The scholiast to *Prom.* 74 believed this literally; some modern scholars too have assumed that P. was indeed represented on stage by a huge puppet, behind which one of the two speaking actors took his position between 81 and 88 (so e.g. Hermann, C. Robert, *Hermes* 31 (1896) 561ff., Unterberger 32); but see Taplin 243–5, and below, p. 31 n.95.

26. It is true that P.'s prophetic knowledge is shared by his mother, Ge–Themis, who theoretically could intervene of her own accord to save Zeus; but there is no hint of this in *Prom.* (For her possible appearance in *P. Lyomenos*, see App. fr. 111a n.).

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1000nn.), for his lack of foresight in bringing disaster on himself (62, 85–6, 1033–5nn.), and for his inability to ‘cure’ his own troubles (239–41, 335, 469–71, 472–5, 978nn.): but he himself insists that he knew just what he was doing, if not the precise details of his punishment (265–70, cf. 101–5). So too, there is no disputing the fact that his skills have saved mankind from extinction, given them Hope (250n.), and put them on the road to civilization (436–525, 456–8, 496–9, 500–3nn.): as ‘discoverer’ and ‘teacher’ (110–11, 254, 450–506, 456–8, 477nn.), he has turned his Hesiodic cleverness to practical and constructive ends – including even instruction in *μαντική* and sacrifice (484–90nn.). The archaic fire-demon and Attic potter-god has been transformed into a culture-hero on the grandest scale, an enemy to give Zeus pause.

By rescuing the human race and giving them fire, P. has offended against the Olympian order. In the eyes of his fellow gods, he is a shameless ‘mortal-lover’,²⁷ whose assistance of mankind has detracted from their own prestige (7–8, 30, 82–3, 945–6). Yet, to a human audience, this ‘wrong’ (8–9n.) is morally defensible, even praiseworthy, as the action of a compassionate and generous spirit (cf. 10–11, 446, 543–4nn., and 406–24, 547–51, 613–14). His crime against established authority may be compared to that of Sophocles’ Antigone. Like Antigone too – and other Sophoclean heroes – P. aggravates his opponents’ rage through his self-assertiveness and obvious contempt for them. P. is frequently censured by friends and foes alike for his ‘high thoughts’ (18n.), his ‘free tongue’ (178–80, 318–19nn.), his ‘rough’ and ‘sharp’ temper (29, 35, 64–5, 79–80, 311–12, 937, 944–6nn.), and his obstinate refusal to compromise or moderate his behaviour (176, 309–10, 320, 1040–53nn.): in a word, for his *αἰθαδία* (64–5n.). Still he revels in his stubborn and dangerous defiance (971, cf. 436–7). Like Sophocles’ Ajax or Philoctetes, he has kept his pride intact amidst pain and humiliation, and finds solace in the anticipation of his enemies’ downfall. And like them, he arouses in his friends, as in the audience, mixed emotions of revulsion and sympathy, horror and admiration (e.g. 162, 178–80, 251, 260, and 307–29, 472–5, 932–6nn., and esp. the Chorus’ last words, 1063–70).

27. *φιλάνθρωπος* in the mouth of the gods has perhaps some of the same derogatory force that ‘nigger-lover’ has for some white racists; but obviously the term is loaded too with inescapably positive connotations (30, 611nn.). See further S. Tromp de Ruiter, *Mnem.* 59 (1932) 271–306.

As the play progresses, P.'s mood grows more belligerent. Early on, his reproaches and veiled prophecies are interspersed with lamentation for his own miseries, and the prophecies mostly refer to his eventual release and reconciliation with Zeus (i.e. to what will, in fact, happen in *P. Lyomenos*), with only occasional mention of the possibility of Zeus' downfall. Later, the predictions become more strident and bold: they are outright threats, exaggerated to the point of self-contradiction (103–5, 755–6, 959nn.). The play begins with Zeus and P. already violently opposed: by the end, this opposition – and violence – has swelled to a climax of threats and counter-threats, as Zeus moves heaven, earth, and sea (1043–52, 1080–8) in his efforts to break P.'s spirit.

For the personalities of Zeus and P. have much in common.²⁸ Both are 'harsh', 'bold', 'unbending', full of rage and pride; the same epithets are applied to both (35, 42, 64–5, 79–80, 404–5, 907–8nn.). The one relies mainly on his physical power (*Κράτος και Βία*, cf. 1–87, 10, 150–1, 736–7nn.), the other on his cunning and foresight (514n.).²⁹ Cosmic order requires that the two be combined. But now they are in conflict, and both parties have some claim to being in the right (30, 978, 999–1000, 1041–2, 1093nn.). Zeus, as legitimate ruler, is defending his constitution against a traitor (10–11, 231–6, 975–6) who has shared divine privileges with men. Yet P., his former ally, has done no more than champion the weak against a seemingly arbitrary attempt to annihilate them: if mankind has any claim to fair treatment from the gods, his theft of fire was justified by the circumstances.

Of the remaining characters of the play, Hephaestus, the smith, was an obvious choice for the shackling of P. Less obvious, but dramatically most effective, was his portrayal as a sympathetic and sensitive foil to the heartless *Kratos* (cf. 1–87, 7–8, 12–35, 36–87nn.). The other visitors to P.'s remote prison comprise a strange assortment, and in each case their arrival comes as a surprise to P. and to the audience (298–9, 561–5nn.).

The Chorus of water-nymphs are not much involved with the main action of the play;³⁰ But this lack of involvement is put to good effect,

28. Podlecki (2) 287–92.

29. Detienne and Vernant (1978) 58–61, G. Nagy, *The best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore 1979) 45–9; but cf. too Conacher 8–10, with refinements and reservations.

30. See too below, pp. 22–3, 29.