The scholiast on Hesiod, *Theogony* 139 and 144 quotes Hellanicus as dividing the Cyclopes of myth into three categories (the wall-builders, Polyphemus and his fellows, and the Cyclopes associated with the gods who were the makers of Zeus' thunderbolt), and I propose to accept this division for the purposes of these papers. In the present article I shall examine any links between these three groups, discuss some of the most important theories which have been advanced about the origin and meaning of the Cyclops myth, and deal with the Greek literary references to the wall-builders and the thunderbolt-makers. In a later article I shall deal with the Greek literary references to Polyphemus and his fellows.

It is difficult to determine to what extent the three groups are connected. The scholiast says that they are descendants of the Cyclops, son of Uranus, but I have found little evidence to support this and it seems to be an assumption based on the fact that in late Greek literature the division between the groups tended to become blurred.

A clear link lies in appearance. The association of the thunderbolt-makers with the other giants in Hesiod, *Theogony* 139–46, the description of Polyphemus in Homer, *Odyssey* 9.240–3 and the size of the walls of Mycenae and Tiryns leave no room to doubt that all three groups were giants. Similarly both Hesiod and Homer make it clear the divisions of Cyclopes mentioned by them had only one eye (*Theog.* 142–3, *Od.* 9.382–3); and since, as Hesiod points out (*Theog.* 143–6), it was the single round eye in the brow of the Cyclopes which gave them their name, we can assume that the wall-builders had the same physical peculiarity.

G.S. Kirk's suggestion that the wall-builders were merely adopted by local folklore as typical giants who could have built the massive Mycenean walls makes sense (*Myth its Meaning and Functions*, Cambridge 1970, 163), especially since examination of the references to this group will show later that there is a little story surrounding their task, and they are simply named as its performers.

There does seem to be a tenuous link between the thunderbolt-makers and Polyphemus and his fellows. Despite Polyphemus' lack of respect for Zeus (*Od.* 9.275–6), the golden age conditions in which he and his fellow Cyclopes lived (*Od.* 9.181–8) suggest that they were favoured by Zeus. This might connect them with the sons of Uranus and Gaia (Kirk, *op.cit.* 163), who had earned Zeus' gratitude by providing him with the thunderbolt. The parentage of the two groups is, however, different, because while the thunderbolt-makers were sons of
Uranus and Gaia, Homer gives Poseidon and the nymph Thoosa as father and mother of Polyphemus, though he makes no mention of the parents of his fellow islanders (Od. 1.68–71). Perhaps the Cyclopes encountered by Odysseus were considered to be descendants of the thunderbolt-makers, but there is no evidence to support such a theory.

It is impossible to say with certainty at what stage the folk-tale giants whom we meet in the Odyssey became linked to the mythical helpers of Zeus first mentioned in the Theogony, but in later authors these two groups of Cyclopes have merged and Nonnus speaks of Polyphemus in association with the helpers of Zeus (Diony. 14.52–66).

A number of theories have been advanced as to the origin and meaning of the Cyclops myth. Most explanations are concerned with the Homeric Cyclopes rather than the somewhat shadowy figures of Hesiod, about whom we hear far less in literature.

Robert Graves, (The Greek Myths I, Penguin 1955, 31–2), however, suggests that the Cyclopean smiths originated from a guild of early Helladic bronzesmiths who probably had concentric rings tattooed on their foreheads. These smiths were one-eyed in the sense that smiths often shade one eye. Mythographers forgot their true identity and associated them with volcanoes. Early Helladic culture also spread to Sicily, which might explain the location of the later Cyclopes on that island. This theory is based on the merest speculation and Graves is apparently not able to support it with evidence. He also describes the Cyclopes as former of Thrace and afterwards of Crete and Lycia and says that it was their sons whom Odysseus encountered (op.cit. 31–2). The sources he quotes for the paragraph containing this latter statement make no reference to any such facts, but there is partial support for his theory in Strabo 8.6.11, which states that the Cyclopes came from Lycia.

Paley in the index of his commentary on the Theogony describes the Cyclopes as Pelasgic settlers. The Oxford Classical Dictionary describes the Pelasgians as a North Aegean people uprooted by Bronze age migrations whose name came to be used for aboriginal Aegean peoples. Therefore Paley’s description is too vague to be of any real help. Possibly the source of this speculation is Liddell and Scott’s Lexicon, which describes the Cyclopes as originating from Thrace and offers Strabo 8.6.11 as evidence, but Strabo refers to Lycia not Thrace.

The blinding of a giant shepherd who is holding a hero in his cave and the escape of the hero with the help of the giant’s sheep has been shown to be a folk-tale widespread in Europe and beyond in a number of versions (Page, D. The Homeric Odyssey, Oxford 1955, 3). Homer’s story seems to be the earliest known one, but, as Page has shown, inconsistencies in the story suggest that it is a combination of versions (op.cit. 3–17). In addition a number of versions have survived independently of the Homeric tradition.

Scholars have repeatedly sought explanations for the origin, popularity and endurance of this tale. These have been summarised by J. Glenn (Gr & R. 25 (1978) 141–9) on whose summary the following is largely based.
Glenn says that there were numerous pseudo-philosophical and allegorical interpretations advanced up to the middle of the nineteenth century, which were fanciful and far-fetched. At that point Wilhelm Grimm wrote an essay entitled 'Die Sage von Polyphem' (Abhandlungen der Königl. Akad. der Wiss., Berlin 1857, 1–30). In this he saw the origin and significance of the story as an allegory of nature. Polyphemus' eye represented the sun, and the story the struggle of winter against summer, day against night, the heavens against the earth etc. Numerous other scholars have also seen nature symbolism in the story, and, while the sun is the most popular symbol, there have been others. For instance L. Laistner (Nebelsagen, Stuttgart 1879, 272) suggests the eye of a storm, and V. Berard (Les Pheniciens et l'Odysée, Paris 1903, 150–3) a volcano. A modern scholar, not mentioned by Glenn, who also favours a nature theory is Jan H. Schoo (Hercules' Labours, Chicago 1969, 47). He identifies the Cyclopes with volcanoes, associating the large round openings at the top of these with the Cyclopes' eyes. The association of the Cyclopes with volcanoes is easier to see in the case of the smith Cyclopes than Polyphemus. One of the main problems with such nature theories is that, to me at any rate, scholars more often seem to be twisting the myth to fit their pet symbol rather than basing their ideas on the myth itself.

Other scholars like E.B. Tylor (Primitive Culture, London 1870, 376–85) and stretching as far back as Strabo (1.2.9) have regarded the characters of Homer including Polyphemus as based on historical facts and people, perhaps arising out of sailors' tales of strange peoples. It is true that many nations have sailors who like to tell yarns about their adventures, but this does not explain the universality of the tale or the strange feature, a single eye.

W. Mannhardt (Antike Wald und Feldkulte, Berlin 1877, 103–6) suggested that the Cyclopes were originally Forest and Mountain Spirits of Ancient Greece associated with corresponding nature spirits of North European folklore. However, I find the connection between the Cyclopes, especially the godless Cyclopes of Odyssey 9, and nature spirits hard to see.

A.B. Cook (Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion, Cambridge 1914, 325–9 has suggested that the discovery and use of the 'fire drill' gave rise to the tale of the blinding of Polyphemus. S. Eitrem (R.E. 11.1, 1922, cols. 2344–5) describes the blinding of Polyphemus as a ritual to ward off the 'evil eye'. These two attempts to explain the myth in terms of ritual seem again to be forcing the myth to fit in with a preconceived theory. A similar study is that of G. Germain (Genèse de l'Odyssee, Paris 1954, 55–129), who concludes that the Polyphemus story originated as an ancient initiation into a ram-cult. I do not find such anthropological explanations particularly convincing.

A few scholars like F. Robert (Homère, Paris 1950, 296–301) and R. Dion (Les Anthropophages de l'Odyssee, Paris 1969, 35–50) regard the story as political satire by Homer, but the evidence is flimsy and they are unable to agree on who the object of the satire was.

There have also been a variety of psycho-analytical interpretations of the myth. L. Laistner (Das Rätsel der Sphinx, Berlin 1889, 48–9) believed that all the
monsters and ogres originated in nightmares. A. Wormhoudt (The Muse at Length, Boston 1953, 72 & 84) sees Odysseus' attack on Polyphemus as a sort of sexual assault. G. Roheim (The Gates of the Dream, New York 1952, 361–72) describes it as a disguised version of the Oedipus complex rooted in the hostility between father and son. A. Rascovsky (Revista de Psicoanalisis, 1957, 347) asserts that it is an expression of the antagonism between the 'pre- and post-natal nucleus of the ego'. Such theories appear to me far-fetched and bizarre. H.J. Rose (Handbook of Greek Mythology, New York 1953, 10), while considering that psycho-analytical theories to date are unsatisfactory, sees this as a promising field of study if one accepts that myths are the products of the imagination. Nevertheless psycho-analysis continues to be subjective and controversial and it seems unlikely to me that such explanations will improve.

Glenn himself rejects all the above theories and stresses that a folk-tale arises 'when a story-teller, in his effort to free himself from the tedium, anxiety and frustration of everyday life, gives free rein to his imagination and fantasies' (op.cit. 149). Yet he feels that the study of such fantasies and their source, as an accepted interest of psycho-analysis, might be fruitful. Since one of the motives for such fantasies is wish-fulfilment, he feels that 'Polyphemus and Odysseus are acting out the same archetypal conflict that underlies the early Greek account of the creation and evolution of the cosmos — the rivalry between father and son' (op.cit. 153). Glenn himself admits that his idea requires further investigation and I find his arguments unconvincing. Not to mention the fact that he has earlier rejected Roheim's theory, which is very like his, the parallel he draws between the myth of Uranus, Cronus and Zeus, a far more obvious father-son conflict, and that of Polyphemus and Odysseus does not seem to me to be a valid one.

In view of the unsatisfactory nature of all these theories I sympathise with G.S. Kirk's rejection of all attempts to study the origins of myths, yet even he is not content to see the Polyphemus story in the Odyssey as merely a good story but feels that in it there has been developed a systematic confrontation between nature and culture (op.cit. 162–171). He makes a complicated analysis of the story to back his theory but in the course of this the 'systematic confrontation' becomes watered down and he uses vaguer descriptions like 'a kind of orderly confusion of attitudes' and admits that these ideas may not have been consciously expressed. I feel that while there may be an unconscious expression of a confrontation between nature and culture in the myth, Kirk has exaggerated its importance. This is particularly evident in the long list of details about Polyphemus' fellows who play a very minor role in the story, and the emphasis on trivial details.

Other modern attempts to come to terms with myths have moved from the fantastic towards detailed analysis of structure. W. Burkert has described such structuralism which considers that 'the identity of a traditional tale . . . is to be found in a structure of sense within the tale itself' (Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Religion, California 1979, 5). He names two leading exponents of such theories.
Propp (see Burkert, op.cit 5–6), working with Russian fairy tales, identified a linear set of thirty-one functions. He saw these functions as the constant elements in the tales. The number of functions is limited and their sequence fixed but not all need appear in one tale. Such analysis excludes details and characters, however striking, and concentrates on actions; for this reason it can be used to establish the identity or non-identity of tales. Burkert (op.cit. 32) points out that the Polyphemus myth could be made to correspond roughly with part of Propp’s sequence; but, as Propp was concerned with quest tales and Odysseus’ search for provisions does not assume great importance in the Polyphemus tale, the usefulness of such a process is limited.

Levi-Strauss (see Burkert, op.cit. 11ff) breaks up the sequence of a story and all its elements, turning these into abstract expressions resembling mathematical formulae. He usually arranges these in two columns ‘representing the basic opposition and an intermediary between the two’. In this way he claims to reveal the structure of a tale, but it is difficult to see how such formulae can do much to enhance the understanding of a particular myth. Such theories seem to remove all the imaginative beauty and fascination from myths and, while they may help to identify types of myth, seem more calculated to destroy interest in mythology than to arouse it, by trying to impose scientific analysis on it. Furthermore they appear to have little bearing on an attempt to understand the Cyclopes myth.

Burkert (op.cit. 14–18) himself reduces the structure of traditional tales to programmes of actions placing these in a biological perspective of fulfilling a need or following a natural sequence of human actions, stating that ‘tale structures, as sequences of motifemes, are founded on basic biological or cultural programs of actions’. He defines a myth as a ‘traditional tale with secondary, partial reference to something of collective importance’ (op.cit. 23). Burkert’s examination (op.cit. 31–32) of the Cyclops tale has the advantage of emphasizing the action of the story, the encounter with Polyphemus, the horror and the escape, facets of the story which are more memorable than Kirk’s contrast between culture and nature, which Burkert sees as merely a ‘by-product of crystallisation’ which requires an idyllic background for Polyphemus’ cannibalism. Nevertheless his outline of the sequence of actions seems to me to have little value beyond providing a framework for comparison with other similar tales. He identifies the main action as a struggle for power resulting in the triumph of cleverness over brute force (op.cit. 33). Then pursuing his biological perspective he sees Odysseus’ quest for food followed by the sacrifice and meal at the end of book nine together with Polyphemus’ cannibalism as a theme dealing with a basic process of life. ‘Man eats animals, and consumes them, disturbing the balance of life; to make up for this, myth introduces an agent who preserves the flocks and eats men’. This seems to me to be based on an anachronistic idea. There is no reason why ancient man should have considered the consumption of animals, one of his first and chief sources of food, as upsetting the balance of life, particularly as this is not necessarily the case.

As for his theory (op.cit. 33–4) that the introduction of a superfluous wooden
spear could point to a link with paleolithic man, it falls down because his suggestion that Odysseus might just as well have used a sword is precluded by the fact that it took Odysseus and four of his companions to blind the giant, whereas a sword is a one-man weapon.

All the above theories seem to me to illustrate the complexity and richness of a myth which can be viewed from so many different perspectives, and can make some sense in a number of varied fields. What is most important is that any theory should arise out of the myth itself and not be imposed on it from without; and further that one should not be narrowly exclusive in one's view.

To consider the first group of Cyclopes, who were said to have built the massive walls of Tiryns and Mycenae, they receive nothing more than the odd mention in Greek literature. The folk-lore naming them must have been well-established by the time of Pindar. For he merely calls the gates of Tiryns Cyclopean portals in the following fragment referring to Heracles driving the kine of Geryon to Mycenae at Eurystheus' request: . . . ἐπεὶ Γηρυόνα βόσα, / Κυκλωπίων ἐπὶ προθύρων, Ἐυρροσθέος, ἄναττις τε και ἀπράτως ἔλοσεν. (fr. 169).

Similarly Aeschylus, in a fragment assigned to him by Nauck, speaks of Γιρύδηνα πλανθεμ, Κυκλωπίων ἔδω (fr. 269). This seems to imply the continuing presence of the Cyclopes in Tiryns, but since the fragment is without context, and it is impossible to tell of what period Aeschylus is writing, we cannot draw any conclusions from it.

Bacchylides, also writing in the fifth century, describes the foundations of Tiryns as follows: τεῖχος δέ Κυκλωπίων κάμον / ἔλθοντες ὑπερφίαλοι κλεινά πόλει / κάλλιστον. (Victory Songs 7.10.77–9). This quotation makes explicit what was merely implied in the other two quotations, the building of the walls of Tiryns by the Cyclopes, but it adds little else to the picture of the Cyclopes except for the epithet ὑπερφίαλοι, which seems to be used here in its original sense of 'exceeding in power', rather than its later meaning of 'overbearing' or 'arrogant',3 and the description of their work as κάλλιστον. We have here a completely different picture from the Homeric Cyclopes; these Cyclopes are benevolent and have performed acts of benefit to mankind. Jebb (Sophocles fragments, ed. Pearson, Cambridge 1917, 170) commenting on these lines states that the legend of the Cyclopes as wall-builders is post-Homeric.

Sophocles writes of a κυκλωπίων τροχόν (fr.229). It can reasonably be assumed that, because this fragment comes from a play about Heracles, 'the circuit of Cyclopean walls' referred to is that surrounding Mycenae, home of Eurystheus, who set Heracles his twelve labours.

All the references in Euripides' plays to the wall-builders allude clearly to Mycenae except for two. Of these one refers to Argos (Iph.Aul.534), but it seems most likely that at this point it is Argos the district and not the city of Argos, particularly as the speaker is Agamemnon; in the other (Ores. 965) Electra calls on γά Κυκλωπίω, once again a wider use of the adjective 'Cyclopean'. She too is probably referring to Mycenae or else to Argos as a whole.

It is not only the city walls themselves which Euripides connects with the
Cyclopes (Elec. 1158; Troi. 436–7; Iph.Aul. 534). He also uses 'Cyclopean' almost as a conventional epithet for Mycenae itself (Herc.Fur. 15, 944,998; Iph.Tau. 845; Iph.Aul. 265), which is also described as Κυκλάπων πόλον χερόν (Iph.Aul. 1501). There is an interesting reference to Κυκλάπων ... θυμέλας (Iph.Aul. 152). The normal meaning of θυμέλας is shrines or altars and so we have a possible reference to a cult of the Cyclopes (see further below). Most commentators, however, consider that θυμέλας in this line refers either to masses of wall or the homes of Mycenae and Liddell and Scott advance the former as a possible meaning only. Another possibility is that the Cyclopes built the shrines mentioned.

Apolloodorus in the Bibliotheca makes only a brief reference to the wall-builders when he discusses Proetus (2.2.1.), saying that he occupied Tiryns which the Cyclopes had fortified for him. This link between Proetus and the Cyclopes will be amplified by later quotes. Robert Graves also connects another sentence from Apollodorus' Epitome with the Cyclopes (2.4.4–5), which states that Perseus reigned over Tiryns after fortifying Midea and Mycenae (The Greek Myths, Penguin 1955, 241). Graves seems to feel that the fact that, as we shall see under Pherecydes, Perseus is said to have brought the Cyclopes to Argos and persuaded them to fortify Mycenae and Tiryns, is enough to link Midea to them, and imply that it also was fortified by the Cyclopes. This seems unlikely because of the absence of any other reference to Midea in the sources, but is not impossible.

Pherecydes in a note on Argonautica 4.1090 (fr.26) says that when Perseus left Seriphos for Argos he took the Cyclopes with him and left them there. Here we have yet another place of origin suggested for the Cyclopes, viz. Seriphos, which is an island in the south-west Aegean (cf. pages 2,3).

Also of interest is Pollux 10.139 quoted in Frag.Hist.Graec. after Pherecydes' note, naming one of the Cyclopes in the works of Pherecydes as Aortes. This may refer to those Cyclopes whom Pherecydes makes Perseus' fellow-travellers. This version of the Cyclopes' arrival does not agree with Apollodorus (2.2.1), which states that Tiryns had already been fortified by the Cyclopes when Proetus occupied it. This must have been before the arrival of Perseus in Argos as Apollodorus later says that Megapenthes, son of Proetus, was ruling Tiryns when Perseus arrived (2.4.4). This serves to confirm yet again the vagueness of detail surrounding their arrival and land of origin.

Strabo in his Geography adds another possible work to the list of those built by the Cyclopes. He says that the caverns near Nauplia and the labyrinths built in them were called Cyclopean, and it is possible that they were named after the Cyclopes who fortified Tiryns (8.6.2,11). Since Κυκλάπων is commonly used of the architecture attributed to the Cyclopes, as we have seen, this might mean that the labyrinths were built by them but there is no conclusive proof. Nauplia does however fall in the same area as the Cyclopes' other works. Strabo provides us with the fullest description of the wall-builders (8.6.11). His version of the time of building is yet another variant on those of Pherecydes and Apollodorus: this time
it was Proetus himself who employed the Cyclopes to help him fortify Tiryns. Strabo says that there were seven Cyclopes who were called γαστεροχείρεια because they got their food from their skill and that they had come by invitation from Lycia. This quotation makes the Cyclopes sound like human workers and seems to provide some support for Graves' theory that the Cyclopes were nothing more than this. It should however be remembered that Strabo (1.2.9) was a self-avowed believer in the fact that all mythical figures were based on genuine historical personalities and attempted to explain away such monsters as Scylla as a memory of bandits.

Pausanias' Description of Greece is the last source for the wall-builders. The most important fact which he adds to our information is that at Corinth there was an altar of the Cyclopes on which people sacrificed to them (2.2.1). Since Corinth is a neighbour to Argos it is not strange that the Cyclopes should be well-known there. This is however our only mention of a cult of the Cyclopes. It seems strange that there should be such a cult there and none at Mycenae and Tiryns which had so much more reason to be grateful to the Cyclopes. Perhaps after all we should reconsider Euripides' reference to θυμάλαι Κυκλώπων discussed above.

Pausanias gives us the fullest description of the handiwork of the Cyclopes both at Mycenae and Tiryns. By the time he visited Mycenae in the second century A.D. there were only parts of the walls still standing and the gate on which lions stand (2.16.5). He describes the wall of Tiryns as made of such big stones that a pair of mules could not move one (2.25.8). One more work attributed to the Cyclopes is added to our list by Pausanias, this time at the city of Argos. It is a head of Medusa made of stone situated beside the sanctuary of Cephisus (2.20.7).

What emerges from these references is either a group of skilled builders who immigrated to Argos and completed a number of works there, or else the attribution of works so imposing that they seemed to have been built by giants to the Cyclopes as likely mythical candidates. In either case this group of Cyclopes and the references to them can add little to our understanding of the other two groups, though the details of strength, craftmanship and beneficent services producing things for others fit with the thunderbolt-makers, whom I shall now discuss.

Hesiod's Theogony is the earliest source for the thunderbolt-makers. His first mention of the Cyclopes is in a passage listing the children born to Gaia and Uranus (Theog. 139–146). The appearance of the Cyclopes at this point in the poem interrupts the sequence of the narrative but both M.L. West (Hesiod Theogony, Oxford 1966, 200) and C.J. Rowe (Essential Hesiod, Bristol 1978, 58) argue against the rejection of these lines. West suggests that they were a later interpolation by Hesiod not fully reconciled with the narrative, while Rowe suggests that in rejecting them we would be attempting to impose modern standards of coherence and consistency on Hesiod.

In 139 the Cyclopes are described as οὐπέρβησον ἵτορ ἐξοντας, a description reinforced by the epithet ὀφρυμοθύμος applied to Arges in the next line. This
confidence in their own power and pride is a trait which the thunderbolt-makers
have in common with Polyphemus, as is their strength and single eye. Hesiod
gives the number of the Cyclopes as three and their names as Brontes, Steropes
and Arges, i.e. Thunderer, Brightner and Lightner, names related to the most
famous example of their handiwork, Zeus' thunderbolt. As West (op.cit. 200)
suggests, these names represent the aural, visual and tactile aspects of the same
phenomenon. These are the only names given to the thunderbolt-makers in
Greek literature down the time of Nonnus.

From line 141 on there is disagreement among scholars over the authenticity of
the text. Line 141 explains the Cyclopes' functions as making the thunderbolt and
lightning and giving them to Zeus. Paley (Theogony, London 1883, 190) concurs
with Goettling in considering this verse spurious, but it is retained by West and in
the Oxford text edited by Solmsen. This line is necessary as the only direct
reference in the Theogony to the fact that the Cyclopes made the thunderbolt.

In lines 142–3 the interpretation of the words 'like the gods in all other respects
except for their single eye', is at first sight difficult, since, though there is no
mention of this story in Hesiod, we read in Euripides' Alcestis 1–7 that the
Cyclopes were killed by Apollo and so could not be immortal. However, in-
consistencies between various stories about the same mythological character are
frequent in Greek myth, and so Euripides' version cannot be seen as conclusive
proof that all myths portrayed the Cyclopes as mortal. It seems the most sensible,
as West (op.cit. 207) and Rowe (op.cit. 59) do, to accept that Hesiod classified
them as immortal. This makes Paley's attempt (op.cit. 190) to limit the reference
of ἐναλλαγκίας unnecessary. 6

It may have been this difficulty which prompted Crates to give the line quoted
as fragment 52 in the Oxford text of Hesiod's works: οἱ ὁδὸν ἀδύνατον θεντοι
τράφεν αὐδήμενες. All modern editors reject this line. It is superfluous and
awkward and there is little justification for its insertion.

The validity of line 141 is also in doubt (οἱ Ζηνὶ βροντήν τε δόσαν τεῖξαν τε
κεφαλόν): it is bracketed in the Oxford text but retained by Paley who brackets
instead 144–6 (Κύκλωκες δ' ὄνομι ἔσαν ἐπώνυμον, οὐνεκ' ἄρα σφέων/ κυκλο-
tερής ὀδηγοῦσθ' ἔσις ἐνέκειτο μετὰπρ' ἰσχύς τ' ἂδι βίη καὶ μηχανι ἐσαν ἐπ' ἔργοις.). It is unlikely that both 141 and 144–5 should be retained, as that would
be pointlessly repetitious. So, despite West's comment that such repetition is
found elsewhere in Hesiod (op.cit. 207), I favour the omission of 141 and the
retention of 144–6 which make a good sense unit corresponding well to the short
description of the Titans given in lines 150–3.

If therefore we accept the Oxford text as the most likely version of Hesiod's
original, we are in a position to consider the first appearance of the Thunderbolt
Makers in Greek literature. They are impressive figures, proud, strong and
probably divine, but at least godlike. Even their names are indicative of power,
and their power is not merely brute strength, they also display skill as crafts-
men. Provided the lines are genuine, this explanation of the name Cyclopes as
derived from their single round eye must also carry weight.
The only other clear reference to the Cyclopes in Hesiod is in lines 501–6 of the *Theogony*. Hesiod is relating Zeus’ preparations to overthrow his father (άλλος δὲ πατροκασιγνήτως ὁλον ὑπὸ δεσμών/ Οὐρανίας, οὗς δὴ πατήρ ἀεισφροσύνησιν/ οἷς ἀπεμνήσαυτο χάριν εὐεργεσίαν, / δόκας δὲ βροντήν ἡδ' αἰθωλέντα κεραυνόν/ καὶ στεροῦσίν· τὸ πρὶν δὲ πελώρῃ Γαῖᾳ κεκεύθει/ τοῖς πίπτοντος θυντοῖς καὶ θανάτουσιν ἀνάσσει).

While these lines are unbracketed in the Oxford text and are accepted by West, Paley (op. cit. 226) regards them as spurious and cites Goettling and Flack as concurring with this opinion. His grounds for bracketing them are that a lacuna probably existed here, as there is no mention of Zeus’ attack on Cronus and accession to his throne, and these lines were inserted to ease an abrupt transition from the setting up of the omphalos (498–500) to the marriage of Iapetus and Clymene (507–8). He also points out that Hesiod has not mentioned the imprisonment of the Cyclopes before. While it is possible that a lacuna exists here, the passage about the Cyclopes seems an unlikely insertion as it does little to ease the transition. West’s suggestion (op. cit. 200) that any problems are due to late alterations of the text is incapable of conclusive proof. So probably the best explanation is that of Rowe (op. cit. 75), that these lines were here as a necessary explanation of Zeus’ acquisition of his weapons.

While it is strange that the Cyclopes are not named but referred to as sons of Uranus, and uncles of Zeus, it seems unnecessary to insert a duplicate of line 140 as Solmsen does in the Oxford text, as their gift to Zeus is identification enough (Rowe, op. cit. 75).

In lines 501–6 the Cyclopes are portrayed as benevolent beings who show gratitude for Zeus’ help and it is implied that Cronus’ action of chaining them was unjustified. Their gift is regarded as important in establishing the authority of Zeus.

Paley (op. cit. vi) describes the *Theogony* as ‘a compendium of dogmatic theology’. It is a didactic poem presenting an outline of the beliefs about the origins and genealogies of the gods prevalent at the time of Hesiod. Because of the nature of the poem the characterisation of the Cyclopes is limited.

The next surviving mention of the thunderbolt-makers in Greek literature comes in the opening seven lines of Euripides’ *Alcestis*, where Apollo relates how Zeus had killed his son Asclepius with his thunderbolt and in revenge Apollo killed the Cyclopes. As punishment he has been sent to do blood atonement as servant to a mortal. The Cyclopes are described as τέκτωνας Δίον πυρός (5). In these lines there is no doubt that the Cyclopes are the makers of the thunderbolt but the important point to emerge is the mortality of the Olympian smiths. As later sources will show, however, they accomplished much in their lifetime, and it also appears at times as if the story of their death is either ignored or unknown by some of the later writers.

In Callimachus *Hymn* 3 we find a completely different style of writing about the thunderbolt-makers. In witty and lyrical poetry he describes Artemis as a child cajoling her father Zeus into allowing her to ask the Cyclopes to make her a
bow and arrows (8–10). This is the first mention of the Cyclopes as craftsmen for the gods in general; a role fulfilled in Homer (II.18.368ff) by Hephaestus, assisted only by golden maidservants. Once she has obtained Zeus' consent Artemis, accompanied by her newly-formed band of nymphs, visits the Cyclopes (46–86). Callimachus in these lines provides the fullest description in Greek literature of the thunderbolt-makers at work, and a number of new points are made about them. They are working as assistants of Hephaestus at his forge on Lipara, a small island north of Sicily. When Artemis arrives they are fashioning a horse-trough for Poseidon. Callimachus effectively uses the frightening appearance of the monsters describing them as πρησσομεν᾽ Ὀσσωμεν᾽ ἄουκΟτα (52) and with their single eyes ... σάκεϊ τα τετραδεῖς δεινὸν ὑπογιανσοντα (53–4). He does this first to show the terror they inspire in Artemis' handmaidens and the daughters of the Blessed, and they by contrast to show Artemis' confidence and fearlessness. Not only the Cyclopes' appearance but also their work is on a grandiose and awesome scale. Their hammering, the blasting of the bellows, and even their groans caused reverberations in the surrounding lands even as far distant as Cyprus (modern Corsica) (54–61).

Despite the impressive description of the Cyclopes and their effects, there is also evident in these lines a tendency for these monsters to become figures of fun, as we hear about parents using them to frighten their children and about the antics of Hermes (66–71). It is however the picture of Brontes, the gentle giant, placing the 3-year old Artemis on his knees and having a patch of hair on his breast pulled out so that the middle of his breast remains hairless (75–9) which finally gives the lie to the Cyclopes as terrifying monsters. These lines introduce a delightful personal note, very different from the impersonal catalogue of the Theogony. The Cyclopes have been used by Callimachus as foils for the charmingly precocious Artemis, who undaunted by their appearance and impressive tasks demands and receives what she wants. This whole passage is typical of the innovative approach of Alexandrian poets to mythology.

Apollonius of Rhodes also mentions the Thunderbolt Makers in his epic the Argonautica. In book one there is a reference to the Cyclopes' arming of Zeus with thunder and lightning, and the fact that they were the sons of Earth or Gaia (509–511). This adds nothing new, but in lines 730–734 of the same book in the course of a description of devices on the mantle given to Jason by Athene, Apollonius tells of one portraying the Cyclopes forging a thunderbolt for Zeus, the first description we have of this task. The Cyclopes' task is described as ἄφθοτο, which suggests that the myth of Apollo’s killing of the Cyclopes was a variant not always included in the thunderbolt-maker myth, unless ἔργο means handiwork and refers merely to the thunderbolt which is being made. The description of their work concentrates on the object being made, rather than the makers, who hammer away at the bolt which already seems to have a life of its own, as it spurs forth a breath of raging flame. It seems that this scene was chosen by Apollonius as a vivid and brightly coloured one suitable for a splendid mantle given by the goddess of weaving.
It was inevitable that Apollodorus in his *Bibliotheca* should have mentioned the thunderbolt-makers. The first allusion (1.1.2) is largely a summary of Hesiod *Theogony* 139–46, but it adds the fact that Uranus bound the Cyclopes and cast them into Tartarus, an event not mentioned anywhere by Hesiod. He also states that the Titans released the Cyclopes after the castration and dethroning of Uranus, but once Cronus was sovereign he again bound them in Tartarus. Hesiod had only referred to Cronus’ binding of the Cyclopes in connection with Zeus’ releasing of his uncles (*Theog.* 501–2). Apollodorus narrates the latter event (1.2.1), saying that Earth had prophesied victory for Zeus if he released the Cyclopes. He killed their gaoleress, Campe, and freed them. In Apollodorus the Cyclopes give not only the usual weapons to Zeus, but also a helmet to Pluto and a trident to Poseidon. All these additional details in Apollodorus’ summary show how incomplete our earlier sources of the myth must be. Apollodorus also mentions the killing of the Cyclopes by Apollo in vengeance for the death of Asclepius (3.10.4), to which Euripides had referred (*Alc.* 1–7). Apollodorus gives Zeus’ motive as fear that men might acquire the art of healing from Asclepius and so save one another.

This episode is also mentioned by Diodorus of Sicily (4.71.3). His version adds nothing new directly related to the Cyclopes but makes Hades the complainant against Asclepius. It is interesting to note that this is the only allusion to the Cyclopes which Diodorus considered worth making in his world history.

Lucian refers twice to the thunderbolt-makers. In *Timon* Zeus orders Hermes to fetch the Cyclopes from Aetna to sharpen the thunderbolt and put it in order for use (1.19). This is the first mention I found in Greek literature of the situation of the Cyclopean forge under that volcano. In *On Sacrifices* 4 Lucian also refers to Apollo’s banishment from heaven because of his killing of the Cyclopes.

Pausanias’ *Description of Greece* includes an interesting reference to the location of the fabled battle between the gods and the giants in which the Cyclopes took part (8.29.1–2). He writes that the Arcadians claimed the battle took place at the spring of Olympias and not at Pellene in Thrace, and that at the spring sacrifices were offered to lightning, hurricanes and thunder, the first and last being of course closely associated with the Cyclopes. In the next sentence Pausanias, discussing Homer’s reference to the giants, refers to a passage in the *Odyssey* where Homer makes the king of the Phaeacians say that the Phaeacians are near to the gods like the Cyclopes (*Od.* 7.205ff.). Since the only Cyclopes referred to in the *Odyssey* are Polyphemus and his fellows it is reasonable to suppose that they are the Cyclopes mentioned by the king, but in this passage Pausanias is linking Homer’s quotation to the sentence about the giants of the early Olympian battles. This seems to me symptomatic of a blurring of the distinctions between the two groups which was taking place.

In book fourteen of Quintus Smyrnaeus’ *Fall of Troy* Zeus lends his thunder and lightning to Athene, describing it as all the arms which the Cyclopes made to win his favour (445–6). The motive for the Cyclopes’ gift given here is different from that of gratitude mentioned in Hesiod (*Theog.* 503–5).

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Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* also contains references to the thunderbolt-makers. As W.H.D. Rouse points out on page xviii of his introduction about mythology in the Loeb edition of the *Dionysiaca*, much of the mythology used by Nonnos comes from late and obscure sources or is invented; so it is necessary to be cautious about linking his versions too closely with other Greek precedents. Nevertheless his references are of interest and his work is a good example of the degeneracy of Greek myth by this stage.

The first two books of the *Dionysiaca* tell the tale not found before Apollodorus of an attack on Zeus by Typhoeus. While uttering threats against Zeus, Typhoeus says that he will break the constraining chains, bring back the Titans to the sky and settle the Cyclopes with them in heaven. He also threatens to build more thunderbolts and better lightning (2.339–346). When Zeus in turn is taunting Typhoeus he says: και χθονίους Κύκλαπας, ἐξδίων ναστήρας Ὄλυμποι/ τεῦχον ἄρειστόρου νέον σπανθήρα κεφανοῦ. (2.600–1). It appears possible from these two passages that Nonnos considered the Cyclopes to be held imprisoned underground by Zeus and not just by Uranus and Cronus as in Hesiod (*Theog.*502) and Apollodorus (*Bibl.*1.1.2, 4–5), and that Typhoeus expected them, as his brothers, to help him and not Zeus as they had in the earlier accounts. It may also be suggested, though this is not clear, that Typhoeus hoped to get the Cyclopes' help in furnishing himself with the weapons which gave Zeus his power. Clearly much of this is in conflict with earlier myth.

During the account of Dionysus’ conquest of India there is an interesting passage recounting the participation of the Cyclopes in battle (14. 52–66). There are φάλαγγες of them, which implies a large number, something which is possible if we are dealing with the Homeric Cyclopes, but when we read further we find that what we have is a confusion between the Homeric Cyclopes and the thunderbolt-makers. The first few lines (53–60) seem for the most part to deal with the thunderbolt-makers. There is reference to Σκελοὶ σπανθῆρες (56), which recalls the forge of the Cyclopes located under Etna in Lucian (*Tim.*19), and the forge is specifically mentioned in 57–8. The usual names of the thunderbolt-makers, Brontes, Steropes and Arges, are also given but Nonnus adds four new names: Euryalos, Elatreus, Trachion and Halimedes (59–60). While the first few lines (52–55), where the Cyclopes show their strength, fit the thunderbolt-makers, there is another hint of confusion of categories here, as the use of hills as weapons recalls Polyphemus' use of a hill-top to hurl at Odysseus and his companions (*Od.* 9.481–2). This confusion is confirmed in lines 61–66 where Polyphemus is mentioned as a logical companion for the thunderbolt-makers kept away only by his love for Galateia (cf. *Theocr.* *Id.*11).

In book 27 Deriades, an Indian leader, issuing instructions to his troops before going into battle against the forces of Dionysus, instructs them not to kill the Cyclopes but merely to blind them, so that he can put them to work for him (85–98). Again blinding as a method of attack on a Cyclops is linked to the Homeric Cyclopes and in particular to Polyphemus who is blinded by Odysseus and his companions (*Od.* 9.382–8). Deriades pictures Brontes making him a βαρύ-
δουπον σύλπιγγα to mock Zeus' roar (91–92) and Steropes forging lightning to compete with Zeus' thunderbolt (93–94).

Nonnus states at the beginning of book twenty-eight that in it: ... πολλὴν/Κυκλὼπων πυρόκεισθαι ἑσπερῆς ἑώς. This promise is fulfilled in lines 172–275. In this passage the Cyclopes have become merely another set of mythological combatants in a catalogue, to be described in warlike terms. Some of the weapons they use recall their activities in the forge, being related to thunder and lightning; for example the πυρηνικής κεραυνός wielded by Argilipos (175); or else, as earlier, they hurl pieces of mountains. One new name is added to Nonnus' earlier list (14. 59–60) of Cyclopes' names, Argilipos. These lines are typical of epic battle descriptions and often sound more like an account of the feats of warrior heroes than reference to the thunderbolt-makers. There are, however, some good moments that are in character, as when Brontes swings an iron hammer round his head and strikes enemies with a noise: (οῦ εἴρη μακελότιμον άκριμα νύμφων, 204–5), mingled with the use of ridiculous devices like artificial rain showers (197–9) and cries which could kill twelve men (272–3). Similar to this passage is 39.218–221, where the Cyclopes again participate in battle, this time at sea.

The characteristics of the thunderbolt-makers which emerge from the above examination of the literary sources are that, while there is no clear agreement on their immortality, they are the closest of the three groups to the gods and act as smiths for them, providing Zeus with the weapons which made him ruler of gods and men. Like the wall-builders, but unlike Polyphemus and his fellows, they are benevolent and kind. From the tasks performed by the wall-builders we can infer that they and the thunderbolt-makers were of exceptional size and strength, as were the Homeric Cyclopes. A characteristic of the thunderbolt-makers never directly attributed to the wall-builders is their single eye which links them to Polyphemus and his fellows. We get a fuller description of the thunderbolt-makers, who emerge as personalities and not just unknown figures of the past like the wall-builders. They have individual names and at times even act as individuals (but it is only Polyphemus who assumes a major individual role in mythology). Although the thunderbolt-makers do not play a particularly important role in literature, and there is no work specifically about them, they serve as an interesting example of the development of Greek mythological characters from a canon of divine beings in Hesiod, through Alexandrian innovation in myths, to Nonnus' overdrawn characters, often revealing a lack of knowledge or understanding of the old stories.

NOTES

1. Liddell and Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, gives the meaning of Κύκλωπων as round-eyed and quotes examples of the word used as an adjective to describe the moon.
2. By crystallisation he means 'the interplay of multiple structures' in a tale.
3. The original meaning is more appropriate to the wall-builders who are nowhere else described in an unfavourable light. It is interesting to note that Homer uses this same adjective to describe the Cyclopes (Od. 9.106), though it is hard to determine its connotations in that context as Homer uses the word in both ways cf. Liddell & Scott, p.1619.


5. West, *op. cit.* 200. West points out that ἁγγίς is also a formulaic epithet for καρπάννας.

6. It should be noted though that the scholiast on Hesiod, *Theog.* 142 says that he represented them as destroyed by Apollo in the 'Catalogue of the Daughters of Leucippus'.

7. There is a fragment which may be about the Cyclopes but it is impossible to restore and can add nothing to our knowledge of them (*Fragmenta Hesiodea* 55).

8. Presumably the helmet of invisibility which he lent to Perseus.

9. cf. Vergil, *Georgics* IV. 170ff., where this is also the case.
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