

HOMER AND HESIOD

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One of the most frustrating aspects of Homeric studies is that so little literary material outside the Homeric corpus itself survives to enhance our understanding of the cultural landscape of the period. Recent scholarship suggests that a large and diverse poetic tradition lay behind the figure we refer to as “Homer,” but little of it survives. Indeed we have little continuous written Greek for another century. The one exception is Hesiod, who composed two extant poems, the Theogony and Works and Days, and possibly several others, including the Shield of Heracles and the Catalogue of Women. As we shall see, while Hesiodic poetry was not occupied specifically with heroic themes, it was part of the same formal tradition of epic, sharing with Homer key metrical, dialectal, and dictional features.

There are many reasons, beyond chronological proximity, to draw connections between Homer and Hesiod. Both poets composed in the dactylic hexameter, the traditional meter of Greek epic, and in an oral formulaic tradition. Like Homer, Hesiod was primarily concerned with transmitting traditional material in oral performance. Comparative analysis of Homeric and Hesiodic diction indicates that both poets drew on a common store of traditional formulas.¹ The particular ways in which this heritage manifests itself in both poets suggests that epic was driven by a “Panhellenic” impulse, a desire to appeal to as many city-states as possible. In language and theme alike, therefore, Homeric and Hesiodic poetry represent a movement away from epichoric composition, toward performances that could be intelligible and meaningful virtually anywhere in Greece.²

These linguistic and formal similarities led ancient critics to see both poets as part of a unified tradition known as epos (“epic” poetry), although the contrasts between their works in length, subject matter, and authorial self-presentation challenge modern conceptions of the “epic” genre.³ We tend to think of epics as poems like Homer’s—very long narrative poems, dealing with heroes, often at war. Hesiod’s poems, however, are short (Theogony: 1022 lines; Works and Days: 828 lines), have little to do with heroes, and are not much concerned with war, at least not among humans (the Theogony narrates divine battles, and humans play little part). Indeed, the Theogony and Work and Days themselves are quite unlike each other in many ways. Each seems to owe its character to distinct poetic sub-genres (“theogonic” or “didactic-wisdom” traditions, respectively)⁴ appropriate to different occasions.⁵ As we shall see, the conspicuous differences between the poems of Hesiod and between Hesiod and Homer existed in tension with the unified poetic tradition of epos,

to which these works belonged at the broadest level. By considering how Homer and Hesiod situated themselves within this larger tradition of hexameter epos and in relation to each other, we will understand better their sophisticated poetic culture, their generic self-consciousness, and the dynamics of intertextual composition in archaic poetry.⁶

The Question of Priority

Since antiquity, scholars have debated the absolute and relative dating of Homer and Hesiod and the chronology of their works. They have approached this problem with many motives—political, moral, or aesthetic⁷—and our own age is no different. While we may no longer be interested in establishing whether Homer or Hesiod was the better poet by fixing their dates, our reasons for pursuing this problem amount to more than idle curiosity. For if we could fix their chronology, we might gain a better sense of their relationship. In cases where one poet seems to allude to the other, for example, we could grapple more effectively with intertextuality within a dynamic oral tradition. And if we could plausibly isolate in one poet consciousness of the other's work, we could perhaps address less diffidently the tension between the oral poet as “author” and as purveyor of tradition. Such concerns reflect a persistent obsession with authorship and an author's identity in our own era,⁸ and chronology and historical context form the obvious starting point for addressing these issues.

We cannot fix the dates of Homer and Hesiod with much certainty, but a general consensus has developed in recent decades that the two poets' activity falls in the century 750-650 B.C. The issue is complicated by the fact that these poems must originally have been composed without writing; questions of dating have to address the problem of when our texts became fixed.⁹ Still, it is probably no coincidence that our first texts, no matter when they were finally fixed in their current form, reflect poetic activity from the period when the introduction of the alphabet seems to have fostered the development of literature.¹⁰ Scholars have applied external evidence from linguistics, archaeology, and history to Homer and Hesiod to date each poet individually. But because they both can be placed in the same general period, and because we cannot narrow down their dates to periods of time less than several decades, the question of which “came first” requires further strategies. As we shall see, the situation is further complicated by a persistent ancient tradition that Homer and Hesiod were not only contemporaries, but even met in a poetic contest intended to contrast their individual styles.

Modern scholars generally assume that Homer composed earlier than Hesiod, although this rests on little more than subjective evaluations. Homeric epic somehow “feels” older than Hesiod, as if the former's heroic, military themes must precede the more “refined”

sensibility which the latter's theogonic or didactic poems allegedly reflect.¹¹ The arguments have grown more sophisticated in recent decades, and the consensus in favor of an earlier date for Homer survives, but the issue is not settled, and it may be worthwhile to mention here several representative discussions.

The fundamental debate is over the relative merits of internal and external criteria. Should we concentrate on establishing absolute dates for each poet by comparing his work with the historical and archaeological records, and from there making a circumstantial case for a relative chronology? Or will analysis of details of language, diction, and poetics offer better evidence for the relationship between the two, even if we cannot determine absolute dates?

Martin West, in his commentary on the Theogony, exemplifies the external method, and is one of the few recent scholars to argue for Hesiod's priority.¹² West sets himself in a tradition going back at least to fifth-century Greece, when the earliest poets were listed, presumably in chronological order, as Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod, and Homer. West suggests that "the Theogony may well be the oldest Greek poem we have."¹³ His terminus post quem of c. 750 B.C. for Hesiod, based on archaeological and historical evidence, seems secure;¹⁴ but dating the actual composition of the Theogony to the eighth century is another matter. To do this, West relies on a series of controversial premises about the dating of historical events, notably the so-called Lelantine War, an apparently intermittent conflict between Eretria and Chalcis.¹⁵ Even if we accept this argument, Hesiod's priority also rests on the controversial view that Homer's poems as we have them cannot be older than c. 700.¹⁶

Until quite recently, however, nearly all scholars have relied on internal criteria. They found common ground between the two—shared themes, identical phraseology, unusual diction—and then tried to decide whether one was borrowing from or alluding to the other. These attempts to date the poets now seem problematic, especially as scholars explore the nature of oral poetry with increasing sophistication. The success of the method must be judged on a case-by-case basis.¹⁷ Even champions of internal criteria lament that they encourage subjective evaluations: what strikes one commentator as "naive" strikes another as "sophisticated"; one person's idea of "derivative" or "ornamental" will seem "original" and "effective" to another.¹⁸ The most explicit verbal and thematic parallels have been collected and sifted by several generations of scholars,¹⁹ and just one example can illustrate the method.

Toward the end of the Theogony's proem, honoring the Muses for their inspiration, Hesiod rounds off a list of the nine Muses with a digression about their special relationship with kings (basilêes). The Muses, he says, pour sweet dew on the king's lips, which

accounts for their honey-sweet speech (83-84). Hesiod then continues the description of the king:

οἱ δὲ νῦ λαοὶ

πάντες ἐς αὐτὸν ὀρῶσι διακρίνοντα θέμιστας 85
ἰθείησι δίκησιν· ὁ δ' ἀσφαλέως ἀγορεύων
αἰψά τι καὶ μέγα νεῖκος ἐπισταμένως κατέπαυσε·
τούνεκα γὰρ βασιλῆες ἐχέφρονες, οὔνεκα λαοῖς
βλαπτομένοις ἀγορήφι μετὰ τροπα ἔργα τελεῦσι
ῥηιδίως, μαλακοῖσι παραιφάμενοι ἐπέεσιν· 90
ἐρχόμενον δ' ἀν' ἀγῶνα θεὸν ὥς ἰλασκόνται
αἰδοῖ μιλίχη, μετὰ δὲ πρέπει ἀγρομένοισι.

Theogony 84-92

[...and the peoples all look to him as he decides what is to prevail with his straight judgments. His word is sure, and expertly he makes a quick end of even a great dispute. This is why there are prudent kings: when the peoples are wronged in their dealings, they make amends for them with ease, persuading them with gentle words. When he goes among a gathering, they seek his favor with conciliatory reverence, as if he were a god, and he stands out among the crowd.]

(trans. West)

This passage has long reminded scholars of Homer, Odyssey 8.165-77, where Odysseus angrily responds to Euryalus, who had just ridiculed Odysseus's unathletic appearance (159-64). Odysseus states that the gods bestow different gifts on different men, but that the eloquent man is especially envied:

ἄλλος μὲν γὰρ εἶδος ἀκιδνότερος πέλει ἀνὴρ,
ἀλλὰ θεὸς μορφήν ἔπεσι στέφει, οἱ δὲ τ' ἐς αὐτὸν 170
τερπόμενοι λεύσσουσιν· ὁ δ' ἀσφαλέως ἀγορεύει
αἰδοῖ μιλίχη μετὰ δὲ πρέπει ἀγρομένοισιν,
ἐρχόμενον δ' ἀνὰ ἄστῳ θεὸν ὥς εἰσορόωσιν.
ἄλλος δ' αὖ εἶδος μὲν ἀλίγκιος ἀθανάτοισιν,
ἀλλ' οὐ οἱ χάρις ἀμφιπεριστέφεται ἐπέεσσι, 175
ὥς καὶ σοὶ εἶδος μὲν ἀριπρεπές, οὐδέ κεν ἄλλως
οὐδὲ θεὸς τεύξειε, νόον δ' ἀποφώλιός ἐστι.

Odyssey 8.169-77

[...One man has a weak appearance, but god adorns him with eloquence, and people look upon him with pleasure. That man speaks flawlessly in public with conciliatory reverence, and distinguishes himself from the crowd, and they regard him as a god as he goes through the city. Another man, however, may have a physical appearance like the immortal gods, but his words are not suffused with charm. So in your case, you have a distinguished appearance, god has seen to that, to be sure, but you're really a fool.]

The similarities between these passages are close enough to suggest some sort of relationship (even if only one that has them drawing independently on the same traditional material), yet they are different enough to make it difficult to argue that either directly depends on the other. The difference in context—the one a hymnic invocation, the other a scene in a secular narrative— does not suggest interdependence based on the notion of a “theme” and “variation;” yet the main rhetorical point of each passage is strikingly similar. The Theogony passage praises the just king and describes the respect he receives; in the Odyssey passage, Odysseus notes the pleasure that the people take in the gifted speaker. Both the Hesiodic king and the Odyssean orator rely on the quality of their discourse and owe their talents to the gods.

Scholars have puzzled over these passages since Wilamowitz,²⁰ who felt that the Hesiodic one was probably the earlier. In his commentary on the Theogony, West also suspected that the Hesiod passage came first, although he does not assume that the author of the Odyssey therefore depended on Hesiod. West sees the difficulty in establishing a relative chronology, but his remarks on the passages' diction typifies a common type of argument. West suggests that “...Homer seems the further removed from the original or traditional application of the language involved. αἰδοῖ μελιχίη [“with conciliatory reverence”] is much less appropriate to the tone of an eloquent man (Od. 8.172) than to the respect with which the people regard an αἰδοῖος βασιλεύς [“revered king”] (Th. 92), and mere eloquence...does not make a man who is εἶδος ἀκιδνότερος [“weak in appearance”] conspicuous in a crowd...Kingship does.”²¹

Every point West makes here is controversial: we have no access to an “original or traditional application of the language involved,” and his assessment of what is “appropriate to the tone of an eloquent man” oversimplifies a complex issue.²² Other scholars have criticized West's subjectivity on this point, but are themselves little more “objective.” Heinz Neitzel, for example, felt that the key point was that in Homer the god who bestows gifts on men and determines their natures in life is not named, whereas in

Hesiod the divine benefactors appear as the Muses. Why, he asks, would Homer have neglected to mention the Muses if he were imitating Hesiod?²³ In fact, we can imagine any number of reasons why Homer might choose to do so or not to do so. The argument does nothing to establish priority, even if it does offer useful observations about how the two poets chose to handle traditional material.

Most recently, John Butterworth has argued that although the phrase αἰδοῖ μιλίχῃ [“with conciliatory reverence”] is found in both passages, its appearance in Homer was more traditional, and therefore that Homer was the earlier of the two. In the end, however, he too relies on an argument like West’s (albeit in reverse form), that the phrase αἰδοῖ μιλίχῃ seems to the sensibility of one critic to fit its context naturally in the one case (Homer), and awkwardly in the other (Hesiod).²⁴

The ways in which scholars have confronted the similarities between these passages highlight the questions most commonly asked when parallel passages are detected, and the methods used to answer them. An obsession with chronology runs as a leitmotif through most attempts to explicate parallel passages, and this obsession has intensified as we become more confident about at least the approximate dating of the two poets, and about the mechanics of the oral poetic tradition in which they composed. But it is too often forgotten that discussing the relationship between any two poets by assessing similar passages involves an act of interpretation by the critic, and that such acts of interpretation presuppose, whether we choose to admit it or not, beliefs about the author’s intentions which will never be verifiable. We seek, in other words, a simple answer to a simple question—who was first, Homer or Hesiod?—but the interpretation of the poetry itself cannot provide an answer.

This is not to say that the discussions of parallel passages are without insight or value, even if their ultimate goal of determining priority is unattainable.²⁵ Few would disagree with West, Neitzel, or Butterworth that the similarities between the Theogony and the Odyssey passages are more than coincidental, or that each poet was using in some way traditional material. Indeed it is precisely the similarities between the two passages which suggest the presence of traditional material. But even more remarkable, perhaps, is the fact that diction so similar is found in such different contexts. This ought to encourage us to focus more on how each poet manipulates traditional material within the individual work, rather than on trying to determine whether one must have borrowed from the other, and must therefore be judged the clumsier for it.

Both these passages, for example, although the narrative contexts are so different, depict as their central moral exemplum a figure who acquires public renown through intelligence and eloquent speech. By comparing its appearance in our two passages we

begin to see how an oral poet could put his own stamp on traditional material. Although we will probably never have an accurate chronology for the passages, we can see a relationship between them that goes beyond verbal allusion. Despite the different stories that each poet is telling, the notion of a distinguished public speaker and arbiter resonates in both contexts.²⁶ Hesiod's kings are revered explicitly for their ability to mollify quarreling parties (86-87). In the Odyssey passage, the distinguished public speaker's moral qualities are less obvious, but Odysseus's exemplum highlights Euryalus' moral deficiency in contrast to his own more refined sensibility, based on eloquence and wit. Moreover, the dispute between Odysseus and Euryalus is precisely the sort of affair that Hesiod's judicious kings resolve, though Odysseus himself makes no overt connection between the gifted speaker and a reconciliation with Euryalus. The passages are related in their use of the same traditional motif, but each poet deploys it in an idiosyncratic way. Whereas Hesiod offers a straightforward description of the idealized king, Homer weaves the motif into the passage with remarkable narratological economy. Homer has Odysseus counter Euryalus's taunts, contrast his own public eloquence to Euryalus's feeble-mindedness, and emphasize his own kingly stature. As Richard Martin puts it: "What is explicit in Theogony 86ff.—that it is the king who speaks faultlessly, winning aidos and solving a neikos in the agora thereby—is acted out in the Odyssey."²⁷

Neither external nor internal criteria in the end settle the dating question conclusively, even if the questions they elicit about the poets' literary relationship may lead us down more productive critical paths. But one other recent attempt to address chronology deserves mention as a judicious amalgamation of external and internal arguments, avoiding many of the methodological pitfalls of each. In his book, Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns, Richard Janko uses linguistic phenomena to establish a chronology of archaic hexameter poetry. Janko works in a well established tradition of linguistic analysis²⁸ that sees signposts of poetic development in the evolution of dialect and the formulas of oral composition. But his careful collation of a broad spectrum of texts, his application of statistical methods, and his sensitivity to oral theory and poetic genre distinguish his study from most treatises that analyze the technical and formal aspects of epic. Janko sums up his method as follows: "...one expects old formulae and archaisms to diminish in frequency through the generations, as innovative phraseology and language creeps in; and if this could be quantified, it might prove a yardstick useful for assigning approximate relative dates to the poems."²⁹ Janko orders the poems as follows: Iliad, Odyssey, Theogony, Works and Days.³⁰ This conclusion is hardly revolutionary, as he himself points out, and he acknowledges the inadequacies of our evidence, such as the impossibility of fixing absolute dates, the amount of material now lost,³¹ and the problem of literary "allusion" in an oral

tradition.³² But he has taken the debate a step forward, offering cogent support for the widespread consensus that Homer composed before Hesiod.³³

The Certamen: the Contest of Homer and Hesiod

No matter what relative chronology of Homer and Hesiod we ultimately choose to believe, no one would dispute that the two poets lived close enough in time to each other, between the middle of the eighth and the middle of the seventh centuries BC, to make it plausible for their lifetimes to have overlapped. Indeed, for much of antiquity, it was assumed not only that the two poets were contemporaries, but even that they competed against one another in a contest of poetic styles. The story of a contest between Homer and Hesiod, even though clearly a fiction contrived by early biographers of the poets,³⁴ represents an early attempt to confront several fundamental questions perhaps even more significant than that of chronology, namely how a common epic tradition could produce such different poets as Homer and Hesiod, and how the distinctive character of each poet's work might reflect a difference in moral value and utility within an evolving canon.

The Contest of Homer and Hesiod exists for us in its fullest form in a text dating from the second century AD, traditionally referred to by its Latin title, the Certamen.³⁵ Although this treatise is relatively late, there is persuasive evidence that it was based on a work by the sophist and rhetorical theorist Alcidamas of the fourth century BC,³⁶ which leads one to suspect that the tradition originated even earlier. The author of the Certamen takes a disarmingly catholic view of the background to his subject, opening the work in almost Herodotean fashion by recounting various traditions about the genealogical and geographical provenance of Homer and Hesiod, while committing himself to none in particular.³⁷ On the matter of the chronology of Homer and Hesiod, the author simply relates the divergent theories: "Some say that [Homer] came before Hesiod, while others say that he was younger and related to him" (ἔνιοι μὲν οὖν αὐτὸν προγενέστερον Ἡσιόδου φασὶν εἶναι, τινὲς δὲ νεώτερον καὶ συγγενῆ, 44-5). Although the author proceeds to offer a genealogy that makes Homer and Hesiod cousins through a lineage stretching back to Apollo himself, the anecdote that will occupy the rest of the treatise seems to assume that the two were unrelated: "Some people say that [Homer and Hesiod] were active at the same time, and so were able to compete with one another at Chalcis in Euboea" (τινὲς δὲ συνακμάσαι φασὶν αὐτοὺς ὥστε καὶ ἀγωνίσασθαι ὁμόσε ἐν Αὐλίδι τῆς Εὐβοίας..., 54-55).³⁸ This version of the story has Homer and Hesiod meet by chance (καὶ οὗτοι οὖν ἐκ τύχης, ὡς φασι, συμβαλόντες ἀλλήλοις ἦλθον εἰς τὴν Χαλκίδα, 66-68) when they came to compete in the funeral contests held in honor of Amphidamas, the king of Euboea. It has long been recognized that the contest between the

two poets at Euboea almost certainly arose from the famous passage in the Works and Days in which Hesiod claims that the only sailing he ever engaged in was the short voyage from the mainland to Euboea precisely in order to compete in the funeral games for Amphidamas. No mention is made of Homer in that passage, although as we shall see below, the whole passage is suffused with diction paralleled in Homer, which may help explain why later audiences found the funeral games to be an ideal venue for a meeting between the two poets.³⁹ For the author of the Certamen, in any event, the historicity of the events he relates or the reliability of the biographical facts about Homer and Hesiod seem far less important than the ethical and aesthetic ramifications of the contest itself.

The format of the contest of Homer and Hesiod in the Certamen certainly reveals a complex and puzzling agenda. Hesiod himself essentially controls the proceedings, at first asking Homer a series of questions, and then engaging him in an exchange of verses in which Homer has to complete a series of lines begun by Hesiod. The very first question posed by Hesiod establishes that the poets were to be judged especially for their philosophical contributions:

υἱε Μέλητος Ὀμηρε θεῶν ἄπο μήδεα εἰδῶς
 εἴπ' ἄγε μοι πάμπρωτα τί φέρτατόν ἐστι βροτοῖσιν; (75-76)

[Homer, son of Meles, whose thoughts come from the gods,
 tell me first of all what is best for mankind?]

That Hesiod orchestrates the contest seems to imply that his poetry was felt to be inherently didactic and philosophical, whereas Homer's was less explicitly so, and so had to prove itself on this score. But while the Certamen leads us to assume at the outset that Hesiod will expose his adversary's inability to hold up under Hesiod's rigorous challenges, in fact, Homer acquits himself successfully, at least in the eyes of the audience. When Homer, for example, answers Hesiod's second question (81-82) about what is the "finest thing" for mortals (κάλλιστον, 82, with aesthetic and moral overtones) by quoting the famous passage from the Odyssey about the splendors of the banquet (Od. 9.6-11), the audience is enormously impressed: ῥηθέντων δὲ τούτων τῶν ἐπῶν, οὕτω σφοδρῶς φασὶ θαυμασθῆναι τοὺς στίχους ὑπὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ὥστε χρυσοῦς αὐτοὺς προσαγορευθῆναι..., 90-92 ["when these verses were uttered, they were so greatly admired by the Greeks that the lines were called 'golden'..."]. This reaction annoys Hesiod (ὁ δὲ Ἡσίοδος ἀχθεσθεῖς, 94) and forces him to pose more "difficult" questions (τὴν τῶν ἀπόρων...ἐπερώτησιν, 95). Homer continued to perform well in the exchange that

ensued, and the crowd finally called for the victory crown to go to Homer (176-77). But the contest then takes an unexpected turn, when King Paneides intervenes and orders both poets to recite what they consider their finest passage. After Hesiod quotes from the Works and Days (383-92) and Homer from Iliad (13.126-39), the audience once again judges Homer the victor. But the King sees things otherwise, and awards the victory to Hesiod, "...saying that it was just that he win the prize who urged people to practice farming and live in peace, and not the one who recounted wars and slaughter" [...εἰπὼν δίκαιον εἶναι τὸν ἐπὶ γεωργίαν καὶ εἰρήνην προκαλούμενον νικᾶν, οὐ τὸν πολέμους καὶ σφαγὰς διεξιόντα, 208-210].

This conclusion to the contest is rather unexpected in view of the fact that throughout the Certamen Homer is portrayed much more favorably than Hesiod, and the crowd's consistent preference for Homer certainly bears this out. It is difficult to decide how significant it is, therefore, that in spite of the story's apparent anti-Hesiodic bias, that poet still ends up with the prize. Any attempt to address this problem fully must confront the complicated issues surrounding the provenance of the Certamen, as well as the relationship between this treatise and other traditions of the contest for which we have some evidence.⁴⁰ Neil O'Sullivan reminds us in his recent study of this topic that although differing versions of the contest circulated at various points in antiquity—some in fact more disposed towards Hesiod throughout—they all agree that Hesiod won the contest in one way or another. This fact alone makes him suspect that a tradition of Hesiod's victory arose simply from an early tendency to assume that the passage in Works and Days where Hesiod claims to have won a victory tripod (651-57) in Chalcis must have referred to a contest with Homer.⁴¹ As such, the story of a contest that can be traced ultimately to a competition at Chalcis had to have Hesiod win in the end, even if the individual treatments of the event invested the narrative with idiosyncratic significance.⁴²

Clearly the traditions of a contest between Homer and Hesiod tell us more about the ways in which subsequent cultures conceived of these poets than about how they may have actually interacted in their own lifetimes. Yet the cultures that generated these stories were grappling with the same sorts of questions about the very nature of Homeric and Hesiodic poetry which continue to intrigue us today: Can we, for example, characterize Homer and Hesiod meaningfully according to the contents of their poems? Can we, in the end, ever hope to define "epic" poetry in the face of the differences between the two poets? Imagining a contest between Homer and Hesiod during which their poetic skills were articulated, compared and judged is just one way of arriving at answers to critical questions such as these. In the next section we will consider more recent strategies for understanding the specifically literary relationship between Homer and Hesiod in their own time.

Homer, Hesiod and the Character of Archaic Epic

We noted earlier that the certamen-tradition arose in the first place most likely because in the Works and Days Hesiod recounts his participation in the poetic contest at the funeral games for Amphidamas at Chalcis. Homer, of course, is not actually mentioned in that passage (even if ancient commentators assumed that he was in fact Hesiod's rival on that occasion), but in recent years scholars have detected there strong indications that Hesiod was attempting to contrast his own poetry to that of Homer's. The passage occurs in a section of the poem commonly referred to as the "Nautilia", or "Sailing" (619-94), where the poet offers advice about seafaring.⁴³ At lines 648-50 Hesiod introduces a digression about his own experience on the sea:

δείξω δὴ τοι μέτρα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης,
οὔτε τι ναυτιλίας σεσοφισμένος οὔτε τι νηῶν ·
οὐ γάρ πώ ποτε νηί γ' ἐπέπλων εὐρέα πόντον, 650
εἰ μὴ ἐς Εὐβοίαν ἐξ Αὐλίδος, ἧ ποτ' Ἀχαιοὶ
μείναντες χειμῶνα πολὺν σὺν λαὸν ἄγειραν
Ἑλλάδος ἐξ ἱερῆς Τροίην ἐς καλλιγύναικα.
ἔνθα δ' ἐγὼν ἐπ' ἄεθλα δαίφρονος Ἀμφιδάμαντος
Χαλκίδα τ' εἷς ἐπέρησα· τὰ δὲ προπεφραδμένα πολλὰ 655
ἄθλ' ἔθεσαν παῖδες μεγάλητορος· ἔνθά μέ φημι
ῥυμῶν νικήσαντα φέρειν τρίποδ' ὠτώεντα.
τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ Μούσης Ἑλικωνιάδεσσι ἀνέθηκα,
ἔνθά με τὸ πρῶτον λιγυρῆς ἐπέβησαν ἰοιδῆς.
τόσσόν τοι νηῶν γε πεπείρημαι πολυγόμφων· 660
ἀλλὰ καὶ ὥς ἐρέω Ζηνὸς νόον αἰγιόχοιο·
Μοῦσαι γάρ μ' ἐδίδαξαν ἀθέσφατον ῥυμνον ἀείδειν.

(Works and Days 648-62)

[I will show you the measure of the resounding sea—quite without instruction as I am either in seafaring or in ships; for as to ships, I have never yet sailed the broad sea, except to Euboea from Aulis, the way the Achaeans once came when they waited through the winter and gathered a great army from holy Greece against Troy of the fair women. There to the funeral games for warlike Amphidamas and to Chalcis I crossed, and many were the prizes announced and displayed by the sons of that valiant; where I may say that I was

victorious in poetry and won a tripod with ring handles. That I dedicated to the Muses of Helicon, in the original place where they set me on the path of fine singing. That is all my experience of dowelled ships, but even so I will tell the design of Zeus the aegis-bearer, since the Muses have taught me to make song without limit.]

(trans. West)

Readers have frequently been struck by the fact that Hesiod would glorify a trip from Aulis to Euboea—a distance over water of some several hundred feet—by referring to it as an example of sailing, but other details in the passage suggest that sailing in the literal sense may be only part of what the poet has on his mind here. The mention of Aulis at line 651, for example, is followed immediately by a reference to the mustering of the Achaean ships as they prepared for their expedition to Troy,⁴⁴ and the much more substantial sea-voyage that the Achaeans had to make, contrasting starkly with Hesiod's short voyage, is expressed in distinctly Homeric diction.⁴⁵ The obvious connections with Homer and Homeric poetry, which in their immediate context appear gratuitous at best, and the immediate transition to an account of Hesiod's poetic victory at Chalcis (654-57), has led Gregory Nagy to wonder whether the passage "reveals an intended differentiation of Hesiodic from Homeric poetry."⁴⁶ Hesiod, in fact, spends the last five lines of the passage recounting how he dedicated his victory tripod to the Muses, and the fact that his focus has suddenly shifted from an apologia about his explicitly "non-Homeric" expertise in sailing to a proud proclamation of his success as a poet,⁴⁷ makes it very likely that at some level he was equating sailing metaphorically with his poetic production.⁴⁸

However much force we might choose to give to a metaphorical reading of Hesiod's account of his sailing, it is worth emphasizing, as we noted earlier, that the autobiographical digression within the *Nautilia* inspired ancient readers to suppose that Hesiod's antagonist at Chalcis was none other than Homer, and that the contest between them became emblematic of their divergent styles. This need not necessarily mean, of course, that in antiquity the digression was itself read allegorically as Hesiod's declaration of a poetic program, but the fictions of a certamen that arose from the passage had to presume for the age of Homer and Hesiod that it was plausible for the two poets to have been able to think critically and self-consciously about their own work. Clearly even ancient readers reacting to Hesiod's autobiography in the *Nautilia* sensed that Hesiod himself was attempting to claim a certain authority for his poetry, an authority that can only be secure when the poet has successfully articulated the very nature of his poetic activity. The authors of the various certamen-stories, therefore, seem to have been motivated by a central paradox: they felt that Homeric and Hesiodic poetry were somehow related (sharing

poetic form, diction, and some aspects of theology, for example), but at the same time acknowledged that the two poets composed fundamentally different sorts of poetry.

What does the poetry itself of Homer and Hesiod, then, reveal to us about how they may themselves have actually understood the differentiation of their respective genres from the other? Hesiod's Theogony and Works and Days, in fact, conspicuously call attention to their formal affiliation with an epic tradition that we associate with Homer, particularly in their opening lines. Both Hesiodic poems open with an invocation to the Muses as the source of the singer's inspiration (Th. 1: Μουσάων Ἐλικωνιάδων ἀρχώμεθ' αἰεΐδεν...; WD 1: Μοῦσαι Πιερίηθεν, ἀοιδῆσι κλείουσαι...), as do the Homeric poems (Il. 1.1: Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά...; Od. 1.1: ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα...). Certainly, the function of the Muses in archaic Greek poetry is not monolithic. Sometimes they are invoked as a source of knowledge (e.g. the implication that Hesiod can sing of sailing because the Muses have taught him, or Homer's invocation to the Muses at the beginning of the "Catalogue of Ships," Iliad 2.484-87),⁴⁹ at other times, they account for the poet's technical skill and aesthetic prowess (e.g. Th. 94-97).⁵⁰ But the epic Muse embodies in particular a force of commemoration, whose primary function seems to be to aid the poet in recollecting and recounting traditional narratives,⁵¹ and both Homer and Hesiod call attention to this notion at various points in their poetry. Indeed the commemorative aspect of the Muses inheres in their mythological pedigree, which names Mnemosyne ("recollection" or "memory" personified) as their mother.⁵² In archaic epic, then, one of the main functions of the Muses is to call to the poet's mind the "things that have been heard," or κλέα, about the gods, men and the world.

The human beings who have garnered for themselves a reputation that is deemed worthy "to be heard" are naturally "heroes" of the sort we find in Homeric epic.⁵³ But Hesiod, even as he invokes the Muses as bestowers of kleos, is interested in a rather different sort of commemoration than Homer, one that is not primarily concerned strictly speaking with the "deeds of famous men." In a famous passage from the Theogony's proem, for example, Hesiod describes the character of his inspiration by the Muses:

ἐνέπνευσαν δέ μοι αὐδὴν
θέσπιν, ἵνα κλείοιμι τὰ τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα,
καί μ' ἐκέλονθ' ὕμνεϊν μακάρων γένος αἰὲν ἐόντων,
σφᾶς δ' αὐτὰς πρῶτόν τε καὶ ὕστατον αἰὲν αἰεΐδεν.

Theogony 31-4

[...and they breathed into me wondrous voice, so that I should celebrate (= “give kleos” to) things of the future and things that were aforesaid. And they told me to sing of the family of blessed ones who are for ever, and first and last always to sing of themselves.] (trans. West)

The Muses invoked at the beginning of the Works and Days are likewise singled out for their ability to offer kleos (Μοῦσαι Πιερίηθεν, ἀοιδῆσι κλείουσαι..., [Muses from Pieria, who offer kleos with songs...], WD 1), though Hesiod promptly makes clear that he intends to compose a mythos directed against his brother Perses, containing “true things” (ἐγὼ δέ κε Πέρση ἐτήτυμα μυθησαίμην. [...but I would tell (= “make mythoi about”)⁵⁴ true things to Perses 10), rather than a narrative of the past heroes and their exploits.⁵⁵

Clearly then, while Homer and Hesiod are at some fundamental level united by a desire to endow their subject matter with kleos in a commemorative project orchestrated by the Muses, they differentiate themselves from each other explicitly in what they choose to sing about. Homeric epic can be characterized generally as hexameter poetry that celebrated the deeds of the heroes of the past⁵⁶ with the pretense of objectivity and impersonality. By contrast, Hesiod’s concerns in the two major poems that have come down to us lie elsewhere, and an insistent subjective voice runs through both of them. The Theogony, for example, has as its main theme the ascendancy of the Olympian gods, their genealogies, struggles and ultimate moral victory, and the poet highlights his personal relationship with the Muses as the source for the theogony proper that he proceeds to recount. But even though Hesiod’s subject matter in the Theogony seems alien to that of heroic epic,⁵⁷ recent scholarship has aligned that poem intimately with the dynamics of performance associated with Homer. The Theogony, after all, can be regarded formally as a prelude or prooimion to a work that would immediately follow in performance. Hesiod’s poem, to be sure, is an elaborate and expansive version of such a form, but the formal parallels with the Homeric Hymns, many of which were clearly intended as proems to heroic epic, strongly suggest that the Theogony was composed along the same lines.⁵⁸ The likelihood, moreover, that the Hesiodic Catalogue of Women, a poem that catalogued famous women of a heroic and mythical past, picked up literally where the Theogony left off reinforces the idea that the Theogony could have functioned as a prooimion.⁵⁹

Although the Iliad and Odyssey have not come down to us with formal prooimia in place, it is likely that in performance they were preceded by one, and the longer Homeric Hymns provide likely analogues for this.⁶⁰ If this is true, however, the traditional view that Homer and Hesiod differ fundamentally in their respective authorial stances must be

considerably modified. While it is true that the poet Homer rarely intrudes into the narrative, whereas Hesiod dwells self-consciously on his own role as composer and teacher, some scholars have found it more appropriate to regard this contrast merely as reflecting the different stages of an epic performance rather than a fundamental difference in authorial orientation. Through a proem, then, Homer too would have had his opportunity to situate himself and his reputation in the broader context of the poetic tradition, as Hesiod could do in his expansive way in the Theogony.⁶¹ With a model for performance such as this, we might more easily imagine how an actual competition between two poets such as Homer and Hesiod might have played itself out.⁶²

So far we have seen that Hesiod's Theogony, in spite of its many apparent differences from Homeric poetry in terms of subject matter, narratology, and authorial perspective, is in fact very much a part of the same performance context. We will probably never be able to determine exactly how the Theogony came to be the elaborate pastiche of autobiography, theology and mythography that it is for us, and whether its current form reflects the idiosyncratic force of one individual poet or the vagaries of transmission. But its affiliation with the Homeric tradition both in form and occasion allows us at least to assume a very productive intertextual relationship between them. The Works and Days, on the other hand, has often proven less easy for scholars to align with Homer, largely because of its "domestic," non-heroic, subject matter and explicitly didactic program. Martin West, for example, has situated the poem in the context of "wisdom literature," by which he means "works of exhortation and instruction,"⁶³ and few would deny that, at least in its overall structure and professed intention, the Works and Days exhibits the characteristics of this type of poetry.⁶⁴ Certainly as well, the insistent autobiographical stance of the poem, the drama of a quarrel with his brother Perses, still active in the fictive present of the poem, offer a striking contrast to Homer's poetic voice, with its pretense of objectivity and only oblique connections with its audience.⁶⁵ But even though the Works and Days clearly derives much of its ethos from literary genres distinct from heroic epic, we must remember that formally it too, like the Theogony, belonged to the same oral hexameter tradition as Homer, and as such, we may suppose that Hesiod created the Works and Days under similar conditions of performance and composition.

Recently, in fact, a number of scholars have been arguing that, well beyond matters of diction, meter and formula, the Works and Days was perhaps even more profoundly engaged in the Homeric tradition than the Theogony. The Works and Days, after all, is a poem explicitly about cosmic justice (dikê) as it manifests itself in the daily lives of human beings. Dikê is certainly a multivalent term in archaic Greek thinking, but as it emerges in the Works and Days, it can be summarized as that sense of balance and order in human

activity most conducive to personal and social well-being in a precarious world. At first glance, this may seem like a theme rather alien to the predominantly heroic and militaristic world of Homer, where individual kleos often holds the spotlight and little systematic moralizing can be found on mundane social or domestic issues. But Homeric epic also concerns dikê, even if it is there articulated in different ways than it is in the Works and Days. In the broadest sense, the Iliad and Odyssey tell one grand story about how dikê operates throughout all stages of human relations, from the interpersonal to the international. The story is told with the kind of authorial distance we come to expect of the epic poet, and there is no pretense, as there is in the Works and Days, of offering practical “advice” to an audience construed in the second person. But while a didactic thread may be less easily traced through Homer than it can in the Works and Days, the fundamental ethical issues that inspired the tale of Troy and the nostoi (“homecomings”) are not far removed from Hesiod’s. In fact, the mythical cause of the Trojan War itself—the abduction of Helen by the foreigner Paris—was a violation of dikê at an interpersonal level of the sort that interested Hesiod most. Indeed, throughout the Iliad and the Odyssey the delicate issues of social and material equity, a concern for the proper balance of giving and receiving, for timê (“honor”) and philia (“friendship”), are continually dramatized in some of the most pivotal scenes of both poems: we may recall the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles over Briseis (the event that occasions the very plot of the Iliad), the failed embassy to Achilles’ tent, the behavior of the suitors toward Telemachus at Ithaca, or the complex social dynamics at work in Odysseus’ behavior with the Cyclopes, to name just a few.

The dispute between Hesiod and his brother Perses over an inheritance of land, which ultimately motivates the composition of the Works and Days (or so Hesiod claims), can be situated in the same general realm of moral discourse as the Homeric examples, even if the players are now supposed to be “contemporary” rather than heroic.⁶⁶ Perses’ violation of dikê prompts Hesiod to offer him a prolonged sermon on the dangers of unjust behavior and the need for self-sufficiency through hard work in an agricultural economy. Hesiod’s moralizing, simply put, seeks to promote a world in which humans coexist peacefully, resolve their disputes through law, and regard violence as itself a violation of dikê. Homer’s narrative, by contrast, offers a considerably more complex response to wrongful behavior than Hesiod’s in its focus on heroic figures, who have acquired their exalted status primarily through military expertise and the desire for kleos.⁶⁷ This is a simplistic evaluation, of course, which hardly does justice to the subtle treatment of the many individual Homeric heroes, but taken together these heroes do represent a contrast to the system of values envisioned by Hesiod. Happy landowners living at peace with each other, constructing their lives in accordance with the rhythms of nature certainly did not form the

focus of heroic epic. Homer and Hesiod, in short, confront the same moral, social and even psychological dilemmas shared by all human beings, but their solutions seem widely divergent, and often in direct conflict.

Hesiod himself seems to call attention to such a conflict in the famous “Myth of the Ages” at Works and Days 106-274, and I would like to conclude with a discussion of this passage because it exemplifies so well the intertextual possibilities within archaic epic. In this parable, directed explicitly at Perses, Hesiod traces the history of humankind as a sad decline from a state of paradise through periods of moral degeneration and misery. Hesiod uses the metaphor of metals to characterize the successive ages, from an age of gold, to silver, bronze and iron, each metal representing a successive stage of decline. Between the bronze and iron ages, however, Hesiod locates a fourth, and calls it a “divine race of heroes” (159). This age is actually a brief improvement over the preceding one (δικαιότερον καὶ ἄρειον, [“more just and superior”], 158), and Hesiod notes its close relationship with his own (iron) age (προτέρη γενεὴ κατ’ ἀπίρονα γαῖαν, [“the race before us on the limitless earth”], 160).⁶⁸ Scholars have long been puzzled by this obvious interruption of an otherwise coherent progression, but one clue to its significance certainly seems to be the fact that Hesiod has in mind specifically literary heroes, the heroes who populate traditional epic poetry:⁶⁹

καὶ τοὺς μὲν πόλεμός τε κακὸς καὶ φύλοπις αἰνὴ
τοὺς μὲν ὑφ’ ἑπταπύλῳ Θήβῃ, Καδμηίδι γαίῃ,
ᾧλεσε μαρναμένους μήλων ἔνεκ’ Οἰδιπόδαο,
τοὺς δὲ καὶ ἐν νήεσσιν ὑπὲρ μέγα λαῖτμα θαλάσσης
ἔς Τροίην ἀγαγὼν Ἑλένης ἔνεκ’ ἠυκόμοιο.

Works and Days 161-65

[And as for them, ugly war and fearful fighting destroyed them, some below seven-gated Thebes, the Cadmean country, as they battled for Oedipus’ flocks, and others it led in ships over the great abyss of these to Troy on account of lovely-haired Helen.] (trans. West)

This passage contains the one sentence describing the activity of the heroes on earth, and it is striking that its grammatical (and thematic) subject is “evil war” (πόλεμός κακός) and the “horrible cry of battle” (φύλοπις αἰνή). The heroes of Thebes and Troy are defined solely in terms of their military exploits, and their fate as humans hardly sounds enviable: they fight over issues which, in their brief mention, appear to be trivial (“the flocks of

Oedipus,” “fair-haired Helen”)⁷⁰ in comparison to the genocide that they effect, and in the end the heroes can claim no kleos other than their death in battle.⁷¹ Most of these heroes receive a merely generic sort of death (...τοὺς μὲν θανάτου τέλος ἀμφεκάλυψεν, [the finality of death covered over some of them] 166), although a few of the élite are granted a semi-divine existence on the “Islands of the Blessed” (171).⁷² Hesiod calls these select heroes “happy” (ὄλβιοι ἥρωες, 172), although this is a happiness that comes only at the expense of any sort of humanity: Zeus provides them with a livelihood and habitat “apart from mankind,” and settles them at the “ends of the earth” (τοῖς δὲ δίχ’ ἀνθρώπων βίοντον καὶ ἤθε’ ὀπάσσας || Ζεὺς Κρονίδης κατένασσε πατὴρ ἐν πείρασι γαίης..., 167-8). Indeed, the entire passage is suffused with ambivalence about the race of heroes, and one wonders whether this ambivalence also reflects Hesiod’s attitude towards the kind of poetry that celebrated such heroism. Hesiod may indeed believe that the familiar heroes of traditional epic were “more just and superior” (158),⁷³ that their exploits were worthy of admiration in some sense, but his bleak description of their lot also seems to imply that in the end they can tell us little about living productively and morally in the world.

This reading of the Myth of the Ages suggests an ongoing engagement with the Homeric tradition, and as such may even be one of our earliest examples of literary criticism. The didactic stance of the Works and Days certainly comes into sharpest focus when viewed in relation to the values that pervade heroic epic, and when we understand that Hesiod was exploring the dynamics of the great epic themes—eris, dikê, the desire for kleos, among others—in a non-heroic setting which would include his own audience as well as future generations of people living in the real world. This tension in the Works and Days between a heroic past and the realities of life ultimately reflects a quite different conception of humankind than that of Homeric epic. While Homer is full of stories that celebrate the attempts of heroic figures to transcend their limitations as humans, Hesiod emphasizes that dike can really only be achieved when humans behave in accordance with a natural order configured for them by Zeus.⁷⁴

Although, as we have seen, the connections between Homer and Hesiod in terms of dialect, meter, diction and compositional technique, have by now been well established, much work remains to be done on how Homer and Hesiod situated themselves within the larger tradition of Greek epos, and how their individual poetic voices were shaped by it.⁷⁵ Our consideration of such questions here offers only a few of the possibilities that a comparative literary analysis of the two poets can yield, yet it reveals clearly that the interaction between them operated at a much deeper level than that of form and technique.

All audiences of Homer and Hesiod have been struck by the differences between them in terms of subject matter and even moral vision, but careful attention to their respective poetics has begun to suggest that each was profoundly self-conscious about his place within a highly diverse poetic tradition, and that each could most fully articulate his individual poetic identity, to himself as well as his audiences, by constructing it in relation to the many literary alternatives available within this tradition.

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¹ See G. P. Edwards, The Language of Hesiod in its Traditional Context, (Oxford, 1971) in general, and pp. 190-207 for a summary of his conclusions. For other bibliography on this topic, see our discussion below pp. 000.

² As Gregory Nagy, "Hesiod," in Ancient Writers, ed. T. J. Luce (New York, 1982) 44, puts it, in discussing the particularly Panhellenic representation of the Olympian gods in Homer and Hesiod: "Homeric and Hesiodic poetry systematized the city-states' diverse ideologies about the gods into a set of attributes and functions that all Hellenes could accept." See also Gregory Nagy, Pindar's Homer. The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past (Baltimore and London, 1990) 70-71. Equally revealing of Panhellenic tendencies are the glaring cases where localization occasionally seems to surface; see Gregory Nagy, "An Evolutionary Model for the Making of Homeric Poetry," in The Ages of Homer. A Tribute to Emily Townsend Vermeule, ed. Jane B. Carter and Sarah P. Morris, (Austin, 1995) 163-79.

³ See Andrew Ford's essay in this volume, "Epic as a Genre," pp. [000].

⁴ For the "theogonic" traditions that inform Hesiod's Theogony, see M. L. West, Hesiod. Theogony (Oxford, 1966) 1-16; for the didactic traditions of "wisdom literature" behind the Works and Days see M. L. West, Hesiod. Works and Days (Oxford, 1978) 3-30.

⁵ For some recent discussions of the generic identity of Hesiod's poetry, see W. G. Thalmann, Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Poetry (Baltimore, 1984) [XXX]; Andrew Ford, Homer: the Poetry of the Past (Ithaca and London, 1992) 13-56, esp. 29-30; West, Works and Days, 3-25; R. Hunt, "Satiric Elements in Hesiod's Works and Days," Helios 8 (1981) 29-40.

⁶ "Intertextuality" might not, perhaps, seem an ideal critical term for discussing oral traditions, where the very notion of a "text" is somewhat anachronistic. Still, Homer and Hesiod survive for us as texts, and as texts they allow us to analyse their constituent parts, even if these parts originally evolved from an essentially non-literary process of composition. In fact, "intertextuality" as a term to describe how a group of texts (and authors) influence the composition and character of each other, is more appropriate for oral poetry than, for example, a concept such as "allusion," since the very force of a poetic tradition makes it difficult to ascribe influence to one particular poet who happens to survive, instead of to another one who does not. As we shall see below, the uncertainty about the chronology of Homer and Hesiod in particular makes it all the more dangerous to

posit a chronology or direction of textual influence in cases where textual similarities (linguistic, thematic, metrical or otherwise) seem to exist.

⁷ Mary R. Lefkowitz, The Lives of the Greek Poets (Baltimore, 1981) 8, notes some of the agendas lying behind theories of priority in the past.

⁸ Even some critical methodologies of recent decades that question the legitimacy of framing interpretative questions around the figure of a historically situated “author” (new criticism, structuralism, deconstruction, and some phenomenological approaches, for example) have had to confront in their own ways the fact that all texts imply a relationship between an author and an audience, both of which are ultimately elusive to an individual critic. It is especially difficult to find stable meaning in texts composed within an oral tradition, because their oral provenance implies a certain measure of authorial anonymity—an individual poet may be responsible for the text as we have it, but his necessary reliance on traditional material (that is, the work of countless other oral poets) blurs the lines between innovation and poetic inheritance. For a sensitive appreciation of the critical dilemmas that a poet such as Hesiod poses for the modern reader, see Robert Lamberton, Hesiod (New Haven and London, 1988) 34-37.

⁹ Cf. Nagy, “An Evolutionary Model,” 174.

¹⁰ See Barry Powell’s chapter in this volume, pp. [000].

¹¹ See P. Walcot, Hesiod and the Near East (Cardiff 1966) 124: “...the difference between the two poets in technique of composition and in language is thought to imply a lapse of time.” Walcot is impatient with this assumption and urges us first to establish dates for each poet independently before attempting to discuss their relationship.

¹² Others who have maintained priority for Hesiod include: E. Bethe, Homer. Dichtung und Sage (Leipzig 1929) 2.299-339. For West’s full argument on the dating of the Theogony in particular and the relationship between Hesiod and Homer, see his Theogony, 40-48. Inez Sellschopp, Stilistische Untersuchungen zu Hesiod (Hamburg, 1934) argued that much of the Odyssey must have been composed later than Hesiod; for an attempt to repudiate this position, see Edwards, Language of Hesiod, 167-189.

¹³ West, Theogony, 46.

¹⁴ For details, see West, Theogony, 41-42.

¹⁵ West, Theogony, 43. For problems in dating the Lelantine war, see Richard Janko, Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns. Diachronic Development in Epic Diction (Cambridge, 1982) 94-98.

¹⁶ See West, Theogony, 46 n. 2, where he notes the archaeological evidence for an early sixth-century date for Homer. On the current state of the question of Homer’s date, see

Chapter [00] in this volume, pp. (000). Of course, the issue of assigning a date to Homer is all the more complicated by the necessity to separate Homeric texts as a product of a dynamic and fluid oral tradition, unsusceptible by nature to firm dating, and Homer the historical figure who lived some time in the eighth or seventh century BC. See Gregory Nagy, “Homeric Questions,” Transactions of the American Philological Association 122 (1992) 51-53 on the evolution of an oral poem from performance to fixed text.

¹⁷ Some scholars have registered categorical disapproval of the method: “A more insidious type of argument can result from the a comparison of passages in Homer and Hesiod whose contents or phrasing are similar.” (Walcot, Hesiod and the Near East, 124). Walcot’s objection is based on the nature of oral poetry: “If poets trained in an oral tradition share formulas and themes, it is inevitable that we meet coincidence of phrasing when their subject-matter is similar” (p. 125).

¹⁸ Heinz Neitzel’s Homer-Rezeption bei Hesiod. Interpretation ausgewählter Passagen (Bonn 1975), for example, is concerned specifically with the passages in Hesiod that seem redolent of Homer (note, of course, how his title presupposes a chronology and direction of literary influence), though he sees his own work as more “scientific” than that of his predecessors: see his introductory survey of the history of the problem, pp. 1-15.

¹⁹ In addition to Neitzel’s monograph (see previous note), one may consult the principal works that address the relationship between Homer and Hesiod: Friedrich Schwenn, Die Theogonie des Hesiodos (Heidelberg 1934), Inez Sellschopp, Stilistische Untersuchungen, Fritz Krafft, Vergleichende Untersuchungen zu Homer und Hesiod (Göttingen, 1963).

²⁰ U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Die Ilias und Homer (Berlin, 1915) 477-79. For further bibliography, see Heinz Neitzel, “Zum zeitlichen Verhältnis von Theogonie (80-93) und Odyssee (8.166-177),” Philologus 121 (1977) notes 3,4, and p. 44.

²¹ West Theogony, 183.

²² For criticism of West’s subjectivity, see John Butterworth, “Homer and Hesiod,” in J. H. Betts, J. T. Hooker, and J. R. Green, Studies in Honor of T. B. L. Webster (Bristol, 1986) 35. See also Friedrich Solmsen, “The ‘Gift’ of Speech in Homer and Hesiod,” TAPA 85 (1954) 1-15. Solmsen and Neitzel, “Theogonie und Odyssee,” along with Butterworth, argue that Homer’s thought and language in this passage is coherent and precise (contra West).

²³ Neitzel basically is following Solmsen, “The ‘Gift’ of Speech,” 9, on this point.

²⁴ His argument may be schematized as follows:

(a) μειλίχτιος is always applied in Homer to words, with the exception of this passage, where it is used of αἰδώς.

(b) *μειλίχιος* can be considered a traditional adjective applied to words

(c) *αἰδοῖ μιλίχῃ* is a unique phrase in Homer and Hesiod

(d) In the *Odyssey* passage, the phrase is used more traditionally in that it at least refers to the verbal qualities of the eloquent man.

(e) The use of the phrase in Hesiod is awkward in its context (see also Neitzel, “Theogonie und Odyssee,” 43) and untraditional in its usage (not referring to words), and therefore must come later than the Homeric passage.

²⁵ In this regard, P. Pucci’s remarks in *Odysseus Polytropos. Intertextual Readings in the Odyssey and the Iliad* (Ithaca and London 1987) 234 n.14, about the question of the priority of Homer and Hesiod seem unnecessarily extreme: “Even if it were proved that Hesiod’s text follows the *Odyssey*’s...no serious critical consequence should stem from this assumption...”

²⁶ See Richard P. Martin, “Hesiod, Odysseus, and the Instruction of Princes,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 114 (1984) 29-48, who argues that both passages are examples of the genre known as “Instruction of Princes.” Martin emphasizes the traditional link between *aidos* and kingship (pp. 41-43), and notes how this link allows us to see Odysseus in the Homeric passage as commenting on the appropriate behavior of kings, and, in effect, enacting such behavior himself (see p. 44).

²⁷ See Martin, “Instruction of Princes,” 44. Martin cautions on p. 45 that the typological connections between the two passages need not imply any direct influence of either one on the other.

²⁸ In the case of Hesiod, Janko is particularly indebted to Edwards, *Language of Hesiod*, who established with reasonable certainty that Homer and Hesiod were products of the same linguistic and dialectal tradition.

²⁹ Janko, *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns* 189.

³⁰ See Janko, *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns*, 189-200; see Nagy, “An Evolutionary Model,” 174, who thinks of text-fixation as a more fluid process than Janko does.

³¹ Janko, *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns*, 9: “At least as much epic poetry has been lost as has survived, leaving aside oral poetry there may have been which was never recorded.”

³² On the utility and legitimacy of investigating *exemplum* and *imitatio* in oral epic, cf Janko, *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns*, Appendix D, 225-28. See also Butterworth, “Homer and Hesiod,” 33-45.

³³ Just how meaningful even this general formulation can be is uncertain, of course, given the fact that we know so little about the actual mechanism by which they were fixed in writing. To say that Homer composed before Hesiod implies that the texts we have of

them reflect in some way the chronology of their composition. Given what we know generally about the transmission of Homeric and Hesiodic texts in the historical period of Greece, we have to be cautious about how much we make of the issue of priority. But until we have more information, for example, about influence of the rhapsodic tradition on textual fixation, it is reasonable for us to assume that our texts of Homer and Hesiod, taken as a whole, provide us with a serviceable record of a moment of fixation close to the period of original composition. For reservations about this assumption, however, see Nagy, “An Evolutionary Model,” 174.

³⁴ See Lefkowitz, Lives of the Greek Poets, 4-5, Lamberton, Hesiod, 5-7; also M. L. West, “The Contest of Homer and Hesiod,” Classical Quarterly 61 (1967) 433-50; K. Heldmann, Die Niederlage Homers im Dichterwettstreit mit Hesiod, (Göttingen, 1982). The story was repudiated by Plutarch (according to the fifth-century AD commentator Proclus), and in Quaest. Conv. 674f he regards the contest as a tedious topic; see West, Works and Days, 319.

³⁵ The Greek text can be found in Volume 5 of T. W. Allen, Homeri Opera (Oxford, 1925) 225-38 (Oxford Classical Texts series), the work has been translated into English by H. G. Evelyn-White in Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns, and Homerica (Cambridge, 1914; “Loeb Classical Library”) 567-97.

³⁶ On the modern history of the question of Alcidamas’s influence on the Certamen, which began with a two-part article by Friedrich Nietzsche (“Der Florentinische Tractat über Homer und Hesiod, ihr Geschlecht und ihren Wettkampf,” Rheinisches Museum 25 [1870] 528-40 [part 1] and 28 [1873] 211-49 [part 2]) see Neil O’Sullivan, Alcidamas, Aristophanes, and the Beginnings of Greek Stylistic Theory (Stuttgart, 1992) 63-66.

³⁷ The author does, however, give particular credence to information gleaned from the Pythia (line 41). On the narrative style of the Certamen, see Lefkowitz, Lives of the Greek Poets, 19.

³⁸ The reading Εὐβοΐας follows F. Nietzsche’s emendation of Βοιωτίας,

³⁹“Der Florentinische Tractat” (part 2), 234.

³⁹ West, Works and Days, 32, 44-45, has suggested that the Theogony itself was actually composed for performance at the funeral games for Amphidamas; see Janko, Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns, 94-95. The Certamen mentions at lines 213-14 that when Hesiod won the tripod at Chalcis he dedicated it to the Muses with an inscription boasting of his victory over Homer. Pausanias, writing in the second century AD records that he saw the tripod at Mt. Helicon (9.31.3). On the tradition of Hesiod’s victory tripod see O’Sullivan, Alcidamas, 97.

⁴⁰ See O’Sullivan, Alcidamas, ch. 3, esp. 96-98.

⁴¹ O’Sullivan, Alcidamas, 96-97.

⁴² O’Sullivan, for example, stresses the likelihood that the Certamen derives from Alcidamas’s (a sophist of the fourth century BC) treatise Peri Sophiston, and that Alcidamas saw the contest between Homer and Hesiod as emblematic of a contemporary debate between two opposing rhetorical styles (where Homer represented the “grand”, Hesiod the “slender” styles, Alcidamas himself championing the former). O’Sullivan, Alcidamas, 98, notes other interpretations of Hesiod’s victory.

⁴³ Scholars have often felt uneasy about this passage, since it seems out of place in the poem, and some have even proposed to delete it. See West, Works and Days, 55-56, and Lamberton, Hesiod, 131.”

⁴⁴ West, Works and Days, 320: “It shows how strong was the interest in heroic poetry, that Hesiod cannot mention Aulis without thinking of the Atreidai and their expedition.”

⁴⁵ West, Works and Days, 320-21; Edwards, Language of Hesiod, 80.

⁴⁶ Nagy, “Hesiod,” 66.

⁴⁷ Note the peculiar summary line at 660: (τόσσόν τοι νηῶν γε πεπείρημαι πολυγόμεφον, [“that is all my experience of dowelled ships”]) where τόσσον [“that” or “that much”] implies that the whole passage somehow relates to his expertise in sailing, even though the immediately preceding lines have been concerned with his competition at Chalcis.

⁴⁸ I have pursued this argument in detail in “Poetry and Sailing in Hesiod’s Works and Days,” Classical Antiquity 9.1 (1990) 99-113.

⁴⁹ See Louise H. Pratt, Lying and Poetry from Homer to Pindar (Ann Arbor, 1993) 12-17 (on the Iliadic passage); 48-49 (on the WD passage). In spite of such passages that call upon the Muses for “information,” Pratt’s argues more broadly that the primary function of archaic poetry was aesthetic, rather than to offer access to some notion of “truth.”

⁵⁰ Cf. Pratt, Lying and Poetry, 31-32.

⁵¹ Cf. Pratt, Lying and Poetry, 33-43 on the commemorative aspects of archaic poetry.

⁵² Cf. Gregory Nagy, The Best of the Achaeans (Baltimore, 1979) 17 §3n2.

⁵³ The song of Demodocus among the Phaeacians in Odyssey 8, a song about Odysseus and witnessed by Odysseus, has often been seen as a self-conscious reflection of the entire commemorative enterprise of heroic epic. Cf. Nagy, The Best of the Achaeans, 17-20. Pratt, Lying and Poetry, 43-47, discusses the passage with an eye to the question of poetic “truth.”

⁵⁴ On the semantics of mythos, see Marcel Detienne, The Creation of Mythology, Trans. M. Cook (Chicago, 1986) 47-51, and Richard P. Martin, The Language of Heroes. Speech and Performance in the Iliad (Ithaca and London, 1989) 1-42. Martin's working definition of mythos is an "authoritative speech-act performed in detail" (p. 39; and see pp. 12-13). On the verbal form, mytheomai, which occurs in the Hesiodic quotation above, Martin notes, p. 40.

⁵⁵ On the meaning of etetyma ["true things"] in Hesiod, with bibliography tracing the long history of the problem, see Pratt, Lying and Poetry, 95-113.

⁵⁶ Ford, Poetry of the Past, 17 formulates a definition of Homeric poetry as "that subclass of epos that offers a Muse-sponsored presentation of the past."

⁵⁷ Indeed, we may legitimately speak of a "tradition" of theogonic literature with an existence independent of hexametric epos. See West, Theogony, 1-16 for a survey of world theogonic literature; for the Greek tradition in particular, see Ziegler, "Theogonien" in Roscher W.H. Roscher, Ausführliches Lexicon der griechische und römische Mythologie 1469-1554.

⁵⁸ Cf. Nagy, Hesiod, 53: "The proposition that the Theogony is, from a purely formal point of view, a complex prelude that invokes all the gods can be tested by adducing the larger Homeric Hymns as simplex preludes, each of which invokes one god." On the Homeric Hymns as preludes, see H. Koller, "Das kitharodische Prooimion: Eine formgeschichtliche Untersuchung," Philologus 100 (1956) 159-206. Nagy regards lines 1-963 of the Theogony as "...not a single, but rather a composite, hymn in comparison with most Homeric Hymns" (p. 54). Nagy, in fact, finds three discrete theogonies in this section of the poem; for details see pp. 54-55.

⁵⁹ At Theogony 963 Hesiod makes a transition from the Olympian gods to goddesses who slept with mortal men, and the heroes who were born from such unions. Although in antiquity the Catalogue was generally regarded as Hesiodic, modern scholars have expressed serious doubts. See M. L. West The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women (Oxford, 1985) 124-38. For our purposes, however, it matters little whether the Hesiod of the Theogony also composed the Catalogue. The point remains that the Theogony could serve a prooimic function in antiquity.

⁶⁰ For bibliography on the Homeric Hymns as preludes to epic performances see Ford, Homer, 24 n.23. See also Nagy, Hesiod, 53.

⁶¹ See Ford, Homer, 28-29: "Short or long, [the proem] could allow these poets...to assert themselves and then sublimate themselves into the transcendental voice of the Muses."

The proem carries the poet and audience from the personal to the traditional, from the local to the Panhellenic, from the present to the eternal.”

⁶² A central question remains, however, as Lamberton, Hesiod, 47-48 rightly stresses: why were the Theogony and Works and Days transmitted to us with prooimia in place, while Homer was not. Lamberton speculates that part of the reason for this has to do with the fact that by the Hellenistic period, the persona and text of Hesiod were institutionally connected with a festival for the Muses at Mt. Helicon, near Hesiod’s birthplace, Askra.

⁶³ West, Works and Days, 3; For a survey of world traditions see pp. 3-25.

⁶⁴ See Ford, Homer, 30. Ford classifies the Works and Days as “parainetic” or “advice” poetry, and distinguishes its “ethos” from that of Homer, or even the Theogony: “...its fundamental ‘ethical’ difference from epos is in its constant oscillation from sacred time back to its present auditor in order to draw lessons about the human place in the moral order of the world.”

⁶⁵ See Ford, Homer, 30-31.

⁶⁶ On the figure of Perses as he is portrayed in Works and Days, and the question of whether or not he is a fictitious character, see West, Works and Days, 33-40, who himself opts for a middle ground, namely that Perses was a real figure, but that Hesiod invented various details about him to suit his own purposes. Nagy has pointed out that the neikos (“quarrel”) between Hesiod and Perses which occasions the poem functions analogously to the neikos between Achilles and Agamemnon at the opening of the Iliad. Both poems, that is, begin with a dispute, and both portray explicitly the working out of eris. Nagy, Best of the Achaeans, 312-13

⁶⁷ On “heros” see West, Works and Days, 370-73, Nagy, Best of the Achaeans, 115-17, Ford, Homer, 139-40. The term came to refer to great figures of the past who had acquired cult status after death, though its precise connotation in Homer is not entirely clear, especially since, as West notes, Homer applies the word to living men.

⁶⁸ Translating with West ad loc., “the race before ours.”

⁶⁹ See West, Works and Days, 174. Scholars have long noted that the diction of the passage is especially Homeric. See Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Hesiodos. Erga, (Berlin, 1928) on 161, F. Krafft, Vergleichende Untersuchungen zu Homer und Hesiod, (Göttingen, 1963) 119.

⁷⁰ See W. J. Verdenius A Commentary on Hesiod, Works and Days, vv. 1-382 (Leiden, 1985) ad loc. p. 101. The diction of these phrases is of course synechdochal, as R. Renehan, “Progress in Hesiod” [Review of West, Works and Days], Classical Philology 75 (1980) 347, has noted, but the specific causes of these two great wars noted here are

especially resonant in the context of the Works and Days. The “flocks of Oedipus” refers to a dispute over land and inheritance, the very cause of the quarrel between Hesiod and Perses. As for Helen as the cause of the Trojan War, not only is she too treated here as an object of disputed property, but her appearance here occurs in a passage that immediately follows the story of another seductive and lethal woman, Pandora.

⁷¹ West’s dry description of the passage (West, Works and Days, 191) is revealing: “Hesiod has nothing special to tell us of these people’s way of life, and passes straight on to the manner of their death. It is exactly the same as that of the Bronze race: they killed each other off. But he puts it in a more favorable light”. On the last point, see below in text.

⁷² See Verdenius, Commentary on Hesiod, ad loc. p. 101 on the “Islands of the Blessed.”

⁷³ See Lamberton’s discussion of this issue, Hesiod, 119.

⁷⁴ As Hesiod himself reminds us in one of the most symbolic myths of the Works and Days, Prometheus and Pandora (47-105), this “natural order” which governs human existence came about when Prometheus angered Zeus at Mekone by trying to deceive him with an inferior apportionment of meat. In response to Prometheus’s behavior, Zeus hid fire and so began the separate lives of humans and gods, and the need for humans to work.

⁷⁵ On Homer’s generic self-consciousness and the ways in which Homeric texts interact with the various aspects of epos, cf <XXX in this volume; Ford? Slatkin? Davies?>.