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Greece, the Near East, and Egypt: Cyclic Destruction in Hesiod and the *Catalogue of Women*

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Since the beginning of this century, an increasing number of scholars in our field have studied the influence of Near Eastern cultures upon the Greeks: archaeologists and art historians have articulated an Orientalizing period; new finds cast light even into the Dark Age; the decipherment of linear B has changed our view of Greek pre-history; the unearthing of many new texts in Greek, Ancient Near Eastern, and Egyptian languages has advanced our knowledge of these societies. We can no longer afford to look at early Greece in isolation. What is known to researchers, however, does not always reach the classroom, and the general public is hardly aware that our picture of ancient cultures and, in particular, of early Greek culture, has undergone dynamic changes. The Western tradition, with its hold on education, has tended to stress the uniqueness of Greek culture and its literature, and in reading Homer we can, in fact, enjoy the aesthetic values of the *Iliad* without considering oral literature. Yet, when we ask historical questions—How did this enjoyable piece of literature come into being? What was its function within the culture whose hopes and values it reflected? Why is this epic still important for modern society?—it is no longer sufficient to follow Porphyrios' tradition-bound advice and explain Homer out of Homer.¹ We must compare the *Iliad* with other ancient or structurally similar epics and Homer's world with that of other cultures. We then get a better sense of what the Greeks owe to others, and we better comprehend how they used foreign concepts productively, making them building-blocks of their own culture. Originality lies rarely in the grand idea, born out of nothing in the brain of a genius;

¹See R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship I* (Oxford 1968) 227.

it more often develops from the reworking of a concept received from others.² Moreover, intercultural influences tend not to move along a one-way street, nor do individuals and peoples adopt something unless they are ready to do so. Such readiness tends to develop over a long process of intercultural exchanges, and the ultimate product of borrowing and adaptation seldom bears much similarity to what was originally borrowed.

I. Hesiod's Story of the Five Ages, its Structure and Function within the *Erga*

Let us use Hesiod's story of the Five Ages as an example.³ The passage is in everyone's mind, and yet there is little agreement over what Hesiod is saying. Hence, I ask your patience for my brief retelling of the highlights (*Op.* 106–201).⁴

The first two ages of mankind were created by the Olympian gods (ἄθάνατοι... Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες, 110) under the rule of Kronos (οἱ μὲν [sc. the people of the golden age] ἐπὶ Κρόνου ἦσαν, 111).⁵ In the first, or

²As Glenn W. Most phrased it in a letter to me (March 16, 1994), "individuality is not uniqueness, but the creative transformation of an integrated heritage." Cf. A. Heubeck's remarks in "Mythologische Vorstellungen des Alten Orients im archaischen Griechentum," *Gymnasium* 62 (1955) 508–25, esp. 522 (repr. in *Hesiod, Wege der Forschung* 44, ed. by E. Heitsch [Darmstadt 1966], 545–70, esp. 570). Earlier I had occasion to discuss my interpretation of Hesiod with Glenn Most, and that discussion influenced my thought, although we also agreed to disagree in some important details. I also had the opportunity to discuss the passage from the *Catalogue* (below, sect. III) with J. Latacz and, after reading this paper, the date of the *Catalogue* with R. Janko; other references I owe to G. Nagy. In the final phases, Ann Hanson had a decisive influence on both the conceptualization of the complex intercultural phenomena that I try to describe in this paper and on the imagery with which I describe them. But, of course, none of my friends should be implicated in any view or theory which I present here. Finally, I am also much obliged to the patience and care with which Sander M. Goldberg edited this paper.

³In the following pages I shall try to avoid the term "races" because of the restrictive sense in which the term is used in our vernacular. But "age," the word I shall use, is not precisely what Hesiod had in mind. He does not talk about the creation of periods of time, but about the human beings who lived in specific periods of their own. For the problem, see J. Fontenrose, "Work, Justice, and Hesiod's Five Ages," *CP* 69 (1974) 1–16, esp. 1 n. 1, and, with regard to a different kind of misunderstanding, P. Mazon, *Hésiode, Les Travaux et les Jours* (Paris 1914) 83.

⁴As did Hesiod: ἐκκορυφώσω, 106 (pace W. J. Verdenius, *A Commentary on Hesiod, Works and Days*, vv. 1–382 [Leiden 1985], *ad loc.*). My understanding of the entire passage is much obligated to earlier literature, especially to the commentaries by M. L. West (*Hesiod, Work & Days* [Oxford 1978]), W. J. Verdenius, and U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Hesiodos Erga* (Dublin 1928).

⁵There is some critical discussion as to who created the people of the golden and silver ages because Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες elsewhere in Hesiod refers to Zeus and his generation of gods (T. G. Rosenmeyer, "Hesiod and Historiography," *Hermes* 85 [1957] 257–85, esp. 278f. [repr. in *Hesiod*, WdF (above, n. 2) 602–48, esp. 637f.]). I see no difficulty in assuming that

golden, age (106–26) people lived like gods, without cares and sorrow, not subject to aging, always feasting, and untroubled by evil. Earth gave them plenteous fruits without toil. Death came like sleep. When this age ended, they became deities on earth (δαίμονες . . . ἐκθλοὶ ἐπιχθόνιοι, 122f.), guardians of men keeping watch over justice (δίκη, 124) and evil deeds (σχέτλια ἔργα),⁶ and givers of wealth. This was their royal privilege (βασιλῆιον γέρας, 126).

In the second, or silver, age (127–42) the same gods created mortals anew (Ολύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες, 128, cf. n 5), but these were lesser both in their physical appearance and in their morality. They dwelt like children for one hundred years in their maternal house, but, once grown up, they lived only for a short period and suffered because of their folly (ἄφραδις, 133). They did not restrain themselves from crimes (ῥβρις) against one another. Yet, in contrast to later ages, they did not engage in warfare. ῥβρις, now appearing for the first time, did not permeate their lives. When Zeus came to power, they did not sacrifice to the (new) Olympians, so he destroyed their life on earth (138f.).⁷ Yet, living beneath the surface of the earth, they are called gods and mortals alike (τοὶ μὲν ὑποχθόνιοι μάκαρες θνητοὶ καλέονται, 141).⁸ They

the formula is adapted to a more general meaning in the present context (see West on line 110). The gods in general created humankind, and Zeus is responsible specifically for the bronze age and the following ages (R. S. Shannon, *The Arms of Achilles and Homeric Compositional Technique*, Suppl. Mnemosyne 36 [Leiden 1975], 109–10 and 127f.; G. Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics* [Ithaca and London 1990], 200 and n. 128). Hesiod is not interested in relating the time of the present myth to the time of the succession myth of the gods.

⁶I keep lines 124–25 although they are repeated in 254–55; see Verdenius *ad loc.*; West supports their deletion (as does Wilamowitz).

⁷Zeus here appears for the second time in the Myth of the Five Ages. He is first mentioned in 122, where his plan is responsible for assigning the dead of the golden age to their new function as δαίμονες (for the textual problem see the app. critt. and commentaries). If we wish to relate this stage of the myth to the succession myth (but see n. 5), then Zeus is not yet in charge and is merely mentioned because he is the guarantor of the present world–order in which these spirits have share and function (see Verdenius and West). When Zeus next appears, he is in his wrath and makes the people of the silver age disappear (ἐκρυψε χολούμενος, 138), because they did not honor the gods (οὐνεκα τιμὰς | οὐκ ἔδιδον μακάρεσσι θεοῖς οἱ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσιν; see also 135f.). Again, the “Gods who have their seats on Olympos” is a comprehensive term, but this time we may think specifically of Zeus and the younger generation of gods. The next age of mankind will be created by Zeus (143). The people of the silver age did not worship the gods as the younger gods required. In terms of the succession myth, then, the older gods were replaced by Zeus and the younger gods before Zeus destroyed the silver age. For the view that Kronos presided only over the golden age, see, for example, West’s commentary on line 111; Fontenrose (above, n. 3); W. Nicolai, *Hesiods Erga* (Heidelberg 1964) 39.

⁸For the soundness of the text see the commentaries (Wilamowitz; West; Verdenius; thus also Solmsen; Marg); others have adopted Peppmüller’s conjecture θνητοῖς (Rzach, Mason, Evelyn–White, Lattimore, Colonna).

are the ancestor heroes. As such they are honored,⁹ although they are inferior to those of the golden age.

Zeus created the next three ages of mankind (143–55) after, it would seem, he had replaced Kronos. The third age, that of bronze, represented, in a real sense, the first human beings. They were totally different from those of the silver age. They were born from the Melian nymphs, the sisters of the Erinyes and the Giants, recalling not only the ash tree and wooden spear, but also the dark stories about human birth from trees.¹⁰ They engaged in deeds of war and in hybris ("Ἀρεος ἔργ(α) . . . καὶ ὕβρις, 145f.), and thus they were worse than those of the silver age. No longer did they live from grain (οὐδέ τι κῆτον ἢ κῆθιον, 146f.), but they ate meat, the flesh of animals. Their minds and bodies were fierce; they used weapons, houses, and tools of bronze; they killed themselves off, going nameless to Hades. Death took them, for all their might.

At this point Hesiod interrupts the deterioration¹¹ and has Zeus create a better and juster, a fourth, age of heroes or demigods, the immediate predeces-

⁹For the irony of the mankind of the silver being transformed to cult heroes and thus being honored by the gods whom they themselves did not honor, see Nagy, *Greek Mythology* (above, n. 5) 134f.

¹⁰For men born from an ash-tree see Shannon, *The Arms of Achilles* (n. 5) 44–57; Wilamowitz' and West's commentaries *ad loc.*; U. Bianchi, "Razza aurea, mito delle cinque razze ed Elisio," *Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni*, Scuola di studi storico-religiosi dell'Università di Roma, 34 (1963) 143–210, esp. 174f; Nagy, *Mythology* (above, n. 5) 200 and n. 128.

¹¹There is disagreement as to whether there is indeed a continuous deterioration. I hope that my telling of the story indicates my view: golden age: god-like life without sorrows and labor, plenty of fruit and festivities; longevity, after death (= sleep) they become guardian spirits on earth. → 2. silver age: longevity restricted to childhood; hybris against each other, but no wars; no worship of gods as yet; after their end, they become spirits under the surface of the earth (tombs). → 3. bronze age: first real people, strong of body and mind, with presumably a normal life span, meat-eaters; hybris and wars; after death in Hades without fame. → 4. Heroic age: more just and superior; demi-gods; evil and wars continue, but the wars are organized and purposeful (Thebes and Troy); all are killed by these wars and transferred to the Islands of the Blest, where the golden age is partially reinstituted. → 5. iron age: great intensity of endless sorrows; mixture of good and evil developing into a total collapse of all society; no respect for gods, oaths, justice, and good, honor for the evil doer and man of hybris; progressive loss of childhood; Aidos and Nemesis leave the world. The overall deterioration of the ages is precisely gauged not only by the metals and their symbolic values, but also in the case of the first four ages by the function and fate they have in the afterlife. On both counts, the heroic age is an exception (cf. n. 12 and below in the main text). This deterioration has been denied by J. P. Vernant's structural analysis; see his "Le mythe hésiodique des races. Essai d'analyse structurale," *RHR* 157 (1960) 21–54, esp. 41 (repr. in *idem*, *Mythe et pensée chez les grecs* [Paris 1965], 18–47), and cf. his defense in "Le mythe hésiodique des races", *RPh*, ser. 3, 40 (1966) 247–76; K. Matthiessen, "Form und Funktion des Weltaltermythos bei Hesiod," in *Arktouros, Hellenic Studies presented to B. M. W. Knox*, ed. by G. W. Bowersock, W. Burkert, and M. C. J. Putnam (Berlin and New York 1979) 25–32; P. Pucci, "Lévi-Strauss and Classical Culture," *Arethusa* 4 (1971) 103–17, esp. 107f. However, the conclusion that the theme of progres-

sors of Hesiod's own age (156–73). Again, these engaged in evil war and dreadful battle, as Hesiod says with a line also used once in the *Iliad*: πολέμοις τε κακὸς καὶ φύλοπις αἰνὴ (*Erga* 161 and *Iliad* 4.82). The quotation raises the Hesiodic heroes to the glorified light of Homeric tradition and distinguishes them from previous and subsequent generations with their aimless wars. These heroes died at Thebes and at Troy, as Greek traditions had it. But, as I understand Hesiod's ambiguous lines, the entire race was transplanted by Zeus to the Islands of the Blest,¹² where, under Kronos, they live on in a renewed golden age. Earth grants them three harvests in the year.

sive deterioration is interrupted by the age of the heroes does not preclude a structure of pairs in chiasmic order: the golden age (1) is to the silver age (2) as the heroic age (4) is to the bronze age (3). P. Walcot, "The Composition of the Works and Days," *REG* 74 (1961) 1–19, esp. 4–7, and *Hesiod and the Near East* (Cardiff 1966) 81f., thought that in a history of oral tradition the original myth encompassed only the first four ages as a sequence of good (gold) and bad (silver), bad (bronze) and good (heroes) and that Hesiod begins a new topic, justice, at 174. But the present fifth age can hardly be separated from the preceding ages (cf. Matthiessen, "Form" [above] 26 n. 4).

¹²Thus Proklos *ad* 166 (*Schol. Vet.* ed. A. Pertusi). This interpretation does not depend on the deletion of line 166 (F. Solmsen, *AJP* 103 [1982] 19–24, esp. 22–24, and in his edition of the text). See Wilamowitz' commentary to 168; Rosenmeyer, "Hesiod" (above, n. 5) 273 or 628f. of the reprint; Nicolai, *Hesiods Erga* (above, n. 7) 42–46; G. Nagy, *Pindar's Homer* (Baltimore and London 1990) 277 n.16 and *Greek Mythology* (above, n. 5) 126 n. 17. Cf. also Vernant, "Le mythe" (above, n. 11) 21–54, esp. 41, and 18–47, esp. 36, respectively; Matthiessen, "Form" (above, n. 11), and *idem*, "Das Zeitalter der Heroen bei Hesiod," *Philologus* 121 (1977) 176–88. But because access to the Islands of the Blest in Homer, as well as in the later tradition, was reserved for few heroes, many scholars understand Hesiod as if he were offering this happy afterlife to some heroes only: e.g. West and Verdenius in their commentaries; E. Rohde, *Psyche* (Tübingen 1907), I 102–06 (Engl. transl. by W.B. Hillis [New York 1925] 74–76; K. von Fritz, "Pandora, Prometheus and the Myth of the Ages," *The Review of Religion* 11 (1947) 227–60, esp. 233f. (repr. in *Hesiod*, WdF [above, n. 2], 367–410, esp. 377f.); Mazon, *Hesiods* (above, n. 3) 62, 67, and 73; Bianchi, "Razza aurea" (above, n. 10) 179f.

In some ancient beliefs, however, hope for a happy afterlife and access to the Islands of the Blest seems to have been less restricted; see, for example, Pindar, *Ol.* 2; *Carm. conv.* 11 in PMG 894; and cf. also Simon. 22 West (2nd. ed.). Closely related are the Germanic beliefs in Odin's Walahalla whither all warriors that died in battle went and enjoyed a pleasurable life: J. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie* (Göttingen⁴ 1876), II 682–88. For related beliefs see M. Boyce, "On the Antiquity of Zoroastrian Apocalyptic," *BSOAS* 47.1 (1984) 57–75, esp. 62–66; among other Indo-European people, B. Lincoln, "On the Imagery of Paradise," *Indoeuropäische Forschungen* 85 (1980) 151–64; but the concept was not restricted to the Indo-Europeans. When, as in Hesiod, the heroes are concentrated in one age that is called, as a result, the age of heroes, their happy afterlife was expanded to the entire age. Within the Greek tradition, there are also traces of the flip side of the same story, namely that the Trojan war led to a total destruction of the warriors—most importantly in *Iliad* 12.23 it is ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν that dies at Troy; according to *Iliad* 4.85–88, Zeus has destined the Greek army at Troy to endure war from youth to old age, ὄφρα φθιόμεθα ἕκαστος. In the context of ideas about the destruction of the heroic age, these passages seem to be more than a rhetorical exaggeration, reflecting instead a

The fifth is the present age of iron (174–201). It is characterized by never-ending sufferings (176–78), in total contrast with the golden age (112f.). Someday Zeus will destroy this age, whenever human beings are born with gray temples (180f.). The extended childhood of the silver age (130f.) will thus become its opposite—the complete loss of childhood—and this will be the sign of the end. Hesiod never suggested that the series will start again. Moreover, the fifth age is described as an unfolding process, with what begins as a mixture of good and bad (179) becoming unmitigated evil, accompanied by the collapse of social structures and neglect of the gods (182–89). Thus the fifth race ends worse than it began. The intensity of Hesiod's language and the minute details he provides make this age far worse than its bronze counterpart.

We will return later to some details of Hesiod's description of the age of iron. First we shall look at the function of the story of the Five Ages at the beginning of the *Erga*, a work that presents itself as a series of admonitions. Hesiod warns Perses, his brother, to work honestly as a farmer; and he admonishes him and the "kings" to use justice in adjudicating the two brothers' property dispute. But inconsistencies indicate that the personal story is no more than a foil for admonitions of universal dimensions (cf. West, pp. 33–40). In this manner Hesiod explains the deplorable state of the present-day world. At the same time, he introduces a faint hope that societal disintegration is not irreversible. He opens his narrative with three mythological paradigms, each of which in its own way explains the presence of evil in this world.¹³ First is the existence of two kinds of Eris (strife): a bad Eris, producing war and battle, and a good Eris, encouraging competitive work and bringing success (11–26). Second is Prometheus' story—his quarrel with Zeus and the creation of Pandora, the beautiful but treacherous woman with her box of evil gifts. All her gifts were released except for hope, the ambiguous gift that could make life bearable (42–105). Deceived by an imitation of beauty and lacking hope, mankind seems lost. In line 273, however, Hesiod still has some hope in Zeus.¹⁴

background of traditional beliefs; see W. Kullmann, *Die Quellen der Ilias*, Hermes Einzelschriften 14 (Wiesbaden 1960) 47 n. 2 and below, n. 68; Matthiessen, "Das Zeitalter" (above) 183.

¹³Cf., for example, von Fritz, "Pandora" (above, n. 12) 231f. and 373f. respectively.

¹⁴Suffice it to refer to P. Pucci, *Hesiod and the Language of Poetry* (Baltimore and London 1977) 82–126 and to von Fritz, "Pandora" (above, n. 12). V. Leinieks, in a very helpful survey of the meaning of ἑλπίς ("ἑλπίς in Hesiod, *Works and Days* 96," *Philologus* 128 [1984] 1–8, points to the use of the word "as false expectation of good" that provides "the confidence which makes it possible for men to undertake various ventures." This, again, is something of ambivalent value (as his examples show; p. 4). Leinieks joins those who take ἑλπίς in the Pandora story as negative, but with an interesting twist: ἑλπίς is evil, but keeping it in the jar is even worse. Men cannot prepare for it, and evil comes unexpected. But, I presume, even the

The Pandora myth is not the poet's final word. Third is the story of the Five Ages, four of which are completed cycles. The repetitive cycles roll in linear fashion from the beginning of mankind to humanity's end.¹⁵ In this way the narrative proceeds from past history to a tentative eschatology, whose predictions are marked by use of the future tense.¹⁶

Although the 'history' is an aetiologic tale of how evils entered the world, a small hope is counterpoised to the evils, as traces of the earlier and better ages linger on. The golden age left behind the good spirits to watch over men (also lines 251–55); the dead of the silver age live on in their venerated tombs, and those of the bronze age inhabit Hades, whither all subsequent men now go.¹⁷ These are the beliefs of Hesiod's audience, who will themselves descend one day to Hades, yet in their lifetimes they venerate the tombs of their ancestors and they hope for the intervention of the protector spirits in their day-to-day business of gathering wealth, as well as in their time of need. Because these things are true, Hesiod's audience will conclude that his predictions about the end of mankind will also come true. The truth of the past narrative validates the prediction of the future.

unexpectedness of evil is a very ambiguous thing. It can make survival possible. Even if Pandora's hope were clearly evil, keeping it in the jar would be a potential good and would, paradoxically, make hope possible.

¹⁵The sequence of the ages in the chronological ordering of Hesiod's narrative can be understood as, *prima facie*, indicating a hierarchy, not linear temporality. Each cycle is subject to its own progression and constitutes cyclical time (cf. Vernant, "Le mythe" [above, n. 11] 24–27 and 22–24 respectively). On the other hand, Hesiod does not give any indication that the series of cycles constitutes a large cycle which may repeat itself in the same or in reverse order. Instead, time develops from a first to a fifth cycle which may (or, as I shall argue, may not) bring the end of the world. Thus the cycles combine into progressive, linear time. It is precisely this feature that, as I argue, marks Hesiod's important contribution to the Greek concept of historicity, a very significant step in the development of Greek thought. At this point I disagree with Vernant and join the general view expressed by Rosenmeyer in 1957 (above, n. 5).

¹⁶The future tense starts in line 176f. with οὐδ(ἐ)...παύσονται καμάτων καὶ οἰζύος making an easy transition (cf. below the Prophecy of Shulgi [sect. II 2 (b)], although I do not wish to make a direct connection). Rosenmeyer ("Hesiod" [above, n. 5] 276f. and 633–35 respectively) suspected "modal" use of the future, but ὀλέσει (180) and ἔτον (199) have clearly temporal meaning (also see Verdenius' objections *ad* 177). As I shall argue, the future signals the turn to a prophecy about the end of the world; see B. Gatz, *Weltalter, goldene Zeit und sinnverwandte Vorstellungen*, Spudasmata 16 (Hildesheim 1967) 49 (referring to the use of the future in apocalyptic prophecies) and West *ad loc.* ("prophecy may have been an inherited feature of the myth").

¹⁷Rohde, *Psyche* (above, n. 12) 95–103 (Engl. 70–74); V. Goldschmidt, "Theologia," *REG* 63 (1950) 33–39. Hades was, after all, the place whither everyone went since the days of the bronze age, with the exception of those of the heroic age, and it is an important element in the structure of the myth. This fact invalidates Matthiessen's objection ("Form" [above, n. 11] 27) against Goldschmidt's analysis (pace Verdenius, *Commentary*, p. 105 n. 435 end).

With this in mind, the audience encounters Hesiod's introduction of the fifth age, a point at which he deliberately alters the introductory formula employed for the other ages. "I wish," says Hesiod, "I were not part of the fifth age of men, but had died earlier, or would be born later" (μηκέτ' ἔπειτ' ὄφελλον ἐγὼ πέμπτοις μετεῖναι | ἀνδράσιν ἀλλ' ἢ πρόθε θανεῖν ἢ ἔπειτα γενέσθαι, 174f.). As we stated before, Hesiod's narrative of the other ages does not speak of a future, a sixth generation of men, whose lives would be better. Nevertheless, his wish is more than a plea not to live in the present age, as critics have assumed.¹⁸ At least in the early stage of its downward progression, the present age will still be a mixture of good and evil (179). The protector spirits of the golden age continue to help men live both justly and prosperously. More important, the paradigm of the heroic age exemplifies the possibility of reversal, for, at that time, humankind was better and more just than in the previous ages (δικαιότερον καὶ ἄρειον, 158). The deterioration in the other series of ages is underscored by the descending value of the metals—gold, silver, bronze, and iron (see above, n. 11). Because the age of heroes reverses this deterioration and is not named after a metal, it is not fully integrated into the rest of the series and signals the possibility of a return to the better.

After the tale of the Five Ages, Hesiod poses a riddle (αἶνος, 202), a fable illustrating not only the lawlessness of the animal kingdom, but also the threat under which he lives (202–12). The tale functions as symbol of the hopeless fight which the nightingale/poet puts up against Perses and the "kings," the men of brute force.¹⁹ But then follows Hesiod's admonition to Perses that he

¹⁸West applauds, taking line 175 as "polar expression" (E. Kemmer, *Die polare Ausdrucksweise in der griechischen Literatur* [Würzburg 1903]; U. v. Wilamowitz, *Euripides Herakles* [Darmstadt² 1959] III and G.W. Bond, *Euripides Heracles* [Oxford 1981], both to line 1106): "Anything would be better than this!" as R. Lamberton phrased it in his *Hesiod* (New Haven and London 1988); see Verdenius *ad* 175 (with further literature). Thus Rosenmeyer points out that it is probably best to interpret the phrase "as a colloquial escapist term, expressing his revulsion from the present," but he also explains that, "still, the ἢ ἔπειτα does indicate that Hesiod's mind is not degeneration-fixed" ([above, n. 5] 275–76 and 631–33; also see Bianchi, "Razza aurea" [above, n. 10] 194).

There is more to it, I believe. In the context of the *Erga*, Hesiod tells the myth so that it may convince Perses and the "kings" to mend their ways. This can only be achieved if there is hope for avoiding the end of the world. Vernant correctly stresses this point ("Le mythe" [above n. 11] 22 and 20 respectively), and West distinguishes between the myth, which may not allow a turn for the better, and Hesiod's own feelings, which may allow for such a wish. It is precisely this wish which contains Hesiod's new interpretation of the myth.

¹⁹The use of the word αἰτιδός (208) mediates between ἀηδών, nightingale (203), and the poet. See Pucci, *Hesiod* (above, n. 14) 61–81, also S. H. Lonsdale, "Hesiod's Hawk and Nightingale (Op. 202–12): Fable or Omen," *Hermes* 117 (1989) 403–12; West *ad* 203 observes

not follow the animals, but rather listen to Dike (Justice), and thereby reverse the growing presence of Hybris in this world (213–24). Hybris leads both the mighty and the lowly to a bad end, while Dike's path avoids ruin (ἄρη, 216).²⁰ At both the literal level as an address to Perses, and again on the generalizing level as a message to the audience, these admonitions only make sense if there is a glimmer of hope for a more optimistic future, despite the present lawlessness.

Next, the admonition to Perses is extended to the kings through the juxtaposition of the just and unjust cities (225–47), an image paralleled, in part, by the prosperous and suffering cities of the Homeric *Shield of Achilles* (18.490ff.) and the *Aspis* of the Hesiodic corpus (237ff.). Hesiod describes the just city in terms that recall his golden age and his Islands of the Blest. Justice brings prosperity (227), child-nourishing peace (εἰρήνη...κουροτρόφος, 228), and festivities (231); earth gives food in abundance (232–34). Children are similar to their parents, i.e. not subject to progressive degeneration. This reverses the present day fate of the iron age.²¹ War first appeared in the age of bronze (145f.) and destroyed those of the heroic age (161ff.), but Zeus does not decree war for the just city (228f.). There is no ruin (ἄρη, 231), nor do men travel in ships (236f.), as did the heroes of the Trojan war. Life is becoming a present-day variant of the golden age. Further, this image of the just and prosperous city sets up the possibility that the doom predicted can be avoided through justice. What seemed a preordained future gives way not to

that the dove is the hawk's standard prey in Homer. Cf. his commentary on 208 and e.g. Verdenius and Wilamowitz *ad loc.*

²⁰For ἄρη in Hesiod's *Erga* in the meaning of "ruin," and even specifically "financial loss," see R. E. Doyle, *Ἄρη, its Use and Meaning* (New York 1984) 23–25.

²¹τίκτουσιν δὲ γυναῖκες εἰκότα τέκνα γονεῦσι, 235; οὐδὲ πατὴρ παῖδεςσιν ὁμοῖος οὐδὲ τε παῖδες, 182. Even if the meaning of ὁμοῖος is more specific than the general similarity expressed by εἰκότα, the two lines seem to be related. Moreover, if the similarity of the children with their parents denies genealogical degeneration (R. Renehan, "Progress in Hesiod," *CP* 75 [1980] 339–58, esp. 349f.), then the just city is liberated from the process, dominating not only the sequence of Hesiod's ages, but also the history of the present-day iron age. The meaning of ὁμοῖος is much debated, but can be derived from an original meaning "going to the same place" and thus to denote equal goals, equalmindedness (Verdenius takes 182 ὁμοῖος as equivalent to ὁμόφρων), although in Homer the word, used for war and death, has only negative connotations (A. Athanassakis, *RhM* 119 [1976] 4–7). εἰκότα τέκνα γονεῦσι recalls curses, where the phrase is contrasted with giving birth to monsters (e.g. Aischin., *Ktes.* 111; Verdenius *ad* 235), but in the description of the just city it seems to be primarily concerned with morality (Renehan [above] esp. 349f., cf. 348 on 182). It is in this sense that the εἰκότα τέκνα γονεῦσι of the just city reverse the children of the iron age that are not ὁμοῖοι with their fathers. The word is chosen for its similarity with ὅμοιος. A later time thought that marital fidelity was the ground for the similarity (Theokritos XVII 63f., cf. 53–57; see Wilamowitz' commentary).

the creation of a subsequent new age, but to a reversal of the downward descent of this fifth age. It is in this sense that Hesiod wishes to be born at a later time—after the turning point (cf. the discussion in n. 18). His seemingly casual wish, once it is coupled with his concept of an heroic age and the image of the just city, refashions the doomed and descending cycles of history into a linear future that flows continuously out of the present—because life lived morally has the capacity to reverse the doom and the direction of history.²² In intellectual terms, this represents a gigantic step not only toward the development of a concept of linear time that stretches through history from past to present and on to the future, but also toward the development of the moral principle based upon individual responsibility.

II. Oriental Myths

Hesiod's own text and structure carry us this far. His decisive step from spiraling cycles to linear history, from unavoidable destruction to moral responsibility, emerges, I shall now argue, from a Greek amalgam of concepts acquired and acculturated over the course of many centuries from areas far beyond the Greek mainland. Martin L. West has emphasized Hesiod's debt to the genre of Admonition literature, widespread in the ancient world, and has reminded us that Hesiod's description of the diptych of just and unjust cities is paralleled in Leviticus (26) and Deuteronomy (28) by pairs of Jahweh's blessings for those who obey the law and curses for those who do not.²³ We have also noted above that Hesiod's narrative of the heroic age was not fully integrated into the series of ages named after metals (above and n. 11). This fact is further confirmed by an additional inconsistency. The analogy of the other ages and the logic of the story should preclude any genealogical continuity between the age of the heroes and the present age. Yet, Hesiod's wording eschews this conclusion. Instead of saying that Zeus created the fifth or the iron age, he surprises his audience with the wish that he not live in the fifth age. Through this deviation from the usual

²²See already above, n. 15 and, in particular, Rosenmeyer's contribution. Heubeck speaks of a new "geschichtsphilosophische Konstruktion" which resulted from the poet's attempt to combine oriental ideas with traditional Greek views and which he tried to fit into the paradigmatic intentions of the *Erga* ("Mythologische Vorstellungen" [(above, n. 2] 510 and 548, respectively). As Nicolai observes (*Hesiods Erga* [above, n. 7], 49f.), the notion that men could live almost as happily as the gods, provided they practiced justice, permeates the description of all five ages.

²³In the introduction to his commentary, West discusses Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian, Aramaic, Hebrew, Indian, Irish, and Norse wisdom literature as well as a number of more recent or more recently recorded examples (pp. 3–25). For Jahweh's blessings and curses for those obedient and disobedient to the law, see his comm. to 225–47, where he specifically refers to Lev. 26 and Deut. 28. See also Walcot, *Hesiod* (above, n. 11), chapt. "Didactic Literature in Greece and the Near East" (80–103).

form of transition between the ages, Hesiod avoids a violation of his own and the Greeks' sense of continuity between themselves and the heroes.²⁴ Hence, I agree with scholars who have argued that Hesiod is here transforming a story of Four Ages, current in his own time, by inserting a characteristically Greek story about an age of heroes.²⁵

1. Zoroastrian, Indian, and Jewish Apocalyptic Ideas?

The recognition of an original series of four metallic ages does not mean that this feature derives from Eastern sources—as has been argued on the basis

²⁴Verdenius states that the present age “is not especially created by the gods because it consists of the descendants of the men who lived in the heroic age” (*ad* 174, p. 105; cf. *ad* 158 with n. 416). But against J. Rudhardt, “Le mythe hésiodique des races et celui de Prométhée,” *Rev. europ. d. sciences soc.* 19 (1981) no. 58, 245–81, esp. 248f., Verdenius maintains that not the entire population of the present-day iron age descends from the heroes. Hesiod's text, however, says nothing about such descent, and the fact that Zeus transplants the entire age of heroes to the Islands of the Blest (above, n. 12) precludes this assumption. A later poet tried to bridge the transition from the age of the heroes to the iron age more smoothly (173a–e) and, as it seems, included the formal statement that Zeus created the new age (173d; cf. West).

²⁵Most scholars who have discussed the myth of the Ages have come to this conclusion. Matthiessen, “Das Zeitalter” (above, n. 12) accepts the validity of the oriental parallels to which R. Reizenstein has drawn critical attention (below, n. 26) and argues that the destruction of the age of the heroes by itself belongs to the wide-spread type of myth that contrasts an idealized first age to the present age (see below section III). In Matthiessen's view, then, Hesiod combined two stories, each of which in a different way reflects essentially the same myth of the destruction of an original, mightier mankind and the subsequent creation of the less perfect humanity that we all know. Others have found different explanations for the inconsistencies in Hesiod's text: Wilamowitz thought that the bronze age and the present age originally were the same and were divided by inserting the age of the heroes (commentary, p. 139f.; for M. P. Nilsson's rejection of this notion see n. 26). The result would be an original myth of only three ages (for the Orphics see M. L. West, *The Orphic Poems* [Oxford 1983], 75 and 107 and cf. 118; for other attestations, see von Fritz, “Pandora” [above, n. 12] 232 and 373, respectively, n. 16). Walcot believed that the original myth consisted only of the first four ages (above, n. 11). Vernant's structural analysis (above n. 11) divides the fifth age into two contrasting phases, the present phase and the future phase that will be even worse. Thus he finds three pairs of contrasting ages, each pair reflecting one of G. Dumézil's “indo-european” classes. There is not much textual evidence to support either of these arguments; cf. Matthiessen, “Form” (above, n. 11) 26 n. 4. And the evidence for this tripartite structure in Greek society is quite insufficient: G. S. Kirk, *Myth* (Cambridge 1970) 210; Matthiessen, “Form” 29f.; D. Boedeker finds this tripartite division in the functions of Hekate in the “hymn” to Hekate of *Theogony* 411–52—*non liquet*: Hesiod does not see the one who sacrifices/prays (416–19) and the king (434) as representing the same religio-legal and social function. In point of fact, sacrificing and praying are not the specific privilege of any social class, whether one looks to this “hymn” (ἔρδων ἱερά . . . κικλήσκει Ἑκάτην. πολλή τέ οἱ ἔπετο τιμή I . . . ᾧ πρόφρων γε θεὰ ὑποδέξεται εὐχάς) or to Greek culture in general.

The tensions and inconsistencies between details of the myth of the ages and Hesiod's own intentions are real. Nonetheless, they seem to have been acceptable to Hesiod, probably as the result of the aesthetic that developed under the influence of oral poetry.

of similarities to Zoroastrianism and later Jewish and Indian beliefs.²⁶ The eschatology of the oldest layers of Zoroastrianism portrays a final period of evil, at the end of which a savior of the world comes to conquer the evil spirit. But, as the Iranist Mary Boyce has pointed out,²⁷ it was only toward the end of the 5th century BC that this basic structure evolved into an elaborate scheme of a world period of 12,000 years. A savior appears at the end of each of the last three millennia and establishes a new and better time, but at the end of both the first and second millennia the renewal is followed by a recrudescence of evil. Some variations on this scheme are early Hellenistic, or even more recent. Nevertheless, it is of particular interest here that in Pahlevi versions, four ages of the present millennium of Zoroaster are distinguished according to metals: gold, silver, steel, and "intermixed" iron. According to Mary Boyce, "intermixed iron" means 'ironstone,' hence iron still mixed with dross ("Zoroastrian Apocalyptic" [above, n. 12] 71f.). She also points out that elaborate world-age schemes and their characterization by metals are absent from older Zoroastrian apocalypticism, again suggesting their introduction into the story in an early Hellenistic milieu. Other evidence comes from the prophetic dream of Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel (2), written about 166 BC. In the dream, the king saw four future kingdoms beneath the image of a mammoth statue, whose various parts were composed of four metals—gold, silver, bronze, iron and, for the feet, a mixture of iron and clay. This mixture is most likely a misunderstanding of the "intermixed" iron in the Iranian text, making it likely that the metals reached the book of Daniel via an Iranian tale (M. Boyce, *ibidem*). Indian texts present the concept of four subsequent world-

²⁶For the following see R. Reitzenstein, "Altgriechische Theologie und ihre Quellen," *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* IV (Leipzig 1924/25) 1–19 (repr. in *Hesiod*, WdF [above, n. 2], 523–44) and *idem* in R. Reitzenstein–H. H. Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland*, *Studien der Bibliothek Warburg* VII (Leipzig and Berlin 1926), 38–68; Gatz, *Weltalter* (above, n. 16) 1–51; West *ad* 106–201 (with more literature on. p. 177). M. P. Nilsson rejected both ideas—namely, that in the story on the Ages Hesiod was following oriental myth and that he inserted the age of the heroes and the iron age into an older story consisting of only three ages (*Deutsche Literaturzeitung* [1928] 1652; *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* I, Handb. d. Altertumswissenschaft 5. Abt. II 1 [München³ 1967], 622 n. 1).

²⁷Boyce, "Zoroastrian Apocalyptic" (above, n. 12) 67–75. Also see my summary in "Manichaean Apocalypticism at the Crossroads of Iranian, Egyptian, Jewish, and Christian Thought," *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis*, *Atti del Simposio Internazionale* (Rende–Amantea 3–7, settembre 1984), Università Degli Studi Della Calabria, Centro Interdepartmentale di Scienze Religiose (Cosenza 1986) 285–332, esp. 308f.; S. S. Hartmann, "Datierung der jung-avestischen Apokalypsik," in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism*, Uppsala, 12–17 August, 1979, ed. D. Hellholm (Tübingen 1983) 61–75, esp. the table on p. 63.

ages, each decreasing in length and in righteousness, but characterized by the metallic colors white, red, yellow, and black. Again these concepts occur only in comparatively late texts, probably reflecting Hellenistic speculation after the time of Alexander. In short, Hesiod provides the earliest attestation for the metallic ages, and at this point I must part not only with Reitzenstein, Gatz, and West, who thought that Hesiod's metallic ages were following Zoroastrian or Babylonian configurations (see n. 26), but also with Burkert, who posited an Aramaic sibyl of the 8th century as the common source for Hesiod and Daniel, because for historical reasons, the influence of Iranian apocalypticism on Hesiod is virtually excluded.²⁸ Rather, the concept of metallic eras moved from Hesiod to Zoroastrianism, and from there to the book of Daniel and to India.

When Reitzenstein drew attention to Zoroastrian eschatology, he was impressed by what seemed to be similarities between late, even medieval, Zoroastrian apocalypticism and an oracle found on a papyrus, the so-called *Oracle of the Potter*, which claims to be, and probably is, a Greek translation of an Egyptian original.²⁹ The composition of the two extant versions can be dated to

²⁸"Apokalyptik im frühen Griechentum: Impulse und Transformationen," in *Apocalypticism* (above, n. 27) 235–54 (with bibliography). He finds indirect support in a prophetic text from around 700 BC written on the plaster of a stele in a temple in Deir 'Allā in Palestine, now conveniently available in J.A. Hackett, *The Balaam Text from Deir 'Allā*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 31, Chico 1980. For the view that this prophecy is partially related to Egyptian prophecies, see Koenen, "Manichaean Apocalypticism" (above, n. 27) 329 and n. 122.

²⁹For text and interpretation see Koenen, *ZPE* 2 (1968) 178–209; 3 (1968) 137f., 13 (1974) 313–19; 54 (1984) 9–13 (on the date); J. Assmann, "Königsdogma und Heilserwartung. Politische und Kultische Chaosbeschreibungen in ägyptischen Texten" in *Apocalypticism* (above, n. 27) 345–77, esp. 362–64; F. Dunand, "L'oracle du potier" in *L'apocalyptique*, Et.d'hist. des rel. 3, Université des Sc. Hum. de Strasbourg, Centre de Rech. d'Hist. des Rel. (Paris 1977) 41–67; R. Kearns, *Das Traditionsgefüge um den Menschensohn* (Tübingen 1986) 110–42; D. Frankfurter, *Elijah in Upper Egypt. The Apocalypse of Elijah and Early Egyptian Christianity*, Studies in Antiquity & Christianity (Minneapolis 1993) 159f. nn. 1–3, and 174–91; Koenen, "Manichaean Apocalypticism" (above, n. 27) 317f. with n. 94 (with additional literature) and 321–32. Another text to be considered here is the Demotic *Oracle of the Lamb* (K. Zauzich, "Das Lamm des Bokchoris," in *Festschrift zum 100-jährigen Bestehen der Papyrus-sammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer* [Wien 1983] I 165–74, a text usually discussed in tandem with the *Oracle of the Potter*). The strongest argument for Reitzenstein's derivation of the Oracle of the Potter from Iranian apocalypticism was its use of the term "bearers of the girdle" (ζωνοφόροι) for the evil-doers, a term that reminded him of the girdle of the demons in the medieval Bahman-Yasht (*Studien* [above, n. 26], 44f.; G. Widengren, "Leitende Ideen und Quellen der iranischen Apokalyptik," in *Apocalypticism* [above, n. 27], 77–162, esp. 108 and 114). But the term can be explained as of Egyptian origin and may have been an oracular expression for "enemies" in Hellenistic Egypt (as a word employed specifically for the Gauls, see L. Koenen, "Die Adaption Ägyptischer Königsideologie am Ptolemäerhof," in *Egypt and the Hellenistic World*, Proceedings of the International Colloquium, 24–26 May 1982, *Studia Hellenistica* 27 [1985] 143–90, esp. 181–83 and n. 106). If W. Clarysse correctly recognized the term in the name of a tomb in the Theban

about 130 BC. This *Oracle*, however, belongs to an Egyptian tradition which reaches back at least to the *Prophecy of Neferti*, an Egyptian text of 1991 BC, although it pretends to be 500 years older.³⁰ While the parallels between the Egyptian and the late Zoroastrian descriptions of calamity may be independent responses to similar social and political turmoil, I now think it possible that Egyptian tradition had an influence on Zoroastrianism (Koenen, “Manichaean Apocalypticism” [above, n. 27] 329f.). That problem cannot be pursued here, but Egyptian and Akkadian traditions now merit attention.

2. Egyptian and Akkadian traditions

I shall start with a brief preamble. The Egyptian and the Akkadian poems were produced in writing³¹ and knew limited circulation among scribes and noblemen; some poetry was meant only for the dead king, as is the case with one example I shall use. We nevertheless can assume that motifs expressed in such poems also reached the oral culture, as scribes told the stories to their families and friends. That is to say, differences between the scribal cultures of the Egyptians and the Akkadians on the one hand, and early Greek oral culture on the other, do not preclude a transferal of concepts and narrative patterns from the one group to the other.

(a) Egyptian Prophecies and Myth

First, then, we turn to Egyptian prophecies that proceed according to the following narrative pattern. They characterize present time as chaos and disaster, and envision the coming of a new king, the embodiment and bringer of *maat* (justice). We have already seen that the concept of justice’s restoration is a key element in Hesiod. The death of the Egyptian king means disintegration

necropolis, “the tomb of the zonophoros” (snwpwrs; *Enchoria* 18 [1991] 177f.), then the Greek word was used by Egyptians, whether it denoted a “member of the army or police force” (Clarysse), or a foreigner (Gaul), or some other strange person. The term may also have been used in the prophecy in the temple of Deir ‘Alā (above, n. 25; see Koenen, “Manichaean Apocalypticism” [above, n. 27], 329).

³⁰W. Helck, *Die Prophezeiungen des Nfr-tj*, Kleine ägyptische Texte (Wiesbaden 1970); M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I* (Berkeley–Los Angeles–London 1973) 139–45; *ANET* (Princeton³ 1969) 444–46 (J. A. Wilson) and 676. For the interpretation, see Assmann, “Königsdogma” (above, n. 29) 357–61; G. Posener, *Littérature et politique dans l’Égypte de la XII^e dynastie* (Paris 1956) 21–60 and 145–57; Frankfurter, *Elijah* (above, n. 29) 168–73; Koenen, “Manichaean Apocalypticism” (above, n. 27) 314f.; for a different interpretation, see H. Goedicke, *The Protocol of Neferyt*, The John Hopkins Near Eastern Studies (Baltimore 1977).

³¹P. Michalowski, “Orality and Literacy and Early Mesopotamian Literature,” in *Mesopotamian Epic Literature. Oral or Aural?*, ed. by M. F. Vogelzang and H. L. J. Vanstiphout (Leuiston 1992) 227–45. See also M. Reichel, “Gräzistische Bemerkungen zur Struktur des Gilgamesch-Epos” in *Historical Philology: Greek, Latin, Romance*, Current Issues in Linguistic Theory 87, ed. by B. Brogyanyi and R. Lipp (Amsterdam and Philadelphia 1992) 187–208.

of all order, and the new king comes to create the world anew out of chaos, just as the Egyptian gods are believed to have done in the beginning. The king's coming inaugurates a new and better time during which earth and men again prosper through peace and stability. Such events reflect the people's historical experiences, and the Egyptian belief in permanent renewal of cycles makes historical sufferings understandable and bearable. The prophecies are an expression of these beliefs in cyclical renewal through the appearance of the new king on his throne. Just as we saw in Hesiod, the Egyptian prophecies are in part *ex eventu* and thus establish the credibility of predictions for the future. But they are also an integral part of pharaonic ritual, royal ideology and propaganda, and they are grounded in the belief that the world must forever be renewed.³² The concept of an evil present, linked together with the hope for the advent of the good king also entered Egyptian Wisdom literature as we know it in the *Admonitions of Ipuwer*, written about 1300 BC.³³ Yet by Ptolemaic times, when Egyptians could no longer hope for an indigenous ruler, amelioration of the human condition was expected only with the beginning of a new, great cycle. Soon after this modulation the tradition turned apocalyptic,³⁴ possibly under Persian influence.

A good example of the affinity between Hesiod and the Egyptian tradition lies in Hesiod's prophecy of the bad things that will occur during the present fifth age. In the passage Hesiod concentrates on the moral decay of society and specifically of the family:

"The father will not be of equal mind with his children, and the children not at all of equal mind with their father [see above, n. 21]. Nor will the guest be friend to the host, companion to companion, and brother to brother, as before. Forthwith they will pay no honor to their aging parents. Naturally, they will quarrel with them in harsh words, hard-hearted, and not knowing the revenge of the gods" (182–87).³⁵

³²For literature on this point, see nn. 28f.

³³Lichtheim, *Anc. Egypt. Lit.* I (above, n. 30) 149–63; *ANET*³ 441–44 (J. A. Wilson) and 676; also see Assmann, "Königsdogma" (above, n. 29) 347–51.

³⁴L. Koenen, "The Prophecies of a Potter: A Prophecy of World Renewal Became an Apocalypse" in *Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress of Papyrology*, ASP 7, ed. by D. H. Samuel (Toronto 1970) 249–54.

³⁵οὐδὲ πατὴρ παῖδεςσι ὁμοίους οὐδέ τι παῖδες, ἢ οὐδὲ ξεῖνος ξεινοδόκῳ καὶ ἐταῖρος ἐταίρῳ ἢ οὐδὲ κασίγνητος φίλος ἔσεται, ὥς τὸ πάρος περ. ἢ αἶψα δὲ γηράσκοντας ἀτιμήσουσι τοκήας· ἢ μέμψονται δ' ἄρα τοὺς χαλεποῖς βάζοντες ἔπεσσι ἢ χεῖντοι οὐδὲ θεῶν ὅπιν εἰδότες. See Koenen, "Manichaean Apocalypticism" (above, n. 27) 327f., with additional parallel texts. See also the Akkadian texts quoted below.

The Egyptian *Prophecy of Neferti* (above, n. 30) from the beginning of the second millennium BC knows similar societal dissolution: "I show you the son as enemy, the brother as foe, a man slaying his father" (44f.). The *Admonitions of Ipuwer* (above, n. 33) describes the same evils: "A man regards his son as his enemy... A man strikes his maternal brother" (1.5 and 5.11). In the Hellenistic *Oracle of the Potter* the elaboration of evils is magnified: "At this generation there will be [war and ... murder (?)] between brothers and spouses; ... And the slaves will be freed and their masters will not have food. The virgins will be corrupted by their parents, the father (?) will thrust off the husband from his daughter, and there will be marriages between sons and mothers. Male slaves (or male children) will be dishonored by force." (P₃ 24f.; 46f.).³⁶ The Christian Gospels predict: "Brother will deliver brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise against their parents and kill them",³⁷ and in the late Iranian *Yamasp Namag* the mother will sell her daughter (17), the son will strike his father and mother and deprive them of their authority, the younger brother will strike his older brother and take his possessions (18).³⁸ According to the *Bahman Yasht*, the friendship between father and son and between brothers will disappear (II 30).

At this point I postpone the evaluation of the striking similarities of phrases and images that occurred over the course of more than 2,600 years and in a wide range of Mediterranean and Mesopotamian countries, but I shall provide one other example. We noted Hesiod's wish that he had not been born in the present age. The *Admonitions of Ipuwer* says simply: "Great and small <say>: 'I wish I were dead'" (4.13). According to the late Zoroastrian *Yamasp Namag* it were better not to be born at all, or straightway to die (70; see n. 37). Earlier, the *Apocalypse of Baruch* refers to Jeremiah (20.14) and says: "Happy the man who was never born, or the child who died as child" (10.6). In

³⁶For the edition see n. 29; the text is extant in three versions. P₁ (P. Graf G 29787; 2nd cent.) contains only the introductory narrative; the other two versions, P₂ (P. Rainer G. 19813; 3rd century) and P₃ (P. Oxy. XXII 2332, late 3rd. cent.), are parallel versions which by and large contain the same prophetic statements, but the wording is at times different. Reitzenstein (above, n. 26) could not yet know the Oxyrhynchus papyrus. P₃ 24ff. τ[ο]ῦτον τοῦ γέ- ν[ο]υ | [πόλεμος καὶ φόνο]ς . . . | . c ἔσται τῶν ἀδελφῶν | [καὶ τῶν γαμετῶν. P₂ 10ff. τοῦτο[υ τοῦ] γί[νε]ο[υ]ς | [πόλεμος τε καὶ φόνο]ς ἔσται ὃς καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφο[ὺς] καὶ [τὰς γα]μετὰ[ς] | ἀ[νελεῖ]. P₃ 44ff. καὶ οἱ δοῦλ[οι] ἐλευθερωθήσονται κα[ὶ] οἱ κύριοι αὐτῶν | βί[ο]υ δεηθήσονται (similarly in *Neferti* and *Ipuwer*). καὶ αἱ παρθέναι ὑπ[ὸ] τῶν γονέων | φθαρήσονται καὶ ὁ (πατ)ήρ τῆς θυγατρὸς ἀποσπάσει τὸν | ἄνδρα καὶ μητρογάμοι ἔσονται. καὶ τὰ ἀρσενικὰ παιδία | βιαιώ[ε]ς αἰχχυνθήσονται.

³⁷παραδίδωμι δὲ ἀδελφὸς ἀδελφὸν εἰς θάνατον καὶ πατὴρ τέκνον, καὶ ἐπ- αναστήσονται τέκνα ἐπὶ γονεῖς καὶ θανατώσουσιν αὐτούς, Matt. 10. 21 par.

³⁸E. Benveniste, "Une apocalypse pehlevie: le Zāmāsp-Nāmak," *RHR* 106 (1932) 337–80.

the *Apocalypse of Esdras*, “it were better for man not to have been born, better not to be alive” (I 21); etc. (see Koenen, “Manichaean Apocalypticism” [above, n. 27] 326f.). Hesiod’s voice seems to borrow and adapt a topos already developed in ancient Egyptian texts. And, in doing so, he turns that topos into a cue that prompts us to see the entire passage as tendering a glimmer of hope.

The Egyptian prophecies reflect a view of history and ritual in which each good king begins a cycle of renewal. Other Egyptian tales point to larger cycles of past history. In the Egyptian myth of the *Cow of Heaven*,³⁹ a narrative found in the royal tombs of kings from the 14th to 12th century BC, and therefore contemporary with the *Admonitions of Ipuwer*. Rhe, the Egyptian sun god and divine king, becomes old and tired after ruling over an aboriginal kingdom in which gods and men lived together. Men rebelled against Rhe; he called an assembly of the gods and with their agreement dispatched Hathor, the eye of Rhe. The fire of Hathor slew the men in the desert, and thus, by “diminishing the population” Rhe’s power over mankind was reestablished. Hathor, however, was about to continue her slaughter, when Rhe decided to save mankind; he ordered beer brewed in order to cover the land like a Nile flood. In Egyptian thinking, the beer *is* the Nile flood that covers the land every year. Hathor got drunk from the beer and no longer recognized the targets of her rage. Mankind was saved, and Rhe, having separated heaven and earth, withdrew to Heaven. The story goes on to tell how the new world was made to function and how its order was established. From this time forth, men rejoined the gods only after death.

Like Hesiod’s story of the Five Ages, the Egyptian myth is an aetiological tale that explains the present order of the world and its maintenance through annual renewal. On the mythical level, it narrates a revolution against the chief deity, the near destruction of men by fire, their salvation through a flood, and the separation of men from the gods, whereby mankind lost the divine companionship that characterized previous times. Under this dispensation, men were reunited with the gods only in the afterlife. Rhe has limbs of gold, bones of silver, and hair of lapis lazuli, so that what was a traditional description of gods’ bodies is here manipulated into a description of Rhe’s body, now grown old

³⁹The text has been newly studied (with text, translation, and commentary) by E. Hornung (in collaboration with A. Brodbeck, H. Schlögl, and E. Staehelin, and with a contribution by G. Fecht), *Der Ägyptische Mythos von der Himmelskuh. Eine Ätiologie des Unvollkommenen*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 46 (Freiburg [Schweiz] and Göttingen 1982). Earlier partial translations: M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature II* (Berkeley–Los Angeles–London 1976) 197–99; *ANET*³ 10f. (J.A. Wilson).

(5–7).⁴⁰ The tale gives voice to concepts drawn from Egyptian myth, ritual, and the geographical conditions of the Nile valley. Nevertheless, there are also elements shared with Hesiod: the two distinct periods of Rhe's rule correspond, respectively, to the rule of Kronos over the first two ages and to Zeus' subsequent rule (cf. above, nn. 7 and 25). At the same time they also correspond, respectively, to the gods' life among the heroes and their separation from men in the present-day world. We shall soon revisit such beliefs when we turn to the *Catalogue of Women*. In the present context it is sufficient to point to the fact that sandwiched in between the two periods of Rhe's rule lies the near destruction of mankind by fire.⁴¹

(b) Akkadian Prophecies and Myth

Some Akkadian prophecies are very similar in structure to the Egyptian prophecies which we have been discussing. The so-called Uruk-prophecy, written probably at the beginning of the 6th century under Nebuchadnezzar II, predicts, *ex eventu*, a long series of bad kings and the final restoration of Uruk under a good king.⁴² The extant portion of *Shulgi's Prophecy*, probably dating

⁴⁰See Hornung's commentary, p. 52 (6) and cf. the Sumerian story of "Enki and Nihursag" (below, n. 57). Probably in the 2nd century the idea of the aging and renewal of the world was taken up in the *Apocalypse of Asklepios of the Hermetic Corpus* (extant in Latin, ed. with commentary by A. D. Nock and A.-J. Festugière II [chapt. 24–26], and in Coptic, ed. by Martin Krause and Pahor Labib, *Gnostische und hermetische Schriften aus Codex II und Codex VI*, Abh. d. DAI Kairo, Koptische Reihe II [Glückstadt 1971], pp. 194–200; translation in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. J. M. Robinson [San Francisco³ 1988], 334–36): 26 *haec et talis senectus veniet mundi*. This apocalypse emerged in the Egyptian tradition, but it is also much obliged to Stoic notions about the destruction and renewal of the world through flood and fire, and, in this context, it takes up a passage of Plato (*Tim.* 22C; see Koenen, "Manichaean Apocalypticism" [above, n. 27] 318–21 with n. 95). The concept of the world's old age held a particular fascination for currents in the Roman view of the world (for example, Lucr. 2.1150–53), particularly in late antiquity; see R. Häussler, "Vom Ursprung und Wandel des Lebensaltervergleiches," *Hermes* 92 (1964) 313–41; F. Vittinghoff, "Zum geschichtlichen Verständnis der Spätantike," *Hist. Zeitschrift* 529–74, esp. 563–73.

⁴¹The destruction of the world by fire is an ubiquitous motif which, however, Hesiod does not apply.

⁴²H. Hunger and S.A. Kaufmann, "A New Akkadian Prophecy Text," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95 (1975) 371–75; P. Höffken, "Heilszeitherrschererwartung im babylonischen Raum," *Die Welt des Orients* 9 (1977) 51–71 (see also n. 46). For the similarity between Akkadian and Egyptian prophecies, see R. Borger, "Gott Marduk und Gott-König Šulgi als Propheten," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 28 (1971) 3–24, esp. 23f. This similarity is much closer than the few passages I quote can indicate. In *Marduk's Prophecy* (see n. 45) the god describes past misfortunes as occurring when he deserted Babylon and traveled to the Hittites, Assyrians, and Elamites; each time he returned to Babylon in order to bring new prosperity through his presence. The Uruk-prophecy predicts that the tutelary deities are absent from Uruk in evil times and are then returned, when the good king appears. In the Egyptian *Oracle of the Lamb* and the *Oracle of the Potter* the new king of better times brings back the statues of the

from the end of the second millennium BC, although it pretends to be much earlier, starts with the good deeds of king Shulgi and continues with a prophetic review of Babylonian history, focusing on evil times under subsequent kings who will throw the land into complete disorder (?).⁴³ “So long as he is king, fighting and warfare will not cease (cf. n. 16). In that reign brother will devour his brother, people will barter their children for silver, the lands will be thrown into complete disorder. Husband will forsake wife, wife will forsake husband.⁴⁴ Mother will bar her door against daughter,” and so forth. “Friend will slay his friend with a weapon, companion will destroy companion with a weapon, [the lands] will be totally destroyed.” At the close comes the prediction of a restoration of good times under the new king. In the *Prophecy of God Marduk*, a text probably composed in or soon after 1124 BC, the god tells of his peregrinations and predicts his final reconciliation with Babylon at the time of a new king, probably Nebuchanezzar.⁴⁵ During the evil time: “Brother consumed brother, comrade slew his comrade with a weapon, free citizens spread out their hands (to beg of) the poor!”, and so forth. Then Marduk will return, and under this rule of a good and pious king better times will commence, when “brother will have consideration for brother, son will revere father like a god. Mother will [be friend with (?)] daughter, bride will be mar[r]ied and r[e]vere her husband. There will always be consideration among the people. The young man will [always bear] his burden (?). This prince will [rule all] lands.” In another text, which seems to belong to a different, but related type of prophecy, mention of astronomical phenomena leads to long series of predictions. Twice the gods decide to restore kingship; twice the country falls back into bad times, although at the end a new intervention by the gods is possible. The bad times after the first attempt of restoring kingship include revolution: “the entire land will rebel against the prince who will sit on the throne,” “city [will

gods, after enemies have plundered them away. The return of the statues becomes one of the standard duties of the king. In the *Oracle of the Potter* Alexandria will be destroyed when its god returns to Memphis. For a survey of the Akkadian prophecies, see H. Ringgren, “Akkadian Apocalypses,” in *Apocalypticism* (above, n. 27) 379–86. I note in passing that some of the Akkadian prophecies intersperse good reigns with evil ones, a feature which later reappears in apocalypses of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, for example in the apocalypse of Elijah.

⁴³B. R. Foster, *Before the Muses. An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda, Maryland, 1993) I 270–72; Borger (see n. 42); A. K. Grayson and W. G. Lambert, “Akkadian Prophecies,” *Journ. of Cuneiform Studies* 18 (1964) 7–30, text C.

⁴⁴While I print Foster’s translation, for this sentence I adopt the rendition of Borger and Grayson–Lambert (Text C iii [p. 21]). Borger has “Man will forsake maid, maid will forsake man.”

⁴⁵Foster (above, n. 43) 304–07; Borger (see n. 42). In one of the lacunae I have added a guess (“Mother will [be friend with (?)] daughter”). The phrase “This prince” refers to the new king whose good reign is predicted in much detail.

turn against] city, family will turn against family, brother will slay brother, friend will slay friend.”⁴⁶ The sequence of bad times and good times are, in effect, cyclic catastrophes and restorations.

A different kind of Akkadian literature, The *Song of Atrahasis*,⁴⁷ is attested in several versions, the oldest of which was written in the 17th century BC. Assyrian copies were still available in the 7th century. Part of the *Song* also survives in a 13th-century copy from Ugarit, a locality with closer ties to Greece. The text has attracted classicists’ attentions mainly because it begins with three chief gods dividing the world by lot: Anu received heaven; Enki, the water of Apsu; Enlil, the lower earth, very much as Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades cast lots to apportion Heaven, Ocean, and the Underworld in the *Iliad*.⁴⁸ At present, however, we are interested in the manner in which the Akkadian story periodicizes its narrative. All history is divided into five periods. A first period of perhaps 2,500 or 3,600 years,⁴⁹ prior to the creation of mankind, is followed by three subsequent periods of twelve hundred years each,⁵⁰ and finally

⁴⁶R. D. Biggs, “More Babylonian ‘Prophecies,’” *Iraq* 29 (1967) 117–32, lines 14–16 (text B in Grayson’s and Lambert’s “Akkadian Prophecies” [above, n. 43]). The connection of this prophecy with astrological oracles is certain, but in the main text a single astronomical sign is followed by a rather long prediction covering an extended period of time and the reigns of several kings. Later astrological prophecies show, at least in principle, the same phenomenon. For example, CCAG VII 143.12ff. (Nechepso and Petosiris) predicts that a great man will invade Egypt from Asia and capture Egypt’s leader; when the invader departs, there will be civil war with rebellion, upheaval of the political and social order, murder, larceny, etc. The prophecy is, I believe, *ex eventu*, referring to the invasion by Antiochos IV, the capture of Philometor, the return of Antiochos to Syria (twice), and the subsequent period of civil strife. Thus the astrological constellation leads to a “prophecy” encompassing the period between about 170 and 163 BC, if not longer. The language and the spirit of these astrological prophecies is quite similar to prophecies such as the *Oracle of the Potter* (above, nn. 29 and 36), and it is significant that the front side of the tablet with the Uruk prophecy (on the back; see above, n. 42) contains both protases and apodoses of omens.

⁴⁷Foster (above, n. 43) 158–201; Lambert and Millard, *Atra-ḫasīs. The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford 1969); J. Bottéro and S. M. Kramer, *Lorsque les dieux faisaient l’homme. Mythologie mésopotamienne* (Paris 1989); S. Dalley, *Myth from Mesopotamia* (Oxford 1989) 9–38; ANET³ 104–09 (E. A. Speiser) and 512–14 (A. K. Grayson).

⁴⁸W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution. Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, transl. by M. E. Pinder and W. Burkert (Cambridge, Mass., London 1992) 88–92.

⁴⁹Line I 37; 2,500 with W. von Soden’s reading and restoration (ZA 68 [1978] 56; accepted by Bottéro–Kramer [above, n. 47]). S. Dalley restores 3,600 years, i.e. 1 saros or 6 neroi of 600 years in the chronology used by Berossos of Babylon, *Babylonika* II, FGrH 680 F 3. (10) (S. M. Burstein, *The Babylonica of Berossus* [Malibu 1978] II 1.2 p. 18); see n. 50; *alia alii*.

⁵⁰The number occurs in the formula which introduces the destruction of men: “Twelve hundred years had not gone by” (extant in lines I 352 and 416 = II 1; also restored in the late Assyrian version at I iv 1). The number is written by a repetition of 600; 600 years are 1 neroi in Berossos’ chronology (see n. 49). Also see Burkert, *The Orient. Revolution* (above, n. 48)

by a fifth on-going period after the creation of the present world. The Zoroastrian division of the world-period into four periods, for a total of twelve thousand years, as noted earlier, appears to be a later application of the older Babylonian paradigm. Equally, if we leave aside the original period before humankind was created, we encounter four periods and three attempts at the destruction of humankind. This structure is similar to that of the myth followed by Hesiod, although the *Atrahasis* story does not specifically tell us that men deteriorated from one age to the next, focusing instead on the destruction of mankind and the gods' quarrels.

I cannot engage in a full comparison of this story with Greek mythology, but I may briefly discuss a few relevant details. In the *Song of Atrahasis*, the gods are divided into two groups. On one side are the chief gods who are older and, on the other, the lesser and younger gods, the sons of Anu. Originally, the younger gods lived without toil, but subsequently they were forced to dig out the river-beds and mound up the mountains, in order that the chief gods have food.⁵¹ The younger gods revolted, forcing the older gods to acknowledge that the younger gods' work load was too heavy. The older deities slew one of the younger gods, and this sacrifice served as purification of the lesser gods for their earlier rebellion. Moreover, the slain god's flesh and blood, called the "spirit," were mixed with clay and used for the creation of men and women,⁵² who speedily became too numerous, once procreation and childbirth were established among them. The humans' noise annoyed Enlil. As I mentioned above, Enlil tried to destroy mankind on three occasions: in the first two instances it clearly happened at the end of each of the first two periods of 1200

89. S. Dalley regards the repetition as a rhetorical, not arithmetical, device and assumes periods of only 600 years between Enlil's destructions of mankind.

⁵¹This motif appears already in the Sumerian myth of *Enki and Ninmah*, that narrates events after the separation of heaven and earth—how the goddesses got married and gave birth to the younger generation of gods. These younger gods have to provide labor and, among other things, dig canals. They grumble about their life, until Enlil is raised from his sleep and with the help of the other gods creates men from clay to be servants for the gods. The Classicist, always mindful of the *Odyssey*'s Demodokos, reads the continuation of the story with particular interest. There follows a feast at which Ninmah and Enki engage in heavy beer drinking and the goddess challenges Enki; she fashions a series of human beings, all with physical deformities, and for each of them Enki finds a useful function in society. His second challenge is to discover a function for "a man who could see though blind" ("blind" is a reasonable surmise," Kramer in his footnote 32). He "gave him the art of song, named him chief [musician] of the *ušungal*-lyre before the king." For the story see S. N. Kramer and J. Maier, *Myth of Enki, The Crafty God* (New York and Oxford 1989) 13f., 31–37, esp. 33f. (cf. S. N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology* [Westport² 1972], 68–72).

⁵²All this is very similar to Marduk's creation of men in *Enuma Elish*. Also see Berossos, *Babylonika* I FGrH II, 680 F 1.(7): Burstein, *Berossus* [above, n. 49] I 2.3a/b p. 15).

years, and we may presume that the third and most disastrous destruction took place also at the end of a 1200-year period. Enlil first tried plague, then drought and famine, and finally flood.⁵³ During his third attempt, decline was precipitous, as people became smaller and lived shorter lives, a feature recurring in later Zoroastrian apocalypticism and implied in Hesiod's Five Ages. Men's shoulders and legs shortened, and in a section extant in the Assyrian recension, mothers did not open their doors to their daughters, a feature already noted in Akkadian prophecies. Daughters did not open their doors to their mothers.⁵⁴ Mothers and daughters seem also to have watched each other being sold into slavery,⁵⁵ a motif we have already found in late Zoroastrian apocalyptic narrations. Even worse is the cannibalism. Parents ate their daughters and sons, and house devoured house. After the most serious attempt at destruction, that through flood, child-snatching demons and chastity for female priesthoods were devices invented to preserve the present order of the world and to prevent subsequent over-population.

As it turns out in this story, Enlil's efforts to destroy mankind were futile. The Egyptian Rhe also abandoned his attempts at destruction, once he diminished the population. Zeus likewise invented the wars at Thebes and Troy to decrease population.⁵⁶ But Hesiod's Zeus is always victorious, and, as a result, these two wars brought the heroic age to its final end. Yet, Zeus and the gods created a new age of mankind, the age of present-day people. And in the *Catalogue of Women* which I already mentioned and to which I soon shall return, Zeus' plan failed just as Enlil's and Rhe's original plans failed or were aborted.

(c) Conclusions

We cannot pursue here the survival of the concept of periodic destruction into Hellenistic and late antiquity, or into even later times. It is rather the time

⁵³For the flood, see also tablet XI of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and Berossos, *Babylonika* II, FGrH 680 F 3.(10), (13) and F 4 (Burstein, *The Babylonika* [above, n. 49], II 1.11 and 2 pp. 19–21).

⁵⁴Thus Bottéro–Kramer (above, n. 47) rev. v 18f. (p. 557) and vi 7f. (558); according to Lambert–Millard (p. 113; see also their comm. *ad loc.* [p. 166]) and Foster (I p. 192) “daughter saw mother go in. But mother would not open her door [to daughter].”

⁵⁵Thus Foster (above, n. 43) p. 192, and Lambert–Millard (above, n. 47) p. 113; rev. v 19f. and vi 6f.

⁵⁶For this motif see the beginning of the *Kypria*; cf. Aristarchos' criticism of the *πλάσματα* of the *neoteroi* (to *Il.* I.5–6; see H. Erbse's note [*Scholia Graeca in Hom. Iliadem* I]); Burkert, *The Orient. Revolution* (above, n. 48) 100–04; W. Kullmann, “Oral Poetry Theory and Neoanalysis in Homeric Research,” *GRBS* 25 (1984) 307–23, esp. 322. For the supplementary idea that Zeus relocates the entire race of heroes on the Islands of the Blest, see above, n. 12.

to evaluate what we saw on our journey through the Egyptian and Near-Eastern texts. The most striking similarity binding the Hesiodic with the Egyptian and Near Eastern stories involves the language and imagery used to describe societal evils and the dissolution of the family. But do the literary descriptions of evils develop independently of one another, or did one tradition influence the other? Wars, social and political upheaval, dissolution of family, loss of comradeship—these and other experiences of extreme hardship could produce the similarities in the descriptions. Words and phrases do not bring on their own sufficient proof of intercultural borrowing. More persuasive arguments seem to derive from the fact that the similarity of language and imagery for evils is found embedded in kindred narrative structures that are appearing in the geographical area in which these cultures are known to have been in contact.⁵⁷ It is the common feature of the various stories which we surveyed that they provide an explanation of the present world and, in doing so, either describe or assume a past that begins with an aboriginal, beatific age; they then proceed to the evils of present-day life. This description of present-day life is frequently presented in the form of prophecies of evils that are still to come. Moreover, these prophecies of the destruction of the world and its order lead up to the prediction of the final restoration of the country to its former glory and happiness. In Babylon as well as in Egypt this type of narrative intertwines with the concept of a powerful savior king who comes to restore the world. No single, extant narrative inspired Hesiod. It is rather within this broad cultural matrix that Hesiod's narrative was engendered and came into being. Hesiod re-

⁵⁷Belief in an ideal age that precedes the present-day world is almost universal. It is attested for Sumer. The story about the exploits of Enmerkar refers to a time when there were neither snakes nor other dangerous animals, and people lived without fear, in plenty and security, and they praised Enlil with one tongue (Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology* [above, n. 51], frontispiece and p. 107, n. 2). "Enki and Ninhursag: A Sumerian Paradise Myth" begins in all likelihood before the creation of mankind in the paradisiac land and city of Dilmun. Neither lions nor wolves kill, while wild dogs and pigs do not yet exist, etc.; people become neither sick nor old; water for washing off pollution does not yet exist. It seems unneeded. There is no mourning. When water is created, however, the process involves Enki's excessive sexual activity. Annoyed by his infidelity, Ninhursag, the mother goddess, creates eight plants from his overabundant semen; Enki eats the plants, gets sick, yet is saved when Ninursag gives birth to eight deities who heal his eight ailing organs. One of them, Ensag, becomes Lord of Dilmun, and we may surmise that this marked the beginning of the more normal living conditions in which mankind finds itself (Kramer and Maier, *Myth of Enki* [above, n. 51] 12f. and 22–30, based on a new edition; cf. Kirk, *Myth* [above, n. 25] 91–99). Some elements of this myth recall the Egyptian story about the "Cow of Heaven" (above, Sect. II 2 [a] and nn. 39 and 40).

As Christine Goldberg has pointed out to me, tales about a series of creations and, in particular, the concept of four ages occur outside the Mesopotamian and Mediterranean cultural complex. See, for example, S. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, A 630 ("Series of creations") and 1101 ("World calamities and renewals"). This aspect needs further study.

formulated the materials he encountered for the purposes of his own story. In Hesiod's world there was no place for a good king to come and restore justice.

As I argued at the outset, Hesiod's tentative hope for the amelioration of the human condition lay only in mankind's return to a morality grounded in justice and we may add, in light of the rest of the *Erga*, to the farmer's life of honest work. Hesiod also grafted an heroic age onto a pre-existing narrative structure that catalogued the ages of mankind. This insertion was, as I have argued, the linchpin of Hesiod's own narrative, since it introduced the possibility of improvement and in this manner prepared the way for the image of the just city, establishing a dramatic paradigm for avoiding human catastrophe. In the great kingdoms at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, it was the duty of the good king to maintain justice, and the king's justice was precisely the phenomenon which ushered in better times, in Babylon as well as in Egypt. The "kings" of Hesiod's Greece could not play the social and religious role of oriental monarch. Instead, Hesiod offers the diptych of doing justice and avoiding injustice (*hybris*), not only as solution to his own situation, but also as paradigm for all human intercourse. Behind the addresses to his brother and the kings lurks his real audience: his own society, and, we dare say, the people of future times. There is to be no new creation of mankind in Hesiod's Greek reconstruction and no mediating salvation from outside the social order; rather, human beings must improve out of a sense of responsibility for themselves and for their entire community. And so Hesiod changes the inherited structure to suit his own socio-historical context.

We have distinguished two layers—Hesiod's story and an older amalgam of tales. They combine the narration of past history, depicted as a mythic series of successive cycles, with prophecies that reflect the ideologies of Egyptian and Near Eastern kingship and that culminate in the salvation of mankind through the just king. Sandwiched between is another layer. I have already argued that the heroic age, lacking any metallic identifier, was added by Hesiod to the pre-existing cycle of the ages—gold, silver, bronze, and iron. The need for such tampering indicates that the series of the metallic ages is itself pre-Hesiodic. In the early Near Eastern cultures, however, we have found no trace of four ages named after metals.⁵⁸ It is therefore likely that the idea of naming cycles of time after metals was a Greek innovation, and one that, although it preceded Hesiod, necessarily occurred after iron had become less expensive, less valued

⁵⁸In order to prove the high antiquity of the association between ages and metals in the Near East, Gatz relies on the connections made between metals, colors, and planets (*Weltalter* [above, n.16], 12f.). This argument builds on many assumptions.

than the other metals.⁵⁹ For if Hesiod himself had introduced the metals, he had no motive for denying a metallic identifier to his fourth race of heroes. In sum, the pre-Hesiodic story of the ages already partakes of at least two distinct developments—the perception of past history as a series of closed cycles of subsequent ages of mankind and the supplying of these ages with metallic identifiers.

The multi-layered prehistory of Hesiod's Five Ages indicates that the motifs of this story, as well as the story itself, enjoyed a long life in Greece prior to Hesiod's day. The cycle of ages probably belonged to popular culture, and Hesiod may not have been aware of the story's circulation in the Near East, nor, as is likely, of its Near Eastern origins. This leads to the supposition that this adoption of narrative technique and motifs from Egyptian and Near Eastern stories stretches, perhaps, as far back as the second millennium BC—that is, to "Mycenaean" times, when Syria, together with Ugarit, served as the bridge linking Greece to Egypt and Babylon.⁶⁰ At this time the eastern

⁵⁹Use of iron and trade in iron begins in Greece as early as the Late Bronze Age, but naming the present-day age after iron must have been occurred considerably later. It seems scarcely possible before the 9th or even 8th century BC. For iron in early Greece see S. P. Morris' summary in *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art* (Princeton 1992) 117–19 and cf. her index s.v. iron. Hesiod's description of the use of bronze, not only for tools and weapons but for entire houses (150f.), when combined with the fact that he places his age of heroes between his bronze and his iron age, indicates that he was thinking of his mythical bronze age as long past (also see E. Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age* [Chicago and London 1964], 307); Hesiod marvels at it: 151 μέλας δ' οὐκ ἔκε κίδηρος.

⁶⁰See, for example, Nilsson's *Gesch. d. griech. Religion* (above, n. 26) and *The Minoan–Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion* (Lund² 1950); B. C. Dietrich, "Evidence of Minoan Religious Traditions and their Survival in the Mycenaean and Greek World," *Historia* 31 (1982) 1–12; *idem*, *The Origins of Greek Religion* (Berlin and New York 1974) and *Tradition in Greek Religion* (Berlin and New York 1986); M. C. Astour, *Hellenosemitica* (Leiden 1965); Morris, *Daidalos* (above, n. 59); Matthiessen, "Das Zeitalter" (above, n. 12) 187f.; also see the first chapter of Burkert's *Greek Religion*, translated by J. Raffan (Harvard 1985; German, 1977). The investigation of Mycenaean influence on Greek religion and early Greek thought needs to be kept separate from questions that ask whether Homer reflects Mycenaean historical and social institutions, or those of the 8th and early 7th centuries: for the 8th and early 7th cent., see H. van Wees, *Status Warriors. War, Violence and Society in Homer and History*, Dutch Monographs on Ancient History and Archaeology IX (Amsterdam 1992); for the 8th cent., see Ian Morris, "The Use and Abuse of Homer," *CA* 5 (1986) 81–138, but his arguments suffer from his assumption that Homer has been proved to be a poet who composed orally during the second half of the 8th cent. BC.

My argument for dating Oriental influences on the myth of Hesiod's Ages as early as the Minoan and Mycenaean periods does not doubt that such influences continued over centuries and that they reached a new peak of intensity and evolved a distinctive character in the orientalizing period of 750–650 BC. Burkert, *The Orient. Revolution* (above, n. 48) ascribes the influence of the *Atrahasis* story to this later period. West speaks of "neo-oriental" elements (*Early*

Mediterranean basin was a multicultural world in which Greek speakers took an active part. Traces of Minoan wall painting have recently been found in Auariš in the eastern Delta of the Nile, dating to the time of the Hyksos about 1600 BC, and they seem to testify to the existence of a Minoan palace and settlement in the middle of the Egyptian city.⁶¹ In sum, trade and cultural exchanges took place over long periods of time, and eventually what was borrowed from others was acculturated into Greek tradition, centuries *before* Hesiod. As noted, Egyptian and Near Eastern concepts of mankind's renewal were closely connected with kingship. Greece would have been receptive to such stories principally in the days when kings still inhabited the great palaces. Yet as memories of powerful kings faded among the Greeks, renewal, as a concept, severed its traditional connection with kingship. The development is analogous to the later transformation of Egyptian kingship prophecies into apocalyptic ones (above, nn. 34 and 40).

III. The Destruction of the Heroes in the *Catalogue of Women*

A brief look at the last book of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* further testifies to the abundance and longevity of pre-Greek traditions within the Greek world, as well as to the creativity of the changes that emerged in the process of adaptation. If this poem was not written by Hesiod, or by a contemporary of Hesiod (as I am inclined to think), then it was written, at the latest, in the early 6th century.⁶² The text of the last book is known only from a fragmentary

Greek Philosophy and the Orient [Oxford 1971] 205). Already Heubeck dated the adaptation of oriental myths and ideas to the first half of the 8th century (above, n. 2).

⁶¹In M. Bietak's Austrian excavations at Tell el-Dab'a: *Egyptian Archaeology*, Bull. of the Egypt Explor. Soc., 2 (1992) 26–28; *Archaeology* 46 (1993) 20.

⁶²For a date between 580 and 520 see M. L. West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* (Oxford 1985) 130–37; also J. Schwartz, *Pseudo-Hesiodica* (Leiden 1960), esp. 487–500 and 628f. None of the reasons for a late date is convincing by itself, and thus the conclusion remains uncertain. R. Janko (*Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns. Diachronic Development in Epic Diction* [Cambridge 1982]) has argued for a date during Hesiod's own lifetime, approximately 690 BC (p. 200). His statistical data indicate a date slightly earlier than that for the *Theogony*, but, as he points out, "linguistic tools are inevitably somewhat blunt" (p. 86). He does not expect accuracy within a decade (p. 198). In the absence of firm linkage between the relative and the absolute chronological data and in light of the speculative nature of dating our primary point of reference, the *Iliad*, to about 730 BC, this level of accuracy is too optimistic. Chronology aside, Janko's statistical linguistic data (esp. pp. 221–25) do not preclude Hesiod's authorship for the *Catalogue*, and they show a particular closeness of the language of the *Catalogue* to the language of the end of the *Theogony*.

In the following interpretation of the end of the *Catalogue of Women*, it will be apparent that in contrast to the miserable life of the present-day, all previous humankind lived in a single, happy age that corresponded to the *Erga's* golden, silver, and heroic ages all combined together. They dwelt in close communion with the gods (cf. fr. 1). The idealized creatures, the heroes and demigods, are sent to an afterlife in the Islands of the Blest (cf. M. L. West, "Hesiodica,"

Berlin papyrus that leaves many details uncertain. It is reasonably clear, however, that the poet is narrating the end of the heroic age, when, according to the plan of Zeus, the heroes dying in the Trojan war were to be transplanted to a place far separate from where mankind lives. This poet does not mention the name of Hesiod's Islands of the Blest, but he clearly alludes to it (below, with nn. 62 and 67 and my apparatus *ad* 103). Many lesser mortals were to die as well—and, we may presume, they were to be sent to Hades. There were others who, after much suffering, were to be saved, when the world was renewing itself. This renewal of the world did not return it to its previous state, when gods and mortals lived happily together, but instead ushered in the present-day world in which we live.

With Helen's wedding, the story has approached the time of the Trojan war, which, together with the war at Thebes, explained for Hesiod why the age of heroes perished (above, with n. 12). In the *Kypria* of the *Homeric Cycle*, Zeus used these two wars as the means to reduce surplus population on earth and to punish human beings for their impiety (sect. II 2 [b], with n. 56). Attribution of the first of these motives to a god is less appropriate for the rather sparsely settled lands of the Greeks and far more at home in the densely populated areas of Mesopotamia and Egypt. While the author of the *Catalogue* tells his audience that "the minds of the gods were divided in strife" (95f.), as, in a more general way were the gods of the *Iliad*, that motif occurs in precisely the same context in the Akkadian *Song of Atrahasis* (above, sect. II 2 [b]). The *Catalogue* continues in a badly damaged passage (fr. 204. 96–103):⁶³

CQ n.s. 11 [1961] 130–36, esp. 133), while the rest of humankind renews itself on earth. This is a tradition in its own right (cf. n. 25). But this tradition is not necessarily older than the structuring imposed upon the ages in the *Erga* (cf. R. Merkelbach, *ZPE* 3 [1968] 126–33). To the contrary, the story in lines 99–105 is narrated in a very allusive manner (argued more fully in what follows below), and the *Catalogue*'s version is only understandable in light of Hesiod's story about the removal of the heroes to the Islands of the Blest (the island is not even mentioned in the *Catalogue*). I do not think this merely a faulty impression engendered by the fragmentary character of these lines. Hence, the fact that *Cat.* fr. 204.103 is almost identical with *Erga* 167 (see West's commentary and my apparatus below) functions as a reference from the *Catalogue* to the *Erga*, and not the other way around. The *Catalogue* must therefore have been written after the *Erga*, or at least it reached its mature form after the *Erga*, despite the fact that the *Catalogue* continues the *Theogony*. This chronology, however, does not necessarily imply that the content of the *Catalogue*'s story is post-Hesiodic, as is sometimes assumed. I hope that all this will emerge from my interpretative presentation. Important at the outset remains my strong belief that fr. 204 is not a later addition to the *Catalogue*. To the contrary, the removal of heroes from earth to the Islands of the Blest is the appropriate ending for the *Catalogue* and in accordance with fr. 1.

⁶³I am following the text of R. Merkelbach and M. L. West, with minor changes (³1990; *ed. maior* 1967); as yet, I have not seen either the original or a photograph.

δὴ γὰρ τότε μήδετο θέσκελα ἔργα	96
Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης <νεῖκος> κατ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν	
τυρβάξας, ἤδη δὲ γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων	
πολλὸν αἰσιτῶσα κεῖν δε, πρόφασιν μὲν ὀλέσθαι	
ψυχὰς ἡμιθέων, μὴ]οῖσι βροτοῖσι	100
τέκνα θεῶν μι[. . .] . [. .]ο . [ὄφ]θαλμοῖσιν ὀρῶντα,	
ἀλλ' οἷ μ[ε]ν μάκ[α]ρες κ[.] , ὥς τὸ πάρος περ	
χωρὶς ἀπ' ἀν[θ]ρώπων [βίοντον κα]ῖ ἦθε' ἔχουσιν.	103

97 <νεῖκος> or perhaps <μῆνιν> Koenen e.g., with the latter referring to the beginning of the *Iliad*; πόλεμον or γενεὰς considered by Merkelbach–West, cf. *Cypria* 5 ῥιπίσσας πολέμου μεγάλην ἔριν Ἰλιακοῖο : μειξαι Π (probably a gloss for τυρβάξας) 97f. μειξαι --- τυρβαξίας Rzach 98 τυρβάξας, see Janko, *Homer* (above, n. 62) 224 100f. μὴ ὁμοῦ θνητ]οῖσι βροτοῖσι | τέκνα θεῶν μι[νύθ]η]ι West : μὴ ἐπιχθονί]οῖσι βροτοῖσι | τέκνα θεῶν μι[χθῆ]ι (μι[γέν]η]ι Rzach) Wilamowitz 101 φά]ος West, cf. *Theog.* 451 ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἴδοντο φάος --- Ἡοῦς, and the formula ὄρᾱ (and ὄρᾱν) φάος ἡελίοιο, also *Cat.* 58.12 and *Il.* 5.120 : μόρον Wilamowitz; but if his reconstruction were inherently valid, I would rather expect τὰς, or generic τοὺς (see below, on Genesis 6) 102 I expect something like κ[αὶ κάρτερ]οι (cf. *Il.* 5.806), or κ[αὶ ὁμόφρον]ες, although Π is said to have]ν : κ[αὶ ἐς ὕστερο]ν Rzach, but this is too long for the lacuna according to West–Merkelbach; the scribe may have omitted ἐς or written κ[ας for κ[ας) 103 cf. *Erga* 167 τοῖς δὲ δίχ' ἀνθρώπων βίοντον καὶ ἦθε' ὀπάσας.

“For at that time high–thundering Zeus planned grandiose things, stirring up <quarrel> throughout boundless earth. Already he was eager to make away with the copious race of mortals, all the while pretending to destroy the lives of the demigods, lest the children of the gods, seeing the earthly people (?) with their eyes, [would mix (?)] with them, but the blest [and...], as formerly, would have their life and seats apart from men.”

An essential detail of the translation, as I have given it here, depends upon a conjecture by Wilamowitz, and this conjecture has become the basis for the canonical interpretation of these lines (see apparatus *ad* 100f.).⁶⁴ This interpretation holds that Zeus is planning to destroy mankind in order to prevent

⁶⁴For the following see Matthiessen, “Das Zeitalter” (above, n. 12), esp. 182–87; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, “Apocalyptic and Myth in I Enoch 6–11,” *JBL* 96 (1977) 383–405, esp. 395–97; P. D. Hanson, “Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel, and Euhemeristic Heroes in I Enoch 6–11,” *JBL* 96 (1977) 195–233, esp. 197–218.

“the children of the gods” (that is, the younger generation of gods) from living together with mankind and, upon seeing mortal women (?), falling in love with them and fathering the demigods. These gods must return to life apart from men, living by themselves, as they did before mankind was created (ὥς τὸ πάρος περ, 104). The Trojan war brought about by Zeus destroys humankind and brings an end to the period which began with the happy intermingling of gods and mortals (fr. 1).

In this interpretation, ring composition thus brings an appropriate and satisfying conclusion to the poem. Similar stories are known. In the book of Genesis (6) the “children of god” saw that the daughters of men were beautiful(!). They married them and fathered children upon them, the “giants.” God saw this as mankind’s act of defection, and hence he planned near complete destruction for the human race as well as for all animals through the flood.⁶⁵ There can be no question but that some of these ideas, essentially the quarrel between the generations of gods and the destruction of men, are already present in the Akkadian *Song of Atrahasis*, as we saw above.

There are, however, substantial difficulties with this restoration and interpretation of the fragment, as M. L. West has seen.⁶⁶ The separation of the “children of the gods” from mankind has been described with nearly the same words the *Erga* used for describing the resettlement of the heroes in the Islands of the Blest. Other words confirm that the references in the *Catalogue* to this context in the *Erga* are deliberate.⁶⁷ Hence, the “sons of the gods”—the very ones whom in the *Catalogue* Zeus plans to remove from this world—are, in point of fact, the heroes who correspond to the fourth generation of the *Erga*.⁶⁸ Further, if this is correct, then the Zeus of the *Catalogue* is not taking

⁶⁵A much expanded story is extant in *1 Hen.* 6–10 (transl. by E. Isaac in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. by J. H. Charlesworth [New York 1983], I 15–19); M. Black, *The Book of Enoch*, *Studia in veteris testamenti pseudepigrapha* VII (Leiden 1985).

⁶⁶For what follows, see the text of *Cat.* 96–103 and my critical apparatus.

⁶⁷ἡμίθεοι: *Erga* 160 and *Cat.* 204.100—The μάκαρες in *Cat.* 204.102 correspond to the ὄλβιοι ἥρωες, living ἐν μακάρων νήσοις, of *Erga* 171f.; see also *Erga* 141 ὑποχθόνιοι μάκαρες θνητοί for the people of the silver age after they have been removed to beneath the surface of the earth (above, sect. I with n. 8)—*Cat.* 204.122 οἱ μ[έν] fulfills the same function as *Erga* 166 τοὺς μὲν. Also see n. 62.

⁶⁸In addition one wonders why the poet of the *Catalogue* would introduce the term τέκνα θεῶν, meaning ‘gods,’ into a poem about the unions of gods with human women when the term becomes ambiguous in such a context. On the other hand, 104 ὥς τὸ πάρος περ may be easier understood if the phrase compares the pending separation of the gods (not heroes) from mankind with the time before the existence of mankind (thus in the preceding interpretation). Never before have the heroes been separated from the rest of mankind. But this is no real difficulty. ὥς τὸ πάρος περ can be closely connected with the preceding μάκ[α]ρες and the word(s) that follow in the lacuna, instead of relating it to the separation from mankind as de-

aim at the sexual activities of the lesser and younger gods, but he wishes instead to prevent the heroes from diminishing in their numbers and in their status. Many of them were, after all, his very own offspring. Taking up M. L. West's restorations in line 100f., we may now adjust our translation as follows (see n. 63):

"Already he (Zeus) was eager to make away with the copious race of mortals, all the while pretending to destroy the demigods, lest they, the gods' children, seeing [the light (?)] with their eyes (i.e. being alive), waste (?) [away together] with the earthly people, but blest [and strong (?)] as formerly, they would have their life and their seats apart from men."

Without Zeus' provident concern, the heroes would die together with ordinary mortals and go as shadows to the darkness of Hades. In their new abode in the Hesiodic Islands of the Blest, however, the heroes will continue to live in bright light.⁶⁹ The happy days of the prologue, when mortals and gods shared common meals and common festivities, had long ago disappeared. To be sure, gods still appear on earth and father children upon women they desired, as the stories of the *Catalogue* tell us, but the lives of the heroes were no longer blissful. Zeus' plan now restores their former good life, although the setting is no longer an earthly one.

This passage has become comprehensible through the awareness of the *Catalogue's* allusion to Hesiod's *Erga* and the implied contrasts between the fate of the heroes and those of ordinary men. As it now turns out, the story in the *Catalogue* does not adopt a motif in which the reigning god fears that revolution would develop from sexual liaisons between the younger gods and mortal women. At least, it does not do so explicitly. Nevertheless, Zeus will separate the heroes apart from mankind and he brings to an end the age of social and sexual intercourse between gods and mortal women.

scribed in the following line: for example, "blest [and with united minds] as formerly," or "blest [and strong] as formerly" (see my tentative suggestions in the apparatus *ad* 102). Zeus plans to restore the happy life that the heroes have long started to lose over many generations and will totally lose during the cosmic preparations for the Trojan war and through dying in the war itself. West, *The Hes. Catalogue*, 119 speaks about the "paradise conditions they had enjoyed in the beginning," that is at the time of the prologue. Upon being transferred to a place where they enjoy a happy afterlife, the heroes would be restored to their former vitality.

⁶⁹In epic diction, φάος refers to the light of the sun which defines life on earth (see West's supplement to line 101, n. 63). Here, φάος indicates that the children of the gods are alive and living on earth. It is significant, however, that the expected ἡελίοιο has been omitted—perhaps because the heroes are not to be diminished in their ability to see the light, but they will be seeing the bright light on the Islands of the Blest, not the light of the sun on earth.

In the Akkadian *Song of Atrahasis*, Enlil wants to destroy mankind against the will of Enki and the other gods. Without men, the gods would have no food. In the *Catalogue*, Zeus plans the destruction of mankind but does not wish to inform the other gods about this element of his plan. Even Apollo, the god of prophecy, is deceived by Zeus (204.120). Motifs present in the oriental stories are implied—at least in part. If we ignore the allusions that link the separation of the children of the gods in the *Catalogue* with the age of the heroes in the *Erga*, then the Jewish story and its likely Babylonian prototype of the gods mixing with human women is clearly present. But if we instead link the story in the *Catalogue* to Hesiod's age of heroes, we find that the poet is reinterpreting his source and is modulating the story to his own purposes. It is not his intention to explain why gods no longer live on earth, but why the heroes have been removed from earth and why they now dwell in a place separated off from mankind—the Islands of the Blest. This is the heart of the central theme in Hesiod's Five Ages that specify the different Greek modes for the afterlife (see sect. I).

In sum, it is quite conceivable that the stories in Genesis and the *Catalogue* both derive independently from the same Babylonian background. The poet of the *Catalogue*, however, combined such stories with Greek beliefs in heroes and with a concept of the Islands of the Blest, as these were described in Hesiod's *Erga*.⁷⁰ The result was a new story.

The Zeus of the *Catalogue* is not more successful than Enlil in the *Song of Atrahasis*. The *Catalogue* observes that mankind was nearly destroyed by natural catastrophes and war. "Zeus heaped pain upon pain" is the prelude to the destruction: ἔ]βαλ' ἄλγος ἐπ' ἄλγעי | Ζεῦς, 105f. Line 106 ends with ἔκερσε, "he ravaged." There follows a reference to men embarking on ships (109f.), a clear sign of evil times. Those who inhabit Hesiod's just city do not sail upon the sea in ships (*Erga* 236).⁷¹ The *Catalogue* continues: trees shed their leaves (πολλὰ δ' ἀπὸ γλωθρῶν δενδρέων ἀμύοντα χαμάζε | χεύετο καλὰ

⁷⁰For the afterlife of the heroes on the Islands of the Blest, see n. 12. In the Homeric tradition the heroes go to Hades, with the exception of Menelaos. Even if the transportation of the heroes to the Islands of the Blest proves to be essentially a Greek idea, this does not preclude that it was coalescing with pre-Greek images and beliefs. Nilsson thought that the concept of the happy afterlife was pre-Greek, that is, Minoan, and that it was influenced by Egyptian religion (*Gesch. d. griech. Religion* [above, n. 26]); see also B. C. Dietrich, *Death, Fate and the Gods* (London 1965) 345–47 app. V, and cf. 352–57 app. VII on the Five Ages; *idem*, *The Origins* (above, n. 60) 58 n. 273.

⁷¹According to *Erga* 164, ships belong to the Trojan war, and hence to the destruction of the heroes. The inhabitants of the unjust city see their ships being destroyed by Zeus (247). This negative view of travel by sea was never lost; see, for example, Tibullus I 3.35–50.

πέτῃλα, 124f.) and dropped their fruit, when they had been hit by violent blows from the North wind, even as Zeus destined it (125f.). Centuries later in Hellenistic Egypt, the *Oracle of the Potter* manipulates the motif of falling leaves so that it becomes a sign that events have rounded the turning point and that evil times are over: “when the falling of the leaves, of strangers, comes to Egypt.”⁷² In the *Catalogue* the sea was swollen (?),⁷³ and, hence, everything quivered. Zeus seems to have combined the force of both flood and the earthquake. “Men’s strength was wearing out; the fruits of earth became scarce in springtime, when in the mountains, in the hole of earth, the hairless one (the snake) gives birth to three children in the third year” (128–30).⁷⁴ These images turn out, as the poem advances, to be a sign that transition toward a better time is commencing. The language fittingly becomes oracular, as is likewise indicated by a shift from narration in past tense to the timelessness of the present tense. In the first year, the “hairless one” avoids the paths of men. In the winter this being hides in its lair, the terrible snake (δαινός ὄφις, 136) with tawny back. Zeus throws his missiles at the snake and overcomes this evil-doer (ὕβριστην τε καὶ [ἄγριον, 137). But the snake retains its life, or, to be precise, its soul (ψυχὴ), but not its strength. It is this soul (ἡ δ’) that sheds its “chamber,” that is, its old body, its skin in which it has lived hitherto (139f.).⁷⁵ Throughout the second year the snake hides inside the earth. It is blind (142), as is said with allusion to the belief that snakes temporarily lose their vision in the darkness of their caves (Plin. *Nat.* 8.99). In the spring of the third year the snake reemerges, when something (perhaps the warming sun) gives pleasure to men (145).⁷⁶ The few words that survive on the papyrus continue this gentler tone, indicating that, first, the snake gives birth to its three young (147–50).

⁷²P₂ 30–32 and P₃ 53–54 (above, nn. 29 and 36) ταῦτα δὲ ἔσται ἐπὶ τέλει τῶν κακῶν, ἐπὶ πᾶν φυλλό(ροι)α παραγένεται εἰς Αἴγυπτον ξένων ἀνδρῶν. A corrupt passage of the *Oracle of the Potter* seems to refer to the acacia tree which shed his leaves in the bad times and grows them back after the restoration of good times; see Koenen, “Manichaean Apocalypticism” (above, n. 27) 325f.

⁷³[οἱ]δεσκεν δὲ θάλασσα, 127. For the supplement see W. A. Beck, “Hesiod Fr. 204, 127 M.–W.,” *ZPE* 38 (1980) 46.

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|---------------|---|----------------|
| ⁷⁴ | τρυχέσκεν δὲ μένος βρότεον, μινύθεσκε δὲ καρπός,
ὥρηι ἐν εἰαρινῇ, ὅτε τ’ ἄτριχος οὔρεσι τίττει
[γ]αί[η]ς ἐν κευθμῶνι τρίτῳ ἔτει τρία τέκνα. | 128

130 |
| ⁷⁵ | ψυχὴ τοῦ [γ]’ οἷα καταλείπεται
ἡ δ’ ἀμφ’ αὐτόχυτον θάλαμ[ον] | 139
140 |

West recognized the metaphor of sloughing; “Hesiodica” (above, n. 62) 134. The image is natural enough; it does not yet imply the later metaphor of the soul clothing herself with her body (Empedokles fr. 126, and later, very common).

⁷⁶For the surviving words and letters of lines 144–80 see the *editio maior* (above, n. 63).

Then men seem to be healed from sickness (156 and 158)⁷⁷ and, thus, life is renewed. Nothing survives in the extant text that defines the quality of the renewed cycle, but in light of the *Erga* we may easily surmise that it is our present-day life that emerged out of the catastrophe.

What begins as the destruction of the heroic race in the Trojan war is transformed in the course of the narrative into an image of mankind's renewal. The world and the condition of human life deteriorate until they become unbearable, but then Zeus smites the snake, his enemy κατ' ἐξοχήν. In this same way Zeus conquered Typhon (or Typhoeus, as Hesiod calls him), the creature with arms and legs, but a hundred serpent-heads. Marduk fought against the snake Tiamat, and the ritual was repeated each year in the festival of the Babylonian New Year in which the cycle of time was renewed.⁷⁸ In the *Catalogue* the significance of the snake-symbol changes, so that the *dead* snake modulates into a *hibernating* snake, as Martin West has recognized. It restores and recreates itself so that it is fit to begin its life anew. The snake and its three young are transformed into a symbol of time renewed.⁷⁹ And thus Zeus, who set out to destroy mankind, becomes the savior of mankind on earth, much like the Egyptian sun-god Rhe. Zeus rescues the heroes, too, conveying them after their death on the battlefields at Troy to the Islands of the Blest, as Hesiod had taught. The poet of the *Catalogue* would have narrated this episode of the heroes' resettlement near the end of his poem, where the end of the life of the heroes on earth brought his story line to its end and, at the same time, the happiness of the heroes' restoration brought back the happy times with which the story began (fr. 1). First, however, he was to continue the story which had been interrupted by the symbol of the snake. The Trojan war was about to break out with all the destruction it brought, when Zeus in fulfillment of his plan "heaped pain upon pain" (*Cat.* 105f., see above).

The poet of the *Catalogue* began with Hesiod's narrative, but combined it with other stories from Greek and Near Eastern milieux. He intertwined historical narrations of events from his people's past with prophetic imagery in order to explicate how and why this renewal of time's cycle once took place.

⁷⁷West recognized the birth of the three young. "Healing" caused him to think of the medical uses of snakes ("Hesiodea" 135 and *The Hes. Catalogue* [above, n. 62] 120). In the present context, however, "healing" is perhaps an essential ingredient in the renewal of world.

⁷⁸For a brief survey of the manifold religious and other ideas connected with snakes, see R. Merkelbach in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, s.v. Drache.

⁷⁹In Egypt, snake deities are in charge of periods of time, as well as the lifetime of mortals (H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religion* (Berlin 1952) s.v. Schlange. Later, in gnostic speculation, the snake circling and biting its own tail, the ouroboros, will become the symbol for the world and for eternity.

Hesiod of the *Erga* had already passed beyond a concept of cyclic renewal, but the poet of the *Catalogue* kept it alive and, on the literary level, expanded it into an important device within his intellectual and narrative strategies.⁸⁰ As a concept within Greek speculative thought, cyclic renewal of the world and its inhabitants remained strong and ever amenable to manipulation, crossing back and forth among Greeks, Romans, and the Near East.

Alas, many details of my story remain doubtful, for our texts are damaged and many works have disappeared. Nonetheless, I hope to have presented a persuasive description of the cultural layers out of which both Hesiod and the author of the *Catalogue* formulated their own concepts. They inherited a many-faceted legacy of cyclic time and an all-powerful kingship which had taken shape in Egyptian and Near Eastern milieux centuries earlier—even if our Greek authors failed to realize it. This is not to deny that more recent and more direct influences came into play just previous to Hesiod's own time (above, n. 60). But there were, I submit, earlier Minoan–Mycenaean cultural exchanges, even as there were most assuredly later Hellenistic ones. These movements never traveled simply from East to West, but concepts, once borrowed, moved with equal vigor from West to East during Mycenaean–Minoan times, as we saw attested in the Minoan wall-painting in Egypt, and later in Hellenistic times, as prophecies of world renewal transformed into apocalypticism. They entered Zoroastrianism and, in the process, reemerged as an apocalypticism in which Egyptian, Babylonian, and Jewish traditions, currently in circulation at the time, happily intermingled to become constitutive elements in later, mainly Christian, apocalypticism which is still alive and well in our own day.

⁸⁰This, of course, is not an argument against Hesiod's authorship.