

# Short Accusatives in Hesiod: A Diachronic Approach to an Un-Homeric Feature

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**A**MONG THE LINGUISTIC FEATURES that seem to be almost exclusive to the Hesiodic text in the wider corpus of Greek hexametric poetry, the occurrence of a small but telling number of accusative plurals with a short vowel in the thematic declensions is probably the most significant and certainly the most studied. There are six sure occurrences in the *Theogony* (60, 267, 401, 534, 653, 804) and three in the *Works and Days* (564 = 663, 675) in which the ending -ās is used with stems belonging to the so-called first declension. This declension comprehends in Greek two distinct groups of Indo-European nouns, namely those ending in a thematic  $-eh_2$  and the feminine nouns that are composed with the apophonic suffix  $ih_2 / \check{i}eh_2$ .<sup>1</sup> In historical Greek the ending -ās for the accusative plural appears only in those dialects in which the phonological outcome of the original ending  $*-ns$  in *sandhi* before consonant ( $*-āns + C > -ās + C$ ) has been extended to all other cases and become general, i.e. in North-Western Greek (NWG) and in the Aeolic dialects of the mainland (Thessalian and Boeotian) but not in Ionic, the closest relative of the epic dialect.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The topic has an extensive bibliography; the most recent discussions can be found in A. C. Cassio, “Introduzione generale,” in *Storia delle lingue letterarie greche* (Milan 2016) 84–86.

<sup>2</sup> The latest discussion of this isogloss is in A. C. Cassio, “The Language of Hesiod and the *Corpus Hesiodicum*,” in F. Montanari, et al. (eds.), *Brill’s Com-*

If we begin our analysis with the assumption that ungrammatical forms in epic poetry are not simply instances of ‘poetic license’ but rather the products of analogical innovations resulting from generations of oral composition, then we need also to assume that they depend on the formulaic system through which this poetry is composed. The analogical exceptions resulting from the adaptation of traditional formulas to different inflectional contexts were later overgeneralized by the poets of following generations. This means that a *kunstsprachliche* explanation of the short accusative plural requires us to determine what kind of context would have allowed the poet to develop a greater formulaic flexibility by integrating into his poetic grammar a metrically advantageous artificial form. I argue that we have evidence in Hesiod that the declension in the accusative of pre-existing and grammatically-sound formulas has produced these aberrant forms.<sup>3</sup>

### 1. *Previous interpretations of the phenomenon*

Scholars have explained the presence of these short accusatives in the transmitted text as one of the following:

- a) under the influence of a continental poetic tradition in which Doric dialects played a more important role than in the Ionic tradition.
- b) the result of the direct influence of spoken dialects on the epic language, as consistent with the non-Ionic background of Hesiod or the singers of the Hesiodic tradition.
- c) the outcome of an internal analogical process which occurred within the artificial language of epic poetry at a certain stage of its development.

*panion to Hesiod* (Leiden 2009) 179–201. The original coexistence of the two forms is shown in Cretan and Argolic, where the generalization has not been carried out and both the long and the short forms are preserved.

<sup>3</sup> By formula I here mean “a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea,” as first formulated by Parry: *The Making of the Homeric Verse. The Collected Papers of Milman Parry* (Oxford 1971 [1928]) 80. For discussion of formulaic modifications see J. B. Hainsworth, *The Flexibility of the Homeric Formula* (Oxford 1968).

The first theory is as old as the first discussions of Hesiod's language, and it is already present in the scholia:

[1] Schol. Hes. *Theog.* 267:

Ἀρπυιάς Δωρικῶς συνέσειλε· τὰς γὰρ εἰς ἀς ληγούσας αἰτιατικὰς αὐτοὶ συστέλλουσι

(Hesiod) Arpyiās shortened in the Doric fashion: for the (Dorians) shorten the accusatives which end in -as.

Accordingly, scholars have often interpreted these accusatives as Doricisms and attributed them either to the influence of spoken dialects of the NWG group or to a mainland poetic tradition. The great dialectal studies of the nineteenth century present this view,<sup>4</sup> and Ahrens has also attempted to link Hesiod's hexametric poetry to that of Delphic oracle. However, substantial evidence points in the opposite direction, namely that the oracular tradition depends on epic poetry, and it is now commonly agreed that, if indeed there was an influence, the influence came from the Homeric and Hesiodic poetry.<sup>5</sup>

A second group of studies has explained these forms as the result of an artificial process of 'poetic assimilation' in which the Boeotian bards tried to compete with contemporary lyric poetry by adopting some of its forms in their performances, among which there would also have been the accusatives in -ās.<sup>6</sup> Lyric and epic, however, are clearly distinguished 'genres' already in their first attestations and present their own clear linguistic conventions and *Sitz im Leben*. Most importantly, even if we were to

<sup>4</sup> K. W. Goettling, *Hesiodi Carmina* (Henning 1843) 12; H. L. Ahrens, *De Graecae linguae dialectis* II (Göttingen 1843) 177–181; A. Rzach, "Der Dialekt des Hesiodos," in *Jahrb.f.class.Phil.* Suppl. 8 (1876) 400–401.

<sup>5</sup> See A. Morpurgo Davies, "Doric Features in the Language of Hesiod," *Glotta* 42 (1964) 138–165; Cassio, in *Brill's Companion* 179–201. A list of short accusatives in Delphic inscriptions can be found in Schwyzler, *DGE* 325.

<sup>6</sup> C. Tsagalis, "Poet and Audience: From Homer to Hesiod," in F. Montanari et al. (eds.), *La poésie épique grecque: métamorphoses d'un genre littéraire* (Vandoeuvres (2006) 79–130; A. Ercolani, *Esiodo: Opere e Giorni* (Rome 2010) 28–29, 349–350; L. Lulli, "Questioni aperte di una dizione epica: la mistione linguistica dell'epos di Esiodo," *SemRom* 5 (2016) 195–215.

accept the possibility that lyric influenced Hesiod, what seems unconvincing in this theory is the extreme scarcity of these ungrammatically short accusatives, to the point that almost all occurrences, as we shall see, can be explained either by metrical necessity or formulaic modification.

Finally, a third approach to the problem, to which the present work ultimately belongs, has rejected the traditional dialectal explanation and has seen these features as the result of an internal development of the epic tradition. Scholars such as von Blumenthal, Davies, and Wyatt all agree in attributing the -ās in our text to analogy, but vastly disagree in determining the context and causes of this analogical process.<sup>7</sup> Von Blumenthal thinks that forms like *Arpuiās*, *aetās*, *tropās* might have resulted from the influence of the athematic declension, where the ending -ās is perfectly regular (\*C-ης > C-ās). Moreover, he suggests that in lines like the two following, where thematic and a-stem accusative plurals are closely juxtaposed, the quantity of the vowel -a- is irrelevant to the meter, and no palpable difference would have been perceived by the poet if both accusatives had been pronounced with a short vowel:

[2] *Theog.* 935

δεινούς, οἳτ' ἀνδρῶν πυκινὰς κλονέουσι φάλαγγας.

◡ ◡ - ◡ ◡ - ◡ ◡ - x

Terrible, who drive tumultuously the dense (*pykinās*) ranks (*phalangās*) of men.

*Op.* 55

χαίρεις πῦρ κλέψας καὶ ἐμὰς φρένας ἠπεροπέυσας.

◡ - ◡ ◡ - ◡ ◡ - x

You feel joy now that you have stolen the fire and tricked my (*emās*) mind (*phrenās*).

Morpurgo Davies, instead, in her attempt to demonstrate that all Doric features in Hesiod are either archaisms or ascribed to formulaic modifications, considers short accusatives the result of

<sup>7</sup> A. V. Blumenthal, “Beobachtungen zu griechischen Texten,” *Hermes* 77 (1942) 103–104; Morpurgo Davies, *Glotta* 42 (1964) 138–165; W. F. Wyatt, “Short Accusative Plurals in Greek,” *TAPA* 97 (1966) 617–643.

an alternation between forms that occurred before C or V. The original accusative plural ending (-οῦς) had in fact lost the nasal element in preconsonantal position due to the simplification of consonant clusters in *sandhi* (ǎns + C > ǎs) and retained it instead before a vowel (ǎns + V > ǎns). In terms of relative chronology this phonological modification had to take place after the ninth century, as it postdates the Attic-Ionic change of the long central vowel ā into a middle front ē. Otherwise the second compensatory lengthening would have caused the forms before vowel to become -ēs (ǎns + V > ǎns > ās > ēs).<sup>8</sup> According to Morpurgo Davies, when some of the formulas ending with an accusative plural of the a-stem with a preconsonantal outcome found themselves in prevocalic position, especially before the caesura *kata triton trochaion*, the short ending was maintained, and these short accusative plurals were developed.

Finally, Wyatt has proposed a three-phase process in which, because of the influence of a-stem masculine nouns such as ἱππότης, which also present a vocative ἱππότηᾶ sometimes used as nominative, Hesiod had come to feel that a-stem declension could be characterized by a short vowel and he extended this feature also to the feminine nouns, creating an analogical -ǎs for the a-stem declension.

In addition to being uneconomical, these analogical interpretations remain open to criticism and do not explain why the process that created these artificially short forms should not also be attested in Homer, if we are indeed dealing with an internal and perhaps even Archaic development of the epic tradition. It seems likely that either geographical position or chronology must be considered, and a more comprehensive explanation still needs to be found.

Von Blumenthal's work problematically assumes that poets

<sup>8</sup> It is important to point out that not all scholars agree on the absolute chronology of this Attic-Ionic modification, and some think that it is not a post-*proto-Greek* development. On the topic see J. Rau "Greek and Proto-Indo-European," in E. J. Bakker (ed.), *A Companion to the Ancient Greek Language* (Boston 2010) 171–188.



metrical scansion such as in the accusative *gaiëochon* (˘ - ˘ ˘) in *Theog.* 15, in which the diphthong -ai- is scanned with the second element -i- treated as the onset of the following syllable. This phenomenon, which is normally interpreted as *correptio*, ultimately depends on the need to decline the formula.<sup>10</sup>

[4] *Il.* 13.43

ἀλλὰ Ποσειδάων (˘ - - -) γαίηχος (- - ˘ ˘), ἔννοσίγαιος

But Poseidon (*nom. sing.*), earthmoving (*gaiëochos nom. sing.*), the Earth-shaker

Hes. *Theog.* 15<sup>11</sup>

ἦδὲ Ποσειδάωνα (˘ - - - ˘) γαίηχον (˘ - ˘ ˘), ἔννοσίγαιον,

And also, Poseidon (*acc. sing.*), earthmoving (*gaiëochon nom. sing.*), the Earth-shaker

Even a possible variant γαίηχος motivated by the occasional loss of ι in diphthongs before vowel would be indirectly ‘caused’ by the need to inflect the formula. What concerns our study is that these modifications are the result of an attempt to fit a formula rather than a single word into the hexameter.<sup>12</sup>

It is important to clarify that this is not an exclusively Hesiodic process, and that the Homeric diction is rife with such examples. The presence of artificial forms in Homer due to formulaic inflection, however, has not caused scholars to suspect the influence of different, unattested, spoken dialects or traditions.

Moreover, the fact that ungrammatically long athematic

<sup>10</sup> *Correptio* is rarer within the word than at word-end and, according to M. L. West, *Greek Metre* (Oxford 1982) 11, reflects an Ionic tendency of the language. This is a traditional example of Hesiod’s modification of formulaic prototypes.

<sup>11</sup> This is the MSS. text and accepted by M. L. West, *Hesiod: Theogony* (Oxford 1966); other editors have emended to the metrically sound γεήχον which however does not appear elsewhere in either Homer or Hesiod. So e.g. H. G. Evelyn-White, *Hesiod, Homeric Hymns and Homeric* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1914).

<sup>12</sup> See C. D. Buck, *Introduction to the Study of the Greek Dialects* (Boston 1928) 29–30. Cf. P. Chantraine, *Grammaire Homérique* I (Paris 1948) 173, on the similar alternation between the usual βαθείης and the ‘shortened’ forms βαθέης (*Il.* 5.142, 21.213), βαθέην (*Il.* 16.766).

accusative plurals appear also in Homer because of formulaic inflection has received surprisingly little attention. The phrase νῆας ἄλαδ' [5] (cf. οἰκῆας ἀλογόν, *Il.* 6.366) provides us with an example of the same analogical process that we notice in Hesiod involving a-stems and consonant stems. Here the consonant stem νᾶς in the accusative plural has an irrationally long vowel (-ᾶς) which is metrically convenient and allows the poet to decline a formula originally in the genitive.

[5] *Il.* 2.165 = 2.181

μηδὲ ἕα νῆας ἄλα δ' ἐλκέμεν ἀμφιελίσσας

Do not allow them to drag their curved ships (*neās athematic acc. plur.*) into the sea

*Il.* 14.100

σχήσουσιν πόλεμον νηῶν ἄλα δ' ἐλκομενάων

(the Achaeans) will not continue the war, once the ships (*neōn athematic gen. plur.*) are drawn to the sea

Rather than a metrical lengthening before caesura, this is a case of formulaic inflection combined with using the formulaic ἄλα δ' ἐλκέμεν after an a-stem accusative plural, as both Chantraine and Hoekstra have argued.<sup>13</sup>

As a consequence, if we are looking to explain the presence of short accusatives in Hesiod, we need to examine those instances in which these forms are undoubtedly the result of formulaic inflection.

Particularly instructive in this regard is the formula μετὰ τροπὰς ἠελίοιο [6] which appears twice in the *Works and Days* and presents one Homeric parallel in the *Odyssey*, suggesting both that it is traditional, and, because of its single occurrence, that it is unlikely to be an immediate model for Hesiod.

[6] *Od.* 15.403–404

νῆσός τις Συρίη κικλήσκειται, εἴ που ἀκούεις,  
Ὅρτυγίης καθύπερθεν, ὅθι τροπαὶ ἠελίοιο

⋮ ⋮ - ⋮ ⋮ - ⋮ ⋮ - χ

<sup>13</sup> Chantraine, *Grammaire* 104; A. Hoekstra, *Homeric Modifications of Formulaic Prototypes* (Amsterdam 1965) 125.



There is a certain island called Syria, if ever you have heard (of it), beyond Ortygia, where are the turning points (*tropai nom. plur.*) of the sun

Hes. *Op.* 564–565

εὐτ' ἂν δ' ἐξήκοντα μετὰ τροπᾶς ἡελίοιο  
 ὠ ὠ = ὠ ὠ = ὠ ὠ - χ

χειμέρι' ἐκτελέσῃ Ζεὺς ἤματα

Whenever sixty wintry days, after the turning points (*tropās acc. plur.*) of the sun Zeus has accomplished

There is no need to presuppose that Hes. *Op.* 564 is more recent than *Od.* 15.404 but it is sufficient to point out that the formula in the accusative is a later analogical development based on the formula in the nominative plural. Moreover, this explanation would be ultimately coherent with Hesiod's tendency to expand the flexibility of the inherited formulaic system.<sup>14</sup> Another hint of this inflection is found in the 'formulaic' *deinās aētās* of example [7] where again a single parallel with the *Iliad* provides a possible context for the formation of the short accusative:

[7] Hes. *Op.* 675

καὶ χειμῶν' ἐπιόντα Νότοιο τε δεινὰς ἀήτας

and the upcoming storm and the terrible (*deinās acc. plur.*) blast of the South Wind

*Il.* 15.626

ἄχνη ὑπεκρύφθη, ἀνέμοιο δὲ δεινὸς ἀήτη

(she) is hidden by the foam, and the blast of the terrible (*deinōs gen. sing.*) wind

Once again formulaic inflection is not in itself indicative of recent composition, as sometimes Homer presents artificial forms that Hesiod does not. This is the case for example of μέροπες (*meropēs*) ἄνθρωποι in *Il.* 18.288, which shows an artificially long vowel in the nominative ending as the result of the adaptation of the metrically sound formula μερόπων ἀνθρώπων (<sup>3</sup>υυ-υυ-υυ-χ), which is the normal form in both Homer and Hesiod (Hes. *Op.* 109, 143, 180). The only justification for such a form (*meropēs*) is

<sup>14</sup> A more general tendency in Hesiod to decline inherited formulas in the accusative has already been observed by scholars; see the list of examples in Edwards, *The Language of Hesiod* 62–64.

the poet's need to adapt a formula normally found in the genitive to the nominative. Even though the ending *-ēs* was never generalized to the point of becoming an available metrical alternative to the grammatical *-ēs*, the process that produced this form is the same that we observe in Hesiod. It is likely that the existence of an accusative plural ending *-ās* for the athematic substantives played a role in allowing the bards of the following generation to feel the short accusatives as grammatical enough to become a metrical alternative to *-ās* whenever the formulaic system required it. We still need to remember that the number of short accusatives in Hesiod is limited to a few occurrences. As expected in the context of a poetic *Kunstsprache* the grammar often yields to the formulaic lexicon of the poet.

When considered all together, these artificial adaptations are shown to be common to both Homer and Hesiod and to depend on analogy within a formulaic context that generally is shared by the two corpora.

It seems to me that a conclusive explanation for the presence of short accusative plurals in Hesiod can now be attempted. These forms were the result of purely internal modifications of the epic language, which ultimately depended on formulaic declension in the accusative plural of preexisting formulas in the nominative. These forms were also probably influenced by the analogy with the short endings *-ās* of the athematic declension, as has been partially suggested by von Blumenthal (n.7 above). We need to imagine an analogical proportion like the following:

*tropōn* (a-stem): *phrenōn* (athematic) = *tropās*: *phrenās*

This analogy presupposes that in the feminine genitive plural of the type *tropōn* the contraction between the *-α-* of the stem and the suffix of the genitive plural had already taken place (*-άων* > *-ῶν*), thus explaining why in the early uncontracted phase of the tradition such analogical process did not take place and occurred only at a later stage of the epic tradition.

Overall, this theory has the merit of both providing an analogical explanation for the development of these forms in the poet's mind (the poets of the Hesiodic tradition came to feel that

certain a-stem nouns could have an underlyingly short vowel in the accusative plural ending) and of pointing to the metrical and especially formulaic necessity for its employment in composition. This means that even occurrences like ἠυκόμους θ' Ἄρπυιάς (*Theog.* 267), and μεταναίετᾶς εἶναι (*Theog.* 401), which do not present a formulaic parallel either in Hesiod or in Homer, could still be explained as analogical formations. They are either the result of the overgeneralization of the artificial ending -ās or of the direct inflection of a traditional formula which has not survived into the extant epic poems, but which was still part of the formulaic system shared by Homer and Hesiod. In both cases it must be stressed that it is the formula and not the single word which was the original setting of these modifications.

On a final note, it is worth discussing the only other occurrence of an a-stem short accusative plural in the extant epic tradition outside of Hesiod: ἀθρόας (*athroās*) in the *Hymn to Hermes*.

[8] *Hymn.Hom.Herm.* 106

καὶ τὰς μὲν συνέλασσεν ἐς αὐλίον ἀθρόας οὔσας

and then he drove them in the cowhouse, being (*ousas*) in crowds (*athroās*)

As we would now expect, the ungrammatically short vowel in *athroās* can be explained on the basis of formulaic modification involving nominative endings shortened in *correptio epica* in formulas such as ἀθροῖοι ἦσαν (*Od.* 1.27) and ἀθροῖοι εἶεν (*Hom.Hom.Ap.* 152). The testimony of the *Hymn* is all the more relevant because the short accusative is followed by an Attic form *ousas* which is never attested in Homer and found only here and in *Hom.Hom.Ap.* 330. Earlier epic poems, including the ones of Hesiod, present only ἐοῦσα (< \*h<sub>1</sub>s-ont-ih<sub>2</sub>) as the feminine present participle of εἶμι, and the juxtaposition of the two forms might vouch for the lateness of -ās now that we have argued for its analogical development.

In conclusion, even though it would be conceivable to imagine that at a certain point of the epic tradition, Hesiod or a group of bards operating in the mainland could have borrowed the morpheme -ās from other contiguous Doric or NWG poetic tradi-

tions, both the use of this alleged borrowing in the context of preexisting formulas and especially the absence of analogous accusative plural -ōs of the thematic declension in either Hesiod or the *Homeric Hymns* make this alternative explanation unlikely.<sup>15</sup> Only the analogy with the ‘naturally’ short accusative plurals of the third declension allowed the formation of these artificial forms, and the absence of ‘epic’ words with an -ōs ending for the accusative plural made it impossible to decline formulas with thematic nouns in the accusative plural.

Consider for example formulas of the type of the adjective ἀτάσθαλος (˘˘˘), such as ἀτάσθαλον ἄνδρα (˘4˘˘5˘) or ἀτάσθαλον ὄβριμοεργόν (˘4˘˘5˘˘6x). Homer and Hesiod both present examples of inflection of these formulas (*Od.* 8.166 ἀτασθάλω ἀνδρὶ, Hes. *Theog.* 996 ἀτάσθαλος ὄβριμοεργός), and the position of the adjective before words beginning with a vowel also allows the inflection in the nominative plural with -oi in *corruptio epica* in *Od.* 24.282 ἀτάσθαλοι ἄνδρες ἔχουσι (˘4˘˘5˘˘6x), which can be compared to the genitive singular πατρὸς ἀτασθάλου αἴ κ’ ἐθέλητε (3˘˘4˘˘5˘˘6x) found in Hes. *Theog.* 164. Yet in Hesiod nothing like \*ἀτάσθαλος ὄβριμοεργούς or \*ἀτάσθαλος ἄνδρας is ever attested or could be attested, even though it would be exactly the same formulaic context in which a-stem short accusatives developed. If the influence of a mainland tradition with Doric short accusatives happened to be the actual reason behind the presence of -ās forms in Hesiod, then we would also expect -ōs in similar metrical contexts. Yet, since in the Ionic tradition there was no way to analogically recreate short thematic accusative plurals, these forms are not found.

Moreover, since oral poets are not grammarians, a new morpheme could have spread only through the borrowing of either

<sup>15</sup> Unless one considers the *Shield of Herakles* Hesiodic and finds in the isolated evidence of *lagōs* ([Hes.] *Sc.* 302) sufficient grounds to argue that thematic short accusatives were indeed part of the Hesiodic diction. Many linguistic features, however, as shown especially by Edwards, demonstrate that the *Shield* behaves differently from the rest of the Hesiodic poems, and it is likely to be a late imitation of Homeric poetry.

entire words or phrases from another tradition presenting this congenial metrical feature, and only then by analogy could have expanded to new contexts and words, yet these short accusatives are found only in words that are also Homeric and epic. It seems that, at least in this case, chronology and not geography provides a more likely solution to our problem.

These short accusatives could then be added to the list of other morphological elements created by singers due to metrical necessity, such as distended aorist infinitives and datives in *-essi*.<sup>16</sup> Rather than attributing them to a geographical location, they should be considered characteristic of a later stage of the same Panhellenic hexametric tradition, a phase in which more artificial forms were generalized into the diction to allow greater formulaic flexibility.<sup>17</sup> Since all these features are secondary developments and not particularly productive ones, it seems fitting to say that they are reflecting a more advanced, perhaps decadent stage of the diction.<sup>18</sup> The conclusions that can be drawn so far are that:

short accusatives in Hesiod are not dialectal but analogical forms.

they were produced as a consequence of formulaic inflection; whenever a formula with a nominative plural in *correptio epica* was declined in the accusatives it maintained a short ending according to the rule of the epic *Kunstsprache* and then was generalized in other positions.

the relatively unproductive use of a-stem short accusatives might vouch for the recent development of this feature.

### 3. *The issue of overlength in Hesiod and the Hymns*

A final obstacle one needs to face in order to counter the

<sup>16</sup> On the infinitives see A. Nikolaev, “The Aorist Infinitives in *-έειν* in Early Greek Hexameter Poetry,” *JHS* 133 (2013) 81–92; on the datives, A. Blanc, “Langue épique, parler des aèdes et datifs en *-εσσι*,” in F. Biville et al. (eds.), *Autour de Michel Lejeune* (Lyon 2009) 137–151.

<sup>17</sup> See E. Passa, “L’Epica,” in *Storia delle lingue letterarie greche* 137–139.

<sup>18</sup> See A. Hoekstra, *The Sub-Epic Stage of the Formulaic Tradition: Studies in the Homeric Hymns to Apollo, to Aphrodite and to Demeter* (Amsterdam 1969).

dialectal explanation for the short accusative plurals is the tendency of the Hesiodic poems, observed by Edwards, to allow a pattern  $-\sqrt{C} + \#C$  consistently more often than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, whenever accusative plural endings are involved.<sup>19</sup> So far we have discussed short accusatives as a limited phenomenon that affects only a few, mostly formulaic, phrases. But if this tendency of closing the syllable by position after a thematic accusative plural is somehow related to the previous problem of the short accusative plurals, then the number of occurrences of these forms could actually be extensive. There are two possible explanations for this higher ratio of superheavy syllables.

- a) Hesiod's poetry indeed scans long the vowel of the thematic accusative plural endings, and we observe a certain insensitivity to overlength which would differentiate the Hesiodic tradition from Homer.
- b) The high ratio of accusative plurals before consonant demonstrates that the vowel in the endings  $-\alpha\zeta/-\omicron\nu\zeta$  was pronounced short and that the influence of NWG dialects is much more pervasive than was originally thought.

Parry had already noticed that in the Homeric poems the predilected longum is often a preconsonantal closed syllable with a short vowel and that overlong syllables are used more frugally.<sup>20</sup> Hesiod, instead, "places a disproportionately large number of them before a consonant."<sup>21</sup> This would seem, at first glance, to suggest that all a-stem and thematic accusative plural endings in Hesiod were perceived as characterized by a short vowel unless we find a different explanation for this compositional difference.

Before proposing a different interpretation of this tendency, it is worth pointing out that:

<sup>19</sup> Edwards, *The Language of Hesiod* 155–165. It is this different treatment of the accusative plural endings that ultimately causes Edwards to opt for a dialectal explanation for the short thematic accusatives.

<sup>20</sup> Parry, *The Making of the Homeric Verse* 93–94, 113–114.

<sup>21</sup> Edwards, *The Language of Hesiod* 158.

- a) The only abnormal occurrence of superheavy syllables in Hesiod is that of -ous before C in the *Works and Days*, which accounts for 71% of total occurrences of the ending.
- b) The occurrences of the accusative ending -ēn, especially in the *Theogony*, before C are comparable to those of the accusative plural endings.

One way to solve this problem is to look to the *Hymns* for further evidence that this phenomenon is either limited to Hesiod or perhaps relates to a later development of the epic tradition. Tables 1 and 2 seem to answer our question.<sup>22</sup>

	<i>Theogony</i>			<i>Works and Days</i>			<i>Hymn to Apollo</i>		
	+V	+C	_#	+V	+C	_#	+V	+C	_#
(a) -ᾱς	7	35	12	2	15	11	4	6	10
(b) -ους	12	39	14	6	27	5	4	14	6
a+b	19	74	26	8	42	16	8	20	16
	<i>Hymn to Demeter</i>			<i>Hymn to Hermes</i>			<i>Hymn to Aphrod.</i>		
	+V	+C	_#	+V	+C	_#	+V	+C	_#
(a) -ᾱς	2	16 <sup>23</sup>	4	5	18	4	6	9	2
(b) -ους	2	3	2 <sup>24</sup>	11 <sup>25</sup>	18	11	8	6	4
a+b	4	19	6	16	36	15	14	15	6

TABLE 1: Number of occurrences

	<i>Theogony</i>			<i>Works and Days</i>			<i>Hymn to Apollo</i>		
	+V	+C	_#	+V	+C	_#	+V	+C	_#
(a) -ᾱς	13	65	22	7	54	39	20	30	50
(b) -ους	18	60	22	16	71	13	17	58	25
a+b	16	62	22	12	64	24	18	46	36
	<i>Hymn to Demeter</i>			<i>Hymn to Hermes</i>			<i>Hymn to Aphrod.</i>		

<sup>22</sup> I preserve the structure of Edwards' tables in order to offer the reader results that are immediately comparable to his. I am particularly grateful to the Boston University MSSP consulting service, Daniel Cunha, Yingmai Chen, Jianing Yi, and Yuchen Huang, for testing the statistical significance of the data I collected.

<sup>23</sup> Lines 462 and 465 are suspected to be interpolations.

<sup>24</sup> ἵππους in *Hymn.Hom.Dem.* 388 is often considered an interpolation.

<sup>25</sup> In line 492 there could be an observed *digamma*: νομοῦς (φ)Ἐκκέεργε.

	+V	+C	_#	+V	+C	_#	+V	+C	_#
(a) - $\bar{\alpha}\zeta$	9	73	18	18	67	15	35	53	12
(b) - $\text{ov}\zeta$	29	43	28	27	45	27	44	33	22
a+b	14	65	21	24	54	22	40	43	17

TABLE 2: Percentage of occurrence

With the sole exception of the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, the *Hymns* seem to present a treatment of overlength similar to what we see in Hesiod, allowing a cluster of consonants in *sandhi* after thematic accusative plurals consistently more often than in Homer.<sup>26</sup> The topic would require more space, but it can be briefly suggested here that the different ratios of superheavy syllables shown by the *Hymn to Aphrodite* might point in the direction of an earlier composition, as argued by Janko,<sup>27</sup> who, however, dates the hymn within Hesiod's lifetime.<sup>28</sup> That both the Hesiodic poems and the *Hymns* share a certain insensitivity toward overlength seems to suggest that the accusative plurals were characterized by a long vowel, as we would expect, and that they are a characteristic of a later stage of composition and, perhaps, an Ionic stage. Interesting in this respect is the fact that most superheavy syllables of type (b) in the *Hymn to Apollo* occur in the so-called Delian half of the poem, the one suspected to have been sewn onto an independent Pythian hymn by the rhapsode Cynaethus of Chios and therefore reflecting a more advanced and Ionic *facies*.<sup>29</sup> I thus believe that Nagy was ulti-

<sup>26</sup> Particularly striking are the ratios presented by the *Hymns* to Demeter and Hermes, where the occurrence of superheavy syllables in *sandhi* is almost identical to that of Hesiod.

<sup>27</sup> R. Janko, *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns: Diachronic Development in Epic Diction* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1982) 151–180.

<sup>28</sup> Although the presence of possible references to Hesiod's poems have recently led S. D. Olson, *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite and Related Texts* (Berlin 2012) 10–15, to question Janko's chronology.

<sup>29</sup> This theory depends on a Pindaric scholium and has been defended by many scholars, such as Janko, *Homer, Hesiod* 112–114; A. Aloni, *L'aedo e i tiranni: Ricerche sull'Inno omerico ad Apollo* (Rome 1989) 107–131; and M. L.



mately right in connecting this phenomenon with the fact that “Hesiod generally reveals fewer constraints, and hence less archaism, than that of Homer” and shows therefore “simply a greater tolerance for this type of overlength.”<sup>30</sup> Given the above-mentioned evidence provided by the *Homeric Hymns*, this lack of inherited constraints appears however to have been a more general feature of a later stage of epic poetry to which Hesiod’s poems belong.

There is another potential proof, drawing on the studies of Hoenigswald on the treatment of overlength in the Rigveda in comparison to Homer, that this tendency is the result of chronological variation.<sup>31</sup> Hoenigswald has successfully demonstrated that words such as *kṣétra-* “field,” *hotrá-* “libation,” *mandra-* “lovely” in these hymns present far more occurrences outside cadence than in cadence and that this reflects a way to cope with the “deeply uncongenial phenomenon of overlength” (562). This tendency to avoid superheavy syllables in clausula was observed in Homer by Parry and could provide a better insight into the different behavior that is shown in Hesiod and the *Homeric Hymns*.<sup>32</sup> If we are dealing with an inherited PIE trait which reflects the state of the spoken language then we could be

West, *Homeric Hymns. Homeric Apocrypha. Lives of Homer* (Cambridge [Mass.] 2003) 9–12.

<sup>30</sup> G. Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics* (Ithaca 1990) 61.

<sup>31</sup> H. M. Hoenigswald, “Overlong Syllables in Rgvedic Cadences,” *JAOs* 109 (1989) 559–563, argues that in Vedic Sanskrit, “synchronic processes and diachronic changes keep overlength in check” (559) and that at least in the early period the distribution of words with overlength “hints at a vastly larger quotient of occurrences outside cadence over those in cadence *in the aggregate*” (562). The difference with the Greek situation could be explained by the fact that the hexameter presents a much more rigid structure than the Vedic trishtubh and gayatri which are both characterized by a free opening and a more fixed clausula.

<sup>32</sup> Parry, *The Making of the Homeric Verse* 93–94. The first to observe the phenomenon of overlength was J. A. J. Drewitt, “Some Differences between Speech-scansion and Narrative-scansion in Homeric Verse,” *CQ* 2 (1908) 100–102.

observing in Homer and Hesiod the progressive neglect of the inherited avoidance of overlength.<sup>33</sup>

In fact, Cassio has recently argued that in Homer this inherited tendency was lost considerably early, during the Ionian phase of the tradition, as proved by verses such as the following:<sup>34</sup>

[9] *Od.* 8.113

Ποντεύς τε Πρωρεύς τε, Θόων Ἀναβησίνεός τε

(Then rose) Ponteus, and Proreus, Thoon, and Anabesineus

The synzesis after quantitative metathesis in *Anabēsineōs* (-āo > ēo > eō) presents a very Ionic case of overlength and shows how in later recitations overlength was not perceived as problematic in clausula. Therefore, it is not unlikely that the different quotients of occurrences of superheavy syllables in Hesiod and the *Homeric Hymns* might reflect a mutated phonetic taste. This different treatment of superheavy syllables was already beginning to appear in Homer, where forms such as πῆκτον (*pēkton*) ἄροτρον replaced πᾶκτον (*pākton*) ἄροτρον in the later recitations and would end with almost complete insensitivity to overlength in the poetry of the Classical period.

Finally, it is worth noting that the treatment of overlength can vary significantly based on the position of the syllable in the hexameter. Wernicke's Law, for example, shows a clear hierarchy of syllable length that positions overlong syllables at the top of the preference in the fourth contracted *biceps*, and overlength in

<sup>33</sup> See A. Byrd, *The Indo-European Syllable* (Boston 2015) 192–193. Further evidence that a similar development of phonetic taste took place in the Indian tradition can be found in the phenomenon of Vedic *pluti*. It consists in the protraction of already long vowels especially in the context of interrogative sentence. Pluta vowels had therefore three moras, just like overlong syllables, and were extremely rare in the Rigveda (only three cases), more common in the Atharvaveda, and significantly more frequent in the later Brāhmaṇa literature. For an extensive discussion of this phenomenon see K. Strunk, *Typische Merkmale von Fragesätzen und die altindische 'Pluti'* (Munich 1983).

<sup>34</sup> Cassio, in *Storia delle lingue letterarie* 65–66.

all contracted *biceps* is fairly common, as West argues.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, a better understanding of the treatment of such overlong syllables in the hexameter would also require a broader reevaluation of overlength in Homer, in order to take into account the different treatment of superheavy syllables in different positions and avoid a dubious generalization of the phenomenon.<sup>36</sup> In a recent study, Ryan has noted that ultraheavy and superheavy syllables are treated differently in the Rigveda and that the scale of metrical weight is a complex one.<sup>37</sup> As a consequence, overlength is a more complicated phenomenon than is normally believed, since not all syllables were equally overlong and equally avoided, and more work needs to be done on the subject to understand in greater detail the relation between Homer, Hesiod, and the *Homeric Hymns*.

The short accusative plurals of the a-stem declension and the phenomenon of overlength are therefore likely to be unrelated traits, which both characterize the Hesiodic diction and that of the *Homeric Hymns*. We have then few reasons to suspect that most a-stem and thematic accusative plurals in Hesiod were pronounced with a short vowel. Short accusatives and overlength are linked only insofar as they are both suspected of being representative of a later stage of the epic tradition. Addressing the issue raised by Edwards has therefore allowed us to find new potential evidence for a diachronic interpretation of the un-

<sup>35</sup> *Greek Metre* 39. See A. C. Cassio, "Overlong Syllables in the Epic 'Adonius'," in F. Gallo (ed.), *Omero, Quaestiones Disputatae* (Milan 2016) 31–42, at 32 and 40–41.

<sup>36</sup> According to Cassio, in *Omero* 40–41, Parry was also misguided by a simplified approach to the problem of syllabic overlength.

<sup>37</sup> K. M. Ryan, "The Development of Diphthongs in Vedic Sanskrit," *JAOs* 141 (2021) 289–296; see also "Gradient Syllable Weight and Weight Universal in Quantitative Metrics," *Phonology* 28 (2011) 413–454, where Ryan argues more generally that in languages in which the weight is said to be exclusively binary the "sensitivity to additional weight contrasts" (413) often causes the poets of each tradition to compose according to multiple quantitative contrasts not just two, or three if we include overlength.

Homeric features in Hesiod's language.

*Conclusions*

"If we assume that Hesiod's autobiographical remarks are rhetorical rather than true in a literal sense, we need not pinpoint him in the direct vicinity of Mt. Helicon."<sup>38</sup>

This paper has argued that even the most noticeable linguistic difference between the Hesiodic and the Homeric *Kunstsprache* can be explained as an internal development of the same epic tradition. It is now possible to state clearly that 'Hesiod' is not 'choosing' certain forms any more than he is choosing a formula. Instead, the Hesiodic tradition is continuously and consistently innovating a formulaic and thematic system of which it is neither an imitator nor, so to speak, a competitor but rather a true representative. Even in producing forms that are un-Homeric, the poets of this tradition seem to be composing as Homeric poets insofar as they are trying to adapt and inflect formulas that are shared by both traditions and overgeneralize tendencies that are already present in Homer.

This diachronic approach to Hesiod's short accusatives is also consistent with the other late, and Ionic, traits which are characteristics of his diction: thus genitives in *-εω*, *-εων* with metathesis and synizesis (< *-αο*, *-αων*), the neglect of word-initial voiced labial-velar approximant (digamma), and 'short' datives in *-οις*, *-αις*. All these features seem to reflect a stage of the epic tradition in which Western Ionic dialects, such as Euboean and Attic, and the Aeolic dialect of the mainland, Boeotian, had acquired a more relevant role.<sup>39</sup> Even though the idea of a mainland dialect

<sup>38</sup> H. Koning, "The Hesiodic Question," in A. C. Loney et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Hesiod* (Oxford 2018) 17–30, at 24.

<sup>39</sup> See M. L. West, "The Rise of the Greek Epic," *JHS* 108 (1988) 151–172; A. C. Cassio, "Lo sviluppo dell'epica greca e il mondo euboico," in M. Bats et al. (eds.), *Euboica. L'Eubea e la presenza euboica in Calcidica e in Occidente* (Naples 1998) 11–22.

continuum has been recently refuted,<sup>40</sup> nevertheless these areas could have exercised a sort of collective influence on the last stages of the Ionic epic tradition, and close cultural contacts between Euboea and Boeotia are indeed well documented.<sup>41</sup> Finally, this view of the Hesiodic poems is also consistent with the ‘biographical details’ given in the *Works and Days*, in which Hesiod’s journey from Boeotia to Euboea could perhaps be seen as an instance of self-representation of the epic tradition.<sup>42</sup> The seemingly secondary presence of short accusatives in Hesiod has proved to have many potential implications for the understanding of epic poetry as a whole.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See N. Pantelidis, “Boeotian and its Neighbors: A Central Helladic Dialect Continuum?” in G. K. Giannakis et al. (eds.), *Ancient Greek Dialects from Central Greece to the Black Sea* (Leiden 2017) 167–188.

<sup>41</sup> See A. D. Debiasi, *Esiodo e l’Occidente* (Rome 2008) 17–38.

<sup>42</sup> An extensive discussion of the rhetorical and traditional self-reflexive elements of Hesiod’s biography is in G. Nagy, “Hesiod and the Ancient Biographical Tradition,” in *Brill’s Companion* 271–311.

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