

# The Hecate of the *Theogony*

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NEAR THE MIDDLE of the *Theogony*, Hesiod appears to drop everything in order to launch into an extended encomium of Hecate (411–52). Because of its length and apparent lack of integration into its context, but above all because of the peculiar terms of praise reserved for the goddess, the so-called “Hymn to Hecate” has often been dismissed as an intrusion into the Hesiodic text.<sup>1</sup> To be sure, voices have also been raised in defense,<sup>2</sup> and, at present, the passage stands unbracketed in the editions of Mazon, Solmsen, and West.<sup>3</sup> But questions remain even if the authenticity of the lines is acknowledged. Why does Hesiod devote so much space to so minor a deity? What is the origin and function of Hesiod’s Hecate, and what rôle does she play in the poem?<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Most notably by U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Der Glaube der Hellenen* I (Berlin 1931) 172. Wilamowitz is followed by M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*<sup>3</sup> I (Munich 1969) 723. Condemnation is fairly universal among earlier editors. Cf. O. Gruppe, *Ueber die Theogonie des Hesiod* (Berlin 1841) 72; G. Schoemann, *Die Hesiodische Theogonie* (Berlin 1868) 190, who, after many good observations, concludes that the passage is a later interpolation; H. Flach, *Die Hesiodische Theogonie* (Berlin 1873) 81; A. Fick, *Hesiods Gedichte* (Göttingen 1887) 17 (“Der Verfasser war ein Orphiker”); F. Jacoby, *Hesiodi Carmina* I (Berlin 1930) 162–64; and F. Schwenn, *Die Theogonie des Hesiodos* (Heidelberg 1934) 100–05, who considers only nine verses genuine. See also A. Rzach, *RE* 8 (1912) 1189 s.v. “Hesiodos”; I. Sellschopp, *Stilistische Untersuchungen zu Hesiod* (Hamburg 1934) 52; G. Kirk, “The Structure and Aim of the *Theogony*,” in *Hésiode et son influence* (Entretiens Hardt 7 [Vandoeuvres 1962]) 80, 84–86.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, by F. Pfister, “Die Hekate-Episode in Hesiods *Theogonie*,” *Philologus* 84 (1928) 1–9; P. Friedländer, review of Jacoby in *Hesiod*, ed. E. Heitsch (Darmstadt 1966) 125–26 (from *GGA* 1931); F. Solmsen, *Hesiod and Aeschylus* (Ithaca 1949) 53 n.169; B. van Groningen, *La Composition littéraire archaïque grecque* (Amsterdam 1958) 267–70.

<sup>3</sup> P. Mazon, *Hésiode* (Paris 1928); F. Solmsen, *Hesiodi Theogonia Opera et Dies* (Oxford 1970); M. L. WEST, *Hesiod: Theogony* (Oxford 1966: hereafter ‘West’). Both Mazon and Solmsen bracket line 427, and Solmsen also considers 450–52 interpolated. For transpositions, see *infra* n.25.

<sup>4</sup> The question of the relation between Hesiod’s apparently ‘universal’ goddess and the Hecate of a later era, with her marked chthonic associations and her unappetizing connections with magic, corpses, the moon, crossroads, and dogs, belongs properly to historians of Greek religion and cannot be dealt with here. I would, however, suggest that the interpretation of Hesiod’s Hecate presented here may have important points of contact with certain mediating aspects of the Hecate of the *Hymn to Demeter*. Moreover, some of her late associations with magic and crossroads may not be unrelated to the arbitrary willfulness Hesiod ascribes to her.

Most scholars posit a Carian origin for Hecate, whose characteristic functions are said to parallel those of several female Anatolian divinities such as the Phrygian Cybele and the Ephesian Artemis—in other words, they understand Hecate as a reflex of the Great Mother figure.<sup>5</sup> According to the most recent and authoritative commentary on the passage, by M. L. West, Hesiod's family had a special attachment to the Hecate cult, which it had encountered in Asia Minor before its emigration to Boeotia.<sup>6</sup> West considers the "Hymn to Hecate" "not so much a hymn as a gospel" in which the "zealot" Hesiod gives a statement of "his personal beliefs" concerning "the chief goddess of her evangelist."<sup>7</sup> Recently, however, the long-accepted view of Hecate's Anatolian origin has been thrown into question.<sup>8</sup> If nothing else, the speculations of West and others, based on flimsy evidence to start with, now appear even more tenuous.

Mazon, on the other hand, had assumed that the Hecate cult was already well-established in Boeotia in Hesiod's time, that the goddess was worshipped there as a type of *potnia theron*, and that she was in fact "la grande divinité de Thespies."<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, we ought not to be surprised to find Hesiod giving a privileged position and rendering homage to the chief local goddess—just as he goes out of his way to honor the local Muses of Helicon and the Eros of Thespieae.<sup>10</sup> Two objections come to mind immediately. First and foremost, Hesiod's Hecate does not resemble a *potnia theron* or a "grande déesse de la nature."<sup>11</sup> As enumerated by Hesiod, the spheres of her influence extend broadly over the range of human activities, but precisely *not* over nature or the beasts. The second argument, that Hesiod reserved a special place for Hecate in his poem because she, like Eros and the Heliconian Muses, was an object of local veneration, is equally wrong-headed. Eros is included in the *Theogony* not because

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Wilamowitz (*supra* n.1) 169; Nilsson (*supra* n.1) 722; T. Kraus, *Hekate* (Heidelberg 1960) 24–56; W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche* (Stuttgart 1977) 266; P. Marquardt, "A Portrait of Hecate," *AJP* 102 (1961) 250–51.

<sup>6</sup> West 278. Kraus (*supra* n.5) 61 insists that Hesiod's family could not have been responsible for the importation of the Hecate cult into Boeotia.

<sup>7</sup> West 276–78.

<sup>8</sup> By W. Berg, "Hecate: Greek or 'Anatolian,'" *Numen* 21 (1974) 128–40. It must be confessed, however, that Berg's arguments against Hecate's Anatolian origins are more convincing than his attempts to prove her Greekness.

<sup>9</sup> Mazon (*supra* n.3) 24. That Hecate was honored in Boeotia is already claimed in the scholia to *Theog.* 411. Cf. F. G. Welcker, *Die Hesiodische Theogonie* (Elberfeld 1865) 128, and Marquardt (*supra* n.5) 253ff.

<sup>10</sup> For the Eros of Thespieae see West 196.

<sup>11</sup> As Marquardt (*supra* n.5) 255 finally admits after a review of the archaeological evidence.

he was worshipped in Thespieae but because Hesiod felt the need to introduce the principle of sexual reproduction at the very outset of his poem which takes sexual generation as its paradigm.<sup>12</sup> It is similarly insufficient to assert that the poet introduces the Muses of Helicon in order to pay his respects to local divinities. Hesiod describes his encounter with the Muses on Helicon—and they are the Olympian Muses—not for reasons of personal affection, nor to give a touch of ‘local color’, but to guarantee the authenticity and immediate authority of the account of the gods which follows. Both Eros and the Muses, then, perform rôles which are vital to the argument of the *Theogony*. Can the same be said of Hecate?

Another explanation of Hecate’s prominence in the *Theogony* is based on Hesiod’s presumed desire to celebrate a divinity ignored by epic, yet popular with the peasant class with which Hesiod identified himself.<sup>13</sup> There is, however, no evidence that Hecate was the goddess of the ‘common man’; and it must be noted that such an interpretation takes its bearing from the naïve but still tenacious view of Hesiod as the singing peasant. Finally, it ignores the obvious fact that when Hesiod does vindicate the rights of the *demos* against the ‘gift-devouring kings’, he sings of no god but Zeus.

After rehearsing the scanty external evidence and the sundry interpretations of Hesiod’s Hecate, a recent article concludes on a despairing note: “we shall have to be content to view in shadow” the face of this enigmatic goddess as she appears in the *Theogony*.<sup>14</sup> Like so many others, the author assumes that the essential key to unlocking the mystery of Hecate lies outside the text. In the absence of evidence, tenuous hypotheses, such as those outlined above, have been spun out on the thinnest of threads. It is not my concern to refute in detail these differing accounts of Hecate’s presence in the *Theogony*. Here it must suffice to emphasize the unspoken presupposition shared by all of them: Hecate’s place in the poem is motivated by the poet’s personal beliefs or private devotion, his wish to honor a local deity or to identify himself with a social class. All these reasons for Hecate’s inclusion are extraneous to the structure and context of the *Theogony*, and they all have recourse to the personal quirks or

<sup>12</sup> Cf. P. Philippson, “Genealogie als mythische Form,” *SymbOslo* Suppl. 7 (1936) 12–13.

<sup>13</sup> For example, Pfister (*supra* n.2) 8: “Hesiodos hat aber den Versuch gemacht, der von Homer unterdrückten, wohl aber auch in Boiotien, wenn auch nicht in prächtigen Tempeln, sondern in volkstümlichen Begehungen verehrten . . . Bauerngöttin zu Ansehen zu verhelfen.” W. Aly, “Hesiodos von Askra,” in Heitsch (*supra* n.2) 65 n.23 (from *RhM* 1913), calls Hecate “die Göttin des inoffiziellen Privatkultes.”

<sup>14</sup> Marquardt (*supra* n.5) 260.

circumstances of the poet.<sup>15</sup> After extensive, but it must be confessed pointless, praise, Hecate plays no further rôle, nor is she integrated into the theological argument of the poem or the *cosmos* Hesiod so carefully constructs for us. The *Theogony* culminates in the triumph of Zeus and the establishment of the eternal Olympian order. The question abides whether Hecate, so elaborately praised, remains peripheral to that order.

The answer can only lie in a renewed scrutiny of the Hesiodic text. As a few recent studies have demonstrated,<sup>16</sup> progress can still be made in illuminating the features of Hecate, but it must be based on the assumption that sufficient clues toward an interpretation reside within the confines of the poem. Both the structure of the "Hymn to Hecate" and its pivotal position in the *Theogony* throw light on Hesiod's purpose as well as the significance of the goddess in Hesiod's theology.

The description of Hecate comes just before the center of Hesiod's poem and is followed immediately by the account of the birth of Zeus and the other Olympians. In effect, Hecate is the last-born of the older gods—with the exception of the sons of Iapetus, whose genealogy is postponed until immediately after the deposition and binding of Cronus. Hecate and Prometheus thus flank the crucial event of the *Theogony*,<sup>17</sup> although neither episode occurs in its strictly chronological position. Both are proleptic: in the Prometheus story, Hephaestus and Athena, who mold and adorn the first woman, have not yet been born; and Zeus' final concession of *timai* to Hecate presumably can-

<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the most extreme among these is P. Walcot, "Hesiod's Hymns to the Muses, Aphrodite, Styx and Hecate," *SymbOslo* 34 (1958) 13–14, who after noting the coincidence of the name of Hesiod's brother and that of Hecate's father, concludes: "the story of Hecate had a very personal implication as far as Hesiod was concerned. Hesiod's respect for Hecate is of the same order virtually as his love of the Muses. Both provide a contrast with *his normal hatred of women*" (italics mine). Van Groningen (*supra* n.2) 269 asserts that the *Theogony* was performed at a festival in honor of Hecate. Needless to say, no evidence exists for either view.

<sup>16</sup> I should mention the careful analysis of J. Bollack, "Mythische Deutung und Deutung des Mythos," in *Terror und Spiel: Probleme der Mythenrezeption*, ed. M. Fuhrmann (Munich 1971) 111–18; also the provocative remarks of M. Arthur, "Cultural Strategies in Hesiod's *Theogony*: Law, Family, Society," *Arethusa* 15 (1982) 68–70, concerning the rôle of Hecate within the larger framework of male and female rôles in the *Theogony*; and D. Boedecker, "Hecate: A Transfunctional Goddess in the *Theogony*?" *TAPA* 113 (1983) 79–93, who views Hecate in Dumézilian terms.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Arthur (*supra* n.16) 68: "The Hecate story, with that of Prometheus/Pandora, frames the narrative of the birth of Zeus and is attracted into its orbit of meaning by its narrative quality, which sets it off from the catalogue of the preceding several hundred lines. Hecate's character is not established by the conditions of her birth alone, but is only finally fixed in relation to the reign of Zeus." Cf. the remarks of N. O. Brown, *Hesiod's Theogony* (New York 1953) 28–29.

not occur until the final *dasmos* in line 885 after the defeat of the Titans. Thus theology rather than chronology determines the placement of the Hecate episode.

We may begin the case with a simple review. Zeus, we are told, “honored Hecate above all and gave her splendid gifts, to have a share of the earth and sterile sea. And she also received a share of honor from the starry sky; and is very much honored by the immortal gods” (411–15). Later we learn that “of all those who were born from Earth and Sky and received honor, of all these she keeps a share” (421–22). But it turns out that these universal privileges are not a new dispensation under the reign of Zeus, but belonged to Hecate originally: “nor did the son of Cronus do her violence, nor did he strip her of what she had received from the Titans, the earlier gods; but these she keeps, as from the beginning the distribution was accomplished” (423–25).

Several things bear emphasizing in these lines. First, it is clear that Hecate does not simply receive earth, sea, and sky as her sphere of influence. The Greek is quite precise: the goddess received a *share* of honor on earth, in the heavens, and in the sea. The notion of portion or share is emphatically repeated (413, 426). All talk of Hecate as a ‘universal goddess’ must therefore be carefully modified.<sup>18</sup> The second characteristic of Hecate’s power which Hesiod underlines by three-fold repetition (ἔχειν 413, ἔχει 422, 425) is the continuity of the goddess’ share of *time*. She *keeps* what honor she originally had and, in fact, “even got much more, because Zeus honors her” (428).

In this connection we may compare the story of Hecate’s cousin Styx, told a few lines earlier (383–403). There Hesiod describes the policy of Zeus on the eve of his battle with the Titans. Calling together all the gods, Zeus promised that whoever joined his side would be allowed to keep the honor he held previously; and whoever had been without honor or privilege under Cronus would receive both, ἢ θέμις ἐστίν. In an act that ensures Zeus’ ultimate victory,

<sup>18</sup> E. Rohde, *Psyche*<sup>3</sup> II (Tübingen 1903) 82 n.3, who considers the entire passage an interpolation, calls Hecate a “Universalgöttin” and adds: “Das Ganze ist eine sonderbare Probe von der Ausweitung, die in einem lebhaft betriebenen Localcult eine einzelne Gottheit gewinnen konnte. Der Name dieses durch die ganze Welt herrschenden Dämons wird dabei (da eben Alles auf den Einen gehäuft ist) schliesslich gleichgiltig.” I hope to show below that the latter statement is incorrect and that Hecate’s name is not irrelevant. Taking issue with Jacoby (*Hermes* 61 [1926] 179), who calls Hecate an “Allgöttin,” Friedländer (*supra* n.2) 125 correctly explains the limitation of Hecate’s powers: “Nicht Herrin des Alls ist sie, sondern überall hat sie ‘Anteil’ . . . Nirgends verdrängt Hekate die anderen Götter. Von einer Allgottheit vollends ist in diesem Bezirk religiösen Denkens nicht die Rede. Doch überall ist sie dabei.” Cf. Kraus (*supra* n.5) 62; and West’s comments (281f) *ad* 413–14.

Styx goes over to his side, bringing along her appropriately named children, Kratos, Bia, Zelos, and Nike. In return, Zeus makes her "the great oath of the gods" and establishes her children as his constant companions. Evidently Styx had little to hope for under the old régime of Cronus, and her loyalty to Zeus was amply rewarded.

This little episode foreshadows and guarantees the final victory of Zeus and the *telos* of the *Theogony*. But it also points up a peculiar feature of the Hecate story. As West notes, Hecate does not appear to render any special service to Zeus,<sup>19</sup> yet she not only retains her prerogatives from the old order, but is accorded the additional title of *kourotrophos*. Indeed, the text emphasizes repeatedly that it is Zeus who honors her—and not the other way around. Zeus, in fact, almost seems to court Hecate's favor.<sup>20</sup> He must in some sense recognize the importance and utility of maintaining Hecate's functions and *timai* under his new régime.

The twice-applied epithet *mounogenes* (426, 448) offers an indication of Hecate's special status. West gives the commonly accepted interpretation of the term at line 426: "Presumably an only daughter might be in danger of βλάβη . . . having no brother to protect her interests"; and at 448 he confesses that he does "not know what is the point of the addition ἐκ μητρὸς."<sup>21</sup> Bollack, on the other hand, renders *μουνογενῆς ἐκ μητρὸς εὐδύσα* as "von ihrer Mutter geboren, um einzig zu sein," and draws attention to the use of *mounogenes* in Parmenides and Plato as epithets of Being or the *cosmos*.<sup>22</sup> From a different perspective, Arthur likens the position of *mounogenes* Hecate to that of an *epikleros*.<sup>23</sup> Both interpretations can readily be combined to bring out Hecate's unique position as inheritor of the three cosmic realms, Pontos, Gaia, and Uranus, and who sums up in her person all of the preceding cosmogony and theogony.<sup>24</sup> Zeus, it ap-

<sup>19</sup> West 284 *ad* 423–24; and Marquardt (*supra* n.5) 247, "Zeus' reasons for honoring Hecate, which presumably go beyond affection or familial ties, are never mentioned by Hesiod."

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Boedecker (*supra* n.16) 90: "We might conclude that Zeus needs her more than she needs him."

<sup>21</sup> West 284, 289. The scholia also offer a different interpretation: οἱ γὰρ μονογενεῖς πλεονεκτοῦσι πάντοτε. διὰ γὰρ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ἀδελφοῦς ὁ μονογενῆς πλείονος τετύχηκε τιμῆς. This would suggest that being *mounogenes* is not considered a drawback but rather an advantage.

<sup>22</sup> Bollack (*supra* n.16) 117.

<sup>23</sup> Arthur (*supra* n.16) 68. At *Op.* 376 Hesiod calls an only son who is to be the sole heir to the paternal estate *mounogenes*.

<sup>24</sup> H. Schwabl, *RE Suppl.* 12 (1972) 443 s.v. "Hesiodos," has made the interesting observation that the treatment of Hecate's genealogy is unique in the *Theogony*: it violates the apparent rule of patrilineal descent which forms the organizational principle of Hesiod's catalogues by recounting Hecate's birth in conjunction with the genealogy

pears, honors Hecate not despite the fact that she is *mounogenes*, but *because* of it—in recognition of her unique status.

The catalogue at 429–49 reveals both Hecate's functions and the extent of her powers over the lives of men.<sup>25</sup> Her presence and good will appear to assure success to every human endeavor. Yet the list makes equally clear that Hecate's extensive powers are not independent of those of other divinities. In council, she grants pre-eminence, while in war she gives victory and glory "to whom she wills"; but Victory has taken up her abode with Zeus, who likewise has the power of granting *kudos*.<sup>26</sup> Hecate sits by kings as they render judgments; yet we know from Hesiod's proem that kings are from Zeus, and their successful judicial pronouncements depend on the honey of the Muses. Similarly, we are told that Hecate is beneficent when she stands by horsemen and those who compete in games: "and easily he carries off a fine prize, having won with strength and might, and he gives glory to his parents" (435–39). Once again, it is clear that Hecate is not being made into the goddess who presides over athletic competitions. As we know from countless tales of heroic contests, any god can intervene on behalf of his favorite. Yet Hesiod tells us that Hecate's support and good will are somehow crucial to winning. Exactly how becomes manifest in the following verses (440–43):

And for those who work the stormy sea,  
and who pray to Hecate and to the Earthshaker,  
easily the splendid goddess grants a big catch,  
and easily she takes it away, once it has appeared—  
if indeed she wants to.

Here, finally, we can gain insight into the operation of Hecate's extensive yet not fully independent powers. She grants success in

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of her mother, Asterie. Schwabl (450) further characterizes the combined offspring of the union of Pontids and Uranians (of which Hecate is one): "Sucht man nach einem gemeinsamen Nenner für die Wesen des Abschnitts, so ist er wohl am ehesten einerseits in der starken Bindung an elementare (kosmische) Bereiche und andererseits in der Unheimlichkeit zu finden."

<sup>25</sup> Neither of West's transpositions are necessary or convincing. Following Schoemann, *Opuscula Academica* II (Berlin. 1857) 220–21, but not his edition of 1868, West transposes 434 before 430 despite the harsh change from singular to plural. This ignores the fact that 430–33 define the traditional two-fold virtue of the epic hero, who excels both in speech and in warfare. Cf. *Il.* 9.443, cited by Schoemann: Kings rendering judgments, like the rest of the activities in Hesiod's catalogue (424–46), belong to peacetime. Cf. *Il.* 16.387–88 and 18.497–506, cited by West. Horsemen, to be sure, belong to both peace and war, but there is no compelling reason to transpose 439.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. fr. 75.19–20 M.-W., where Zeus and the other immortals are said to be able to grant *kudos*; also *Scut.* 339, where Athena *νίκην ἀθανάτης χερσίν καὶ κῦδος ἔχουσα*.

fishing *if* she is invoked in conjunction with Poseidon and *if* she is willing. So too in conjunction with Hermes, Hecate can increase the flocks, and, if she wills it, she can make many from few and, on the contrary, diminish the many (444–47).

Hesiod's catalogue of Hecate's powers, while not exhaustive, gives the impression of universality.<sup>27</sup> But it is quite evident that these powers are not autonomous. Each area in which Hecate manifests her influence belongs either to a specific god (Poseidon, Hermes) or to a possible diversity of gods.<sup>28</sup> Yet in each sphere her good will forms an essential ingredient of success—just as its absence seems to lead to failure. Consequently, Hecate must not be regarded as simply beneficent or as a kindly *Helfergöttin*,<sup>29</sup> for that constitutes only half her power and neglects her darker side. Bollack correctly sums up her ambiguous nature: “Unmässig im Guten wie im Bösen, wirkt die Göttin mit einer schwerelosen Leichtigkeit”; and he defines her dominant trait as “die *Allgegenwart des Zufalls*.”<sup>30</sup> The essential character of Hecate, then, resides in the easy exercise of arbitrary power over success or failure in every human enterprise.

The repeated emphasis throughout the passage on Hecate's will<sup>31</sup> has led some scholars to postulate a Hesiodic etymology of her name as ‘the willing goddess’.<sup>32</sup> This gloss is surely in keeping with Hesi-

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Boedecker (*supra* n.16) 79f, and Friedländer (*supra* n.2) 125.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Schoemann (*supra* n.25) 225: “Mercurium deum pastorem fuisse nemo ignorat. Atque sicut huius in hoc munere socia esse Hecate dicitur, et paullo ante in navigantium tutela Neptuni, sic etiam in ceteris, quae supra commemorata sunt, omnibus alii quidam dei nominari potuissent, quorum illa munerum societatem haberet.”

<sup>29</sup> Arthur (*supra* n.16) 69 considers Hecate as “the first of the major female figures in the poem who is presented in a wholly positive light” and speaks of “her beneficent character” (70). Marquardt (*supra* n.5) 244 first claims that “expressions of Hecate's . . . benevolent nature form a recurring theme in the Hymn,” but then more correctly asserts that “the unpredictability of Hecate's favor is a recurring theme in the Hymn” (247).

<sup>30</sup> Bollack (*supra* n.16) 115; Schoemann (*supra* n.1) 185 suggests that Hecate should be understood as a personification of “die göttliche Wirksamkeit”: “Diese Wirksamkeit wohnt nun freilich allen Göttern bei, ist eine Eigenschaft von allen; das aber konnte den Dichter nicht hindern, sie doch auch als eigene göttliche Person aufzuführen.” A striking parallel to Hecate's ambiguous power in human life comes from Pindar's opening invocation to *σώτεια Τύχα* in *Olympian* 12.

<sup>31</sup> ᾧ δ' ἐθέλη 429; ὃν κ' ἐθέλησιν 430; οἷς κ' ἐθέλησι(ν) 432, 439; ἐθέλουσά γε θυμῷ 443; θυμῷ γ' ἐθέλουσα 446.

<sup>32</sup> Walcot (*supra* n.15) 11. Cf. G. Hermann, “De mythologia Graecorum antiquissima dissertatio,” *Opuscula* II (Leipzig 1827) 185, and “De Apolline et Diana pars posterior,” *Opuscula* VII (Leipzig 1839) 306, who, deriving Hecate from ἐκῶν and ἔκητι, renders her name as Volumnia. A. Fick, *Die griechischen Personennamen*<sup>2</sup> (Göttingen 1894) 452, translates Hecate as “nach dem Willen.” Cf. W. Prellwitz, “Participia praesentia activi in der Zusammensetzung,” *Glotta* 17 (1929) 147. Schoemann (*supra* n.25) 228–30 offers an alternative etymology connecting Hecate with ἐκάς. Cf. K.



od's intention, but the perspective is once again skewed by mistaking for good will what is Hecate's essential arbitrariness. Hecate is not the 'willing goddess', but the one *by whose will*—ἔκητι—prayers are fulfilled and success granted. To give an example of Hecate's function: I pray to Hermes to increase my flocks or to Zeus for victory. Both Hermes and Zeus surely have the requisite power to accomplish my wish; yet my prayer may or may not be answered. Something has intervened to bring about my success or failure. That something is, in fact, Hecate. If I have been successful, it is because of the propitious conjunction of Hecate and some other god; it is *by the will* of Zeus, ἔκητι Διός, or another divinity, and Hecate has played her rôle as intermediary.

On the basis of this interpretation, it is possible now to understand the enigmatic, if not absurd, statement at *Theogony* 416–19, which I purposely omitted in my analysis of the opening section of the passage:

καὶ γὰρ νῦν, ὅτε πού τις ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων  
 ἔρδων ἱερά κατὰ κατὰ νόμον ἰλάσκηται,  
 κικλήσκει Ἑκάτην· πολλή τέ οἱ ἔσπετο τιμὴ  
 ῥεῖα μάλ', ᾧ πρόφρων γε θεὰ ὑποδέξεται εὐχάς . . .

The lines appear to assert the bizarre notion that every act of sacrifice or propitiation involves an invocation to Hecate and that success resides in the goddess' kindly reception of the prayer. Now, no such custom every existed among the Greeks, and Hesiod could rightly be accused of perpetrating a meaningless absurdity. The few scholars who have confronted this oddity have suspected some ritual basis for Hesiod's curious assertion, but they do not elaborate.<sup>33</sup> There is in fact some suggestive evidence for a custom that may have inspired Hesiod. When, on occasion, a series of offerings to various divinities was established, the goddess designated as *kourotrophos* was sometimes given the right of first sacrifice, the so-called *prothyma*.<sup>34</sup> The

Brugmann, *Indogermanische Forschungen* 17 (1904/5) 1–11. The modern consensus is that Ἑκάτη is the feminine of Ἑκατος, epithet of Apollo, and perhaps of Anatolian origin. Cf. Wilamowitz (*supra* n.1) 117; and Kraus (*supra* n.5) 14, "Dass Hekatos die männliche Form zu Hekate ist und dass beide aus der gleichen Wurzel, dem gleichen Vorstellungskreis entsprungen sind, ist sicher." What matters of course is not the scientific etymology but Hesiod's interpretation of the goddess' name.

<sup>33</sup> For instance, Marquardt (*supra* n.5) 244 comments on 416–18: "Hecate's presence in such prayers, especially if she is invoked with other gods, may reflect only ritual."

<sup>34</sup> See T. H. Price, *Kourotrophos* (Leiden 1978) 10, 105, 108, 111, 123 (although Price may insist too much on identifying the *kourotrophos* with Ge). For the meaning of *προθύω* and *προθύμα* see J. Casabona, *Recherches sur le vocabulaire des sacrifices en*

existence of such a custom would make sense of Hesiod's claim at the end of his praise of Hecate that Zeus added to her honors the rôle of *kourotrophos* (450). Be that as it may, Hesiod's peculiar statement supports our interpretation of the name and function of Hecate as the one *by whose will* prayer is accomplished and fulfilled.

The decisive proof of the correctness of such an understanding of Hecate's critical mediating rôle comes from the words of Hesiod himself in his opening invocation to the *Works and Days*. There he summons the Muses to hymn their father Zeus:

ὄν τε διὰ βροτοὶ ἄνδρες ὁμῶς ἄφατοὶ τε φατοὶ τε,  
ῥητοὶ τ' ἄρρητοὶ τε Διὸς μεγάλοιο ἔκρητι.

The next two verses clearly echo the Hecate passage of the *Theogony*:

ῥέα μὲν γὰρ βριάει, ῥέα δὲ βριάοντα χαλέπτει,  
ῥεῖα δ' ἀρίζηλον μινύθει καὶ ἄδηλον ἀέξει . . .

The significance and importance of Hecate for the *Theogony* as a whole now begin to emerge. As in the case of several other deities, Hesiod develops Hecate's functions by etymologizing her name. This procedure finds its parallel in Hesiod's treatment of Metis and Aphrodite; he evolves the figure of Metis from the formulaic expression

*grec* (Aix-en-Provence 1966) 103–08, and J. Mikalson, "Prothyma," *AJP* 93 (1972) 577–83. The literary evidence comes from Plato *Com. Phaon* fr.174.5–11 Edmonds. Addressing a Chorus of women enamoured of Phaon, Aphrodite tells them that if they want to see Phaon, they must sacrifice to her first as a *kourotrophos* and then perform other sacrifices to other divinities:

εἰ γὰρ Φάωνα δεῖσθ' ἰδεῖν, προτέλεια δέ  
ὑμᾶς ποιῆσαι πολλὰ πρότερον τοιαδί.  
πρῶτα μὲν ἐμοὶ γὰρ κουροτρόφῳ προθύεται  
πλακοῦς ἐνόρχης, ἄμυλος ἐγκύμων, κίχλαι  
ἐκκαίδεχ' ὀλόκληροι μέλιτι μεμιγμέναι,  
λαγῶα δώδεκ' ἐπισέληνα. τᾶλλα δὲ  
ἤδη <παρὰ> ταῦτά <γ'> εὐτελή 'στ' ἀκούετε.

The *Suda* gives under the entry *Κουροτρόφος γῆ*: ταύτη δὲ θῦσαι φασι πρῶτον Ἐριχθόνιον ἐν ἀκροπόλει καὶ βωμὸν ἰδρύσασθαι, χάριν ἀποδιδόντα τῇ γῇ τῶν τροφείων. καταστήσαι δὲ νόμιμον τοὺς θύοντάς τι τι θεῶ. ταύτη προθύειν. Here the aetiological myth may simply reflect established custom. Cf. *Etyim. Magn.* s.v. *θυηλαί*. For the epigraphical evidence see F. Sokolowski, *LSCG* 20.6 and notes (sacred calendar of Marathon, IV B.C.); and especially *LSCG* 18, the sacred calendar of Erchia (first half IV B.C.). Cf. G. Daux, "La grande démarchie," *BCH* 87 (1963) 603–04, and the analysis of S. Dow, "The Greater Demarkhia of Erchia," *BCH* 89 (1965) 201–02. In the latter inscription the *kourotrophos* is mentioned six times, and she is always the first to receive sacrifice (a pigling). Whoever the *kourotrophos* is here—and the term is more a function title than an identifying name—she cannot be Hecate, since Artemis-Hecate is listed separately. Dow comments (204): "though she was always a minor deity, there would be sense in grouping *Kourotrophos* with the Olympians, since sacrifices to her are always *prothymata* to Olympian sacrifices" (italics mine).

μητίετα Ζεὺς and invents a new genealogy for Aphrodite from her epithet οὐρανία.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Hesiod connects the name of Hecate with the canonical phrase ἔκητι Διὸς and οὐκ ἀέκητι θεῶν.<sup>36</sup> But it must be admitted that such a verbal connection would have remained a minor curiosity, a clever conceit and nothing more, *if* Hesiod had not recognized its theological utility.

The lengthy treatment of Hecate at a pivotal moment in the *Theogony* attests not to a personal whim of Hesiod's, but to the poet's understanding of her critical mediating function. Hecate mediates not only between the old and the new order, the Titans and the Olympians: her powers bridge the three spheres of the *cosmos*, and she forms the crucial intermediary between gods and men. The logic of the placement of the Hecate episode is now apparent. It stands directly before the focal event of divine and cosmic history, the birth of Zeus, and forms the necessary complement to the story of Prometheus, which follows. In the Prometheus myth, Hesiod offers an account of the origins of the great schism separating gods and men.<sup>37</sup> Prometheus' attempt to deceive Zeus through the distribution of meat, Zeus' retention of fire, Prometheus' countertheft, and Zeus' final act of revenge in the form of the first woman—all serve to define what will henceforth be the condition of mankind. The successive acts in the duel between Prometheus and Zeus and Zeus' final and complete triumph explain the permanent separation of men from the gods, of which the institution of sacrifice is an emblem. Henceforth, all communication between men and gods requires the mediation of sacrifice and prayer.

The description of Hecate gives an explanation of how the mediation inaugurated by Prometheus' deception operates in the post-Promethean age under the everlasting reign of Zeus. In the Prometheus episode, human beings are the passive victims of a divine comedy played out at their expense. By contrast, in the passage devoted to Hecate, men are not only more strikingly present than anywhere else in the *Theogony*; they are also depicted as active agents busily engaged in all spheres of human endeavor.<sup>38</sup> But, above all,

<sup>35</sup> On Uranian Aphrodite see West 212.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Theog.* 529; *Il.* 12.8, 15.720; *Od.* 1.79, 3.28, 4.504, 6.240, 12.290, 15.319, 19.86, 20.42, 24.444; *Hymn.Hom.Ven.* 147.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. J.-P. Vernant, "Le mythe prométhéen chez Hésiode" in *Mythe et société en Grèce ancienne* (Paris 1974) 177–94; and "À la table des hommes," in *La Cuisine du sacrifice* (Paris 1979) 37–132.

<sup>38</sup> We tend to forget how little the *Theogony* deals directly with human beings. Schoemann (*supra* n.1) 183 grasps the peculiar character of the passage: "Es ist dieses Stück der Theogonie das einzige in seiner Art. Denn von dem, was die Götter für die Men-

they are men 'like us' who pray and sacrifice to the gods *kata nomon*. "And so, even now, whenever men pray or make sacrifice, they invoke Hecate" by whose will success is granted or denied. Absorbed and consolidated into the Olympian pantheon and taking her place in Zeus' *cosmos* as an essential element of the post-Promethean order, Hecate thus forms the middle term of Hesiod's theodicy and fully deserves her place in the *Theogony*.

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schen thun, von ihrem Walten im Leben derselben, von den Gaben die sie gewähren oder versagen, kurz von Allem, um deswillen sie von den Menschen verehrt und angerufen werden, ist in keinem anderen Theil der Theogonie eigentlich die Rede."