

What the Muses Sang: *Theogony* 1–115

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THE PROEM to the *Theogony* has often been analyzed both in terms of its formal structure and in relation to recurrent hymnic conventions;¹ it has also been interpreted as a fundamental statement of archaic Greek poetics.² While differing somewhat in its perspective, the present investigation builds on and complements those previous studies. Dedicated to the Muses, the patronesses of poetry, the opening of the *Theogony* repeatedly describes these divinities engaged in their characteristic activity, that is, singing. In the course of the proem, the Muses sing four times: once as they descend from Helicon (lines 11–21), twice on Olympus (44–50, 66f), and once as they make their way from their birthplace in Pieria and ascend to Olympus (71–75). In addition, the prologue describes the song the goddesses inspire in their servants, the *oidoi* (99–101), as well as the song Hesiod requests that they sing for him, the invocation proper (105–15). My aim here is a simple one: to examine the texts and contexts of each of these songs and to compare them to the song the Muses instruct Hesiod to sing and the one he finally produces.

¹ See, for example, P. Friedländer, “Das Proömium von Hesiods Theogonie” (1914), in E. HEITSCH, *Hesiod* (Darmstadt 1966: hereafter “Heitsch”) 277–94; W. Otto, “Hesioda,” in *Varia Variorum: Festgabe für Karl Reinhardt* (Münster 1952) 49–53; P. Walcot, “The Problem of the Proemium of Hesiod’s *Theogony*,” *SO* 33 (1957) 37–47; B. A. van Groningen, *La Composition littéraire archaïque grecque*² (Amsterdam 1960) 256–62; H. Schwabl, “Aufbau und Struktur des Proömons des hesiodischen Theogonie,” *Hermes* 91 (1963) 385–415; E. Bradley, “The Relevance of the Proemium to the Design and Meaning of Hesiod’s *Theogony*,” *SO* 41 (1966) 29–47; K. Büchner, “Das Proömium der Theogonie des Hesiod,” in *Studien zur römischen Literatur VII* (Wiesbaden 1968) 9–42; W. Minton, “The Proem-Hymn of Hesiod’s *Theogony*,” *TAPA* 101 (1970) 357–77; A. Lenz, *Das Proöm des frühen griechischen Epos* (Bonn 1980) 127–81; R. Janko, “The Structure of the Homeric Hymns: A Study in Genre,” *Hermes* 109 (1981) 20–22; and W. G. Thalmann, *Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Epic Poetry* (Baltimore 1984) 134–39.

² Cf. J.-P. Vernant, “Aspects mythique de la mémoire et du temps,” in *Mythe et pensée I* (Paris 1965) 80–107; M. Detienne, *Les Maîtres de vérité dans la Grèce archaïque* (Paris 1967) 8ff; R. Harriott, *Poetry and Criticism before Plato* (London 1969) 10–36; J. Svenbro, *La Parole et le marbre* (Lund 1976) 46–73; P. Pucci, *Hesiod and the Language of Poetry* (Baltimore 1977) 8–44; and G. B. Walsh, *The Varieties of Enchantment* (Chapel Hill 1984) 22–36.

Scholars have, of course, previously touched upon the question of the relation of the Muses' songs to the *Theogony*. It has been claimed that the goddesses' various songs adumbrate the contents of the *Theogony* and that Hesiod simply transmits the divine song to his human audience.³ But critics have paid insufficient attention to the differences between Hesiod's song and the ones he ascribes to the Muses. It is a matter of historical interest that the old analysts showed a greater awareness of such discrepancies, but they usually attributed lines inconsistent with the contents of the *Theogony* to later revisers of the Hesiodic text, or they considered the whole to be a rather disorderly compilation from diverse hands and epochs. In their arguments for the integrity of the text, the unitarians for the most part ignored the problems or offered watered-down solutions.⁴ Now that the overall unity of the *Theogony* and the proem in particular has been established,⁵ we can attempt a re-examination of the relation between the Muses' songs and Hesiod's through a sustained and detailed analysis of their similarities *and* differences. Viewed in this light, the proem serves to define the character of the *Theogony* itself.

Hesiod does not tell us what the Muses sing on the peak of Helicon. Perhaps he cannot know. As a mere mortal, he has no access to what transpires there on the "god-haunted" summit.⁶ His uncertainty concerning the Muses' bathing-places would indicate as much.⁷ But as the goddesses make their nocturnal descent from the mountain,⁸

³ By, for example, E. Siegmann, "Zu Hesiods Theogonieproömium" (1958), in Heitsch 318f; Bradley (*supra* n.1) 38f; and Thalmann (*supra* n.1) 139: "the song for which he finally asks their aid (ll. 104–15) combines the subjects of their performances and uses motifs and phrases from all the previous descriptions."

⁴ Walcot (*supra* n.1) 40f, while arguing for the unity of the proem, considers lines 11–21 to be a pre-existing catalogue that is only partially integrated into its context. G. S. Kirk, "The Structure and Aim of the *Theogony*," in *Hésiode et son influence* (Entretiens Hardt 7 [Vandoeuvres 1960]) 84f, represents a kind of neo-analytic position and believes that the prologue in its original form, before it was expanded, gave an accurate inventory of the nucleus of the original *Theogony*.

⁵ This trend can easily be quantified: in his edition, which forms the culmination of nineteenth-century analysis, F. Jacoby, *Hesiodi Theogonia* (Berlin 1930), athetized 69 verses of the 115-line proem; F. Solmsen, *Hesiodi Theogonia Opera et dies Scutum* (Oxford 1970), six; while M. L. West, *Hesiod Theogony* (Oxford 1966), leaves all but two lines intact.

⁶ Cf. West (*supra* n.5) 152, on ζάθεον: "the adjective properly means not 'holy' merely, but 'numinous', πλήρης θεῶν."

⁷ For an attempt to locate the streams and springs mentioned by Hesiod, see P. W. Wallace, "Hesiod and the Valley of the Muses," *GRBS* 15 (1974) 5–24 and the maps on pp.7 and 13. Hesiod's mention of alternative locales resembles the *sive . . . sive* style of hymnic predication. Cf. E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Berlin 1923) 144–47. Here, Hesiod's inclusiveness betrays his ignorance.

⁸ W. J. Verdenius, "Notes on the Proem of Hesiod's *Theogony*," *Mnemosyne* SER. IV 25 (1972) 229, wrongly believes that the Muses are on their way to Olympus. Compare West (*supra* n.5) 155 on line 9.

“wrapped in mist” (that is, invisible to human eyes), Hesiod records their song.⁹ Now heard but not seen, the Muses sing their first song, a catalogue of nineteen divinities, some in pairs or triads, adorned only with an epithet or two for each:

Zeus		Hera
Athena		
Apollo		Artemis
Poseidon		
Themis		Aphrodite
Hebe		Dione
Leto	Iapetus	Cronus
Dawn	Sun	Moon
Gaia	Oceanus	Night

“And the holy race of the other immortals who are forever.”

This first catalogue has been called a table of contents in reverse order to the *Theogony*.¹⁰ Snell, however, recognized that the principle of organization differs from Hesiod’s: “Dies ist nicht die Ordnung der Genealogie, sondern die der Würde und Heiligkeit.”¹¹ But Snell’s supposition that the list proceeds according to “Rangordnung” is not completely persuasive. In fact, the catalogue presents several peculiarities and obscurities and deserves further consideration.¹²

The priority of Zeus does not surprise, nor that of his consort/sister Hera, although it is noticeable that she is not specifically designated as such. While, on the other hand, Athena’s relationship to Zeus is explicitly stated (κούρην . . . Δίος, 13), that of Apollo and Artemis is not. With Themis we appear to move from Zeus’ offspring and contemporaries to an earlier generation of gods, but the mention of Aphrodite throws off our expectations; for Dione’s presence in the following verse invites us to suppose that this Aphrodite is the daughter of Zeus of the Homeric tradition,¹³ as does the proximity of Hebe, his daughter by Hera. After Leto, however, some semblance of order seems to reassert itself: two Titans are followed by the most promi-

⁹ Cf. the scholium at line 23: αἱ Μοῦσαι <ἐν> ἀκροτάτῳ Ἐλικῶνι ὡς θεαί, αὐτὸς δ’ ὑποκάτω τοῦ ὄρους ὡς βροτός. I follow West’s text of lines 11–21. To be sure, scholars have athetized all or parts of these verses, precisely on the basis of their oddness, which merely begs the question. Line 19 is omitted from a papyrus and one MS. and placed before 18 and 15 in others. Solmsen (*supra* n.5) brackets 19 as well as 17.

¹⁰ By, for example, W. Aly, “Hesiodos von Askra” (1913), in Heitsch 54 n.1: “V. 10–21 ist eine Inhaltsangabe der Theogonie in umgekehrter Reihenfolge.” Cf. K. von Fritz, “Das Proömium der hesiodische Theogonie,” in Heitsch 301; Kirk (*supra* n.4) 85; and Büchner (*supra* n.1) 21.

¹¹ B. Snell, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes*⁴ (Göttingen 1975) 55.

¹² Some of these peculiarities are enumerated by R. Schlesier, “Les Muses dans le prologue de la ‘Théogonie’ d’Hésiode,” *RHistRel* 199 (1982) 152f.

¹³ The scholium at line 17 rejects the notion of any ambiguity.

ment meteorological figures and then by what West calls “elemental divinities.”¹⁴

A comparison of the song of the Heliconian Muses with Hesiod’s own reveals a number of striking differences. First and most obviously, the list in lines 11–21 generally proceeds backwards from the Olympians to earlier deities, whereas Hesiod begins ἐξ ἀρχῆς. Furthermore, except in the case of Athena, relations between the named divinities are not clarified. Any simple chronological scheme seems to be jettisoned in the catalogue’s middle section, nor does any other clear principle of ordering emerge. Moreover, Aphrodite’s implied genealogy contradicts the one Hesiod gives in his subsequent theogony (188–200). Dione does, of course, reappear (353) but merely as one of the Oceanids. Finally, line 21 makes clear that this enumeration of the gods remains incomplete, while Hesiod at least suggests that his is exhaustive.

There exists another significant point of contrast, which is perhaps less evident at first glance. In general, the epithets used by the Muses of Helicon to describe the gods appear fairly conventional. But one stands out, not only because it occurs only here in the Hesiodic corpus, but because it differs in kind from the other divine epithets: Ἥρην Ἀργεῖην (11f). Hera is appropriately called Argive because one of her oldest and most important shrines was located in Argos.¹⁵ In Hesiod’s own account of the gods, as far as I can ascertain, no divinity is designated by local cult epithets. The apparent exception of Aphrodite appears to prove the rule; for Hesiod goes out of his way to derive her epithets, “Cyprian” and “Cytherean,” from the circumstances of her birth rather than from any specific and local cultic associations.¹⁶ Hesiod’s song, inspired by the Muses of Olympus, is consciously Panhellenic, whereas the Heliconian Muses, themselves localized divinities, preserve traces of localized cult in theirs.¹⁷

We can now summarize the characteristics of the song sung on Helicon in opposition to Hesiod’s own. The former begins from the Olympians, the present generation of the gods, *i.e.*, those most apparent and closest to us;¹⁸ it neither explains their interrelationships, nor

¹⁴ West (*supra* n.5) 156.

¹⁵ It is worth noting that in Homer “Argive Hera” occurs only twice (*Il.* 4.8 and 5.908), and that on both occasions Hera’s local association with Argos—she is paired with Ἀλαλκομενῆς Ἀθήνη—is emphasized.

¹⁶ Cf. G. Nagy, “Hesiod,” in *Ancient Writers*, ed. T. J. Luce (New York 1982) 49.

¹⁷ See Nagy (*supra* n.16) 55f.

¹⁸ This characteristic may explain the prominence of Dawn, Sun, and Moon in the often athetized line 19, a prominence which contrasts with their minor rôle in the

does it provide a clear and systematic ordering. Moreover, although not openly contradicting Hesiod's later account, the Heliconian song at least suggests a divergent version of the genealogy of Aphrodite. Finally, it is local and incomplete while Hesiod's theogony appears to be Panhellenic and comprehensive.¹⁹

The characteristics of the Heliconian song, as I have spelled them out, are relevant to the subsequent scene of Hesiod's *Dichterweihe*. When the Muses met Hesiod herding his sheep below Helicon, they cryptically proclaimed their ability to "tell lies resembling the truth" and "when we want, to sing the truth." To offer an exhaustive discussion of the problems raised by, and the interpretations put forth of, this enigmatic statement would lead too far afield.²⁰ I only note that the archaic Greek conception of ἀλήθεια is in some ways far narrower than our notion of 'truth'. *Aletheia* consists of 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth'.²¹ The legal terminology is apt, since generally *aletheia* involves a complete and veracious account of what one has witnessed. If the meaning of *aletheia* is considerably more limited than our 'truth', then the notion of *pseudos* has a comparably

Theogony. For men, at least, they are the most conspicuous of the heavenly phenomena.

¹⁹ Hesiod draws attention to both these characteristics of his theogony in his apology for not enumerating all the rivers: τῶν ὄνομ' ἀργαλέον πάντων βροτῶν ἄνδρα ἐνίσπειν, / οἱ δὲ ἕκαστοι ἴσασιν, ὅσοι περιναϊεταίουσι (369f).

²⁰ For a summary of views, see Svenbro (*supra* n.2) 46–49; W. Stroh, "Hesiods lügende Musen," in *Studien zum antiken Epos*, edd. H. Görgemanns and E. A. Schmidt (Meisenheim 1976) 90–97; also H. Neitzel, "Hesiod und die lügenden Musen," *Hermes* 108 (1980) 387–401. I find myself most in sympathy with Pucci's (*supra* n.2) penetrating analysis of the fundamental ambiguity of the poetic *logos* in Hesiod. But I would take issue with his interpretation on certain crucial points. First, his recourse to Derrida's theories of the nature of speech strikes me as unnecessary. Pucci himself musters sufficient evidence to show that Hesiod was fully aware of the ambiguity of the Muses' message. Consequently, I cannot follow Pucci's contention that Hesiod naïvely exempts his own discourse from the intrinsic doubleness of the Muses' *logos*. Cf. Thalmann (*supra* n.1) 151: "the Muses never explicitly promise to convey the truth to Hesiod; and this inconclusiveness in their speech, as well as other more subtle indications, hints that the *Theogony* will, after all, be a way of speaking humanly about the world and not necessarily an absolutely faithful representation of it." See also H. T. Wade-Gery, "Hesiod," *Phoenix* 3 (1949) 86; Stroh 97–112; U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die Ilias und Homer* (Berlin 1916) 473.

²¹ Cf. T. Krischer, "ETYMOΣ und ΑΛΗΘΗΣ," *Philologus* 109 (1965) 167, for the distinction between ἔτυμος and ἀληθής relevant to the Hesiodic passage: "der Anwendungsbereich von ἀληθής ist im wesentlichen auf den Augenzeugenbericht beschränkt, also den Fall, in dem der Sprecher aus genauer Kenntnis spricht und nur darauf zu achten braucht, dass ihm kein Lapsus unterläuft; wird hingegen eine Aussage als ἔτυμος bezeichnet, so ist es ganz gleichgültig, woher der Sprecher seine Information hat: er mag Vermutungen angestellt haben, geträumt haben, er mag Wahrheiten in eine Lüge streuen, was zutrifft, ist ἔτυμος."

broader range than our 'lie' or 'falsehood'.²² It is multiple (note *ψεύδεα πολλά*, 27), embracing not only consciously misleading statements intended to deceive, but also unwitting errors, inaccuracies, and omissions—anything, in fact, that does not hit the absolute bull's eye of truth.

In this light, the song sung at night by the invisible Muses as they descend from the holy mountain in the direction of the habitations of men would seem to resemble "lies like the truth." In other words, when the goddesses declare to Hesiod their knowledge of truth and falsehood, they have already given an example of the latter—as long as we realize that the "lies" of the Heliconian Muses do not simply constitute gross falsehoods. Rather, they denote any and all deviation from a full, ordered, and true account: *aletheia*. Such deviations need not be attributed to willful deception, but may be due to ignorance or a limited perspective. Now, the human perspective concerning the gods inevitably demonstrates such limitations: it may comprehend discrete parts, but not the whole; it regards things that are closest and most immediate as primary, rather than ultimate origins and causes. The Heliconian song, then, represents what a later generation would have called *δόξα*.²³ But does it necessarily follow that Hesiod's song is *aletheia*? The fullness and coherence of his theogony have persuaded most critics of this implication. But the Muses claim only that they know *both* truth and falsehood, not that they will convey the truth to Hesiod. Moreover, their cryptic formulation undermines such a conclusion by their insistence that their truth-telling is a matter of caprice (*εὖτ' ἐθέλωμεν*, 28)²⁴ and that their lies are ultimately indistinguishable (*ὁμοῖα*, 27)²⁵ from the truth. Thus, although Hesiod vouches for the authority of his song by tracing it back to the Muses and his personal encounter with them, he wisely refrains from making an

²² Cf. W. Luther, "Wahrheit" und "Lüge" im ältesten Griechentum (Borna-Leipzig 1935) 80–90, for the wider range of Greek *pseudos*; also J. P. Levet, *Le vrai et le faux dans la pensée grecque archaïque* (Paris 1976) 201–14.

²³ Compare, especially, the proem to Parmenides' poem, which is clearly influenced by Hesiod, where the goddess announces (B 1.10–12 D.-K.):

χρεὼ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι
ἡμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐκκλέος ἀτρεμῆς ἦτορ
ἠδὲ βροτῶν δόξας. . . .

Cf. M. E. Pellikan-Engel, *Hesiod and Parmenides* (Amsterdam 1974); H. Schwabl, "Hesiod und Parmenides: Zur Formung des parmenideischen Prooimions," *RhM* 106 (1963) 138–42; and E. F. Dolin, "Parmenides and Hesiod," *HSCP* 66 (1962) 93–98.

²⁴ For the overtones of arbitrariness or caprice in this phrase, see J. Strauss Clay, "The Hecate of the *Theogony*," *GRBS* 25 (1984) 34f; and Thalmann (*supra* n.1) 149.

²⁵ *ὁμοῖα*, as Pucci notes (*supra* n.2: 9), implies both similarity and identity. The vanishing point of both conceptions would be indistinguishability.

explicit claim for the truthfulness of his theogonic song. Hesiod's procedure in the *Works and Days* stands in striking contrast: there he announces his intention to speak the truth to Perses (ἐγὼ δέ κε Πέρση ἐτήτυμα μυθησαίμην, 10), and his first item of business involves a correction of the Muses' statement concerning Eris. For men, at least, it turns out that there are two Erides, not merely one as the *Theogony* had proclaimed.

The song the Muses sing on Olympus and with which they "gladden Zeus' mind" (37, 51) not only differs substantially from their Heliconian song, but it also bears a much closer resemblance to Hesiod's own.²⁶ It has three parts (44–50):

(1) They sing from the beginning the revered race of the gods, θεῶν γένος αἰδοίου, whom Gaia and Uranus brought forth and the gods, givers of good things, who were born from them.

(2) They hymn Zeus, father of gods and men, and the strongest and greatest of the gods.

(3) They sing the γένος of men and Giants.

Clearly, the Hesiodic theogony embraces parts (1) and (2). Like the Muses' song, it begins ἐξ ἀρχῆς and includes three generations of gods: Gaia and Uranus, the Titans, and the Olympians, δωτηῆρες ἑάων. It also describes Zeus and his triumphant power. The striking difference between Hesiod's song and that of the Muses is his omission of the ἀνθρώπων τε γένος κρατερῶν τε Γιγάντων.²⁷

It has always been remarkable that the *Theogony* offers no detailed account of the origins of mankind. But a moment's reflection reveals that, given the poem's theme, such an omission is eminently reasonable. For if Hesiod's subject is indeed the ἱερὸν γένος αἰὲν ἔόντων (105), then the race of mortals quite properly has no place in his song. From the perspective of the *Theogony* human beings remain marginal creatures. To be sure, men do make an appearance in the poem and are most in evidence in the episodes involving Prometheus and Hecate.²⁸ Yet Hesiod reserves an account of the origins of mankind (in fact, he offers two) for the beginning of the *Works and Days* (109ff). In the *Theogony* he only hints in passing at their genesis in lines 185–87, where he described the birth of the Giants and the Melian nymphs from the bloody drops Gaia receives after the castration of her con-

²⁶ Cf. Aly (*supra* n.10) 54f, who calls this song "eine Inhaltsangabe des folgenden Gedichts." See also Thalmann (*supra* n.1) 139; Büchner (*supra* n.1) 24; van Groningen (*supra* n.1) 261.

²⁷ It has not been sufficiently recognized that this phrase indicates one *genos* for both Giants and human beings. Cf. *Theogony* 185–87 and n.29 *infra*.

²⁸ Cf. Clay (*supra* n.24) 37.

sort Uranus.²⁹ Shortly thereafter, it is clear that human beings have come into existence since many of the offspring of Night (211–32) explicitly affect only the lives of mortals.³⁰ Thus, Hesiod mentions the forces that influence human beings among Night's children because they are eternal and therefore belong to the "holy race of those that are forever," while omitting the ephemeral mortals on whom they prey.

The exclusion of that part of the Muses' song that rehearses the origins of men is fully motivated by the goddesses' instructions to Hesiod on Helicon. There, they gave him a scepter of laurel and a divine voice ἵνα κλείοιμι τά τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα (32, that is, the things that will be and were before, *i.e.*, the eternal things).³¹ On Olympus, on the other hand, the Muses sing not only the eternal things, but also the things that are (τά τ' ἐόντα τά τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα, 38), which correspond to the mortal things. While the Muses' knowledge embraces both the human and the divine realms, in the *Theogony*, at least, they restrict Hesiod to singing matters that are eternal and divine.

²⁹ Cf. Σ 187: ἐκ τούτων ἦν τὸ πρῶτον γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Also Hesych. *s.v.* μελίας καρπός: τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος. West (*supra* n.5) 221 notes that "here if anywhere Hesiod might have recorded the origin of mankind."

³⁰ Nemesis: πῆμα θνητοῖσι βροτοῖσι (223); Horkos: ὅς δὴ πλείστον ἀνθρώπους πημαίνει (231f). One could certainly add Thanatos and Geras, who also plague the lives of men.

³¹ Most scholars equate lines 32 and 38. West (*supra* n.5) 166, for example, calls τά τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα "a shorter equivalent of the full phrase seen in 38." Cf. Lenz (*supra* n.1) 151; Stroh (*supra* n.20) 89; van Groningen (*supra* n.1) 257 n.2. In his *Dialogue with Hesiod*, Lucian already complained of Hesiod's failure to deliver on his promise of including prophecy in his work.

One should, however, note that the expression in line 32 does not refer to two distinct categories, "the things that will be and the things that were before," which would require the repetition of the article (*cf.* Soph. *Aj.* 34f, τά τ' οὖν πάρος τά τ' εἰσέπειτα; Pl. *Ti.* 37E, τό τ' ἦν τό τ' ἔσται). The Hesiodic phrasing refers to *one* category of things that both will be and were before. Cf. Neitzel (*supra* n.20) 197: "Wenn wir jetzt fragen: was ist das 'was sein wird und vorher war'? . . . Von keinem Zustand in der menschlichen Geschichte kann man also sagen, dass er war und auch in Zukunft sein werde. Das 'was sein wird und vorher war', ist also durch die Zeit hindurch daurend, d.h. es ist immer. Folglich bezieht sich der Ausdruck . . . nicht auf Menschliches und Zeitliches, sondern auf das ewige Gottliche."

Line 38, on the other hand, refers to two distinct categories: things which are (τά τ' ἐόντα) and things which both will be and were before (τά τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα). Pucci (*supra* n.2: 22) observes that in line 32 "the absence of the 'present' is indeed shocking, especially in view of line 38 when the Muses, teachers of Hesiod, are described as singing 'present, future and past.'" Cf. Schlesier (*supra* n.12) 164: "si les Muses proclament ce qui est, ce qui sera, ce qui a été . . . elles ne chargent le poète que de chanter le passé et le futur (v.32); le présent temporel semble en être exclu." In this connection, one should perhaps reinterpret the description of Calchas in *Il.* 1.70 to mean that the seer "knew both the divine and the human things." I owe this important observation to D. Mankin.

This equation between τὰ ἐόντα and ephemeral human things will strike students of Greek philosophy as most peculiar. In subsequent philosophical thought, that which is eternal becomes τὸ ἐόν, Being, while the Hesiodic ἐόντα corresponds to Becoming. This drastic ontological shift may, in fact, have arisen precisely from a radical questioning of the notion of theogony; for how can what is eternal, *i.e.*, the gods, have come into being?³²

Twice again in the proem the Muses sing. On Olympus, ἐν θαλίῃς, they hymn “the laws and goodly ways of all the gods” (66f). In addition, shortly after their birth, as the goddesses ascended to their father on Olympus, they sang of Zeus’ rule and his might, of his triumph over Cronus, as well as of his disposition of *timai* among the immortals (71–74). Hesiod incorporates both these songs into his account; in fact, the *Theogony* as a whole has often been called an extended hymn to Zeus. Hesiod wholeheartedly embraces this original song of the Muses, the story of Zeus’ victorious kingship, and makes it the culmination of his theogony. The Muses themselves constitute an important element of Zeus’ dispensation, and their birth is mentioned by Hesiod in its proper place (915–17). There, Zeus’ union with the Titaness Mnemosyne, the last of his alliances with older divinities, becomes an emblem of the newly-won harmony and reconciliation between the new and old orders.³³ In the proem we learn that Mnemosyne bore her daughters to Zeus as a “forgetfulness of evils and an end to cares” (λησμοσύνην τε κακῶν ἄμπαυμα τε μερμηράων, 55). In its immediate theogonic context, this statement refers not to the gifts the Muses bestow on mankind, which Hesiod mentions later and which involve a different kind of forgetfulness (102f)—the gods do not need to forget their human condition—but rather to the oblivion of the recent cosmic conflicts among the gods and those battles which brought Zeus to power.³⁴

³² Cf. Parmenides B 8.5f D.-K.:

οὐδέ ποτ’ ἦν οὐδ’ ἔσται, ἐπεὶ νῦν ἔστιν ὁμοῦ πάν,
ἐν, συνεχές, τίνα γὰρ γένναν διζήσεται αὐτοῦ;

Whether the decisive break was made by Parmenides or by one of his precursors, perhaps Anaximander, remains unclear. See C. H. Kahn, *The Verb ‘Be’ in Ancient Greek* (Dodrecht 1973), esp. 454–57.

³³ On the politics of Zeus’ alliances and his marriage to Mnemosyne in particular, see A. Bonnafé, *Eros et Eris* (Lyon 1985) 92ff. Van Groningen (*supra* n.1) 259 notes the absence of the Muses’ names at 916, “ce qui est une petite preuve des relations très étroites qui unissent le prologue au reste de l’ouvrage.” Cf. F. Solmsen, *Hesiod and Aeschylus* (Ithaca 1949) 39.

³⁴ Büchner (*supra* n.1) 33 notes the parallels between the two kinds of forgetfulness in the human and divine spheres.

When he does enumerate the gifts of the Muses to men, Hesiod describes what their servants, the *aidoi*, sing. Their task is twofold: to hymn the *klea* of men of the past and the blessed gods who inhabit Olympus. Here, Hesiod clearly sets himself apart from other poets who sing of the heroes and celebrate the Olympians. Hesiod thus differentiates his theogonic song from both epic and hymnic poetry³⁵ and implies a distinction between his poetry and that of other *aidoi*. He insists, so to speak, on his unique status *vis-à-vis* other poets, not because they lie, but because they sing of different things.

We turn now to the request with which Hesiod concludes the proem and which constitutes the invocation properly speaking. It parallels the various songs the Muses sing on Olympus, but combines them into one. Hesiod first asks the Muses to begin ἐξ ἀρχῆς, as they do on Olympus, and to recount in order the generations of the gods from Gaia and Uranus (106, *cf.* 43); in addition, he requests an account of the Olympians, δωτηῆρες ἐάων (111, *cf.* 46);³⁶ how they divided their wealth and *timai*, a clear allusion to Zeus' dispensation (112, *cf.* 73f); and how it was that they first gained possession of Olympus, a reference to Zeus' victory over the Titans (113, *cf.* 71–73). But, more interestingly, Hesiod's request also contains some items not contained in the goddesses' Olympian songs: he wants them to include the origins of natural phenomena like the rivers, the sea, and the stars, as well as earth and sky (108–10).³⁷ Hesiod's song, then, differs from its divine counterpart by offering simultaneously a cosmogony as well as a theogony. Furthermore, Hesiod seems to include Night and Pontos among the first gods (107). Neither was named by the Olympian Muses, although the Heliconian goddesses assigned Night the last place in their catalogue (20). In fact, the position of Nyx there suggested that she might be the first of the primal gods.³⁸ As it turns out, Hesiod's theogony reveals that this notion is mistaken. Neither Night, nor Ocean, nor Pontos are the earliest divinities—nor, for that matter, are Gaia and Uranus the primordial couple, as the Olympian Muses appeared to suggest. For Hesiod begins by naming Chaos first

³⁵ For the generic distinctions and complementarities of these three types of *epos*, see J. Strauss Clay, *The Politics of Olympus* (forthcoming).

³⁶ West (*supra* n.5) ejects line 111, which, however, cannot be dispensed with. The Olympians, δωτηῆρες ἐάων, have not yet been mentioned, and they are not “comprised in θεοί in 108,” as West (190) claims.

³⁷ Solmsen (*supra* n.5) brackets 108–10, but *cf.* W. Marg, *Hesiod: Sämtliche Gedichte*² (Darmstadt 1984) 102f, for a defense of these verses.

³⁸ C. Ramnoux, *La Nuit et les enfants de la Nuit*² (Paris 1986) 177ff, discusses several ancient theogonies in which Night is the first of the gods. *Cf.* A. Ballabriga, *Le Soleil et le Tartare* (Paris 1986) 276ff.

of all; the mention of Eros likewise comes as a complete surprise.³⁹ Hesiod's song distinguishes itself from all the songs of the Muses in that it begins from absolute beginnings (note τὰ πρῶτα, 108, 113; πρῶτον, 115).

To conclude: through a complex series of parallels, juxtapositions, and contrasts, the sequence of songs sung by the Muses in the proem throws into relief certain unique characteristics of Hesiod's theogonic song that follows. Diverging from the song of the Heliconian Muses in its divine rather than human perspective, it likewise differs from the composition of the *oidoi* in its content. It even surpasses the songs of the Olympian Muses in its inclusiveness and in its systematic thoroughness. To his unique composition, Hesiod assigns a unique emblem: the scepter of laurel, the gift of the Muses. Symbol of royal authority, the scepter derives ultimately from Zeus. Kings, as Hesiod tells us, come from Zeus, but those whom the Muses honor enjoy their special gift of eloquence. *Oidoi*, on the other hand, spring from the Muses and Apollo. The scepter of laurel, given to Hesiod by the Muses, unites the authority of Zeus with the tree sacred to Apollo. By its triple patronage, Hesiod distinguishes his sovereign poetry.

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³⁹ On the vexed question of how many first principles Hesiod posits, see the recent discussions of M. H. Miller, "La logique implicite de la cosmogonie d'Hésiode," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 4 (1977) 433-56; and Ballabriga (*supra* n.38) 282ff.