

# The Quarrel with Perses and Hesiod's Biographical Tradition

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SCHOLARS OF ANCIENT BIOGRAPHY have amply demonstrated that biographical traditions regarding Greek poets draw information about their genealogies, lives, and careers from their works.<sup>1</sup> The few extant Hesiodic biographies are no exception.<sup>2</sup> These *bioi* have appropriated and further elaborated information that is presented in Hesiodic poetry as autobiographical, such as the poet's encounter with the Muses on Helicon (*Theog.* 22–34), his victory at the poetic competition in Chalkis (*Op.* 650–662), and his father's migration to Ascrea (*Op.* 633–640). Given how meticulously and consistently Hesiodic poetry is used as a source of biographical material, it is

<sup>1</sup>J. Fairweather, "Fiction in the Biographies of Ancient Writers," *AncSoc* 5 (1974) 231–276; M. R. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets*<sup>2</sup> (Baltimore 2012; London 1981); B. Graziosi, *Inventing Homer: The Early Reception of Epic* (Cambridge 2002); G. Nagy, "Hesiod and the Ancient Biographical Traditions," in F. Montanari et al. (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Hesiod* (Leiden 2009) 271–311; M. Kivilo, *Early Greek Poets' Lives. The Shaping of the Tradition* (Leiden 2010).

<sup>2</sup>We have a short and concise summary of the poet's life in the *Suda* (η 583) and a more extensive Hesiodic *bios* in the *Prolegomena* to the *Works and the Days* by Tzetzes. On Gaisford's misattribution of the latter to Proclus see E. Abel, "Zum Γένος Ἡσιόδου des Ioannes Tzetzes," *WS* 11 (1889) 88–93, and A. Colonna, "I Prolegomeni ad Esiodo e la vita esiodica di Giovanni Tzetzes," *BPEC* n.s. 2 (1953) 27–28. In addition, a substantial narrative account of Hesiod's life has been intertwined with a Homeric *bios* in the second century CE biographical compilation known as the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi* (see below). According to the Lamprias catalogue, Plutarch wrote a *bios* of Hesiod (no. 35), but the work does not survive.

particularly striking that extant biographical accounts completely ignore Hesiod's dispute with his brother Perses and the local authorities (*basileis*).<sup>3</sup> The omission becomes even more puzzling when one considers the importance of the quarrel in the *Works and Days*. In this article, I discuss the absence of the fraternal dispute from the biographical tradition as a reflex of the piecemeal proliferation and consumption of the *Op*. In addition, I explore how the agonistic narrative in the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi* may have contributed to the marginalization of Hesiod's quarrel with Perses.

The *Op*. introduces the conflict between the two brothers early on as the occasion for the composition and original performance of the entire didactic poem. Immediately after the proem (1–10), Hesiod instructs Perses about the two types of *eris* integral to human experience: healthy competition, which motivates work, and destructive strife, which brings about not only military conflicts but also litigations that distract people from their labor (11–29). To underscore further how detrimental such a distraction is, the poet draws a contrast between the man who has no sustenance in his house, and thus no time to waste in quarrels (30–32), and a wealthy man (33–34). The contrast involves an element of variation: while the poor man is discussed in the third person, the actions of the latter are laid out in the second person:

τοῦ κε κορεσσάμενος νείκεα καὶ δῆριν ὀφέλλοις  
κτῆμασ' ἐπ' ἀλλοτρίοις.

Once you've had your fill of this [viz. sustenance], you may foster quarrels and conflict over another man's possessions.

Note that the enjambment in 34 redefines the rich man's propensity for strife as criminal and corrupt: he fosters conflict not simply out of idleness but out of the desire to encroach upon other people's property.

<sup>3</sup> By 'Hesiod' I mean the poetic figure that emerges from the self-referential statements of the *persona loquens* in the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*. The question of Hesiod's historicity is irrelevant for my argument.

Having set this sort of behavior in such a negative light, the speaker continues his second-person discourse (34–39):

σοὶ δ' οὐκέτι δεύτερον ἔσται  
 ὧδ' ἔρδειν· ἀλλ' αὖθι διακρινώμεθα νεῖκος  
 ἰθείησι δίκης, αἵ τ' ἐκ Διός εἰσιν ἄρισται.  
 ἤδη μὲν γὰρ κληῖρον ἐδασσάμεθ', ἄλλα τε πολλὰ  
 ἀρπάζων ἐφόρεις μέγα κυδαίνων βασιλῆας  
 δωροφάγους, οἳ τήνδε δίκην ἐθέλουσι δικάσσαι.

But you will no longer have a second chance to act this way. Let's decide our quarrel right away with straight judgments, which are from Zeus, the best ones. For we divided up our allotment already, yet you kept snatching many other (things) and carrying them off, greatly honoring gift-eating kings who are willing to pass this judgment.

The concrete actions recounted in this passage indicate that the generic second person in *Op.* 33–34 has been replaced by a specific addressee (σοὶ δ', 34), namely Perses, who has been identified already in 27 (ὧ Πέρση) as the primary audience for Hesiod's admonition against pursuing the bad *eris*. Perses conforms to the paradigm of the rich man (ὧδ' ἔρδειν, 35) in so far as he is involved in litigation to appropriate Hesiod's share of property;<sup>4</sup> in addition, Hesiod accuses him of having bribed the authorities pronouncing on this case. The passage is admittedly vague on the exact details of Perses' crime and, overall, the *Op.* reveals nothing about the resolution of this dispute.<sup>5</sup> None-

<sup>4</sup> On *Op.* 34–35 see M. L. West, *Hesiod. Works and Days* (Oxford 1978) 149–150, and A. Ercolani, *Esiado. Opere e giorni* (Rome 2010) 135.

<sup>5</sup> The dramatic frame of the poem becomes even more complicated in *Op.* 396–397, where Perses is said to have come to Hesiod as a beggar; on 391–398 in relation to 27–35 see e.g. N. F. Jones, "Perses, Work 'In Season,' and the Purpose of Hesiod's *Works and Days*," *CJ* 79 (1984) 313–314. Scholars who have read the poem as autobiographical have attempted to reconstruct the exact legal context in which the *Op.* should be read and understood; see J. F. Latimer, "Perses versus Hesiod," *TAPA* 61 (1930) 70–79; P. B. R. Forbes, "Hesiod versus Perses," *CR* 64 (1950) 82–87; B. A. van Groningen, "Hésiode et Persès," *Mededel. Konink. Neder. Akad. Wetensch., Afd.*

theless, there is no doubt that the poem presents the quarrel between the poet and his brother as the occasion for its composition and the context in which the poem envisions its own original performance. It is in response to this personal crisis that the poet instructs both Perses and the corrupt authorities about the necessity of justice and honest work, and then proceeds to reveal how one can survive and thrive through agriculture and maritime trade.<sup>6</sup> Thus Hesiod's quarrel with Perses is arguably the most prominent autobiographical element in the entire *Works and Days*.

The omission of the dispute in the extant Hesiodic *bioi* is remarkable not only because of the pivotal role that the incident plays in the *Op.* but also because its function in the poem was acknowledged in ancient scholarship. A scholion to *Op.* 27 attributed to Proclus (= XXVI Marzillo) points out that the quarrel provides the dramatic frame for the *Op.*:

“ὦ Πέρση”: τὸ ποίημα γέγραπται πρὸς τὸν Πέρσην τὸν ἀδελφόν. νουθεσία δὲ καὶ δικαιολογία· νειμάμενος γὰρ τὴν πατρῶαν οὐσίαν κατηνάλωσε, θεραπεύων τοὺς ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ καὶ καταδυναστεύων Ἡσιόδου καὶ πολλὰ παρενοχλῶν, ἐζημίου πρὸς ἄρχοντας καὶ κριτήρια ἔλκων διὰ τὴν τῶν χρημάτων ἐπίθεσιν.

“O Perses”: the poem is written to Perses, his brother. (It is) admonition and pleading. For, after he (i.e. Perses) gained (his share of) the paternal fortune, he spent it all, currying favor with

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*Letterkunde* 20.6 (1957) 153–166; M. Gagarin, “Hesiod’s Dispute with Perses,” *TAPA* 104 (1974) 103–111; L. Lenz, “Hesiods Prozesse,” in J. Cobet et al. (eds.), *Dialogos: für Harald Patzer zum 65. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden 1975) 23–33; J.-U. Schmidt, *Adressat und Paraineseform: Zur Intention von Hesiods ‘Werken und Tagen’* (*Hypomnemata* 86 [Göttingen 1986]) 21–28.

<sup>6</sup> The unitarian reading of the *Op.* has yielded valuable insights regarding the contribution of the fraternal quarrel to the poem’s structure and meaning. See J. Strauss Clay, “The Education of Perses: From ‘Mega Nepios’ to ‘Dion Genos’ and Back,” *MD* 31 (1993) 23–33; *Hesiod’s Cosmos* (Cambridge 2003), esp. 31–48; “*Works and Days*: Tracing the Path to *Arete*,” in *Brill’s Companion to Hesiod* 71–90. See also L. G. Canevaro, *Hesiod’s Works and Days: How to Teach Self-Sufficiency* (Oxford 2015), esp. 22–29. Cf. West, *Hesiod. Works and Days* 33–40, and Ercolani, *Esiodo* 49–51.

those in power and oppressing Hesiod and harassing him a lot, he sought to harm him by dragging (him) before rulers and courts in order to get hold of his money.

The scholion defines the *Op.* as a direct response to the dispute. Furthermore, it attempts to clarify Perses' offence by reworking *Op.* 37–39 into a slightly more concrete scenario. While the reconstruction of events keeps close to the Hesiodic text in Proclus' comment, schol. *Op.* 27c attests to a more creative attempt to supply the details missing in 37–39:

“ὦ Πέρση”: <λέγουσι> τοῦτον <τὸν> ἀδελφὸν Ἡσιόδου τὰ ἑαυτοῦ δαπανήσαντα καλὰ διὰ τὴν τῆς γυναικὸς μοχθηρίαν καὶ τοῖς ἄρχουσι προσιόντα κακοπραμονεῖν τὸν ἀδελφὸν διὰ τὴν τῶν χρημάτων ἐπιθυμίαν. [λέγουσι *suppl.* *Pertusi*]

“O Perses”: <They say> that, having squandered his own goods on account of his wife's depravity and approaching the rulers, this brother of Hesiod was doing ill to his brother because of his desire for money.

The *Op.* does not associate Perses with a wife in connection with the dispute or anywhere else. The poem indicates the right age for a bride and a groom, and underlines the benefits of a good wife and the harm of a bad one (695–705). A biographical reading based on these lines, however, would entail an unmarried Perses who has yet to pick a consort. In other words, Perses' evil wife does not belong to the poem's cast of characters but is a figure invented exclusively in the context of interpretation. Given her vilification in schol. *Op.* 27c, it is possible that ancient readers of the *Op.* constructed this character in accordance with the negative representation of womankind in the Hesiodic corpus.<sup>7</sup> However that may be, the fabrication

<sup>7</sup> Both the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days* describe the emergence of womankind as a negative development in the history of humankind (*Theog.* 570–612, *Op.* 53–105). The latter identifies Pandora as the source of all evils, while the former defines women collectively as voracious consumers of their husbands' wealth, even if as an afterthought it allows for the possibility of a good wife (*Theog.* 607–610). There is no indication in the scholia that the primordial woman/wife in the *Theogony* and the *Op.* was ever interpreted

of Perses' wife is part of a broader attempt to create a full and detailed narrative of the events that are only vaguely alluded to in the beginning of the *Op.*

Unlike ancient commentaries, which pay some attention to the quarrel between Hesiod and Perses when discussing specific lines of the *Op.*, extant biographical narratives about Hesiod remain silent about it. Both the *Certamen* and the *Suda's* brief entry on Hesiod (η 583) omit it completely. At first glance, Tzetzes' *Prolegomena* to the *Works and Days* appears to offer an exception, as it includes an account of the events that prompted the composition of the didactic poem (p.22.1–9 Gaisford):

μετὰ γὰρ τὴν τελευτὴν τῶν γονέων, τὴν αὐτῶν περιουσίαν Ἡσίοδος καὶ Πέρσης διείλοντο. καὶ Ἡσίοδος μὲν σωφρόνως ἔζη καὶ φιλοσόφως, Πέρσης δ' ἀσώτως· καὶ ἄργον βίον διαβιούσας τὴν τε ἰδίαν οὐσίαν ἀνήλωσε, καὶ τῶν Ἡσιόδου τινὰ ὑφαιρούμενος καὶ τοὺς δικαστὰς δεξιούμενος ταῖς δίκαις κατέτριβε τὸν Ἡσίοδον. ὄθεν οὗτος τοῦ ἀργοῦ βίου καὶ τῆς ἀσώτου διαγωγῆς αὐτὸν ἀποτρέπων, διὰ τοῦ παρόντος βιβλίου πρὸς ἐργασίαν προτρέπεται.

For after the death of their parents, Hesiod and Perses divided their fortune. And Hesiod conducted his life in a prudent and philosophical manner, but Perses (lived) extravagantly. And, by leading a lazy life, he consumed his own property, and having snatched some of Hesiod's wealth and having secured the judges, he was pestering Hesiod with litigations. Thus with this present book he urges (Perses) towards work, admonishing him against living lazily and behaving in a profligate manner.

The passage not only recounts a specific biographical episode but also makes an explicit attempt to situate these events—however vaguely—within the poet's lifetime (μετὰ γὰρ τὴν τελευτὴν τῶν γονέων). A closer examination of the passage's immediate context, however, confirms that the pattern of exclusion of the fraternal quarrel from the narrative accounts of

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as a covert reference to Perses' wife, but those passages may have contributed significantly to the *ethos* of this invented character.

Hesiod's life is present also in Tzetzes' *Prolegomena*. The *Prolegomena* encompasses a substantial *bios* of Hesiod that begins with the identity and migration of the poet's parents (14.4–12 = 78–82 Colonna) and ends with his death and the fate of his bones (18.13–19.16 = 163–185). The account dwells on Hesiod's alleged meeting with the Muses, offering two alternative rationalizing explanations (14.14–16.10 = 83–119), and discusses the debate surrounding the dating of the poet (16.10–18.10 = 119–161). Although it mentions Perses as Hesiod's brother,<sup>8</sup> however, this biography includes no information about squandering the inheritance, about his unfair treatment of Hesiod, or about the composition of the didactic poem in response to these actions. The reconstruction of the fraternal dispute quoted above is not part of the narrative *bios* embedded in the *Prolegomena*; rather, it belongs to a different section of the *Prolegomena* that follows the conclusion of the *bios* and is clearly marked as an introduction to the *Works and Days* in particular (see 19.17–18). In other words, the story of the quarrel is associated exclusively with the interpretation of the didactic poem and remains external to the comprehensive narrative of Hesiod's *bios*. Tzetzes' *Prolegomena*, therefore, conforms to the general pattern observed earlier through the juxtaposition of scholia and biographies: here too the quarrel is taken into consideration in the context of the poem's interpretation, but it is not integrated into the biographical narrative of the poet's life.

In what follows, I suggest that we may understand better the omission of the quarrel in Hesiod's *bioi* if we view it in connection with ancient interpretations that cast doubt upon the historicity of Hesiod's conflict with his brother. Such attitudes towards the dramatic setting of the *Op.* were probably encouraged by the piecemeal consumption and proliferation of the gnomic text not only in oral contexts but also through anthologies. In addition, I propose that the marginalization of the

<sup>8</sup> οὗτος οὖν ὁ Ἡσίοδος σὺν ἀδελφῷ Πέρσῃ παῖς ἐγγέγονει Δίου καὶ Πυκμήδης (14.4 = 78).

dispute between Hesiod and Perses was also facilitated by the popularity of the story recounting the contest between Homer and Hesiod.

As discussed above, some ancient readers of the *Op.* developed the hints given in the poem about Perses' misbehavior into narratives of mismanaged inheritance, unfair encroachment, harassment, and bribery. Yet not everyone took the quarrel between Hesiod and Perses at face value. Schol. *Op.* 27a, for instance, allows for the possibility that the poet's engagement with Perses is fictional rather than historical:

“ὦ Πέρση”: τὰ κατὰ τὸν Πέρσην, ἥτοι ἱστορικῶς ἐκκληπτέον ἢ πλασματικῶς καὶ ὑποθετικῶς διὰ τὸ εὐπρόσωπον τοῦ λόγου.<sup>9</sup>

“O Perses”: the (words) concerning Perses have to be interpreted either as historical or as fictitious and appropriate to the plot so that the discourse may have a well-wrought character.

A similar approach is found in an ancient comment on the composition of the *Op.* (*Prol.* B Pertusi):

μετὰ τὴν ἡρωϊκὴν γενεαλογίαν καὶ τοὺς καταλόγους ἐπεζήτησε καινουργῆσαι πάλιν ἑτέραν ὑπόθεσιν· καὶ δὴ καταχρησθέντων τῶν εἰς πολέμους καὶ μάχας, καὶ τῆς γεωργίας διδασκαλίαν εἰσφέρει καὶ τῶν ἡμερῶν τὴν κρᾶσιν, πρόσωπον ἀναπλάσας καὶ παραλαβὼν <τὸ> τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ Πέρσου, εἴτε κατ' ἀλήθειαν, εἴτε κατὰ τὸ εὐπρόσωπον καὶ ἀρμόζον τῇ ὑποθέσει, ὡς ἂν μὴ δυσπρόσωπον εἶη καὶ ἵνα δόξῃ ἐξ ἔριδος τῆς κατὰ τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἐπὶ τοῦτο ἐληλυθέναι.

After the heroic genealogy and the catalogues (Hesiod) sought to innovate again with another plot. And, since (stories) regarding wars and battles had been used excessively, he introduced instruction about agriculture and about the blend of days, having taken and molded the character of his brother Perses, whether in accordance with the truth or in accordance with what was a well-wrought character and one suitable to the plot, so that (the

<sup>9</sup> On the term *πλάσμα* in ancient scholarship see T. Papadopoulou, “Literary Theory and Terminology in the Greek Tragic Scholia: The Case of *πλάσμα*,” *BICS* 43 (1999) 203–210, who discusses schol. Hes. *Op.* 27a at 206.



poem) might not have a poor character and in order that he (viz. Hesiod) may appear to have come to this (poem) as a result of a dispute concerning his brother.

Both passages call into question the degree to which the *Op.* offers an accurate representation of Perses' character and actions.<sup>10</sup> Offering an alternative to an historical or autobiographical reading, therefore, these passages suggest that 'Perses' should be understood as a fictional *persona*, an antagonist created to advance the poet's didactic message.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the quarrel is taken to be simply a pretext, a crude plot that enhances the poet's instruction and facilitates its communication. From the standpoint of such an interpretation, the quarrel does not belong in a Hesiodic biography.

This interpretation was doubtless facilitated by the piecemeal proliferation of the Hesiodic text. While the *Op.* may have been performed in its entirety on certain occasions (e.g. public festivals, symposiastic gatherings), individual Hesiodic gnomic statements had a life of their own as they were recited outside of their proper context.<sup>12</sup> Recent scholarship has demonstrated that such a de-contextualized consumption of Hesiodic didactic

<sup>10</sup> In fact, one could even argue that schol. *Op.* 27a challenges the historicity of Hesiod's brother altogether, depending on whether τὰ κατὰ τὸν Πέρσην is understood as encompassing the existence of Perses and not simply the way he is constructed as a character in the poem.

<sup>11</sup> On modern scholarship along the same line of interpretation see the survey in West, *Hesiod. Works and Days* 33–34; cf. M. Griffith, "Personality in Hesiod," *CLAnt* 2 (1983) 57–58, and Ercolani, *Esiodo* 50–51 with 63–64.

<sup>12</sup> On the symposium as a performative context for the *Op.* see A. Aloni, "Esiodo a simposio. La performance delle *Opere e Giorni*," in E. Cingano (ed.), *Tra panellenismo e tradizioni locali: generi poetici e storiografia* (Alessandria 2010) 115–150; R. Hunter, *Hesiodic Voices: Studies in the Ancient Reception of Hesiod's Works and Days* (Cambridge 2014) 123–166; Canevaro, *Hesiod's Works and Days* 12–13. For the performance of Hesiodic poetry at festivals see Pl. *Ion* 531A–532A and *Leg.* 658D; cf. the public performance mentioned in Isocrates *Panath.* 18 and 33. For a discussion of performative contexts for Hesiodic poetry see also H. H. Koning, *Hesiod: The Other Poet. Ancient Reception of a Cultural Icon* (Leiden 2010) 46–51, who rightly includes education.

poetry was a wide-spread practice,<sup>13</sup> evident already in Pindar's *Isthmian* 6.66–68 where a father is said to admonish his sons by quoting *Op.* 412.<sup>14</sup> This piecemeal approach to the *Op.* was reflected in and reinforced by the inclusion of Hesiodic lines in collections of excerpts as early as the second half of the fifth century BCE. Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 6.2.15) informs us that Hippias of Elis put together an anthology of notable sayings drawn from a wide variety of sources Greek and non-Greek, prose and poetry, including Hesiod (86 B 6 D.-K.):

τούτων ἴσως εἴρηται τὰ μὲν Ὀρφεῖ, τὰ δὲ Μουσαίῳ κατὰ βραχὺ ἄλλῳ ἀλλαχοῦ, τὰ δὲ Ἡσιόδῳ, τὰ δὲ Ὀμήρῳ, τὰ δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις τῶν ποιητῶν, τὰ δὲ ἐν συγγραφαῖς τὰ μὲν Ἑλληνισι τὰ δὲ βαρβάροις· ἐγὼ δὲ ἐκ πάντων τούτων τὰ μέγιστα καὶ ὁμόφυλα συνθεῖς τούτων καινὸν καὶ πολυειδῆ τὸν λόγον ποιήσομαι.

Of these (things) perhaps some have been said by Orpheus, some by Musaeus briefly in this way here, in another way there, some by Hesiod, some by Homer, some by other poets, some in prose writings by Greeks and by non-Greeks. But I, having put together of all these the greatest and those that belong to the same categories, will render this account new and diverse.

We cannot assess how heavily Hippias mined the *Works and Days* for excerpts, all the more since his proto-doxography may

<sup>13</sup> See Koning, *The Other Poet* 18–22, for an overview of Hesiodic lines quoted by subsequent authors, and G. W. Most, “Plato’s Hesiod: An Acquired Taste?” in G. R. Boys-Stones and J. H. Haubold (eds.), *Plato and Hesiod* (Oxford 2010) 52–67, on the Hesiodic quotations in the Platonic corpus in particular. On the piecemeal reception of Hesiod see also B. Graziosi, “Hesiod in Classical Athens: Rhapsodes, Orators, and Platonic Discourse,” in *Plato and Hesiod* 111–132; A. Ford, “Plato’s Two Hesiods,” in *Plato and Hesiod* 133–154, H. H. Koning, “Plato’s Hesiod: not Plato’s alone,” in *Plato and Hesiod* 89–110; and Hunter, *Hesiodic Voices* 75–86. Most recently, Canevaro in *Hesiod’s Works and Days* has argued that the *Op.* was composed both for sequential and for fragmentary readings.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 6.19–25, in which Chiron’s injunction to Achilles may be a near-quotation of a passage from Hesiod’s *Chironos Hypothekai*: see L. Kurke, “Pindar’s Sixth *Pythian* and the Tradition of Advice Poetry,” *TAPA* 120 (1990) 85–94.

have been focused primarily on cosmogonies and natural philosophy.<sup>15</sup> Other anthologies, however, with emphasis on justice, ethics, or appropriate conduct would probably have involved a large-scale engagement with the *Op.* As we learn from Plato (*Leg.* 810E–811A) and Isocrates (*Demon.* 51–52, *Nic.* 42–44), by the fourth century BCE such collections of excerpts (γνώμολογίαι) had become an established tool in education, an alternative to the traditional method of memorizing entire works.<sup>16</sup>

In so far as anthologies became a popular way of consuming wisdom, they precipitated, solidified, and legitimized the marginalization of Perses. As self-contained segments of the *Works and Days* were extracted from their original context and re-contextualized within these collections, the poem's didactic message and value lost the intrinsic link to its dramatic setting and inscribed occasion. Knowing about the quarrel with Perses

<sup>15</sup> On Hippias' doxography see C. J. Classen, "Bemerkungen zu zwei griechischen 'Philosophiehistorikern'," *Philologus* 109 (1965) 175–178; G. B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement*. (Cambridge 1981) 48–49; J. Mansfeld, "Aristotle, Plato, and the Preplatonic Doxography and Chronology," in G. Cambiano (ed.), *Storiografia e dossografia nella filosofia antica* (Turin 1986) 1–59; A. Patzer, *Der Sophist Hippias als Philosophiehistoriker* (Freiburg 1986); and J.-F. Balaudé, "Hippias le passeur," in M. Sassi (ed.), *La costruzione del discorso filosofico nell'età dei Presocratici* (Pisa 2006). On the proem of Hippias' anthology (B 6) see Koning, "Plato's Hesiod," in *Plato and Hesiod* 101, and especially Patzer 15–32. On the culture of excerpting in classical Athens see also A. Ford, *The Origins of Criticism: Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece* (Princeton 2002) 194–197. Aristophanes' *Frogs* 1030–1036 offers an indication of how Hesiod's didactic poem would fit in the context of a collection aimed at isolating the most essential and useful contributions of literary authorities to the common good. For a reading of this Aristophanic passage as a chronological list of πρῶτοι εὑρεταί see Ford 144–145; cf. already A. Kleingünther, *ΠΡΩΤΟΣ ΕΥΡΕΤΗΣ. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte einer Fragestellung* (Göttingen 1933) 142–143.

<sup>16</sup> In *Nic.* 42–44 Isocrates isolates Hesiod, Theognis, and Phocylides as examples of poets whose work contains good advice for life, and makes explicit reference to the possibility of excerpting (εἴ τις ἐκλέξειε τῶν προεχόντων ποιητῶν τὰς καλουμένας γνώμας, 44).

was no longer required for appreciating and internalizing Hesiodic instruction. While the *Op.* remained accessible in its entirety, this alternative, fragmentary approach to the poem—and the validity with which it was invested—demonstrated that the scenario of Perses’ transgression was not essential to the fulfillment of the poem’s didactic agenda. The interpretation suggested in schol. *Op.* 27a and *Prol.* B Pertusi, namely that the entire quarrel is a fictional frame for the sake of instruction rather than an autobiographical reference, may have predated the broad circulation of anthologies but was doubtless reinforced by it.

I would like to suggest another contributing factor for the exclusion of the dispute with Perses from Hesiod’s *bioi*, namely the growing popularity of the story about the poetic *agon* at the funeral games of Amphidamas in Chalkis. This fictional narrative about a competition between Homer and Hesiod was inspired by Hesiod’s mention of his victory at these games (*Op.* 650–659). Hesiod never identifies his competitor, yet, as the story of this *agon* took on a life of its own, the role of Hesiod’s opponent was given to Homer. The most extensive version of this narrative survives in the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*, a second-century CE biographical compilation that discusses the birthplaces of Homer and Hesiod, their genealogies and relative dating, their *agon* at Chalkis, their lives as itinerant poets, and their deaths. The version of the poetic competition embedded in the *Certamen* can be traced back to the *Mouseion* of Alcidamas, a sophist of the fourth century BCE,<sup>17</sup> although the

<sup>17</sup> On Alcidamas’ *Mouseion* and the *Certamen* see already F. Nietzsche, “Der florentinische Traktat über Homer und Hesiod, ihr Geschlecht und ihren Wettkampf,” *RhM* 25 (1870) 529–540 and 28 (1873) 211–249. For discussions that take into consideration the papyrological evidence see J. G. Winter, “A New Fragment from the Life of Homer,” *TAPA* 56 (1925) 120–129, esp. 120–125; M. L. West, “The Contest of Homer and Hesiod,” *CQ* 17 (1967) 433–450; N. J. Richardson, “The Contest of Homer and Hesiod and Alcidamas’ *Mouseion*,” *CQ* 31 (1981) 1–10; more recently, P. Bassino, “*Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*: nuovi spunti per una riconsiderazione delle testimonianze papiracee,” *ZPE* 180 (2012) 38–42, and *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*:

story was almost certainly circulating even earlier.<sup>18</sup> The poetic *agon* between Homer and Hesiod became a popular narrative not only in education but also in the debate surrounding the relative chronology of the two poets.<sup>19</sup>

The *Certamen* pays uneven attention to the poetic careers of Homer and Hesiod. Before the contest, Homer, envisioned as an itinerant rhapsode (*Cert.* 56 Allen), is credited only with the composition of the *Margites* (55–56). During the tour that follows Chalkis, however, he composes his Theban epics (*Thebais* and the *Epigonoï*, 254–260) as well as his two masterpieces about the Trojan War (275–276)<sup>20</sup>—or at least the *Odyssey*, since it remains unclear how much earlier he had composed the *Iliad* (πεπονηκώς ἤδη τὴν Ἰλιάδα ἐπῶν μ,εφ').<sup>21</sup> Homer's

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*Introduction, Critical Edition and Commentary* (diss. Durham Univ. 2013) 53–89. See also K. Heldmann *Die Niederlage Homers im Dichterwettstreit mit Hesiod* (Göttingen 1982), esp. 9–36, and N. O'Sullivan, *Alcidamas, Aristophanes, and the Beginnings of Greek Stylistic Theory* (Stuttgart 1992) 79–105.

<sup>18</sup> While refuting West, *CQ* 17 (1967) 438–441, who argued that Alcidamas invented the story of the competition between Homer and Hesiod, Richardson, *CQ* 31 (1981) 1–3, situates the origins of the narrative in the sympotic culture of the sixth century. Graziosi, *Inventing Homer* 176–180, on the other hand, has argued that the *Certamen* is best understood as a reflection of the rhapsodic culture of the fifth century.

<sup>19</sup> On the relative chronology debate and the importance of the *agon* in this context, see Graziosi, *Inventing Homer* 101–110; Kivilo, *Early Greek Poets' Lives* 17–24; and the extensive discussion of Hesiod's dating by M. Köiv, "A Note on the Dating of Hesiod," *CQ* 61 (2011) 355–377. For the *Certamen* in education see Bassino, *Certamen* 11 and 54–89 (with evidence from the textual transmission); cf. Plut. *Mor.* 674F–675A, according to whom the γραμματικοί were rehashing the story of the contest *ad nauseam*.

<sup>20</sup> The narrative also mentions the composition of two epigrams: the first was commissioned for Midas by his sons after they heard Homer's Theban poems; the second the poet inscribed on the *phiale* that he received as a reward for this commission before dedicating it to Apollo (260–274).

<sup>21</sup> The vague language evades the potential inconsistency between a post-Chalkis composition of the *Iliad* and Homer's performance of an Iliadic pastiche (*Il.* 13.126–133 + 339–344) at Chalkis when Panedes asks the two poets to recite the very best part of their own compositions.

itinerary includes Athens (276–285), Corinth (286–287), Argos, where the locals reward him greatly for his performance of an Iliadic passage (289–314),<sup>22</sup> as well as Delos, where the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* earns him honors from both the Delians and the Ionians at large (315–321). As Homer’s poetic career unfolds, therefore, his defeat in Chalkis is counter-balanced by the success he enjoys after it. By contrast, Hesiod’s poetic career is represented exclusively by his *agon* against Homer. His transformative encounter with the Muses is completely absent from the narrative,<sup>23</sup> and the only thing that happens to Hesiod after Chalkis is death.<sup>24</sup> More importantly for my argument, there is no mention of the fraternal conflict that led to the composition of the *Works and Days* even though Perses is identified by name as Hesiod’s brother in *Cert.* 52.

<sup>22</sup> On the peculiarity of the quoted passage see Bassino, *Certamen* 216–218.

<sup>23</sup> Both the *Certamen* and Hesiod’s short biography in the *Suda* (η 583) ignore Hesiod’s encounter with the Muses on Helicon (*Theog.* 22–34). On the other hand, the *Certamen* does incorporate a part of the ‘autobiographical’ narrative of the *Op.*; in particular, it appropriates the poet’s dedication of the victory tripod to the Heliconian Muses after Chalkis (*Cert.* 213–214, cf. *Op.* 658–659). The dedicatory epigram embedded in the *Certamen* follows *Op.* 658–659 closely, but the crucial allusion to *Theog.* 22–34 in *Op.* 659 is replaced by details about the poetic competition, namely where it took place (ἐν Χαλκίδι) and who Hesiod’s opponent was (θεῖον Ὅμηρον). Given that the Homeric narrator does not claim to have experienced an epiphany comparable to Hesiod’s, it is possible that the *Certamen* suppresses Hesiod’s divine initiation to poetry in order to level the playing field for the two poetic contestants. It is noteworthy that, unlike the *Certamen* and the *Suda*, the Hesiodic *bios* embedded in Tzetzes’ *Prolegomena* discusses extensively Hesiod’s poetic initiation and dwells on its pedagogical value (14.14–15.10 Gaisford = 83–119 Colonna).

<sup>24</sup> That Hesiod’s death follows shortly after his victory indicates that he was older (and thus more experienced) than Homer at Amphidamas’ funeral games. The assertion that Homer had only composed the *Margites* by the time he participated in the poetic competition (*Cert.* 55–56) is consistent with envisioning an unevenly matched pair of contestants at the *agon* and with blaming Homer’s defeat on his youth. See Graziosi, *Inventing Homer* 102, and Bassino, *Certamen* 120.

The *Certamen* draws attention to various (invented) performative occasions for Homeric poetry and contextualizes them within the poet's life; Hesiodic poetry, on the other hand, is not performed outside of the poetic *agon*. The funeral games for Amphidamas are the only performative context for Hesiodic poetry in the entire *Certamen*: when king Panedes asks the two contestants to perform what they consider the best part of their own compositions (ἐκέλευσεν ἕκαστον τὸ κάλλιστον ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων ποιημάτων εἰπεῖν, 178–179), Hesiod wins the tripod with a selection from the agricultural calendar of the *Works and Days* (*Op.* 383–392). Even though the narrative seems to presuppose the composition of the *Op.*, therefore, it refrains completely from engaging with the fraternal dispute, the biographical episode that the *Op.* itself designates as the context of its composition and first performance. Instead, the *Certamen* invents a new performative context for the *Op.* According to the Hesiodic passage that inspired the story of the poetic *agon* between Homer and Hesiod (*Op.* 650–662), the funerary games in Chalkis took place sometime before the composition of the *Op.*; Hesiod won the contest with some unidentified poem (ῥυμφῶ, 657), which clearly could not have been the *Op.*<sup>25</sup> In the *Certamen*, the didactic poem in which Hesiod originally mentions the *agon* becomes part of the contest itself and, in fact, earns Hesiod his victory. In other words, the *Certamen* has given the *Works and Days* a new performative context and purpose that are markedly different from those inscribed in the Hesiodic poem itself. In the context of the *Certamen*, furthermore, the *Op.* is subject to a different mode of performance since the final stage of the contest, in which Hesiod wins with *Op.* 383–392, dramatizes the very act of excerpting.<sup>26</sup> Appropriately, the vic-

<sup>25</sup> West, *Hesiod. Works and Days* 321, suggests that ῥυμφῶ points to the *Theogony*.

<sup>26</sup> In fact, the final stage of the *agon* not only dramatizes but also legitimizes the act of excerpting, as it is a mode of performance that Homer and Hesiod themselves apply to their own work.

torious selection from the *Op.*, which Panedes interprets as advice that should be heeded by anyone and everyone, does not include an address to Perses or any other trace of the personal circumstances associated with the biographical framework of the *Works and Days*.

In my view, the *Certamen* reinvents the performative context of the *Op.* partly as a response to the programmatic meditation on the two kinds of *eris* with which Hesiod opens his didactic discourse (*Op.* 11–29). Hesiod distinguishes between destructive conflict and motivating rivalry; while Perses' behavior represents the former (27–29), poetic competitions represent the latter (ἄοιδὸς ἀοιδῶ, 26). By suppressing the original context for the composition of the *Works and Days* and by privileging its performance at the funeral games instead, the *Certamen* untangles the authoritative figure of Hesiod from Perses' negative *eris* and associates him instead with a manifestation of constructive *eris*.<sup>27</sup> As the *agon* between Homer and Hesiod became increasingly popular not only in education but also in scholarly debates regarding the relative chronology of the two poets, the constructive agonistic context of the funeral games overshadowed the negative *eris* in which the Hesiodic poem situates its own first performance, and contributed to its exclusion from Hesiodic biography.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> A similar revision of Hesiod's personal circumstances in the *Works and Days* emerges when we contrast the favor that Hesiod and his poetry enjoy from king Panedes in the *Certamen* with the poet's mistreatment at the hands of the corrupt kings in the *Works and Days*.

<sup>28</sup> The brief summary of the *agon* in Chalkis in Philostratus' *Heroicus* 43.7–8 seems to contradict the biographical tradition in its treatment of Hesiod. Philostratus pits Homer, who is said to have competed with an Iliadic passage that seems to correspond to the one quoted in the *Certamen* (τὸν μὲν τὰ ἑπτὰ ἔπη τὰ περὶ τοῖν Αἰάντοιν καὶ ὡς αἱ φάλαγγες αὐτοῖς ἀραρυῖαί τε ἦσαν καὶ καρτεραί) against Hesiod, who wins with what seems to be the entire *Op.* summarized in terms that keep close to the original poem: τὸν δὲ τὰ πρὸς τὸν ἀδελφὸν τὸν ἑαυτοῦ Πέρσην, ἐν οἷς αὐτὸν ἔργων τε ἐκέλευεν ἄπτεσθαι καὶ γεωργία προσκεῖσθαι, ὡς μὴ δέοιτο ἐτέρων μηδὲ πεινώη. Perhaps the exceptional connection of Hesiod's winning performance in the



I hope to have shed some light on the absence of the dispute between Hesiod and Perses in the extant biographical narratives of the poet's life. I have suggested that the *bioi* reflect interpretations of the *Works and Days* that treated the poet's personal crisis as a fictional frame for his didactic message rather than as an autobiographical reference. Reading Perses' transgression as fiction was probably reinforced by the circulation of the *Op.* through anthologies of excerpts that decontextualized Hesiodic instruction and thus demonstrated that the scenario of the quarrel was not essential to the successful understanding of Hesiod's *gnomai*. Finally, I have explored how the story of the poetic contest in Chalkis may have contributed to the marginalization of the dispute in the biographical tradition. The *Certamen* proposed a different context for the performance for the *Works and Days* which dramatized exactly the kind of strife that Hesiod himself judged constructive in the *Op.*, and which offered an alternative to Ascra, Perses, and the corrupt kings that was much more pertinent to erudite discussions of poetics as well as to the ever-popular problem of dating those great ancient poets.<sup>29</sup>

December, 2015

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*agon* with the original dramatic frame of the *Op.* in the *Heroicus* is best explained by its immediate context: the vine-dresser's summary intends to educate an internal audience (the Phoenician) who has given no indication that he knows the first thing about Hesiod and the *Works and Days*.

<sup>29</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 110<sup>th</sup> Annual CAMWS meeting in 2014. I am grateful to the readers for their feedback; I would also like to thank Jenny Strauss Clay, Ruth Scodel, Tony Woodman, and Matthijs Wibier.