

HESIOD'S COSMOS

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CHAPTER I

Orientations: the Theogony

Whence each of the gods came into being, or whether they always existed, and what their functions were, the Greeks did not know until recently – yesterday, so to speak. Hesiod and Homer . . . were the ones who made a theogony for the Greeks and gave the gods their names and distinguished their honors and skills and indicated their forms.

(Herodotus 2.53.1–2)

Herodotus' statement is of course not literally true; yet neither is it completely false, for it contains a deeper truth. Homer did not invent the gods, but the images of the gods contained in his poetry were the ones that continued to dominate the Greek imagination. Homer reveals the gods in their interactions with men, or rather, with those grand human beings of the past, the heroes, with whom the gods consorted more intimately and more openly than they did subsequently. From Homer we can learn much about the functioning of the Olympian pantheon, the prerogatives and honors (*timai*), and characteristic modes of action of each individual god under the supreme authority of Zeus, who is both king and father of them all.

Homer alludes in passing to various stories about the earlier history of the gods before the stabilization of the Olympian order, and his narrative presupposes a familiarity on the part of his audience with such tales, but he has no interest in being either exhaustive or systematic. Thus, for example, Homer seems to know of a cosmogonic model in which Okeanos and Tethys were the primordial parents when he calls the former the θεῶν γένεσις (*Iliad* 14.201); and he mentions the Titans confined to Tartarus (*Iliad* 8.479–81; cf. 5.898, 14.274, 279, and 15.225), as well as other earlier conflicts among the gods (*Iliad* 1.396–406; 15.18–24). Moreover, the relations between Zeus, Thetis, and Achilles, which underpin the plot of the *Iliad*, presuppose a version of the succession myth.¹ But for a systematic exposition of the

¹ Cf. Slatkin (1991); also Muellner (1996).

origins of the gods, we must turn to Hesiod, whose *Theogony* provides an account of their genesis and genealogy.

The *Theogony* constitutes an attempt to understand the cosmos as the product of a genealogical evolution and a process of individuation that finally leads to the formation of a stable cosmos and ultimately achieves its *telos* under the tutelage of Zeus. The organization of such a theogony would seem to be completely inevitable and utterly predictable insofar as it starts from the first beginnings (πρώτιστα) and progresses chronologically until the divine cosmos is complete. Yet even within this apparently predictable scheme, there is room for some flexibility, and certain choices must be made. It is in the disposition of his material that we can perhaps most clearly detect Hesiod's originality or thought. That material falls into two major categories: the genealogies proper and the story of the succession among the gods, which in a sense forms the narrative armature of the poem. As West well puts it: "If the succession Myth is the backbone of the *Theogony*, the genealogies are its flesh and blood".² In addition, Hesiod incorporates a number of apparent digressions, containing material related neither to the succession story nor to the genealogies proper, which have no predictable place in the overall chronological scheme. In positioning these diverse elements, Hesiod makes choices, perhaps most obviously when he departs from a strictly chronological framework – as he frequently does – but also when he chooses the exact point at which to insert the episodes of the succession story within the genealogies. Even – and this feature has not received the attention it deserves – the genealogies themselves are not exempt from manipulation. Hesiod may anticipate or postpone a genealogical line, dislocating it from its expected position, or he may interrupt it with the insertion of non-genealogical material.³ Commentators frequently disregard the Hesiodic organization of the genealogies and in their discussions bridge over Hesiod's disruptions.⁴ These nodal points, as we may call them, have, as we shall see, important bearings on Hesiod's argument and hence his understanding of the cosmos.

² West (1966) 31. Muellner (1996) 56 explains the relation between the narratives and the genealogies as follows: "these [narrative] digressions occur only when the procreative processes that generate the world are disturbed or interrupted, and they explain how those processes are restored."

³ West's (1966) 37–39 rather mechanical attempt to outline the principles of Hesiod's arrangements is not very helpful. Note that H. Schwabl (1970) 442–43 disputes West's claim that the genealogies are ordered matrilinearly. The only deviation from the patrilinear pattern Schwabl finds is, interestingly enough, Hecate.

⁴ Philippon (1936), for example, follows the offspring of the line of Chaos to its end before picking up the line of Gaia. She likewise pursues the line of Gaia and Pontos by jumping over to Nereus and his descendants. This is of course perfectly logical, but raises the question as to why Hesiod does not do so.

There have, of course, been many attempts to outline the “architecture” of the *Theogony*, and many of them have much to recommend them.⁵ I myself have previously suggested that the birth of Zeus, flanked by the Prometheus story and the “Hymn to Hecate,” forms the centerpiece of the poem.⁶ But it must be recognized that the very notion of an architectonic form tends to substitute a static model for a linear and dynamic one – and genealogy is by its nature dynamic – and to underplay and even overlook the many decisions Hesiod had to make as he composed his poem. It is in observing and assessing these organizational choices that we can watch Hesiod thinking.

Unlike the biblical Genesis, Hesiod’s model for the coming into being of the cosmos is not that of purposeful creation by a designing Creator, but follows instead the procreative pattern of a human family. As D. Clay has succinctly put it, Hesiod’s cosmogony constitutes a “teleology without purpose” and “without design”.⁷ In addition, the divine family in Hesiod, the ἄθανάτων ἱερὸν γένος, includes a cast of characters that we would never group together into a family unit since it includes members of very different species: the gods both present and past, but then also natural phenomena like the sun, moon, and stars as well as various monsters; finally a host of abstractions such as Death, Strife, Peace, Festivity, and Justice.⁸ What would seem to unite this diverse group into a uniform species in Hesiod’s mind is their immortality. Now, parents unite to reproduce sexually (or asexually in some species) offspring who resemble them and who may even bring out latent features of their begetters; the offspring in turn tend to intermarry and produce increasingly complex interrelationships and families that share certain common characteristics. Yet unlike human families, the race of the gods is immortal; the parents do not die. As a result, divine generation simultaneously becomes a process of increasing proliferation and differentiation that eventually reveals the familiar contours of the cosmos; nevertheless, the first entities abide. To trace Hesiod’s genealogies means to understand the unfolding of his cosmic hierarchies and the principles that determine them; here too we can observe Hesiod making choices and thinking. The following analytic summary of the *Theogony* is not meant to be exhaustive, but offers an outline that draws attention to the organization

⁵ Schwabl (1970) 447–50 offers a useful outline. Hamilton (1989) 4–14 gives a recent summary of scholarly views. Hamilton’s own interpretation involves a rather artificial distinction between genealogies, and narrative and non-narrative digressions and the poem’s chronological framework. See also Thalmann (1984) 38–45, who emphasizes the role of ring composition.

⁶ Clay (1984) 30. ⁷ Clay (1992) 138–39.

⁸ West (1966) 31–33 offers the following categories: gods of cult, gods of mythology, neither of the preceding, individual members of divine guilds, elements of the visible world, and abstractions.

and certain salient features of Hesiod's cosmogony and its representation in his poem, his *cosmos epeon*.⁹

After a lengthy proem celebrating the Muses and recounting Hesiod's meeting with them on Mount Helicon (to be discussed later), the *Theogony* proper begins from what came into being (γένετο) first of all (πρώτιστα), which Hesiod calls *Chaos* (116). This is apparently not, as we might think, a jumble of undifferentiated matter, but rather its negation, a featureless void.¹⁰ A neuter noun in Greek, Chaos has no epithets and apparently no features that can be described. Next, but unrelated to Chaos, comes Gaia (116–18), the Earth, who is defined as possessing solidity (“broad-breasted”) and location (“sure seat of the gods”) – qualities Chaos would seem to lack. Moreover, the features of Gaia help make comprehensible what Hesiod means by his Chaos; for Gaia's first act is to bring forth Uranus, her counterpart, “so that he might enclose her on all sides so as to be forever the sure seat of the blessed gods” (ἵνα μιν περὶ πάντα ἔεργοι, | ὄφρ' εἴη μακάρεσσι θεοῖς ἔδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ, 127–28).¹¹ Noticeable also is the fact that negation (Chaos) – absence of qualities – precedes the positive, Earth, and that the negative in some sense receives its definition from its opposite number – as will become even clearer in the sequel. This movement from undefined to increasing definition is characteristic of Hesiod's cosmogony. In addition, Hesiod describes Gaia proleptically as the “seat of all the gods who inhabit Olympus,” gods who have not yet been born. From the beginning, then, Hesiod alludes to the final disposition of the cosmos, a disposition that is somehow immanent from the outset.

Whether misty Tartara, mentioned in the next line, should be considered the third principle or merely a part of Earth has been debated since antiquity.¹² The text is ambiguous and complicated by the fact that Hesiod later describes Tartarus as a separate realm beneath the earth (729–819) and also as a living entity with whom Gaia will mate to produce the monstrous

⁹ I have found most useful for my purposes, Philippson (1936); Bonnafé (1985); and Muellner (1996) 52–93. Cf. also S. Benardete (2000).

¹⁰ Cf. Mondì (1989); and Bussanich (1983). For the various interpretations of Chaos that have been put forth, see Podbielski (1986) 254–56.

¹¹ With Solmsen (1970) I prefer ἔεργοι (“enclose”) to the variant κλύπττοι (“hide,” “cover”) (cf. West [1966]; Arrighetti [1998]; Marg [1970]), since it more clearly brings out the notion of boundedness that is an essential quality of Gaia and her line as opposed to the unbounded character of Chaos. Only after being delimited by Sky can Earth produce the mountains and sea that define her contours (129–31).

¹² Cf. the Scholia (Di Gregorio [1975]) at lines 115, 119, and 120 and West (1966) on line 119. West counts Tartarus as one of the first principles, although he views its insertion here as a Hesiodic afterthought. Cf. the provocative remarks of Miller (1977); and the response of Ballabriga (1986) 282–90. See also Muellner (1996) 57. Marg (1970) 108 and Schwabl (1970) 447 posit only three “Urwesen.”

Typhoeus (820–22). There is, then, a progression from the neuter plural to a masculine singular in the evolution of this entity. I myself believe that the plural *Tartara* first represents the interior of earth – for earth possesses not only a substantial surface but also an inner dimension. It is within this inner space that Earth will later hide Cronus and Zeus. In the subsequent phases of cosmic evolution, it will develop into the more clearly defined nether regions where the Titans will again be imprisoned beneath the earth. Ultimately, it will become sufficiently differentiated and separated from the Earth to emerge in a final manifestation as the personified Tartarus, a male with whom Earth can unite to produce Typhoeus. Finally, to complete the first phase of genesis, Eros, “most beautiful among the immortal gods,” who overpowers both gods and men, represents the universal principle of generation, the force that causes generation and the proliferation that activates the cosmic process, but curiously does not himself generate anything (120–22).

Hesiod now returns to Chaos, who produces by scissiparity Darkness (Erebus) and black Night, both of whom may be considered aspects of their parent; these two then unite sexually to bring forth their opposites, Brightness (Aither) and Day (123–25). Here again, the negative precedes the positive, and sexual reproduction appears to have a more positive and “progressive” character than parthenogenesis. The genesis of Night and Day may also be considered the beginning of time, which can now be measured by their alternation. After tracing Chaos’ lineage for three generations, Hesiod picks up with Gaia, whose line remains completely separate from that of Chaos – intercourse between these two fundamentally opposed cosmic entities seems impossible. At any rate, by parthenogenesis, Earth produces Uranus, the Heaven, to cover or enclose her in all directions, as if she somehow required such delimitation in order to possess the localization and solidity that characterize her. Indeed, only afterwards do the features and contours of Earth come into being: the Mountains, along with their inhabitants, the Nymphs, and the barren salt Sea, all generated “without desirable love.” Through these three asexual productions, Earth defines herself in opposition to Chaos as having form and substance.

Mating now with Uranus, Gaia gives birth first to the sweet water that encircles the earth, Okeanos,¹³ and then to the eleven other Titans, of whom Cronus is the youngest. Two monstrous sets of triplets follow: the Cyclopes and the Hundred-handers, both of whom diverge from what is

¹³ Note that Okeanos and Tethys, Homer’s primal parents, are first and last – except for Cronus – in the list. Bonnafé (1984) 185–86 draws attention to Hesiod’s downgrading of Okeanos as merely one member of the generation of the Titans from Homer’s primal parent.

evidently an already established theomorphic standard of appearance. (For Hesiod, human beings are anthropomorphic because they resemble the gods.) Hesiod notes that the former have only one eye, while the latter have a hundred hands and fifty heads (126–53).

Genealogy now gives way to narrative as Hesiod relates how Uranus refused to allow his offspring to be born, “but kept all of them hidden and did not allow them to come up into the light” (157) – apparently by blocking the birth canal through continuous sexual intercourse. To relieve the painful pressure within, Gaia concocts a plot to remove the offending member and exhorts her children to avenge their father’s outrageous conduct. In the *Theogony*’s first speech, Gaia justifies her actions in moral terms based on the doctrine of vengeance. Once set in motion, however, the cycle of revenge, fueled by mutual hatred of parent and child, can only repeat itself. The name Uranus collectively assigns to his children, Titans, which is doubly etymologized as “those who stretched their hands against their father” and “those who would pay the penalty for their actions,” embraces the vicious and apparently endless circle of crime and punishment.

After her youngest son, Cronus, alone agrees to undertake the task, Gaia stations him strategically so that he can, as Hesiod puts it, “harvest the genitals of his father” (180–81) with the adamantine sickle Gaia has given him.¹⁴ Uranus now approaches, desiring intercourse and “bringing on night” (176). This enigmatic expression points to the fact that Uranus’ actions turn back the clock, so to speak, by reinstating the primal darkness prior to the birth of Day and hence the genesis of time. This brutal narrative, which culminates in the castration of Uranus, constitutes the first act of the succession myth (154–210); at the same time, it forms a critical component of the cosmogonic process, which has been blocked and denied its natural generative proliferation. Only with the separation of Heaven and Earth and the emergence of their children from the womb of mother Earth can the next generation of gods truly be said to come into existence.

A pattern begins to emerge here that will become more evident and more elaborate in each subsequent episode of the succession myth: the generative principle, identified with the female, promotes change, as Gaia does here when she instigates the plot against Uranus and encourages her youngest son Cronus to depose his father. This continual impetus for change constitutes a radically destabilizing force in the cosmos. Gaia will always be on the side of birth and of the younger against the older generation. Moreover, once set in

¹⁴ Hesiod seems to be punning on λόχος, “ambush” and the root λοχ-, “relating to child-birth.” Cf. O’Byrhim (1997). Muellner (1996) 64 also sees a word play in μήδεα and ἤμησε. Note also that the sickle is the first manufactured object.

motion, there seems to be no inherent reason for this cosmogonic process to stop. Left to itself, procreation would continue, infinitely multiplying and proliferating without brakes. Countering this force for constant change, however, is the male principle, first embodied in Uranus, that attempts to discourage birth and unlimited fertility and to block generational change and the instability it entails. In fact, the history of the gods as a whole can be viewed as an account of the various attempts on the part of the supreme male god to control and block the female procreative drive in order to bring about a stable cosmic regime. Thus Uranus tries to keep his children from being born while Cronus swallows them at birth. Both attempts are of course foiled by the guiles of Gaia. Only Zeus succeeds by pre-emptively swallowing Metis, Guile personified, and thereby incorporating the female principle within himself. The opposition of violence (*bie*) and guile (*metis*) as vehicles promoting succession are already visible in the first instantiation of the repeated pattern.¹⁵ But while *bie* appears to be the prerogative of the male, and *metis* belongs to the female sphere, males like Cronus and Prometheus, who share the epithet *ankulometis*, “with crooked *metis*,” also make use of cunning with limited success. For each act of trickery (Cronus’ swallowing of his children, Prometheus’ attempt to deceive Zeus) provokes a counter-deception. The chain of violence and deception only comes to an end with Zeus’s complete absorption of *metis*/Metis.

But this is to get ahead of ourselves. In addition to releasing the Titans imprisoned in Gaia’s womb (but not the Cyclopes or the Hundred-Handers),¹⁶ the castration of Uranus gives rise to an odd brood: first the Erinyes, then the Giants and the Melian Nymphs, whose place in the cosmos is as yet undefined, and finally Aphrodite, born from Uranus’ semen and incubated by the barren salt Sea.¹⁷ In making her one of the by-products of Uranus’ mutilation, Hesiod reinterprets Aphrodite’s epithet “Uranian,” and sets her far earlier in the cosmic scheme than her traditional Homeric filiation as “daughter of Zeus”; at the same time, the primordial Eros joins her entourage and becomes her subordinate. Paradoxically, Uranus’ male sexuality, which perversely denied its natural issue, here gives rise to a female divinity, who embodies the attraction between the sexes. Nevertheless, she

¹⁵ Cf. Detienne and Vernant (1974), esp. 61–124.

¹⁶ Cf. Schmidt (1988a) 55 solves an old *aporia* by arguing, convincingly, I feel, that the Cyclopes and Hundred-Handers remained imprisoned under Cronus and were liberated by Zeus only in the course of the Titanomachy (501–6, 617–86). Only Zeus had the brains to exploit their power and finally gave them a job and a place in his scheme as jail-keepers of the Titans in Tartarus (734–35). Schmidt is now followed by Arrighetti (1998) 328–29.

¹⁷ On ἐθρέφθη (line 192) and the uniqueness of Aphrodite’s genesis, see Bonnafé (1985) 136, n. 14. Also Moussy (1969) 66.

does not belong to the first principles, but is fully personified as she joins the “tribe of the gods” after her birth (202).

In one of those organizational choices which I have called nodal points, Hesiod only now returns to complete the primal line of Chaos (cf. 123–25) by cataloguing the offspring of Night and her daughter Strife, Eris (211–32).¹⁸ The significance of this postponement and the rationale for its insertion here is not difficult to grasp. The dark forces personified in Night’s brood have so to speak just been unleashed upon the universe in the course of the preceding narrative. Uranus’ excessive sexuality, the mutual hatred of father and children, the brutal violence and sexual outrage inflicted by Uranus on Gaia, her suffering, deception, and plotting for revenge, Cronus’ willingness to wreak violence upon his father, the consequences of Uranus’ castration, and the promise of further violence – all the events enacted in the narrative – now emerge as eternal destructive forces, personifications whose influence on the cosmos must henceforth be reckoned with.¹⁹

We can now detect more clearly the operation of two cosmic forces, Eros, which brings things together, and Eris, who forces them apart.²⁰ It bears emphasizing, however, that they do not simply correspond to the male and female principles, yet both are necessary for the coming-to-be of the cosmos. The story of Uranus and Gaia and its aftermath demonstrates the complexity of their interaction. His *eros* inevitably arouses her *eris* that leads to separation. Indeed, the by-products of that separation, Aphrodite and the Furies, ensure that the process of joining and separating will continue. As the primal Eros already subsumes Eris, so Eris herself is sister to Philotes. The two forces, inseparable and intertwined, make cosmogony possible, but they also continually destabilize the process. The subordination of Eros to Aphrodite, which is necessary for the establishment of a stable cosmos, is the first step in the taming of the generative principle. The accommodation of Eros from primal principle into the realm of the gods will be repeated

¹⁸ The Homeric Eris is a sister of Ares (*Iliad* 4.440). For the children of Night, see Ramnoux (1986); and Arrighetti (1993).

¹⁹ Schwabl (1970) 446 recognizes that Hesiod’s arrangement here is intentional in that he places “die finsternen Leidmächte nach der Uranosentmannung und ihren Folgen.” See also Schmidt (1985) 84–85. The names of some of the personifications included in the family of Night have appeared in the preceding narrative: Apate, “Deception” and Philotes (224), cf. ἔξαπάτας (205) and φιλότητα (206); Neikea, “Quarrels” (229), cf. νεϊκείων (208). The naming of the Muses in the proem likewise follows, and derives from, the preceding narrative description of their activities. Muellner (1996) 66 emphasizes that Night’s offspring are “important creatures for the next episode of the myth.” However, they are already operational in what precedes. The action precedes the abstraction.

²⁰ Cf. Bonnafé (1985) and Rudhardt (1986). In this context, I need hardly remind the reader of Empedocles’ Neikos and Philia.

in Hesiod's treatment of Tartarus and Chaos. Divisive Eris too – despite Achilles' wish that she disappear from the cosmos (*Iliad* 18.107) – will also find a place in the final order.

Having brought the line of Night to a close, Hesiod continues with the line of Pontos, the Sea, which represents a highly varied tribe, embracing both negative and positive characteristics and which must ultimately be integrated into the cosmogonic mainstream. In what appears to be a unique instance of male parthenogenesis,²¹ Pontos generates Nereus, a single male offering a positive counterweight to the preceding host of largely female negative forces, one whose gentleness, truthfulness, and justice counterbalance, but do not cancel out, the existence of the violent, deceptive, and brutal brood of Night and her daughter Eris. In the first exogamous union linking the lines of the Pontids and the Uranids, Nereus, son of the salt Sea, will, in union with a daughter of Okeanos, the fresh water, generate the Nereids whose lovely and musical names embody the benign nature of their father (lines 240–63)²².

The lengthy genealogical catalogue that follows extends for over 200 lines until the birth of Zeus and his siblings leads into the second act of the succession myth. First, in an incestuous union that harks back to the earliest phases of cosmogony, Pontos mates with his mother Gaia, the Earth herself, with all her luxuriant, if sometimes irresponsible, fecundity. Of their four offspring, two form forward-looking exogamous marriages:²³ Thaumás (“Mr. Wonderful”) and an Oceanid produce Iris and other windy phenomena, while Eurybie will later become the consort of the Titan Kreios (375). The two remaining children, Phorkys and Keto, join in an incestuous union, thus concentrating the elemental characteristics of their parents, to produce the monsters.²⁴ Both barren and fertile, Pontos and his family embrace unexpected combinations of opposing qualities, traits that re-emerge in their monstrous progeny.

The descendants of Phorkys and Keto, who will be examined in detail in a later chapter, constitute an endogamous tribe of monstrous beings. Promiscuous combinations of features and qualities that are subsequently

²¹ Most commentators assume that Pontos mates with Gaia to produce Nereus, but Bonnafé (1985) 148 recognizes his unparalleled parthenogenic birth from the male. See also Deichgräber (1965) 190. The case of the neuter Chaos is slightly different.

²² Note that the last of the Nereids (262) is named Nemertes, ἡ πατρὸς ἔχει νόον ἀθανάτοιο. Cf. line 235 and Bonnafé (1985) 17; also Bonnafé (1984) 194; and Deichgräber (1965) 194.

²³ While mother/son alliances of necessity dominate the first generation, and sister/brother unions are common in the second, exogamy increasingly becomes the norm. Cf. Bonnafé (1985) 48. The most striking exception is Zeus himself with his pseudo-parthenogenesis of Athena and his various marriages to his sister Olympians.

²⁴ I examine the monster catalogue in greater detail in Chapter 7. Cf. Clay (1993).

distinguished and kept apart in the course of the cosmogonic process characterize these hybrid creatures. The monsters reveal the emerging categories of the evolving cosmos precisely through their violations of its norms. Hesiod limits and encloses the contagion of their chaotic promiscuity by confining the monster clan to endogamous unions and thus cutting it off from the theogonic mainstream.

In the proem, Hesiod had described the song the Muses sing to entertain Zeus on Olympus; they begin from Gaia and Uranus, then:

οὓς Γαῖα καὶ Οὐρανὸς εὐρύς ἔτικτεν,
οἳ τ' ἐκ τῶν ἐγένοντο, θεοὶ δωτῆρες ἑάων.

those whom Earth and Sky brought forth,
And those who were generated from them, the gods,
givers of good things. (45–46)

For his own program, however, Hesiod insisted that the Muses enlarge the scope of their song to include not only the descendants of dusky Night, but also those “whom salty Pontos nurtured” (οὓς θ' ἄλμυρὸς ἔτρεφε Πόντος, 107). The θεοὶ δωτῆρες ἑάων (“gods, givers of good things”), who distribute and choose wealth and honors and as Olympians are ultimately responsible for the disposition of our cosmos (111–13), are the descendants of Uranus and Gaia, the Ouraniones, as Hesiod calls them.²⁵ The Pontids, on the other hand, descendants of Gaia and Pontos, can be considered a clan at a somewhat tangential angle to the line of cosmic progress, anti-gods who, if left to themselves, would generate a cosmos antithetical to the one over which Zeus reigns.²⁶ Of course, this does not happen: through intermarriage, the Pontids are rapidly integrated into the Ouranid clan. Nevertheless, with the incestuous, interbred, and ultimately sterile tribe of monsters, Hesiod gives us a glimpse of what such an anti-cosmos might be.

After the primordial principles (Gaia, Uranus, etc.), the cosmos takes on its recognizable configuration in the generation of the Titans; but only in the following generation, that of the Olympians, does it acquire its permanent organization under the rule of Zeus. Having moved forward several generations in his account of the monsters, Hesiod now (337ff.) backtracks to elaborate on the offspring of the Titans, who had been enumerated some two hundred lines earlier (133–38). Two endogamous unions produce the Rivers and the Oceanids and the Sun, Moon, and Dawn. These are followed by further couplings that bring together the lines of the Pontids

²⁵ *Theogony* 461, 919, 929.

²⁶ Schwabl (1970) 450 characterizes the Pontid line as having, on the one hand, a close relation to the elemental (cosmic) spheres and, on the other, possessing a certain “Unheimlichkeit.”

and the Ouranids; the remaining daughter of Pontos, Eurybie, joins with a Titan and in the following generation their offspring produce the winds and stars. At this point, the features of the natural world as we know it are more or less complete.

Before the birth of the Olympians and the next act of the succession myth, Hesiod recounts proleptically the tales of two mighty goddesses: Styx, who prefigures the policy that will lead to Zeus's triumph; and Hecate, who will play a crucial role as mediator in the new order established by Zeus. Styx is introduced as the most prominent (προφερεστάτη ἐστὶν ἄπασέων, 361) of the daughters of Okeanos and Tethys, who at least in the Homeric cosmogonic tradition played the role of primordial couple. In *Iliad* 14.201, Hera falsely claims to be en route to visit "Okeanos, *genesis* of the gods, and mother Tethys" (Ὠκεανόν τε, θεῶν γένεσιν, καὶ μητέρα Τηθύν). Later in the same book (line 246), Sleep calls Okeanos "the *genesis* for all things" (ὅς περ γένεσις πάντεσσι).²⁷ The prominence Hesiod assigns to Styx suggests that he was well aware of this alternative tradition. Styx's venerable ancestry could indeed make her a potential threat to Zeus; the powerful offspring Hesiod attributes to her, Might, Victory, Zeal and Force, would indicate as much. At any rate, under the regime of Cronus, she was apparently left without honors (ἄτιμος, 395), and she is the first to accept both Zeus's offer to join his side and his assurance of honors and prerogatives to those divinities who had none under the old dispensation. Zeus's policy of co-opting older gods and assimilating them into his regime prefigures his triumph in the Titanomachy. Styx's dedication of her powerful children to Zeus thus becomes an emblem for Zeus's political acumen at the same time that it suggests how the failure to integrate the power of female fertility might lead to further instability and even disaster. Later, Zeus adds to her prerogatives by making her the great oath of the gods (775–806), in a sense the oath of allegiance to uphold his own regime.

Hecate resembles Styx in being a powerful female divinity who is likewise integrated into Zeus's order and given an important function within it. We will examine that role later, in Chapter 4. But in the present context, it is significant that the elaborate description of Hecate (411–52) comes just before the center of Hesiod's poem, and it is followed immediately by the account of the birth of Zeus and the other Olympians. Hesiod thus gives the impression that Hecate is the last-born of the gods who belong to the generation preceding the Olympians – a false impression, as it turns out, since, as we shall see, the genealogy of the sons of the Titan Iapetus is

²⁷ On Homer's cosmography and its relation to Hesiod, see D. Clay (1992) 131–37.

postponed until after the deposition and binding of Cronus. Thus, while neither episode occurs in its strictly chronological position, Hecate and Prometheus are arranged so as to frame the pivotal event of the *Theogony*: the birth of Zeus. Both episodes are proleptic: in the Prometheus story, Hephaestus and Athena, who mold and adorn the first woman, have not yet been born; and Zeus's concession of *timai* to Hecate presumably cannot occur until after the defeat of the Titans and the final *dasmos* (885). Moreover, both episodes adumbrate the final ordering of the cosmos under Zeus's sovereignty, especially, as we shall see, in relation to the human species. Thus theology rather than strict chronology determines the placement of the Hecate episode.

By manipulating her position within his poem, Hesiod brings out Hecate's unique position as inheritor of the three cosmic realms, Pontos, Gaia, and Uranus, a goddess who sums up in her person all of the cosmogonic processes that have preceded her. The epithet *mounogenes*, twice applied to the goddess (426, 448), offers an indication of Hecate's uniqueness and her special status. The situation of *mounogenes* Hecate resembles that of an *epikleros*, who as sole daughter does not herself possess the right of inheritance but can convey it via marriage.²⁸ Hecate's unusually powerful status would doubtless have made her a good match for Zeus. But, on second thought, perhaps not. The marriages of Zeus have been studied,²⁹ but it might be equally important to study the marital unions that do not occur. Here too the parallel to the story of Styx is revealing; Zeus does not marry her, but in a sense he co-opts or adopts her powerful children, children who could in fact become a threat to his sovereignty if not kept within his control. There is, to be sure, no marriage between Zeus and Hecate, even though her genealogical heritage and her possession of multiple honors under the old regime might thereby endow the supreme ruler with a certain legitimacy.³⁰ But the goddess also embodies a potential danger: the threat of powerful legitimate children who could succeed their father. Perhaps it is more expedient for Hecate to remain a virgin. As he has done with Styx, Zeus will endow Hecate with a crucial role in his new regime that will be appropriate to her high status, but will also neutralize the potential threat that her female power may pose. Zeus will make her *kourotrophos*,

²⁸ Cf. Arthur (1982) 68. At *W & D* 376 Hesiod calls an only son who is to be the sole heir to the paternal estate *mounogenes*.

²⁹ See Bonnafé (1985) 92–102; Ramnoux (1987); and C. Miralles (1993) 17–44. Note that Hecate's aunt, Leto, is absorbed into Zeus's regime by becoming his wife and mother of Artemis and Apollo. Hesiod repeatedly emphasizes Leto's gentleness, i.e. her non-threatening character (406–8).

³⁰ One thinks of Penelope's suitors or Oedipus' marriage to Jocasta.

the guardian of human offspring, an appropriate compensation for her childlessness.³¹

In the first act, as I have called it, of the succession myth, the attempted suppression of the next generation by Uranus, the plot to overthrow him, the birth of his children, and Cronus' succession to the kingship in heaven³² all seem to take place almost simultaneously. In the meantime, however, the cosmos has evolved and become more highly articulated; as a result, the second reenactment of the myth exhibits a far greater degree of complexity and elaboration. In the more evolved cosmos, the birth of Cronus' children, his attempt to repress their birth by swallowing them, the plot devised by Rhea and Gaia to deceive Cronus, their hiding of Zeus in a cave and his growth, and Cronus' regurgitation of the swallowed children constitute only the first phase in the drama of succession (453–500).³³ Both the Titanomachy and the Typhonomachy must intervene before Zeus can finally take his place as sovereign god.

The next section, while largely narrative, incorporates several lengthy digressions whose placement within the overall structure of the *Theogony* constitute significant nodal points. Moreover, Hesiod embroiders upon, and twice interrupts, the narrative sequence. First, Hesiod emphatically disrupts the temporal framework of the succession story with the genealogy of the Iapetids and the Prometheus myth. That digression, in turn, is flanked by two parallel episodes: the release of the Cyclopes, who provide Zeus with the thunderbolts, "trusting in which, he rules over mortals and immortals" (506), and the release of the Hundred-Handers, who guarantee his victory over the Titans.³⁴ I will examine the meaning of Hesiod's narrative arrangement in this section of his poem in connection with the Prometheus story (Chapter 5).

After the defeat of the Titans, Hesiod again digresses from his narrative with a lengthy description of the geography of Tartarus that opens up a whole new dimension of the cosmos. Just as the mutilation of Uranus was followed by the birth of the Children of Night, so here the defeat of the Titans brings to light the previously obscure and undifferentiated features of Tartarus. The two passages are also linked by the reappearance of some of Night's offspring who inhabit these shadowy realms. More precisely, these

³¹ As protector of the young, Hecate is later assimilated to Artemis. Griffith (1983) 54 downplays the potential threat in Hecate's femaleness. But cf. Arthur (1982) 69–70.

³² In fact, one could say that Uranus was never really king of the gods, because in a sense, there was not even a kingdom for him to rule.

³³ Muellner (1996) 52–93 shows how each of the episodes of the succession story recapitulates and elaborates on the previous ones.

³⁴ For the traditional problems of the Titanomachy and the roles of Zeus and the Hundred-Handers in the battle, see Blaise and Rousseau (1996); Saïd (1977) 183–99.

nocturnal beings are now given a clearer definition and function as well as a precise location in the cosmic economy.³⁵

The Hundred-Handers, imprisoned under the reign of both Uranus and Cronus as threats to their regimes, return to the world of darkness, but Zeus's political acumen assigns them a function that exploits their overwhelming physical force. As guardians of the imprisoned Titans, they both serve Zeus's order and are removed as potential menaces to its realization. Even the primordial Chaos who, as one of the first principles, abides eternally, is accommodated in the final dispensation.³⁶ Nevertheless, Zeus cannot be fully invested in the kingship of heaven until his defeat of the monstrous Typhoeus, the last of Earth's children conceived in union with Tartarus, now sufficiently articulated that he can act as a begetter.³⁷

Never a favorite of critics, the Typhonomachy cannot, as frequently claimed, merely stand as a doublet of the war with the Titans.³⁸ Both episodes are necessary, and not only, as some defenders have claimed, because in the second battle Zeus defeats his opponent single-handedly.³⁹ Both these conflicts are cosmic in their scope and touch all parts of the cosmos; one could even say that they are battles *for* the control of the cosmos itself, and their outcome determines its fate. The progressive evolution of the cosmos requires that Zeus first take on and defeat the previous generation of gods, the Titans sprung from Uranus. In addition, the nether realms of the cosmos must come under his sovereignty. The defeated Typhoeus is hurled back into the infernal Tartarus from which he was begotten – yet another strange inversion and permutation of the primordial act of Uranus, who refused to allow his children to emerge from Gaia's womb, and of

³⁵ Cf. D. Clay (1992) 136: "the successive threats to the world order and Zeus posed by the Titans and Typhoeus have the effect of revealing the order of the world in its hidden complexities." In lines 746–66, as Stokes (1962) 23 notes, "the order of the vignettes [of Night and her offspring] is the order in which the births of the deities concerned are described in the genealogical part of the Theogony." Fränkel (1962) 114 notes that the offspring of Night are first explained genealogically and then spatially in the Tartarus passage. For the many difficulties in the description of the geography of the underworld, see Ballabriga (1986) 257–75; and D. Clay (1992) 143–52.

³⁶ Cf. Mondí (1989) 15: "as a result of the subsequent genesis of other parts of the universe Hesiod's cosmogonic χάος was relegated to a subterranean location, where it abides to the present day."

³⁷ The oddness of the phrase διὰ χυρσῆν Ἀφροδίτην (822) in this particular context underlines the oddness of the union of these primordial beings at this late stage of cosmogony. Typhoeus is literally a throwback to an earlier era.

³⁸ For a summary of earlier scholarship, see Blaise (1992) 350–54, who points out that even the defenders of the authenticity of the passage damn it with faint praise. For example, West (1966) 381–82, who rejects the arguments against the passage, nevertheless finds that the "difficulties and awkwardnesses in the section [are] just what one would expect of a poet like Hesiod writing on a theme like the Typhonomachy." For defenses of the episode against its critics, see Blaise (1992) 355–69; Saïd (1977) 199–210; and Stokes (1962) 4 and 33–36. Worms (1953) argues that the passage is old, but not Hesiod's.

³⁹ Bonnafé (1984) 212–16 shows how Zeus is the focus of the battle with Typhoeus, which is simultaneously the defeat of Gaia. See also Blaise (1992) 366–67.

Cronus, who ingested his offspring. Perhaps the reminiscence of those ancient crimes explains Zeus's grief as he disposes of his last opponent (868).⁴⁰ The Earth herself groans as Typhoeus is flogged by Zeus's bolts. Engulfed by the ensuing cosmic conflagration, she dissolves like molten tin or iron, momentarily losing the solidity that characterized her from the beginning: Typhoeus' defeat is also hers.⁴¹ If her campaign for generation began from the manufacture of an adamant sickle (161–62), her final capitulation is signaled by one of the rare similes in the *Theogony* drawn from metal-working. Her days of devising instruments of succession are over. As her last offspring, Typhoeus is *acosmia* incarnate, with his puppy-dog yelps, his bullish bellows, and his fire-breathing eyes, an embodiment of the total disorder that threatens to dismantle the articulated cosmos through universal conflagration.⁴² To render his rule permanent, Zeus must here fight fire with fire and ultimately put an end to Earth's fecundity; he must neutralize her strategy of always siding with the younger against the older generation in order to promote change at the expense of cosmic stability.

Some have found the behavior of Gaia, as Hesiod describes it, paradoxical if not incomprehensible:⁴³ she first helps Rheia and Zeus to depose Cronus, then even advises Zeus to release the Hundred-Handers before his battle with the Titans:

ἀλλά σφεας Κρονίδης τε καὶ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι
οὓς τέκεν ἠύκομος Ῥεΐη Κρόνου ἐν φιλόττηι
Γαίης φραδμοσύνησιν ἀνήγαγον ἐς φάος αὔτις·
αὐτὴ γάρ σφιν ἅπαντα διηνεκέως κατέλεξε,
σὺν κείνοις νίκην τε καὶ ἄγλαὸν εὖχος ἀρέσθαι.

⁴⁰ ἀκοχών (868), which elsewhere is transitive, is surely curious. For the motif of hurling into Tartarus, see Harrell (1991).

⁴¹ Cf. Ballabriga (1990) 22, who sees a connection between the simile of the smelting crucible and the volcanic activity elsewhere associated with Typhoeus.

⁴² Blaise (1992) 362 calls him a "perfect anti-Zeus."

⁴³ Cf. Solmsen (1949) 53, n. 172, who finds it a reason to reject the Typhoeus episode: "Gaia who is normally on the side of Zeus would in this episode be opposed to him. It is unlikely that she should give the gods friendly advice and help Zeus to supremacy (v. 882) if he had just crushed her son." Stokes (1962) 4, however, seems to be on the right track when he says: "There seems to be no reason why Earth should not again bring forth a son, present him with the necessary weapons and cunning advice, and so ensure the overthrow of Zeus." Blaise (1992) 356–59 interprets the action of Gaia as an attack against Zeus's absolute power and the "sterile immobility" of his regime. In addition, she sees the union of Earth with Tartarus as a means of integrating the latter into the cosmos. But that integration has already taken place via the preceding description. Insightfully, Robert (1905) in Heitsch 170–73 bases his defense of the Typhoeus episode on the role of Gaia, whom he calls "die eigentliche Führerin der Handlung. . . . Sie ist nicht nur die alles gebärende Mutter, sondern auch die Diplomatin, die alles weiß, alles ersinnt, alles in die Wege leitet" (171). "Können nicht eben von dieser Seite dem Zeus . . . Gefahren drohen, wenn Gaia, die Allmutter, weiter gebärt?" (172). Cf. also Bonnafé (1984) 209–12.

But the son of Cronus and the rest of the immortal gods,
Whom fair-haired Rheia bore in union with Cronus,
Brought them [the Hundred-Handers] back into the light **on the
advice of Gaia;**
For she told them everything in detail,
How with them they would achieve victory and accomplish their
splendid boast. (624–28)

But shortly thereafter, when her help has proved critical to the Olympian victory, she appears to change sides, now opposing Zeus by giving birth to the monstrous Typhoeus, “who would have ruled over gods and men”.⁴⁴ But her role as kingmaker among the gods and orchestrator of succession is perfectly consistent, and an understanding of her motivation is crucial to the *Theogony*. Cronus was not only his father’s successor, but also and simultaneously the youngest son of Gaia. In the later more highly articulated epoch, however, these two roles are differentiated and split: Zeus must not only prevail against his father and his father’s generation, but he must also overthrow the youngest – and in this case, last – offspring of Earth.⁴⁵ Only after the victory over both the Titans and Typhoeus does Gaia finally align herself with Zeus’s cause, first, by advising the gods to elect Zeus their king and then by helping him anticipate the threat of a successor. Hesiod’s description of her role, first in relation to Cronus, and then in relation to Zeus, can usefully be compared. In the first case, Cronus swallows the children as they emerge from Rheia’s womb:

τὰ φρονέων, ἵνα μή τις ἀγαυῶν Οὐραניῶνων
ἄλλος ἐν ἀθανάτοισιν ἔχει βασιληίδα τιμήν.
πεύθετο γὰρ Γαίης τε καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος
οὔνεκά οἱ πέπρωτο ἔῴ ὑπὸ παιδὶ δαμῆναι.

Thinking that no one else of the awesome family of Uranus
Should have the royal privilege among the immortals.
For he [Cronus] had learned from Earth and starry Heaven
That it was destined for him to be overcome by his son.
(461–64)

When on the other hand, Metis, Zeus’s first wife, is on the point of giving birth to Athena, Zeus:

. . . τὸτ’ ἔπειτα δόλω φρένας ἑξαπατήσας
αἰμυλίοισι λόγοισιν ἔην ἐσκάτθετο νηδύν,
Γαίης φραδμοσύνησι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος

⁴⁴ Thalmann (1984) 44 elides Gaia’s role in giving birth to Typhoeus and hence does not confront the ambiguities of her relations to Zeus.

⁴⁵ Typhoeus (821), Cronus (137), and Zeus (478) are all called ὀπλότατοι.

τὼς γὰρ οἱ φρασάτην, ἵνα μὴ βασιλιθίδα τιμὴν
 ἄλλος ἔχοι Διὸς ἀντὶ θεῶν αἰγιγενετάων.
 ἐκ γὰρ τῆς εἴμαρτο περίφρονα τέκνα γενέσθαι.

Then when he had deceived her mind by a trick
 With seductive words, he put her in his belly,
On the advice of Earth and starry Sky;
For thus they advised him, so that no one of the
 eternally-born gods
 Would possess the royal privilege of Zeus.
 For from her [Metis] it was destined that children of
 outstanding intelligence would be born. (888–94)

Despite the obvious similarities in these passages, Hesiod's language indicates a subtle but important difference; Cronus learned – how, we know not – of his destined overthrow from Gaia. But only in the second case does Gaia take an active role, when she warns and advises Zeus how to evade the threat of succession and thus to stabilize the cosmos under his eternal rule. Zeus's preemptive strike succeeds where Cronus' had failed. In swallowing the pregnant Metis, Zeus reiterates the first two episodes of the succession myth, but with a difference; in giving birth to Athena, he appropriates the female function of procreation;⁴⁶ and he permanently incorporates into himself the feminine principle of guile (*metis*) that had hitherto been the instrument of generational change.⁴⁷

Elected by the gods to the kingship of heaven, Zeus immediately undertakes to “divide their honors well” (885). While Hesiod often alludes to this final distribution, he never gives a systematic account of the division of prerogatives and spheres of influence within the Olympian pantheon.⁴⁸ To be sure, his audience was well aware of the distribution of roles and functions among the gods. Hesiod's omission, however, may also be motivated by the fact that such accounts are accommodated in a different genre of poetry, the hexameter hymn, of which the collection known as the Homeric Hymns is the best representative. Those compositions have as their focus the birth and acquisition of honors by the Olympian gods, precisely those stories that are excluded from the *Theogony*.⁴⁹ Thus

⁴⁶ The monstrous aspect of Zeus's pregnancy should not be ignored. Zeus's pseudo-parthenogenesis is also reminiscent of Pontos' anomalous bringing forth of Nereus and thus constitutes a throwback to one of the earliest phases of cosmic evolution.

⁴⁷ For the workings of *metis*, see Detienne and Vernant (1974).

⁴⁸ Fränkel (1962) 107 remarks disappointedly: “es gibt in der Theogonie keine dürrere und lebenslosere Partie als die wo Hesiod in aller Kürze das homerische Göttersystem referiert (912–42).”

⁴⁹ See Clay (1989) 268–70.

Hesiod's theogonic poetry reveals a cognizance of that genre of hymnic verse, and the Hymns likewise show familiarity with the theogonic tradition. When Hesiod assigns new or non-traditional functions to a divinity, he provides details. It is thus perhaps no accident that he elaborates on the prerogatives of Hecate in what critics have called a "hymn" to that goddess.

While excluding a detailed account of the functioning of the Olympians, Hesiod does, however, describe how Zeus's marital policies continue the integration of the old gods into the Olympian order, a policy that had previously proved critical to his victory over the Titans.⁵⁰ Some of his children complete the Olympian pantheon as we know it from, for instance, the Homeric poems. With the closing of the cycle of succession, however, no one of his sons can offer a serious threat to Zeus's supremacy.⁵¹ The oldest daughter of Cronus, Hestia, like Hecate, remains a virgin. Leto's gentleness disarms her mighty son, Apollo; Demeter has only one daughter; and the possible threat posed by Ares, the only legitimate son of Hera and Zeus, is resolved through his marriage to Aphrodite (933–37). Hera's other son, Hephaestus, is both illegitimate and defective. Between these two males, Athena, whose allegiance is to her father alone and who combines in herself both war and art, is born.

The offspring of Zeus's earlier marriages constitute allegorical emblems of his regime, offering counterweights to the darker primal powers, especially the offspring of Eris and Night, who, as eternal entities, do not disappear in the new order, but henceforth at least are counterbalanced by their opposite numbers; thus, for example, the pleasant daughters of Themis, the Horai, Eunomia (Good Order), Justice, and Peace, form counterweights to Dismomia (Disorder), Strife, and Battles. Most telling in this context is the birth of a new set of Moirai. While the grim triplets sprung from primordial Night manifest themselves only as spirits of inexorable vengeance for the crimes of both gods and men (220–23), their later namesakes dispense good and evil but only to human beings at their birth.⁵² Similarly significant in characterizing the harmony and order of the new dispensation is Zeus's marriage with the Titaness Mnemosyne (Memory), perhaps the only

⁵⁰ Cf. Bonnafé (1985) 87–102, Ramnoux (1987), and Miralles (1993), who stress Zeus's co-option of the feminine through his marriages.

⁵¹ One such potential intra-Olympian rivalry is dealt with in the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*. There, Hera plays the role of jealous wife. Hesiod, however, has Zeus's marriage to Leto precede his union with Hera. See Clay (1989) 17–94; and Miralles (1993) 33–39. It is worth noting that the first five marriages of Zeus produce only females. The *Hymn to Demeter* represents the potential threat of Demeter – like Hera, Zeus's sister-wife – to Olympian stability.

⁵² See West (1966) 229.

“love-match” in the whole *Theogony*,⁵³ a union that produces the lovely and lovable Muses from which the poem began. Their presence here also fulfills their command to Hesiod to celebrate them both at the beginning and at the end of his composition (34).

We cannot hope here to resolve the question of where the *Theogony* ended, a question on which it seems no two scholars can agree. I think it is safe to say that the poem concluded with a catalogue of at least some offspring of unions of gods and human beings; these heroic genealogies were continued and expanded in the *Catalogue of Women*, universally ascribed to Hesiod in antiquity.⁵⁴ Yet unless the sands of Egypt should suddenly become more generous in producing additional papyrus fragments, the details of this composition, of which only tatters survive, may permanently elude us. Nevertheless, the heroes, generated by the unions of gods and men, are already mentioned earlier in the *Theogony* and form its necessary continuation. With Gaia subdued, Metis incorporated, and thus the removal of the threat of succession, the stabilization of the cosmos appears complete. Yet even Zeus cannot simply abolish the principle of proliferation embodied in the procreative drive. He must discover an outlet for it, preferably one that does not unleash a new threat to his eternal rule. Zeus’s solution to this crucial conundrum is the generation of the heroes. Through their intercourse with mortals, the gods are able to deflect the more troublesome aspects of generation away from the gods themselves. In a later chapter, I will examine the genesis of the heroic race and its demise within the context of Hesiod’s cosmogonic scheme.

⁵³ Only here (915) does Hesiod employ a form of the verb ἐραμῶναι, cognate with *eros*, to describe a divine union. Note the adjectives, “lovely” and “desirable” (8, 65, 67, 70), to describe the Muses and their song, as well as the name Erato (78) of one of them.

⁵⁴ For an overview, see West (1985).