

INTRODUCTION

1 LIFE AND WORKS

(a) *Life*

The dates of Hesiod were already debated in antiquity, and even now it is difficult to settle on Hesiod's chronology with any precision.¹ Modern scholars generally regard him as post-Homeric on the basis of some linguistic features and certain passages that are thought to derive from Homer.² But those same passages have been taken as evidence for Hesiodic influence on the *Iliad* by West, who dates Hesiod earlier than Homer.³ Discussions concerning the relative chronology of the two poets are rendered problematic by the lack of consensus concerning the date of Homer. Herodotus placed Homer and Hesiod 400 years before his own time (2.53), far earlier than any modern consensus, but like many Greeks, the historian regarded Homer and Hesiod as contemporaries and rivals who competed either at Chalkis, in the contest Hesiod tells us he won (*WD* 656–9), or on another occasion on Delos (fr. 357). The ancient testimonia also offer both pre- and post-Homeric dates; the *Marmor Parium* places Hesiod one generation before Homer (*FGrH* 239 A27 and 28), while other sources that go back to Aristotle make him a contemporary of Archilochus (*Constitution of the Orchomenians*, fr. 565).

A more concrete date might be provided by Plutarch, who notes that Amphidamas, at whose funeral games Hesiod competed, was killed in the Lelantine War between Eretria and Chalkis (*Conv.* 153f). Archilochus, whose floruit is set in the middle of the seventh century (based on his reference to the Lydian king Gyges [fr. 23], whose reign can be dated to 680–644 BCE), may have alluded to the war at fr. 3. This synchronism depends

¹ Köiv 2011 reviews both the modern scholarly views and the ancient testimonia. Cf. Koning 2010: 40–6, 130–8.

² For Hesiod's language, see pp. 37ff. below. On the basis of his statistical study of certain linguistic features, Janko 1982: 70 and 2012 argues for a post-Homeric date for Hesiod. For the issue of priority of certain passages in Homer and in Hesiod, especially the description of the kings at *Th.* 79–93 and *Od.* 8.166–77, the catalogue of the Nereids at *Th.* 243–63 and *Il.* 18.37–49, the Titanomachy at *Th.* 665–710 and *Il.* 20.54–74, and the Muses' enigmatic statement (*Th.* 27–8 and *Od.* 19.203), see Braswell 1981, Neitzel 1975, 1977, Krafft 1963. Martin 1984 argues that the similarities between *Th.* 79–93 and *Od.* 8.166–77 reveal both passages to have a common source in the genre of instructional poetry.

³ West 1966: 46–7. For Hesiodic passages that he believes influenced the *Iliad*, see West 1995: 208–9 and 2012: 226, n. 3; cf. Blümer 2001: 1.107–260.

on the presumed connection of both poets with the Lelantine War, but the date of the war, although mentioned by both Herodotus (5.99) and Thucydides (1.15), is uncertain, and it may well have been a protracted affair spanning the end of the eighth century to the mid seventh.⁴ If the story of Archilochus' *Dichterweihe* (poetic initiation) – his encounter with old women who made fun of him as he was going to market to sell his cow; they and the cow disappeared, but left him a lyre, after which he realized they were the Muses – is derived from his poetry, it could be considered a parody of Hesiod's meeting with the Muses and our earliest allusion to the *Theogony*.⁵ Hesiod, then, could be dated somewhat earlier than Archilochus.⁶ Despite their different criteria and assumptions concerning the relative chronology of Hesiod and Homer, both Janko and West set Hesiod's dates within this range and not too far apart: Janko more generously dates the *Theogony* between 700 and 665, while West places Hesiod between 680 and 660.⁷ On this issue, perhaps one should let Pausanias have the last word: "As to the age of Hesiod and Homer, I have conducted very careful researches into this matter, but I do not like to write on this subject, as I know the quarrelsome nature of those especially who constitute the modern school of criticism."⁸ If there is some agreement on dating, the issue of their relative chronology remains open.

In contrast to Homer's reticence about himself, Hesiod not only gives us his name (*Th.* 22), but he also provides us with a good many autobiographical details. As in the stories of kings, seers, and prophets receiving a divine calling, Hesiod recounts his meeting with the Muses while he was grazing his sheep on Mount Helicon. After first addressing him with insults and riddling speech, the goddesses gave him a laurel scepter and commanded him to sing of the gods and to celebrate Zeus (*Th.* 22–34). In the *Works and Days* he tells us that he competed in the funeral contests for King Amphidamas in Chalkis (his only experience of seafaring: a short ferry ride from the coast), possibly with a performance of the *Th.*; he won a tripod, which he dedicated to the Muses on Mount Helicon where they had first appeared to him and initiated him into song (*WD* 656–9). He claims to be from Boeotian Ascra, a village in the foothills of Helicon,

⁴ On the Lelantine War, see Parker 1997.

⁵ The story, possibly derived from Archilochus' poetry, is recounted in a lengthy inscription by a certain Mnesiepes, found on Paros in connection with a hero cult devoted to the poet (fr. 4.3–38 Tarditi); cf. Clay 2004.

⁶ For other possible allusions to Hesiod in Archilochus and his contemporary Semon. fr. 6, see Janko 1982: 225–8.

⁷ Janko 2012: 35; earlier, Janko 1982: 98 dated the *Theogony* "not after 660"; West 2012: 237; earlier, West 1966: 41–6 dated the *Th.* between 730 and 700. It is perhaps telling that both scholars have modified their views.

⁸ Paus. 9.30.3 (translation W. H. S. Jones).

to which his father had migrated from Aeolian Cyme, driven by poverty and an unsuccessful career in seafaring (*WD* 633–40). Although Hesiod claims that Ascra is “bad in winter, miserable in summer, never good” (*WD* 640), it is situated above the Theban plain, one of the most fertile areas of Greece, and may have been quite prosperous; Pausanias (9.38.4) calls it “rich in grain” (πολλῆλιος).⁹ At any rate, the father’s fortunes must have improved, since he left behind an inheritance, probably land, to his two sons, Hesiod and Perses. The dispute over this inheritance forms the occasion for the *Works and Days*, while much about it is obscure, it appears that the brothers had divided their inheritance, but Perses (whose name may mean “Wastrel”) had schemed to get more by bribing the “kings,” apparently the arbiters in such a dispute. It turns out that he was not successful and merely managed to impoverish himself. Hesiod proposes to resolve their dispute “here and now,” and that resolution takes the form of the teaching of the *Works and Days* that exhorts Perses to practice justice – while also threatening the corrupt “gift-eating” kings with Zeus’s punishment – and turn his scheming ways to the practice of farming as the only honest way to become prosperous.

Older scholarly views took these autobiographical details at face value and constructed a Hesiod as a country bumpkin, a peasant who inexplicably became a poet – and not a very polished one at that.¹⁰ Often enough, critics have sought autobiographical explanations for peculiar or contradictory passages in his poems. Thus, the negative judgment of kings in the *Works and Days* as opposed to their positive portrayal in the *Theogony* is explained by Hesiod’s performance of the latter poem in the presence of kings at the funeral of Amphidamas.¹¹ Similarly, the lengthy aretalogy (i.e. character and functions) of Hecate (*Th.* 411–52) has been traced to the particular devotion of Hesiod and his family to this goddess.¹² Recent studies, however, have led to a greater appreciation of the sophistication and subtlety of the Hesiodic poems. A Hegelian scheme of the development of Greek literature, perhaps best represented by Bruno Snell’s *Discovery of the Mind*, viewed Hesiod’s personal voice as a symptom of the “rise of the individual” and thus a bridge between Homer’s anonymity

⁹ Tandy 2018 argues for fairly prosperous conditions in Hesiod’s Ascra and considers Hesiod’s farm to have been a substantial estate. A. T. Edwards 2004 surveys both the economic and political situation of Ascra and emphasizes its autonomy. Cf. Mnasalces *AP* 7.54 (quoted below), where Ascra is also described as πολλῆλιος.

¹⁰ Stoddard 2004: 1–33 offers a substantial survey of the autobiographical approach; cf. M. Griffith 1983.

¹¹ West 1966: 44–5; he adds that the following lines on the power of the bards to relieve fresh grief and distract from one’s woes (*Th.* 98–103) would fit well with the occasion of the funeral of Amphidamas.

¹² West 1966: 276–80.

and the self-presentation of the lyric poets, culminating in the flowering of tragedy.¹³ Of late, however, interest in the oral and traditional character of early hexameter has downplayed Hesiod's individuality and viewed his self-presentation and even his name as fictional constructs. "Hesiod," then, would have represented a traditional persona, a legendary bard, rather than a personal voice, one determined and constructed by the requirements of the genre.¹⁴ This Hesiod is a representative of a tradition of "Wisdom Literature," or "Instruction of Princes," widely known from Near Eastern sources and reflected in the *Instructions of Chiron* attributed to Hesiod (fr. 283–5), where the centaur instructs the young Achilles, and in certain passages of the *Theognidea*, addressed to Kynos.¹⁵ However, some of the specific details and particulars that Hesiod provides (his father's emigration from Aeolian Cyme, his description of Ascra, and his travels to Chalkis) seem ill-suited to a generic persona, and they depart from the general pattern of traditional Wisdom Literature where a king, father, or some older counselor gives advice to his son or a young prince.¹⁶ Scholars have bolstered the interpretation of Hesiod as a generic persona by arguing that, when Hesiod claims to be from Ascra, he refers, in their view, to a fictional place that no longer existed in Hesiod's day; however, archaeological evidence calls this view into question.¹⁷ But if he was not from Ascra, we might also have to reject the notion that he participated in

¹³ Cf. Snell 1975: 124 for a summary of his evolutionary views; also, his "Nachwort 1974" on pp. 283–91. Cf. Fränkel 1962: 3–5.

¹⁴ See González 2018: 171, n. 1 for a restatement of this view: "in the major Hesiodic poems the ostensible historical characters and their 'personal' circumstances are literary constructions. Their sole purpose is to frame for the audience the meaning and the function of the Hesiodic tradition. Any biographical reality behind them is both irrecoverable and irrelevant." Cf. Andolfi 2016; Martin 1992; Lamberton 1988: 10–11; and especially Nagy 1990: 36–82 and 2009, who also argues that Homer was a traditional figure for the genre of epic narrative.

¹⁵ For "Wisdom Literature", see West 1966: 3–25 and 1997: 306–9; Martin 1984.

¹⁶ Canevaro 2015: 89–90 suggests that having Hesiod instruct his brother has "a pointed effect" and notes that "throughout the *Works and Days* there is a marked shift away from the succession of generations, towards sibling rivalry" (90).

¹⁷ Martin 1992 views the Hesiodic persona as adopting the perspective of "an authoritative outsider" and thus that there "is no need to take Hesiodic poetry as the product of Boeotia, or concerned with a Boeotian audience, at all" (pp. 27–8). Nagy 1990: 52 states that Hesiod's Panhellenism is "of course facilitated by the historical fact that the figure of Hesiod has no native city to claim him, since Askra was destroyed by Thespians." The archaeological evidence, however, suggests that Askra "cannot have been deserted long following the first abandonment" (A. T. Edwards 2004: 171, n. 13); cf. Thomas and Conant 1999: 149: "this event [the destruction of Askra by Thespians] – if it happened at all – is likely to have occurred during the first half of the fourth century"; and Snodgrass 1985.

a contest. Moreover, in instructing his brother, Hesiod himself raises the question of the source of his authority to speak. In the *Theogony*, it is clear that Hesiod's authority, however ambiguous it may be, derives from the Muses; in the *Works and Days* he admits to needing the help of the Muses when giving instructions on sailing, of which he has little expertise. There too, he has access to the mind of Zeus in cataloguing lucky and unlucky days. But elsewhere his knowledge and authority seem to emanate from himself; at *WD* 294–5, he suggests that he is a *panaristos*, “who on his own thinks through everything, considering what may be better afterwards and in the end.” This seems to be the point of his claim to tell ἐτήτυμα “real” or “genuine” things – things he can personally vouch for – to Perses (*WD* 10). In any case, Hesiod's self-presentation need not be purely fictional to have a poetic and rhetorical purpose.¹⁸

Two “lives” of Hesiod have come down to us: one from Proclus (fourth century CE) and a later one by the twelfth-century scholar Ioannes Tzetzes; additional material comes from Pseudo-Plutarch's *Life of Homer* and various other sources.¹⁹ The most important feature of this biographical tradition derives from Hesiod's mention of his competition at the funeral of Amphidamas (*WD* 654–9), which is then imagined as the occasion for a contest between Hesiod and Homer recounted in the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*, composed in the second century CE, but based on Alcidas' *Mouseion* from the fourth century BCE, which probably incorporated even earlier material.²⁰ In the contest, although Homer is the popular favorite, Hesiod wins an upset victory when the king Paneides (“All-knowing”) declares him the winner because he is the poet of peace rather than war.²¹ Another tradition places the two poets in a hymnic competition on Delos.²²

The other strand of the biographical tradition focuses on Hesiod's death and appears to be independent of the Hesiodic poems, modeled instead

¹⁸ Cf. M. Griffith 1983: 37: “I will argue that Hesiod's personal and autobiographical remarks always serve a specific and necessary function within the contexts in which they occur, and should be viewed in these terms rather than as gratuitous self-revelation and reminiscence.” But Scodel 2016 examines some “quirks” or nontraditional features of Hesiod's advice in the *Works and Days*, which, she argues, “help us identify a genuinely individual voice” (p. 89).

¹⁹ See Kivilo 2010: 7–36 for the ancient sources.

²⁰ For text and commentary, see Bassino 2018; also the discussion by Richardson 1981. The attribution to Alcidas goes back to Nietzsche 1870.

²¹ The contest between Euripides and Aeschylus in Aristophanes' *Frogs* seems to allude to the *Certamen*, but inverts the outcome: Aeschylus who extolls martial virtue defeats the “soft” Euripides (814–1533).

²² Cf. fr. 357: ἐν Δήλῳ τότε πρῶτον ἐγὼ καὶ Ὅμηρος ἀοιδοὶ | μέλπομεν, ἐν νεαροῖς ὕμνοις ῥάψαντες ἀοιδήν, | Φοῖβον Ἀπόλλωνα χρυσάορον, ὃν τέκε Λητώ.

on stories of heroes and poets who receive heroic honors that often involve a misunderstood oracle and a violent death. Hesiod was said to have received an oracle that he would die in the sanctuary of Nemean Zeus, so he avoided the place. In the end, though, he came to Lokris, where he was accused of raping the sister of his hosts, who then murdered him in what turns out to be a grove dedicated to Nemean Zeus. Later, when a plague strikes the city of Orchomenos, its citizens receive an oracle that the plague would subside if they bring back the bones of Hesiod and honor him with cult.²³ It is striking how few of Hesiod's own autobiographical notices are incorporated into the *Lives*, which fail to mention the primary motivations for his composing the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*: his encounter with the Muses on Helicon, which became such an influential literary topos, and the quarrel with Perses.²⁴

(b) *Works*

The *Theogony* and the *Works and Days* are today considered Hesiod's genuine compositions. In antiquity, other works were attributed to him: the *Catalogue of Women*, also known under the title *Ehoiae* (fr. 1–245 = Hirschberger fr. 89–147), after the phrase that opens some of the entries ἢ οἷα “or like the one who.” This sequel to the *Theogony* comprised five books that recounted the genealogies of women who had intercourse with divinities and produced the heroes and their offspring; it spanned the heroic age from Deucalion and Pyrrha to its end with a catalogue of the suitors of Helen;²⁵ the *Megalai Ehoiai* (fr. 246–62 = Hirschberger fr. 147–61), perhaps an expanded version of the former; and the *Shield of Heracles*, an expansion of the Heracles entry in the *Catalogue* recounting Heracles' battle with Cycnos and including a lengthy and somewhat baroque description of Heracles' shield.²⁶ An *Ornithomanteia*, describing bird omens, was considered a sequel to the “Days” of *Works and Days*. These works, with the exception of the *Aspis*, are only preserved as fragments, either as *testimonia* by ancient writers or in papyri, but they attest to the potential for expansion of works in the catalogue style. A series of *gnomai* addressed to

²³ For the traditions surrounding Hesiod's death and hero cult, see Kivilo 2010: 25–36. One of the epitaphs dedicated to Hesiod is ascribed to Mnasalces (*AP* 7.54 = *HE* 2671–4):

Ἄσκη μὲν πατρίς πολυλήϊος, ἀλλὰ θανόντος
 ὅστέα πλησίππων γῇ Μινυῶν κατέχει
 Ἡσιόδου, τοῦ πλεῖστον ἐν ἀνθρώποις κλέος ἔστιν
 ἀνδρῶν κρινομένων ἐν βασάνῳ σοφίης.

²⁴ See Stamatopoulou 2016.

²⁵ On the *Catalogue*, see West 1985a; Hunter 2005.

²⁶ See Martin 2005.

Achilles by the centaur Chiron, entitled the *Cheironos Hypothekai* ("Advice of Cheiron," fr. 283–5), also circulated under Hesiod's name.²⁷

2 HESIOD'S *THEOGONY* AND THE NEAR EAST

The influence of the Near East on early Greek culture has long been recognized, and the *Theogony* offers the clearest argument for that impact.²⁸ The Succession Myth, describing the progression from Ouranos to Kronos to the accession of Zeus, has striking parallels to Near Eastern traditions concerning the sequence of the kingship in heaven. While not homogeneous and arising in different times and places, these traditions themselves show signs of inter-cultural influences as neighboring peoples adopted and adapted materials for their own purposes; nevertheless, these theogonies clearly display motifs and patterns found in the Hesiodic poem. Moreover, they share a common purpose: to explain how the present world arose through a sequence of events, both divine and cosmic. But unlike our evidence for early Greece, they constitute contemporary records written by scribes and preserved on often fragmentary clay tablets, and some, at least, have ritual purposes.²⁹

(a) *The Main Sources*³⁰

(i) The Song of Emergence

Our most important source is the Kumarbi Cycle, preserved in Hittite, but based on earlier Hurrian accounts that doubtless preserve even older

²⁷ Some other lost poems attributed to Hesiod include a *Melampodia* (fr. 270–9), the *Wedding of Ceyx* (fr. 263–9), *Idean Dactyls* (fr. 282), and *Aegimius* (fr. 294–301). For a complete list of works ascribed to Hesiod in antiquity, see Paus. 9.31.4–5 and the entry in the *Suda* (η 583); Cingano 2009.

²⁸ For an overview, see Bremmer 2015, who also mentions some recent finds. The most influential recent scholars to draw attention to Near Eastern influences have been Burkert 1992 and 2004 and West 1997, who devotes a whole chapter (276–333) to Hesiod; but cf. also earlier Walcot 1966 and Dornseiff 1955. Discussions of Near Eastern influences on the *Works and Days* have mainly focused on its relation to "Wisdom" literature (cf. West 1978: 3–25) and on the Myth of the Races (Lardinois 2021).

²⁹ Several theogonic texts are meant as incantations against disease, for instance, ergot poisoning (?) and the "tooth-worm"; see Lambert 2013: 399–400.

³⁰ Perhaps the most accessible collection of these sources is López-Ruiz 2014. It also has maps and other helpful materials outlining the distinctive features of the various accounts. See also López-Ruiz 2010: 88 for a summary table comparing the Near Eastern succession texts to the *Theogony*.

material.³¹ Previously known as the *Song of Kumarbi*, this work, whose title was discovered only recently, is now known as the *Song of Emergence* or *Song of Going Forth*; the title itself, hinting at various anomalous births, points to certain affinities with the Hesiodic Succession Myth. A narrative pieced together from various sources relates how Alalu, the first god (with chthonic connections), was defeated and sent to the underworld by his cup-bearer Anu, a sky god, who was in turn attacked by his cup-bearer, Kumarbi, who chased Anu up to heaven. There, Kumarbi bites off Anu's genitals, gestates, and subsequently brings forth three divinities, one of whom, Teššub the weather god, becomes the last king of the gods. Kumarbi tries to hinder his birth, possibly by swallowing a rock, which is later disgorged; but after Teššub's emergence (probably from Kumarbi's head), Kumarbi continues his opposition to Teššub's reign by creating various monstrous enemies, including the stone monster Ullikummi, the snake Illuyanka, and the sea serpent Hedammu. Aided by other gods, Teššub defeats the huge Ullikummi by using a copper sickle to sever his ties to the earth, thus causing the separation of heaven and earth. In the other episodes, Teššub appears to be helped to victory by a female deity.

(ii) Enuma Elish

A second source is the theogonic/cosmogonic poem called *Enuma Elish* (after its first words, “when on high”). This Babylonian creation epic begins with the primal couple, Apsu, the sweet water, and his consort Tiamat, the salt water.³² Their children and grandchildren beget Anu, a sky god, who somehow emerges from within their commingled waters, but the youngsters' noise bothers Apsu, who then decides to destroy them, against the will of Tiamat. Anu, wisest of the gods, deposes Apsu

³¹ The material must go back to ca. 1650 BCE, though the main text can be dated to around 650 BCE; discussions include West 1997: 278–80; Rutherford 2009; López-Ruiz 2010: 91–4; van Dongen 2011; Scully 2015: 50–70. Kumarbi and his avatars also appear in Syrian materials, and certain motifs – for instance, the battle between the Storm God and the Sea – can be traced back to Mesopotamian traditions; cf. Haider 2005 for the Near Eastern versions of Zeus's combat with Typhoeus. Metcalf 2021 traces the cup-bearer motif all the way back to Sargon of Akkad (2288–2235 BCE).

³² Dated to the mid 600s BCE, our text is a copy of an earlier poem (ca. 1100 BCE), but it appears to go back to a mid to late second millennial Sumerian version, adapted to glorify Marduk, the chief divinity of Babylon. For a detailed discussion of the text and its history and contexts, see Lambert 2013; Heidel 1951 offers a still useful introduction. The primal pair, Apsu and Tiamat, resemble Okeanos and Tethys at *Iliad* 14.201–7, 302–6, a version Hesiod may have known. Haubold 2017 offers a detailed comparison of the *Theogony* and *Enuma Elish*, with a focus on the issue of divine conflict in both works.

and other enemies, then begets Ea, who in turn begets Marduk. At some point, Tiamat decides to avenge Apsu, putting her consort/son Kingu in charge of her campaign and promising him the kingship if he defeats the other gods. Ea is too frightened to lead the rebels, but Marduk takes over the task and is victorious. He then splits the body of the defeated Tiamat into two, thereby creating heaven and earth, while Kingu's blood is used to create mankind, whose purpose is to relieve the gods of the necessity of work. Performed at the New Year's festival, the poem ends with the foundation of Babylon, a lengthy hymn to Marduk and a recitation of his fifty names as part of the New Year's ritual.

(iii) Sanchuniathon's Phoenician History

A far later source is Philo of Byblos' account (late first–early second century CE) of a *Phoenician History* by Sanchuniathon, who, he claims, lived before the Trojan War. Philo's narrative is contaminated by Greek theogonic and euhemeristic traditions but may in fact preserve older Phoenician traditions. It includes a Succession Myth, which begins with Elioun, "the Most High." His children, Epigeios ~ Ouranos and Ge, produce three Phoenician divinities, El ~ Kronos, Baityl, and Dagon, a god of grain, similar to the Hittite Kumarbi, and Atlas. After defeating him in battle, El deposes his father and subsequently castrates him, but also marries Ouranos' pregnant concubine who gives birth to Demarous ~ Zeus, who becomes king in what appears to be a peaceful transfer of power, which he shares with El, his father.³³

This abbreviated summary of some of the Near Eastern materials, especially the motifs of castration, stone-swallowing, and anomalous births by the male (cf. *Th.* 173–206, 485–92, 924–9), demonstrates that the *Theogony* has the closest affinities with the Kumarbi poem, but it also reveals that versions of the Succession Myth, where new gods depose earlier ones, and which also include cosmic battles for supremacy, and monster-slayings, are adopted, revised, and adapted to differing cultural and political contexts over many centuries throughout the Near East. Complicating the influence of these traditions is the question of the Indo-European background. Zeus, after all, is an Indo-European sky god, and several Hesiodic motifs, e.g., the defeat of a monster, a dragon, or a sea monster, are also

³³ While often dismissed as a late and unreliable source, López-Ruiz 2010: 94–101 argues that it contains genuine West-Semitic features, and that the Phoenicians were the conduit for the dissemination of Near Eastern theogonic traditions to Greece.

found in Indo-European contexts and have Indo-European parallels.³⁴ Some may even be universal, detected among peoples far removed from the Mediterranean area.

The striking similarities between the Kumarbi Cycle and the Hesiodic *Theogony* raise further questions, about which consensus has not yet been reached. Several dates for the transmission of this material have been proposed: Middle or Late Bronze Age, the early Archaic period, or even during the not really “Dark” Ages (as material finds suggest, e.g., at Lefkandi, demonstrate). Indeed, contact between the Near East, the Mediterranean, and Greece was never completely lost. Various routes and possible locales of contact and dissemination have also been suggested: western Ionia where the Greeks encountered Anatolian peoples and multi-cultural trading centers, especially in Syria and Ugarit. With the Phoenicians, the possible means for conveying myths and traditions are also numerous: bilingual scribes, traveling seers or craftsmen or even nannies, or perhaps festivals where Greeks and foreigners mingled and exchanged stories. In some cases, even the direction of transmission (not only east to west, but also west to east?) has been subject to debate. Moreover, a greater sense of the interconnectivity of the peoples of the western Mediterranean and a recognition of the changing function of these materials in differing political, cultural, and religious contexts have likewise both enhanced and complicated discussions. Geographies, landscapes, and economies had a profound impact on the transmission and adaption of these stories. The accounts of origins, both divine and cosmic, that developed in the generally centralized kingdoms of the Near East, with their sophisticated scribal and priestly institutions, underwent modifications when adapted to the developing independent early Greek city-states. The rise of Panhellenism, in the context of an oral culture where stories about the gods circulated without priestly books, played an important role in the diffusion and consolidation of the stories. Recent collaborative work by both Classicists and Near Eastern scholars has insisted on the need to go beyond drawing parallels and emphasized the importance of contextualizing similar features within their cultural environment.³⁵

Such questions and observations reveal, too, that the differences among these texts are as important as their similarities.³⁶ What is perhaps

³⁴ West 2007 mentions the conflicts between rival gods (pp. 162–4), the Dawn goddess (217–37), and the Prometheus story (272–4) as Indo-European motifs. Nagy 1990 emphasizes the Hellenization of Indo-European poetics, myth, and social ideology. On dragon-slaying, see Watkins 1995; Ogden 2013.

³⁵ See Kelly and Metcalf 2021; also Metcalf 2015, Haubold 2017, and Ziemann 2020.

³⁶ E.g., van Dongen 2011; Rutherford 2018, 2021; Kelly 2021; Metcalf 2021.