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Tom Galt , John Mackey

The Rise of the Thunderer

United States (1954)

TAGS: Chronos Demeter Epimetheus Hades Hera Hermes Hestia Ouranos / Uranus Poseidon Prometheus Rhea Themis Thetis Zeus





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	The Rise of the Thunderer
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1954
First Edition Details	Tom Galt, *The Rise of the Thunderer.* New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1954, 197 pp.
ISBN	N/A
Genre	Adaptations, Didactic fiction, Myths
Target Audience	Young adults
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yhoo.com

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Creators



Tom Galt (Author)

From the book cover: Tom is an American author from New York, a graduate of Harvard, an author of various stories, such as ‘How the United Nations Works?”, and “The Story of Peace and War”. He appreciates art and theatre.

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com



John Mackey (Illustrator)

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Additional information

Summary

This book focuses on mythological stories related to the creation of the world and man. The stories are adapted for younger readers, although the poetic language suggests a more mature readership. The stories narrate the creation of earth, Gaia and Uranus, the Titans, reign of Cronus, the rise of the Olympians, reign of Zeus and tales around Prometheus. At the end of the book there are scholarly notes regarding the sources for each story and the author's explanations. The stories are accompanied by black and white illustrations.

Analysis

While many books of myths for young adults cover a wide range of stories, the uniqueness of this book is that it centers exclusively on various myths concerning the creation of the Earth and the beginning of mankind. From the end notes, it is obvious that the author researched his sources, and combines stories from Hesiod, Ovid and other ancient writers with stories found in Greek drama. Thus we have a book which is, while adapted, still very true to the source material.

This could also be the reason why the author chose such a poetic tone for his work, rather than a more simple language, namely an idea that the stories are the product of a bygone era and should be narrated in an archaically poetic way. For example, this is a portrayal of Uranus: "Uranus' face was clam. His midnight air drifted about his regal head casually, disdainfully, lifted by a gentle breeze" (p. 3). Another example, is the description of Cronus' age: "in those days men walked like gods without sorrow of heart, free from toil and grief. They had all good things, for the fruitful earth, unforced, bore them food abundantly" (p. 37).The language is also used to create a parallelism between Uranus and Cronus, the kings who eventually do evil. When Uranus asks Gaia to marry him, he says "is this good in your sight" (p. 5) and she approves. The same question is asked by Cronus when he wishes to marry Rhea. This foreshadows the shared fate of these two kings, and how they will be overthrown.

Since the intended readership is young adults, all mentions of sexual relations or castration are omitted. The author prefers to focus on the characters of Uranus, Cronus and Zeus as Kings, rather than on Zeus' lustful escapades. There is a feeling of calm in the narration, which is set in somewhat of a fantastic world, with even wars or maltreatment

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presented in a very calm and serene tone.

As concerns Uranus, Gaia has a premonition that she should not accept his proposal, yet she keeps quiet. Regarding Cronus, he is portrayed as "wily" from the start, and Uranus tells him "my young son…you, more than any other, fill me with respect and fear" (p. 15). Cronus is described as having "shrewdness and guile. And he longed to wield power over others. He hoped to be greatly praised" (p. 16). These are not the qualities of a true king, but of a tyrant. Cronus rules over a golden age, a semi-paradisical existence, where men and women eat fruits from the trees and do not need to toil. The biblical resemblance is echoed with the creation of the first man and woman, "the man and woman broke off sweet fruits from the trees and ate. Then they looked about at the world which was to be their home. And they smiled. And the man said, "This world is beautiful."" (p. 36).

However, soon Cronus becomes fearful for his position and swallows his children. Thus the cycle of fathers harming their children is repeated from Uranus to Cronus.

We also read about Zeus' childhood. The portrayal of this god is interesting; he is described as fearless (he literally does not know what being afraid means) and as benevolent. He punishes Prometheus for stealing fire, but later they reconcile. Hermes is described as the divine messenger, yet he is not described as Zeus' son. His portrayal is mostly negative for some reason. The author also ignored the myth of Pandora and instead narrates a story on Zeus' gifts to mankind.

The notes at the end, as mentioned, discuss the source material for the stories, yet the author also adds his own comments which are perhaps suitable for an older readership that can appreciate them. For example, he explains the notion of "political propaganda" in the ancient myth.

The author shares his dilemma in describing Cronus' time as a golden age, despite the fact that he harmed his own father and children. The author notes that "a good deal of the description of his reign is propaganda, which the Greeks accepted rather naïvely" (p. 176). This is quite a simplistic way to approach the old myths. Then the author explains that there are examples of evil rulers who brought prosperity; the examples he chooses are Mussolini and Hitler. While these examples appear anachronistic at best and irrelevant at worse, we should keep in mind that the book was published in 1954, and the

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	author was clearly deeply influenced from the war. He further comments on Stalin, indicating that he was using this notes' section in order to deliver his own political and moralistic agenda, unrelated to the ancient world. In the end, the author was probably interested in comparing the reigns of three generations, and also in a comparison between Zeus and Prometheus. The author is undeniably knowledgeable and carefully studied his material, yet the result is at times puzzling and might be off-putting to a young modern readership
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Chronos Demeter Epimetheus Hades Hera Hermes Hestia Ouranos / Uranus Poseidon Prometheus Rhea Themis Thetis Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Adversity Conflict Disobedience Emotions Environment Family Good vs evil Identity Justice Love Masculinity Morality Nature Obedience Old age (Old people) Parents (and children) Prediction/prophecy Punishment Reconciliation Respect Siblings Survival Utopia and dystopia

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