

# Hesiod's Fable of the Hawk and the Nightingale Reconsidered

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Νῦν δ' αἶνον βασιλεῦσιν ἐρέω φρονέουσι καὶ αὐτοῖς·  
ὦδ' ἴρηξ προσέειπεν ἀηδόνα ποικιλόδειρον  
ὑψι μάλ' ἐν νεφέσσι φέρων ὄνυχεσσι μεμαρπᾶς·  
205 ἦ δ' ἐλεόν, γναμπτοῖσι πεπαρμένη ἀμφ' ὄνυχεσσι,  
μύρετο· τὴν ὅ γ' ἐπικρατέως πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπεν·  
δαιμονίη, τί λέληκας; ἔχει νύ σε πολλὸν ἀρείων·  
τῇ δ' εἰς ἧ σ' ἂν ἐγὼ περ ἄγω καὶ αἰοιδὸν εὐδύσαν·  
210 δειπνον δ', αἴ κ' ἐθέλω, ποιήσομαι ἡὲ μεθήσω.  
ἄφρων δ', ὅς κ' ἐθέλη, πρὸς κρείσσονα ἀντιφερίζειν·  
νίκης τε στέρεται πρὸς τ' αἰσχεσιν ἄλγεα πάσχει.  
ὡς ἔφατ' ὠκυπέτης ἴρηξ, τανυσίπτερος ὄνις.  
Ἦ Πέρση, σὺ δ' ἄκουε δίκης μηδ' ὕβριν ὄφελλε·  
215 ὕβρις γάρ τε κακὴ δειλῶ βροτῶ, οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλὸς  
ῥηιδίως φερέμεν δύνатаι, βαρῦθει δέ θ' ὑπ' αὐτῆς  
ἐγκύρσας ἀτησιν· ὁδὸς δ' ἐτέρηφι παρελθεῖν  
κρείσσων ἐς τὰ δίκαια· δίκη δ' ὑπὲρ ὕβριος ἴσχει  
ἐς τέλος ἐξελθοῦσα· παθῶν δέ τε νήπιος ἔγνω·  
220 αὐτίκα γάρ τρέχει Ὀρκος ἅμα σκολιῆσι δίκησιν·  
τῆς δὲ Δίκης ρόθος ἐλκομένης ἦ κ' ἄνδρες ἄγωσι  
δωροφάγοι, σκολιῆς δὲ δίκης κρίνωσι θέμιστας· (Op. 202–21)

Hesiod's fable (Op. 202–12) has long been a critical crux because of its apparent inconsistency with what follows. As a concrete example of the preceding Iron Age vision of a world without justice, the fable shows the predatory hawk grasping a helpless nightingale in its claws, vaunting its liberty to do as it pleases with its prey. The following lines (213–21), however, address Hesiod's brother Perses and warn him to avoid *hybris*, because *dike* in the end triumphs over *hybris*. This does not appear to be the lesson of the fable at all.

Critics have attempted to address the contradiction between the fable and its context in at least three different ways, none of them fully satisfactory. (1) The old approach, going back to the scholia, equates the nightingale with Hesiod (ἀηδῶν=αἰιδός) and the hawk with the corrupt kings by whom he feels vic-

timized.<sup>1</sup> The fable exemplifies the 'might makes right' principle and serves as a description of the world as it is, not as one would wish it to be. This approach is untroubled by the ensuing passage on *dike's* triumph over *hybris*, seeing it as an idealizing wish, juxtaposed to the cynical fable in a move considered typical of Hesiod's logical discontinuity.<sup>2</sup> The disadvantage of this interpretation is of course that it despairs of the passage making any sense.

(2) A second popular approach has been to claim that the fable is a negative paradigm of animal behavior not applicable to the human realm.<sup>3</sup> This interpretation appeals to the later lines 274–80, which distinguish justice as the law of men from the law of fishes, beasts, and birds, who eat one another. That passage does indeed seem relevant to the fable and closes off the long series of meditations on the just and unjust city that the fable initiates. But following the fable at a distance of over sixty lines, it seems to act more as a second reading of the earlier passage than as a *fabula docet*. The question still remains why Hesiod did not place lines 274–85 immediately after the fable, and then advise

<sup>1</sup> See Σ*Op.* 202a, 207–12 Pertusi; U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Hesiods Erga* (Berlin 1928) 64; I. Sellschopp, *Stilistische Untersuchungen zu Hesiod* (Hamburg 1934) 83–86; W. Nicolai, *Hesiods Erga: Beobachtungen zum Aufbau* (Heidelberg 1964) 52f; G. B. Ford, Jr., "An Interpretation of the Fable of the Hawk and the Nightingale in Hesiod's 'Works and Days,'" *Orpheus* 12 (1965) 3–9; C. B. Welles, "Hesiod's Attitude Toward Labor," *GRBS* 8 (1967) 17ff; W. J. Verdenius, *A Commentary on Hesiod: Works and Days vv. 1–382* (Leiden 1985) 117f. Cf. H. T. Wade-Gery, *Essays in Greek History* (Oxford 1958) 10f, who thinks that the fable was originally composed as a separate poem in its own right, before the lawsuit was tried, and that the rest of the *Works and Days* was added after Perses' defeat. F. Lasserre, "La fable en Grèce dans la poésie archaïque," in F. A. Andrados, ed., *La Fable* (=Entretiens *Hardt* 30 [Vandœuvres 1984]) 82ff, also sees the fable as a set piece meant to shock the reader by contrast with conventional morality, as expressed in the following lines.

<sup>2</sup> For what is perhaps the most extreme view of Hesiod's inability to sustain a continuous logical development, see E. Havelock, "Thoughtful Hesiod," *YCS* 20 (1966) 59–72.

<sup>3</sup> See H. Frisch, *Might and Right in Antiquity*, tr. C. C. Martindale (Copenhagen 1949) 11f; L. W. Daly, "Hesiod's Fable," *TAPA* 92 (1961) 49f; K. von Fritz, "Das Hesiodische in den Werken Hesiods," in O. Reverdin, ed., *Hésiode et son influence* (=Entretiens *Hardt* 7 [Vandœuvres 1962]) 43ff; M. Puelma, "Sänger und König: Zum Verständnis von Hesiods Tierfabel," *MusHelv* 29 (1972) 99; C. J. Rowe, *Essential Hesiod* (Bristol 1978) 131f; A. Bonnafé, "Le rossignol et la justice en pleurs (Hésiode, 'Travaux' 203–212)," *BAssBudé* SER. 4 42 (1983) 263f; S. Lombardo and R. Lamberton, *Hesiod: Works and Days and Theogony* (Indianapolis 1993) 54.

Perses to avoid *hybris*. This line of interpretation also runs contrary to the usual purpose of fables, which is precisely to parallel animal characters and behavior with the human realm.

(3) A third approach has been to interpret the allegorical identifications of the fable differently: some have said that the corrupt kings, rather than being the hawk, are actually the nightingale, with Zeus as the hawk.<sup>4</sup> Although this approach has the advantage of giving the fable a moral that coincides with the following exhortation to avoid *hybris*, it has the distinct disadvantage of ignoring the nightingale's clear identification as a "poet" (208).<sup>5</sup> It also accords poorly with the implication in the first line that the kings already know the fable's lesson. Another allegorical interpretation has held that the hawk and nightingale are not figures for any specific parties, but for the abstract concepts of *hybris* and *dike* respectively.<sup>6</sup> This seems, however, to combine the drawbacks of all the other approaches, particularly inasmuch as the fable would then suggest that *hybris* triumphs.

I would like to propose another interpretation altogether, focussing on two important but commonly ignored details: the hawk's declaration at 210 that the nightingale's mistake was in matching herself with those who are mightier, and Hesiod's warning to his brother at 214 that *hybris* is especially bad for a poor man. These two details, when construed together, suggest strongly that the nightingale should not be identified as Hesiod, much less as *dike* or the kings. The nightingale should rather be seen as Perses, who has overstepped his station and become hybriatic by involving himself with the rapacious kings, who are mightier than he and will eventually take advantage of him, even as the hawk now grasps the overweening nightingale. Read in this way, the fable makes perfectly good sense in its immediate

<sup>4</sup> See M. S. Jensen, "Tradition and Innovation in Hesiod's Works and Days," *CI Med* 27 (1966) 20ff, who says the nightingale represents Perses and the kings; V. A. Rodgers, "Some Thoughts on ΔΙΚΗ," *CQ N.S.* 21 (1971) 289ff, who says the nightingale represents the kings, as does I. Perysinakis, "Hesiod's Treatment of Wealth," *Metis* 1 (1986) 106ff.

<sup>5</sup> Perysinakis (*supra* n.4: 106f) addresses the problem by suggesting that the kings are *aidoi* insofar as they depend on Mnemosyne and the Muses for their knowledge of laws. This solution seems a bit desperate.

<sup>6</sup> See E. Livrea, "L'AINOΞ Esiodeo," *GiornItFilNap* 22.2 (1970) 14ff; S. H. Lonsdale, "Hesiod's Hawk and Nightingale (Op. 202-12): Fable or Omen?" *Hermes* 117 (1989) 404ff.

context and does indeed illustrate the perils of hybriatic presumption.

The admonition to Perses about *hybris* as an especially bad trait for a poor man clearly echoes the prologue of the *Works and Days*, which gives the necessary background for understanding the nature of Perses' *hybris* (27–41). Indeed the prologue was the last glimpse of the Perses theme before the lengthy digressions of the Prometheus myth and the Myth of the Age (47–201); the fable and the lines that follow seem designed to pick up in ring-form where the prologue left off on the theme of Perses and his involvement with the “gift-eating” kings. In the prologue Hesiod elaborates the grounds for the dispute between Perses and himself; his first warning to Perses is that a poor man has little time and money for such litigation, in contrast to the rich man, who may have the resources to waste. Some twenty years ago, Michael Gagarin argued in support of van Groningen's view that this passage describes Perses' first and only lawsuit against his brother, not a second lawsuit, as often assumed.<sup>7</sup> This passage gives no evidence that Hesiod had lost a previous lawsuit or that his distrust of the kings is anything more than generic. Perses had not squandered his inheritance prior to the lawsuit, but Hesiod is on this view criticizing him precisely for squandering his inheritance on the lawsuit, in an attempt to gain even more. It is for this reason that Hesiod warns Perses about the expense of lawsuits and predicts (34f) that he will not be able to do this a second time. By consorting with “gift-eating” kings and thinking that he can bribe them,<sup>8</sup> Perses aspires to a status higher than his own and makes himself dependent on greedy and unreliable allies. These allies not only eat gifts, but as we see, even the nightingales who bear those gifts.

<sup>7</sup> M. Gagarin, “Hesiod's Dispute with Perses,” *TAPA* 104 (1974) 103–11, arguing in support of a view first proposed by B. A. van Groningen, “Hésiode et Perses,” *MedKonNederlAkadWet* 20.6 (1957) 153–66.

<sup>8</sup> The one issue where I depart company from Gagarin (*supra* n.7: 109f) is in regard to the interpretation of βασιλῆας δωροφάγους (38f): Gagarin believes that this refers merely to the expense of placing a deposit with the judges prior to the hearing of a suit and has no connotation of graft or bribery. But the imputation of “crooked justice” (σκολιῆς δίκης) at 221, also referring to δωροφάγοι judges, combined with the negative connotations of the parallel Homeric epithet δημοβόρος (*Il.* 1.231), suggests clear wrongdoing on the part of the kings. See H. Munding, *Hesiods Erga in ihrem Verhältnis zur Ilias* (Frankfurt a.M. 1959) 34–38; Verdenius (*supra* n.1) 38f.

It must be emphasized that the *basileis* to whom Perses turns are not really “kings” but local aristocrats to whom judicial matters might be referred. Perses is thus presuming to curry favor with a whole class of people, always named in the plural, not with a single individual *basileus*. The other semantic misunderstanding that has hindered proper interpretation of the fable concerns ἀντιφερίζειν at 210. This is usually taken to mean “set oneself in rivalry against,”<sup>9</sup> but its other uses in archaic poetry instead suggest a meaning of “considering oneself on the same level with.” West’s otherwise copious commentary is uncharacteristically silent on this rare verb. Its use seems mainly to be, as here, in contexts of self-comparison with someone greater. In Aristophanes’ *Knights* the Paphlagon is accused of comparing himself with Themistocles (381, σὺ Θεμιστοκλεῖ ἀντιφερίζεις; 818, ὁ Θεμιστοκλεῖ ἀντιφερίζων). At Pindar *Pyth.* 9.50f the centaur Cheiron modestly compares himself with a wise man (εἰ δὲ χρὴ καὶ πᾶρ σοφὸν ἀντιφερίζαι, ἐρέω). Neither of these examples can possibly be cases of actual rivalry or competition. The verb occurs three times in Homer, all in the *Theomachia* of *Il.* 21 in reference to weaker gods who presume to challenge the stronger. This context is no doubt what has led to the mistaken perception of some lexicographers that the verb does refer to conflict between parties. But two of the three examples occur in the phrase “know how much better I am than you, since you compare yourself to me in strength” (ὄτι μοι μένος ἀντιφερίζεις). So say Athena to Ares (*Il.* 21.411) and Hera to Artemis (21.488). Again, what is reproached is not the battle, but the over-inflated self-estimation that leads to it. Indeed, the manuscripts transmit as a variant in the first case ἰσοφερίζεις, literally “set yourself equal to,” a likely gloss that shows how the Alexandrians understood the verb.<sup>10</sup> The other use in *Il.* 21

<sup>9</sup> Note the translations “tries to withstand the stronger” (H. G. Evelyn-White, *Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns and Homeric Epics* [Loeb edition, London 1914] 19), “wishes to fight against those who are stronger” (R. M. Frazer, *The Poems of Hesiod* [Norman 1983] 106), “oppose their betters in strength” (A. N. Athanassakis, *Hesiod* [Baltimore 1983] 72), “struggles against his superiors” (Lombardo [*supra* n.3] 29), “voglia di mettersi contro i piú forti” (A. Colonna, *Esiodo: Le Opere e i Giorni* [Milan 1967] 73), and “begehrt, sich Stärkeren entgegensustellen” (W. Marg, *Hesiod: Sämtliche Gedichte* [Zürich 1970] 316). Closer to the truth is “tries to match his strength with the stronger” (R. Lattimore, *Hesiod* [Ann Arbor 1959] 43) or “is ready to match himself with his betters” (Daly [*supra* n.3] 47).

<sup>10</sup> ἀντιφερίζεις is the reading of the papyrus and the majority of Mss. See N. Richardson, *The Iliad: A Commentary VI* (Cambridge 1993) *ad loc.*

is in the river's statement of surrender to Hephaestus, declaring that none of the gods could equal Hephaestus' fire (357, οὐ τις σοί γε θεῶν δύναι' ἀντιπερίζειν); that this is not merely a synonym for doing battle is proven by the next line, in which the river adds that not even he would fight Hephaestus (358, οὐδ' ἂν ἐγὼ σοί γ' ... μαχοίμην). The notion of setting oneself in rivalry against a competitor is rather expressed in Homeric Greek by the parallel verb ἀντιφέρεσθαι (*Il.* 1.589, 21.482). Finally, we should consider Hesiod's one other use of the verb (*Th.* 609f, τῷ δέ τ' ἄπ' αἰῶνος κακὸν ἐσθλῷ ἀντιπερίζει ἐμμενές), where marriage is said to bring a man equal amounts of good and evil: the sense of the passage is clearly not that good and evil fight one another, but that they are evenly matched. Thus not a single occurrence of this verb in classical Greek can with certainty be said to refer to hostile rivalry; the usual connotation is that of self-comparison with one's betters.<sup>11</sup>

On this interpretation, the nightingale's mistake was to consider herself on the same level as the hawk and the hawk's lesson is a violent reassertion of his superiority; the victory the nightingale loses is not victory over the hawk but victory over other nightingales, based on the erroneous assumption that she was as good as a hawk.<sup>12</sup> Equally Perses' *hybris* was in assuming that he had a reliable relationship with the kings and that his efforts to curry favor would obligate them to grant their respect and support, as if he were a social equal. *Dike* is preferable to such *hybris* because it places trust only in the gods. Perses, a νῆπιος (218), learns this lesson too late, only after he has suffered defeat. As in the prologue (40f), *nepioi* are those who fail to perceive that the half is more than the whole, that resting content with a moderate station is safer than grasping for more.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> This also seems to be the semantic emphasis of the word in later Homerizing poets such as Quintus of Smyrna (1.758, 2.24) and Nonnus (36.48); only Nonnus 2.288 refers unequivocally to hostile combat.

<sup>12</sup> νίκη at 211 is a serious problem on all other interpretations: how could Hesiod expect "victory" over the *basileis*? Or how could the *basileis* expect victory over Zeus? But it does make sense to speak of arrogantly acting like a king or like Zeus in one's relations to other men.

<sup>13</sup> West punctuates with a comma after line 39, but most texts (e.g. Sinclair, Rzach, Solmsen, Evelyn-White) use a period, in which case the statement of 40f is a generic third-person plural, rather than being limited to the kings. The parallel with line 218 suggests that both Perses and the kings are covered by this statement, and that it is thus a gnomic transition from the focus on the kings at 38f to the renewed address to Perses at 42-46. See J. S. Clay, "The

What are we to make of the statement at the opening of the fable, that it is intended as a story for kings, who already know it? How can this stage direction be reconciled with an interpretation of the fable as a moral lesson for Perses? The fable must have a double audience consisting of both Perses and the kings, for the lessons on *hybris* and *dike* in the following lines, explicitly addressed to Perses, seem too closely related to the fable's themes to be a completely independent development. That the fable was meant for more than just the ears of kings is so much as admitted by the statement that the kings know it already; Hesiod hints herein that its true audience is the nightingale, who apparently does not yet know the lesson voiced by the hawk. With its double reference to both kings (the hawk) and Perses (the nightingale), the fable is thus transitional, moving from the Iron age vision of unmitigated predatory violence (the way of the kings/hawk) to the moral ambiguity of Perses the nightingale, Hesiod's naive and overambitious brother, ethically flawed but perhaps still reformable. The framing reference to kings at 202 and invocation of Perses at 213 formalizes this movement.<sup>14</sup>

The central argument in favor of identifying the nightingale with Hesiod has always been the nightingale's status as an *αοιδός* (208). But considering the likelihood of the rhapsode's occupation being hereditary, it is possible that Hesiod's brother Perses may have been a poet, too, and would have been known as such by Hesiod's original audience.<sup>15</sup> The story about Hesiod receiving poetic investiture from the Muses on Mt Helicon (*Th.* 22–34) is of course the appropriate self-accounting for an

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Education of Perses: From 'Mega Nepios' to 'Dion Genos' and Back," *Materiali e Discussioni* 31 (1993) 27.

<sup>14</sup> For a comparable use of general gnomic material with equal validity to two parties as a transitional device, see 40f, as discussed in *supra* n.13. The convention functioned in later poetic traditions too, not only with reference to gnomes but also to mythic paradigms, prayers, ambiguous pronouns, and other devices: see my *The Pindaric Mind: A Study of Logical Structure in Early Greek Poetry* (Leiden 1985) 133–55.

<sup>15</sup> This of course assumes the historicity of Hesiod's brother, which some, going back to the ancient scholia, have denied: see *Hyp.* B p.3.13–16 Pertusi and, more recently, G. Nagy, "Hesiod," in T. J. Luce, ed., *Ancient Writers and Thinkers* (New York 1982) I 62. But even if we see Perses as a generic figure, Hesiod's "shadow" or "other," it would make sense that he be styled as Hesiod's outward equivalent in terms of profession and social status, equal in everything but his character and habits.

epic about the gods, but in no way contradicts the probability that Hesiod had a human teacher as well, in all likelihood his own father.<sup>16</sup> Of Hesiod and Perses' father we know only that he migrated from Aeolian Cyme to Ascra and was habituated to seafaring in his efforts to escape poverty (*Op.* 633–40). Ascra hardly seems a fitting home port for a merchant seaman, but the paternal *Wanderlust* that Hesiod attests could be equally appropriate to a wandering minstrel who moves from audience to audience for his livelihood.<sup>17</sup>

The heritability of the poetic vocation is an idea very deeply embedded in Greek tradition and is doubtless based on the empirical observation of most professions in fact being hereditary.<sup>18</sup> In the best attested historical period all four major Athenian dramatic poets had sons who came to be active in the same genre, although they were often suspected of producing plays that their fathers left behind.<sup>19</sup> The earliest logographers perceived the epic tradition in the same way: already in the late sixth/early fifth century, Acusilaus (*FGrHist* 2F2) and Pindar (*Nem.* 2.1f) speak of Homeric rhapsodes as "Homeridae," sons of Homer. Although by that time the title merely designated one among several rhapsodic guilds, the name suggests a more archaic tradition in which the successors of Homer were quite literally his genetic heirs and descendants.<sup>20</sup> The same assump-

<sup>16</sup> Such is the conclusion, on different grounds, of R. M. Cook, "Hesiod's Father," *JHS* 109 (1989) 170f.

<sup>17</sup> For the *aidos* as a mobile profession see *Od.* 17.382–87, a list of such professions, again contiguous to the τέκτων and πωχός as in *Op.* 25f. For the legends of Homer's own wandering see *Vita Homeri* 6–36 Wilamowitz; *Cert. Hom. et Hes.* 55f, 254–323 Allen.

<sup>18</sup> Phemius claims to be αὐτοδιδάκτος (*Od.* 22.347), but this very claim seems to be styled as an exception to a general rule of hereditary succession.

<sup>19</sup> Aeschylus' sons Euphorion and Euaeon (*Suda s.v.* Εὐφορίων [E3800 Adler]) and nephew Philocles (*ΣAr. Av.* 281c Holwerda = *TGrF* 24r2) are all attested as tragedians, as were Philocles' son Morsimus, grandson Astydamos, and great-grandson Philocles II. Sophocles' son Iophon was a well-known tragedian (*Ar. Ran.* 73–79; *Suda s.v.* Ἰοφῶν [1451 Adler]; *Vita Soph.* 19). *Vita Eur.* 30f refers to a son of Euripides by the same name who wrote tragedy, but this may be a confusion with one of the other two tragic poets named Euripides. Aristophanes' three sons Ararus (*Suda s.v.* Ἀραρός [A3737 Adler]), Nicostratus, and Philippus (*Vita Ar.* 55 = *PCG* τ1, *ΣPl. Ap.* 19c) were all attested as comic playwrights.

<sup>20</sup> See also Hellanicus, *FGrHist* 4F20 and *ΣPind. Nem.* 2.1 Drachmann, citing the Sicilian historian Hippostratus, *FGrHist* 568F5. On the probable sixth-century provenance of these rhapsodic guilds, see A. Dihle, *Homere-Probleme* (Opladen 1970) 115–18; W. Burkert, "Die Leistung eines Kteophylos," *MusHelv* 29 (1972) 78ff.



tions about heritability of poetic ability make Homer and Hesiod cousins (Pherecydes, *FGrHist* 3F167; Hellanicus 4F5; Damastes 5F11; Ephorus 70 F1; cf. *Cert. Hom. et Hes.* 44–53 Allen), Stesichorus the son of Hesiod (Philochorus, *FGrHist* 328F213; Arist. fr. 565 Rose), the *Cypria* or *Sack of Oechalia* Homer's dowry for his daughter (Pind. fr. 265 S.-M.; *Suda s.v.* Κρεώφυλος [K 2376 Adler]), and variously portray Homer as the descendant of either Orpheus, Thamyras, or Musaeus.<sup>21</sup> Of course none of these speculations preserve historical fact, but they do show that poetry was taken for granted as an inherited profession from the earliest stages of recorded Greek history.

That Hesiod and Perses were both poets may be suggested by lines 25f, the description of the two Strifes immediately preceding the admonition to Perses concerning his association with the kings. After describing the good strife, in which neighbor competes with neighbor, Hesiod adds a coda of two lines exemplifying how good strife can turn into bad: potter is angry with potter and carpenter with carpenter, beggar begrudges beggar, and bard begrudges bard.<sup>22</sup> He then addresses Perses and warns him against the bad strife, as illustrated in his lawsuit. Could this progression of examples be meant to suggest that the dispute between Perses and Hesiod was a case of bard envying bard? We know that Hesiod at least was a bard; line 26 suggests that he felt envied by another bard and lines 27ff that he felt envied by his brother. In light of the juxtaposition of lines 26 and 27ff, it does not seem unreasonable to conjecture that the envious bard and envious brother are identical. If so, the "inheritance" of material property they have derived from their father, over which they are now in dispute, may be as much a metaphor for their inheritance of poetic tradition as a reality. Without going so far as to say that "Hesiod" and "Perses" were fictional, generic characters, it may be that the idea of a lawsuit between them was allegorical and emblematic.

<sup>21</sup> For Homer's descent from Musaeus see Gorgias 82D25 D.-K.; Thamyras: *Cert. Hom. et Hes.* 22 Allen. The more common version was to trace both his and Hesiod's genealogy from Orpheus and thus ultimately from Linus and Apollo: cf. Pherecydes, *FGrHist* 3F167; Hellanicus, 4F5; Damastes 5F11; *Cert. Hom. et Hes.* 44–53 Allen.

<sup>22</sup> On the collapse of the distinction between the two Strifes, see the subtle analyses of P. Pucci, *Hesiod and the Language of Poetry* (Baltimore 1977) 130ff; M. Gagarin, "The Ambiguity of *Eris* in the *Works and Days*," in M. Griffith and D. J. Mastronarde, edd., *The Cabinet of the Muses* (Atlanta 1990) 174ff.

The theoretical implications of such a quarrel of poets may be quite significant. It would indeed be the first literary quarrel in a long history of such quarrels throughout the Greek tradition and would help explain Hesiod's appeal to another characteristically quarrelsome Greek poet, the Alexandrian Callimachus.<sup>23</sup> The contest between Hesiod and Perses could be seen as not only between right and wrong, but also between Hesiod's poetry of peasant autarky and Perses' hybriatic poetry of aristocratic flattery. Hesiod minds his business, treats his neighbors justly, and knows the will of the gods. In his economy of small peasant landowners, the *basileis* are unneeded and all but irrelevant. "I did not complete one long poem of many thousand lines on kings and heroes," as Callimachus asserted in the prologue to the *Aetia* (fr. 1.3ff Pf.). In contrast Perses consorts with kings and, in his *hybris*, aims at a loftier poetic theme. But his court-oriented poetry of praise leaves him literally "in the grasp" of capricious and greedy patrons—the kind who, in the hawk's words, will eat him for dinner if they wish. None of this is to deny the reality of Perses' lawsuit or his interest in the material inheritance from their father too. But if we recognize Perses as a poet like his brother, the dispute and the fable gain an added dimension of programmatic significance, allowing Hesiod to distinguish himself from the 'other' strand of epic tradition—heroic epic—by construing his brother as a projected image of the 'other' poet, who foolishly matches himself with kings. As Hesiod's reference to participation in the poetic contest at the funeral Games of Amphidamus (*Op.* 654–57) shows, Greek epic poetry was necessarily agonistic in its performative context even in this early period. I would suggest that the agonism extends to a contest between epic types as well as between individual epic poets.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> On Hesiod's importance to Callimachus and the Alexandrians generally, see H. Reinsch-Werner, *Callimachus Hesiodicus* (Berlin 1976).

<sup>24</sup> Nagy (*supra* n.14: 65f) sees Hesiod's short, unheroic sea-voyage to Aulis to compete in the games at Chalcis as an assertion of his generic opposition to heroic epic. The confrontation between the two strands of epic tradition is of course the theme of the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, a work in its present form likely to be of Hadrianic date, but probably owing its origins to the fifth-century sophist Alcidas and perhaps even with roots earlier in epic tradition. See F. Nietzsche, "Der Florentinische Tractat über Homer und Hesiod, ihr Geschlecht und ihren Wettkampf," *RhM* 25 (1870) 536–40, 28 (1873) 211–22; A. Busse, "Der Agon zwischen Homer und Hesiod," *RhM* 64 (1909) 108–19; J. Schwartz, *Pseudo-Hesiodica: Recherches sur la composition, la diffusion et la disparition ancienne d'œuvres attribuées à Hésiode* (Leiden 1960)

We must also add that none of these considerations justify the actions of the kings and the hawk, which are arguably a form of *hybris* in contravention of *dike*. As 214ff make clear, *hybris* results in ruin not only for poor men like Perses, but in the end even for noble men like the kings when they confront the superior power of Zeus. *νήπιος* (218) and *δωροφάγοι* (221) clearly point back to the kings in the prologue (39f), even as the crooked *dikai* do (219, 221; cf. 36). This shift in focus from one form of *hybris* (Perses') to another (the kings') is quite typical of Hesiod's technique for analyzing complex moral concepts, as in the famous double treatment of *eris* (11–26) and *aidos* (317ff).<sup>25</sup> It is the kings' form of *hybris* that is the focus of the following meditations on the Just and the Unjust Cities, and ultimately of Hesiod's disavowal of animal laws for humanity (274–85). It is the poor man's *hybris* to overstep his station and act like a rich man, and it is the rich man's *hybris* to overstep his station and act like a god. As the hawk implies, both forms of *hybris* are sure to meet with ruin when encountering one who is truly mightier.<sup>26</sup>

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500–05; K. Hess, *Der Agon zwischen Homer und Hesiod* (Winterthur 1960) 56–66. In this work, the final verdict of the king is in favor of Hesiod despite Homer's superior poetic merit, because Hesiod represents peace and fertility rather than war and slaughter (*Cert.* 207–10 Allen). The peace-poetry vs war-poetry opposition is at least as old as the description of the two cities on the Shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18.490–540), on the poetic implications of which see my "Nature and Art in the Shield of Achilles," *Arion* SER. 3 2.1 (1992) 16–41.

<sup>25</sup> The analogy to Hesiod's treatment of *aidos* is especially close: here too we have a division between the significance of the term for rich and poor, as is also implied in the later reflections on *elpis* (498–501). See E. Livrea, "Applicazioni della 'Begriffspaltung' negli *Erga*," *Helikon* 7 (1967) 92, for an acute discussion.

<sup>26</sup> The author is indebted to J. S. Clay, E. Cook, M. Gagarin, E. Lowry, D. Tandy, and the journal's anonymous referee for their interest and constructive comments on the present essay. Of course, none of them should be held responsible for any of the essay's conclusions.