DOI:10.34616/QO.2019.4.55.78 Quaestiones Oralitatis
IV (2018/2019)

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WORKS AND DAYS AS A TRANSITIONAL TEXT

Abstract

Hesiod's *Works and Days* shows a number of peculiarities. Both the Winter segment and the Nautilia contain doublets; significant narrative details are omitted in both the myths; there are internal contradictions; the poem hints at material that is not developed, such as Pandora's deceptive speech and bird-omens. This paper suggests that the poem is a transitional text that establishes a definitive version of a poem previously performed with extensive variation. Such a version required compromises if it was to convey the poet's thought without being open to misunderstanding and still be performable in one sitting.

Keywords: transitional text, Myth of Races, Pandora, doublets, abbreviation, performance time

This speculative paper proposes that some of the peculiarities of the mythical narratives in Hesiod's *Works and Days* are reflections of the transition between oral composition and the fixation of the text. The argument rests on the premise that the poem is the work of a single author, who deliberately

attempted to produce a single and authoritative script, which, however it was produced, would be a transitional text: unlike an oral performance collected by an ethnographer through dictation, it would represent a deliberate attempt to limit the variability of future performances. Although Lord's *The Singer of Tales* argued against the possibility of such texts (those composed in writing with oral techniques), studies of oral poetries around the world and more sophisticated methodologies have blurred the lines between oral and written.[1] J.M. Foley's term "oral-derived" is the safest way to describe the poem.[2] Nonetheless, the argument here is relevant for the interpreter who sees the poem as the result of a process of gradual fixation without a single author, since such a reader must still engage with the peculiarities of the extant text in order to understand how the process could produce it.

Works and Days is obviously an oral-derived text, but there is no good evidence about whether the poet was literate or not.[3] However, both *Theogony* and *Works and Days* show an individual poet's sometimes very idiosyncratic use of mostly traditional materials, sometime at the end of the 8th or in the early 7th century BCE. Many scholars attribute the Hesiodic poems to an evolutionary process.[4] However, repeated performances of a fluid work over time by different performers will tend to erase local and individual peculiarities and result in a text that represents an approximate cultural consensus, but

[1] LORD 1960, 124–138; LORD 1986, and 1995, 105 and 212–237 modify this view.

[2] FOLEY 1990: 5–8. FOLEY 1999: 17–18, discusses how too sharp a division between oral and literate is misleading.

[3] Lit HAVELOCK 1982, 208–219; WEST 1978, 44, cf. WEST 1966, 40–41; MOST 1993; BLÜMER 2001, 1. 126–127; GOLLA 2016, 239–246.

[4] GRIFFITH (1983) influentially argued that Hesiod's "personality" is a function of the poetry. This approach has been developed especially by NAGY (1990), 29–63; see LAMBERTON (1988), 22–27; ROSEN (1990), MARTIN (1992). KONING 2018 sees the autobiographical material as traditional but argues for a single poet. THOMAS 2005, 87–127, takes a strongly biographical approach.

some of the advice in *Works and Days* is eccentric or esoteric, while some of the genealogies in the *Theogony* present divinities who neither received cult nor appear elsewhere.[5] So, single authorship seems more likely.

Whatever we imagine as its origin, *Works and Days* as we have it is (mostly–the transmission has of course not been perfect) a version generated to be a transmissible, relatively final version (not necessarily ensuring truly word-for-word reperformance).[6] It is meant to present everything that the poet thought was essential, while dropping or shortening material where it seemed necessary in order to have a work performable on most occasions. Even if our version was not the work of a single poet who was also responsible for its mixture of traditional and original content, it was surely created in order to be a reproducible and performance-ready text, and the composer selected and arranged its various components accordingly. At its conclusion, the poem implies that it has treated bird-omens, which have barely been mentioned. Sometimes the poem presents advice that probably originated in a different context and is slightly askew where it is now located, but was too thematically significant to be omitted. In some cases, the poem seems to present what could have been alternative versions, but these are not accidents of transmission, whether in rhapsodic performance or in ancient editing. These characteristics represent an aesthetic that is not ours.[7] While the discussion will focus on the two mythical narratives, it will use examples from several parts of the poem to demonstrate this characteristic aesthetic and to point to passages where the poet has made choices about how material that could have been fluid in performance would be fixed. The argument is inevitably circular: it begins from the

[5] SCODEL 2016.

[6] CANEVARO 2015 argues that the poem is designed both to function as a unified work and to be a source from which parts could be taken for separate performance.

[7] In SCODEL 2019 I compared Hesiod's juxtapositions with the two versions of creation in Genesis.

premise that some of the peculiarities of the text arose because the poet created a "final" version, and tries to show that this premises makes the most satisfactory sense of them.

Theogony and *Works and Days* could each easily be performed in a single session. The *Theogony* is both unified and readily open to modification. It tells a single, coherent story of how Zeus came to reign, although it is far from certain where that story should conclude. Still, many of its catalogues and episodes could be lengthened or shortened as needed. *Works and Days* is less obviously coherent. It is a unique combination of a wisdom text, which teaches justice and work as the right way to become prosperous, with a description of the farmer's seasonal tasks and the seasons for sailing, along with esoteric ritual precepts and lucky and unlucky days of the month. We can easily imagine performances of only the sermon on justice or only the Almanac, but it is also easy to imagine various combinations of the material. Many readers have wished the Days were not in the text.[8]

The poem is a unity, in that it artfully weaves together its different components and speaks with a single voice. However, it is simply not the case that nothing could be removed or added. To be sure, if one of the three main segments were absent, it would be a very different poem. Similarly, if one sub-section or another were not there, or if another were, we would not notice anything amiss. Nevertheless, they contribute to the effect of the whole. Some sections, including the narratives, probably had to be abbreviated in order to fit them into a single performance. The explanation offered here tries to respect the nature of the poem, not forcing unity onto the text, but expecting that the connections between parts make sense.

It is unlikely that Hesiod created such a variegated composition all at once, and there are possible traces of how he

[8] LARDINOIS 1998 defends the Days against editors such as WILAMOWITZ 1928 and SOLMSEN 1970.

developed his poem over time. At verse 405, for example, the poet tells you the most basic things that the farmer needs:

> Οἶκον μὲν πρώτιστα γυναῖκά τε βοῦν τ' ἀροτῆρα,
> {κτητήν, οὐ γαμετήν, ἥτις καὶ βουσὶν ἕποιτο,}[9]
> χρήματα δ' εἰν οἴκωι πάντ' ἄρμενα ποιήσασθαι,
> μὴ σὺ μὲν αἰτῆις ἄλλον, ὃ δ' ἀρνῆται, σὺ δὲ τητᾶι (*WD* 405–408)
>
> a house first of all, a woman, and an ox for plowing {–the woman one you purchase, not marry, one who can follow with the oxen–} and arrange everything well in the house, lest you ask someone else and he refuse, and you are deprived[10]

After a warning about how bad delay is, he turns to the first seasonal task. When the summer heat eases and autumn begins, it is time to collect wood (422: τῆμος ἄρ' ὑλοτομεῖν μεμνημένος ὥριον ἔργον, "So at that time be mindful and cut wood, the seasonal task"). But the actual instruction about wood is very peculiar, for he tells his audience how much to cut for a mortar, how much for a wagon, and what to bring home for a plow (420–436), and then digresses into how old the farmer's oxen should be when he obtains them, which in turn leads to the ideal age for a plowman (436–447). The other seasonal tasks that fill this section of the poem are all annual–sowing, pruning vines, harvesting, but only the selection of the plowman could be annual.[11] No farmer makes these tools every year, or obtains new oxen. Hesiod himself refers to the "hundred pieces" of a wagon (456), an exaggeration, but building a wagon was clearly a big enterprise. The farmer might break

[9] This verse is spurious, though it is defended by ERCOLANI 2010 (287–289, with bibliography). A wife is a basic need for a household, a maid is not; women plow only in emergencies (and herding is not relevant here). Aristotle quotes 405 (*Po.*l 1252b10) and so does the author of the *Oeconomica* in Aristotle's corpus (1343a21), both clearly understanding 'wife'.

[10] All translations are from MOST 2018; I have added brackets to the translation of 406.

[11] There is a helpful discussion of this passage in NICOLAI 1964, 96–100.

an ard and have to replace it, so that the poem advises having two, but that surely is not a frequent problem. He surely gathers wood every year, but for fuel and perhaps repairs.

At the end of the agricultural calendar, the poet jumps from the vintage and winemaking (609–614) to fall plowing as the beginning of a new cycle (614–617) – woodcutting does not reappear. However, after the section about seafaring, a sequence of general maxims begins with advice about when to marry:

> Ὡραῖος δὲ γυναῖκα τεὸν ποτὶ οἶκον ἄγεσθαι,
> μήτε τριηκόντων ἐτέων μάλα πόλλ' ἀπολείπων
> μήτ' ἐπιθεὶς μάλα πολλά· (*WD* 695–697)
>
> Lead a wife to your house when you are in good season, neither falling very many years short of thirty nor having added very many

It continues with advice about whom to marry (697–705). I think, therefore, that this is a relic of a performance version that addressed the fundamentals of the farmer's life, and that may or may not have included the calendar. After saying that you need a house, a wife, and tools, it addressed the tools and marriage. Homebuilding in the extant poem receives only a single maxim at 746–747. The section about tools has been put into an extended series arranged according to the calendar, but it only partially fits there, and the calendar and its pendant on seafaring mean that actual advice about marriage is delayed for a long time. In the process of creating the extant version, the material about infrastructure was dispersed, and tool-making, because it begins with wood-cutting, which is seasonal, was drawn into the calendar. Nothing, however, suggests that a fuller treatment of the basic needs of the farmer was dropped only as a fixed version was created; this could be an earlier development.

The famous problem of the final verses of the poem is different:

εὐδαίμων τε καὶ ὄλβιος ὃς τάδε πάντα
εἰδὼς ἐργάζηται ἀναίτιος ἀθανάτοισιν,
ὄρνιθας κρίνων καὶ ὑπερβασίας ἀλεείνων. (826–828)

Happy and blessed is he who knows all these things and does his work without giving offense to the immortals, distinguishing the birds and avoiding trespasses.

It seems the right conclusion for this poem that the speaker delivers a *makarismos* of the person who follows its precepts: he works, ἐργάζηται, he does so effectively because he knows the rules, τάδε πάντα εἰδώς, and he will be successful because he avoids offending the gods. But the birds are missing, ὄρνιθας κρίνων. There was in fact a poem about bird-divination that was in some copies attached to the *Works and Days*, but the envoi surely does not look to a further treatment of bird-omens, but to a topic the poem has already covered.[12] Such a treatment would not necessarily constitute an independent segment. There has been one mention of bird-signs in the immediately preceding section:

Ἐν δὲ τετάρτηι μηνὸς ἄγεσθ' εἰς οἶκον ἄκοιτιν
οἰωνοὺς κρίνας οἳ ἐπ' ἔργματι τούτωι ἄριστοι (*WD* 800–801)

On the fourth day of the month lead a wife to your house, after you have distinguished the bird-omens that are the best for this kind of work.

Line 801, in an oral style, positively invites expansion into a catalogue of the birds that provide the best omens for a wedding. This verse does something the poem generally avoids. While it assumes that the audience member knows, for example, how to prune vines, if it mentions specific choices, it is

[12] According to the Sch. 828a, some copies attached a poem called *Ornithomanteia* to the end of *WD* (and perhaps other material also–see WEST 1978 on 828 (p. 364). West thinks that Hesiod may have composed the *Ornithomanteia*). On this poem as a sequel, see SCHWARTZ 1960, 245–246, and CINGANO 2009, 130.

generally explicit about them. Hesiod tells his audience which wood is best for each part of the plow (435–436). The entry from the Days is exceptionally unhelpful, marking a condition without explaining how to meet it. Yet, what was dropped following 801 was probably only a few lines. Nowhere else is there a visible trace of such an omission. 746–747, warning against constructing a roof that would be inviting to crows, suggests an interest in birds and their omens that the poem does not develop. It is entirely possible that Hesiod chose not to expand Days or other passages with advice about bird-omens that was in his repertory, or that some performances would have included a distinct segment on bird-omens following the Days. The poem ends with advice that only the farmer who had already mastered the earlier teachings of the poem would be likely to heed, in a display of recondite knowledge. The existing conclusion reminds the audience that there is even more to be learned, but does not extend the poem in order to include it.

The section on seafaring, the Nautilia, is notoriously composed of two parts, each of which could be completely independent.[13] At line 618 Hesiod says Εἰ δέ σε ναυτιλίης δυσπεμφέλου ἵμερος αἱρεῖ ("But if desire for storm-tossed seafaring seizes you"). He then proceeds to explain that you should not sail in the autumn, but should secure your boat and wait for the proper season, as did the father of Perses, the addressee, and Hesiod himself. Perses needs to be mindful of the right season for everything, but especially when seafaring is concerned. Hesiod concludes with the advice to praise a small ship, but choose a bigger one so that you can load more cargo. But then, at 646–647 he says

> Εὖτ' ἂν ἐπ' ἐμπορίην τρέψας ἀεσίφρονα θυμὸν
> βούληαι {δὲ} χρέα τε προφυγεῖν καὶ λιμὸν ἀτερπέα

[13] SOLMSEN 1982, 31–32, argues that Hesiod intended the second to replace the first, but the rhapsodic tradition included both the earlier and later versions. See also ROSSI 1997, 52–53.

> If you turn your foolish spirit to commerce and decide to flee debts and joyless hunger

He then explains that he has almost no experience with seafaring, having only taken the ferry to Euboea, where he won a poetry contest; as a skilled poet, he has access to knowledge from the Muses. He then describes the good season for sailing, in the summer, and the spring sailing season, which he does not trust. He concludes with a warning against venturing too much or overloading a wagon. To summarize, each of the two parts opens with an address to Perses, so that the second sounds as if the poet were starting over with instruction about sailing. Each includes instructions about when to sail; each includes autobiographical material; and each ends with advice about how much to venture, but the advice is almost contradictory: the first section points to the greater profit you can obtain by selling more, while the second warns against risking too much. They contrast in other ways, too. The first warns against sailing out of season, and tells Perses to wait until sailing is seasonable (630–631). Only the second actually explains when that time is (662–687).

The two passages look very much like doublets. Yet we can see why the poet wanted both. They repeat, yet complement each other. It is foolish to send cargo to sea unless you can venture enough to make a good profit, but you should never risk a catastrophic loss. The apparent contradiction is typical of this poem: the poet often seems to worry that his listeners will take his advice too far or forget other considerations. For example, at 320–326, he warns Perses about unjust gains, but then turns to other crimes that the gods punish. The warnings against abusing the vulnerable seem to be a corrective to anyone who thought that the gods were only concerned with those who stole property from other households. The doubling is not unique, either. Even the section on agriculture seems to start twice: at 383–387 the poet gives the first signs about when to

do farm work, the rising and setting of the Pleiades for reaping and plowing. The astronomical signs, however, are misleading as an indicator of what will follow, since the section quickly becomes an extended warning to Perses against laziness, with basic advice on what a household needs and the importance of preparation (405–413). Then the calendar begins, with a full description of the time of year, including the nighttime visibility of Sirius (414–419).

There are other segments that look as if they would be included according to the performer's estimate of a particular performance occasion. The extended segment on winter, 493–563, is formed of a series of shorter sections. 536–546, for example, instructions on winter clothing, could be included or dropped depending on how long the performance needed to be.[14] This section again seems to contradict itself: while it first warns against winter idleness (493–503), and says that a man who is undeterred by cold can provide his household with much benefit (μέγα οἶκον ὀφέλλοι, 495), it then seems to advise not going outside during Lenaeon (ἀλεύασθαι, 504–505), with a long description of how nasty the month is (504–535). At 536, however, it becomes clear that the farmer is supposed to work outside, with an extended treatment of winter clothes and the importance of not staying out too late (536–558). As so often, the speaker balances his advice, not by directly qualifying what he has already said, but by giving further, different advice. Once the poet decided to expand on the worst winter month, he seems to have decided that he needed a full section on how to go outside safely in winter. Yet the poet never explains what outdoor work the farmer is or should be doing during the cold weather. Here, as with the birds, we expect more information, and other ancient agricultural manuals do not propose outdoor chores in winter (Vergil, *G.* 1. 259–267

[14] ROSSI 1997, 51–52, argues that in 493–563, as in the Nautilia, rhapsodists performed both 493–523 and 524–563, where originally the second segment was intended to replace the first.

suggests indoor work for days of cold rain). Hesiod's emphasis on going outside is unusual, and makes it surprising that he does not explain. While the extensive treatment of the precautions to be used when working outside in winter fits his continuing theme of the importance of caution and preparation, we cannot know why he chose not to name any winter tasks. Perhaps a catalogue or an example of winter chores would have made this section too disproportionate, or perhaps the particular tasks would depend too much on local conditions, such as what edible plants might be foraged in the area in winter.

The Myth of Races is formally introduced as "another [or "second"] account" (ἕτερον λόγον), and some scholars have thought that it is intended to replace the Prometheus-Pandora narrative.[15] However, it would seem odd for a poet to have included such an extended story only to reject it, and we would expect an explicit clarification if that were the intention. Yet the two stories could not both be true accounts of the remote human past.[16] Prometheus-Pandora offers a single moment when a unified humanity goes from happiness to frequent misery; the Myth of Races presents one singularly blessed humanity, one that suffers in its lifetime but at least in part receives a desirable afterlife (the heroes), and three whose character causes their misery and destruction, although one of these is also favored after death. Since there is no reason to believe that Hesiod or other archaic Greeks did not intuitively understand the law of non-contradiction, there must have been strong reasons to include both these narratives. Both, however, present perplexing aspects; they omit significant details. The Prometheus-Pandora story, for example, is introduced as an explanation of how either the gods (*WD* 42) or Zeus alone

[15] MOST 1993: 90; BALLABRIGA 1998.

[16] SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1997 attempts reconciliation, putting Pandora in the Bronze Race. CURRIE 2012 rightly argues against any reductive approach to Hesiod's treatment of the past.

(*WD* 47) hid sustenance, βίος, but the narrative never explicitly explains when or how that happened.

Despite their contradictions, the two narratives complement each other.[17] Prometheus-Pandora is about deception, a game at which Zeus always wins in the end. Prometheus tricks Zeus, Zeus hides fire, Prometheus steals fire, and Zeus hides evils for humanity in the attractive Pandora, tricking Epimetheus.[18] Hesiod warns his brother against perjury and falsehood, so the warning that deception is not successful applies in the present. The emphasis in the Myth of Races, in contrast, is on violence: the Silver people cannot refrain from violence against each other, while the Bronze Race and the Heroes perish in war. Even in the dismal future of the Iron Race, where perjury will be prevalent, violence rules: δίκη δ' ἐν χερσί (192). The Myth of Races thereby supplements the first story and ensures that its emphasis on deceit does not give the audience the false impression that force is more acceptable than fraud.

Furthermore, the members of the various races of the second narrative have fates, in both life and death, that mostly correspond to their characters. It is a peculiarity of the Pandora-story that the misfortunes of humanity are caused by divinities, and even if the characters were not gods, the people of the present would still suffer for mistakes that were not their own.[19] In this story, mortals have no control over their fates, since the evils released by Pandora circulate in silence and attack unpredictably. The basic message of the Myth of the Races (*WD* 109–201), however, is that people are largely

[17] I have discussed the connections between the two myths more fully in SCODEL 2019 in the context of the poet's claim to speak the truth.

[18] This argument considers the narrative only as it appears in *Works and Days*, although much interpretation has tended to elide the differences between the narratives of the *Theogony* and this poem, often influenced by VERNANT 1980; see BEALL 1991.

[19] VERDENIUS 1985 on *WD* 49 (p. 45) points out that Hesiod says the gods punish entire communities for the crimes of individuals (*WD* 240, 261). I think, however, that Hesiod in these passages implies that the larger community needs to respond to wrongdoing.

responsible for their own lives. The Golden Race lives in peace and contentment, while the Silver is violent and impious.[20] It is not entirely clear to what extent each Race has a fixed nature that it cannot escape, but whether or not the Race has a real choice in how it lives, its way of life determines its fate. Both the Bronze Men and the Heroes die in war. The Bronze Men, however, seem to do nothing but fight, and do not even eat grain–they must live entirely on meat. They perish and are unremembered. The Heroes are said to be more just, and better. Their wars are the famous struggles at Troy and Thebes, so they are the heroes whose names are so important in Greek legend. At least some of them are transported to the Isles of the Blest, where they have three harvests a year (while the Bronze Men did not grow crops at all). We can easily understand, therefore, that the composer of this profoundly didactic poem needed both myths, because each conveys an important aspect of the human condition. Many of the difficulties of life, including not only the hard work that agriculture requires, but disease and accidents, are simply givens of the human condition. Many others, however, are self-inflicted, by mistakes and wrongdoing by both individuals and social systems. Even if the earlier Races were constrained by an inherent character, which is not entirely clear, the people of the poet's own time could choose how to live.

The Myth of Races concludes with a quick turn to the present, which almost instantly turns to the future:

> νῦν γὰρ δὴ γένος ἐστὶ σιδήρεον· οὐδέ ποτ' ἦμαρ
> παύσονται καμάτου καὶ ὀιζύος οὐδέ τι νύκτωρ
> φθειρόμενοι· χαλεπὰς δὲ θεοὶ δώσουσι μερίμνας
> ἀλλ' ἔμπης καὶ τοῖσι μεμείξεται ἐσθλὰ κακοῖσιν. (*WD* 176–179)
>
> For now the race is indeed one of iron. And they will not cease from toil and distress by day, nor from being worn out by

[20] Interpreting the myth of races in pairs was the most important insight of Vernant 1983.

> suffering at night, and the gods will give them grievous cares. Yet all the same, for these people too good things will be mingled with evil ones.

These verses would seem to imply that lives of mortals now are painful and difficult because of the cares that the gods give them. The poem does not specify exactly why people will suffer day and night, but the language Hesiod uses suggests labor and pain rather than social miseries. However, the future is far worse, and Hesiod's description of that evil future confirms the emphasis of the entire myth on human choice rather than external conditions. Apart from the prediction that babies will be born with gray hair, the future is described entirely as a time of social and moral collapse:

> οὐδὲ πατὴρ παίδεσσιν ὁμοίιος οὐδέ τι παῖδες,
> οὐδὲ ξεῖνος ξεινοδόκωι καὶ ἑταῖρος ἑταίρωι,
> οὐδὲ κασίγνητος φίλος ἔσσεται, ὡς τὸ πάρος περ. (*WD* 182–184)
>
> Father will not be like-minded with sons, nor sons at all, nor guest with host, nor comrade with comrade, nor will the brother be dear, as he once was.

Hesiod does not hint at any material change in the world; instead he expands on how violent and unjust men will be, and how nobody will support and protect the honest man. The entire difference between a world in which there are still goods mixed with evils and one that is all bad is human behavior.

The poet's need to balance different aspects of reality can help explain why he repeats and seems to contradict himself. He also includes or ignores details in a way that can mystify a modern reader, but sometimes we can understand why he may have expanded or contracted a narrative. So, for example, in the *Theogony*'s version of the Prometheus-story the creation and adornment of the woman are narrated, and the narrative ends when gods and men behold the woman

with wonder (*Th.* 585–589). It then explains that she is the origin of the race of women (*genos*), and expatiates at length on what a burden women are, concluding with the moral that it is not possible to fool or escape the mind of Zeus. Some emphasis on her adornment is essential, since Hesiod describes women as a luxury (593). Epimetheus has been mentioned earlier in the catalogue of children of Iapetus, and called "an evil for men from the beginning" because he first accepted the woman (511–513), but he does not reappear in the actual narrative about her. His folly is not especially significant in this context. This narrative is relatively expansive about the sacrifice (535–561), probably because it is an action for ritual practice, and it offers three short direct speeches, first of Zeus, then of Prometheus, then of Zeus. Since direct speech is not frequent in the *Theogony*, the confrontation over the sacrifice is very salient. However, the *Theogony* does not provide any motives for Prometheus, or any explanation of why Prometheus is responsible for the division of the sacrificial animal, or indeed where human beings came from at all, let alone why the regulation of divine-mortal relations through sacrifice happened at this point. For Hesiod, this narrative is about the power of Zeus, and this background is simply not important enough when he has material that he regards as necessary and limited performance time.

The Prometheus-Pandora story in *Works and Days* has a different function and is, not surprisingly, substantially different, although it shares verses with the narrative in the *Theogony*. It assumes the narrative about the sacrificial division as the initial cause of the anger of Zeus that leads him to hide fire.[21] It expands the adornment of Pandora, narrating both the commands of Zeus and how these are fulfilled. It then tells how Epimetheus, despite a prior warning from Prometheus,

[21] CLAY 2003, 118, emphatically rejects the usual understanding that the "deception" of *WD* 48 is the division at Mecone, arguing that this narrative begins with the hiding of fire, without any explicit motivation.

accepted her, and how by opening the jar she brought trouble on humanity.

Her adornment receives so much attention because Pandora's attractions so bedazzle Epimetheus that he forgets the warning of Prometheus – they are crucial to the point. The narrator comments (*WD* 89), αὐτὰρ ὃ δεξάμενος, ὅτε δὴ κακὸν εἶχ', ἐνόησε – "but he, having accepted her, recognized the evil as evil when he had it" ("it was only after he accepted her, when he already had the evil, that he understood"). One of the core themes of *Works and Days*, especially in the first part, is that gains from fraud and perjury or violence, which look easy and quick compared to the hard slog of earning prosperity, do not last (213–218, 265–266, 282–285, and most explicitly 320–326). So the expansion is meaningful.

The narrative, however, also has some significant gaps. Both the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days* explain that Prometheus stole fire (*Th.* 565–567, *WD* 50–51) and transported it in a hollow stalk of giant fennel, and both emphasize his success in trickery (ἐξαπάτησεν, *Th.* 565, λαθών, *WD* 52). Neither, however, explains where Zeus hid fire, how Prometheus found it, or how he fooled Zeus. The details might be very entertaining, but the poet seems to be in a hurry to reach the segment about the creation of the woman, and tells the earlier parts of the story very quickly, noting the thematically important deceit without explaining how it was accomplished.

The narrative of *WD* seems more awkwardly abbreviated in the considerable emphasis that it places on Pandora's sneakiness and verbal skill. First Zeus orders Hermes to give her a shameless intelligence and thievish character:

> ἐν δὲ θέμεν κύνεόν τε νόον καὶ ἐπίκλοπον ἦθος
> Ἑρμείην ἤνωγε (*WD* 67–68)
>
> and he ordered Hermes, the intermediary, the killer of Argus, to put a dog's mind and a thievish character into her.

Hermes improves on the command, by giving her a rhetorical ability that makes her mental characteristics more effective:

> ἐν δ' ἄρα οἱ στήθεσσι διάκτορος Ἀργεϊφόντης
> ψεύδεά θ' αἱμυλίους τε λόγους καὶ ἐπίκλοπον ἦθος
> τεῦξε Διὸς βουλῇσι βαρυκτύπου (*WD* 77–79)
>
> Then into her breast the intermediary, the killer of Argus, set lies and guileful words and a thievish character, by the plans of deep-thundering Zeus

He also gives her a voice (*WD* 79–80). The attention given to her physical attractions obviously prepares for the way the narrative actually unfolds–Epimetheus, we can safely infer, is overwhelmed by her seductive beauty, which makes him forget that he was warned against accepting a gift from Zeus. Her bad qualities of mind and her ability to deceive with speech, however, do not appear in the narrative as it is presented They are all the more salient because they did not appear at all in the version of the *Theogony*, although they would be appropriate to the overt misogyny of that version, since all women have presumably inherited them. To be sure, they serve in part to link Pandora with the sexy and sweet–talking woman who endangers the farmer in Hesiod's own world (*WD* 373–374), and to the danger of verbal deceit more generally. Still, I would suggest that this careful preparation for a narrative element that does not appear is another result of abbreviation. In a version in which this narrative was more extensive, Pandora would have used her cunning speech.

That leads to the next question. Pandora alters the previously fortunate human condition by opening a jar. This jar is introduced without explanation – Sch. vet 94a complains: "what jar (ποίου πίθου)?"[22] Some interpreters assume that the

[22] Sch. *WD* 89 reports a version in which satyrs bring the jar to Prometheus, who gave it to Epimetheus, usually thought to be see SOMMERSTEIN 2018, 281–282.

jar was originally in the possession of Zeus and that Pandora brought it with her as a dowry.[23] The poet's failure to explain the jar may be a slip, like the failure of the *Odyssey*-narrator to explain that the Cyclops had one eye, even though the detail is essential to the plot. However, the narrator omits not only where the jar came from, but exactly what it contained. Although most interpreters believe that the jar contained the evils that now roam the world, some have argued that sustenance, or sustenance-protecting forces, were inside it, and Pandora scattered them so that they were lost.[24]

To be sure, omissions are characteristic of traditional narratives. If everybody knows the story, it is a flaw but not a real problem if the narrator forgets something. In this instance, however, different origins for the jar would give the entire narrative slightly different nuances. If the jar came from Zeus as a dowry, it brings this version closer to the story in the *Theogony*, both because Pandora brings all the troubles with her, and because the only reason to stress her manipulative speech would be to imply that women today are not to be trusted. If, however, the poet's stress on Pandora's manipulative speech implies that Pandora used her skill to get access to the jar, which was already in the possession of Epimetheus, she embodies poetic justice: Prometheus stole what Zeus had hidden, and Zeus, through Pandora, uncovers what Epimetheus had hidden. If the story of Pandora and the jar was traditional and often told, the extant version could be using a sort of narratological traditional referentiality: manipulative speech evokes an entire sequence of story that the present narrative fails to develop.[25] Moderns, however, are not familiar with the story that

[23] BLÜMER 2001, 180–181 (though I disagree with much of his argument). So CLAY 2003, 125. WILAMOWITZ 1928, 51–52, suggests that Hesiod must assume that his audience knows the detail from another, lost poem.

[24] So NEITZEL 1976; MUSÄUS [2004], 30–44, KRAJCZYNSKI and RÖSLER 2006; BEALL 1989 thinks of protective spirits.

[25] For traditional referentiality, see FOLEY 1991, 7 and 137–139; for its application, KELLY 2007, 44–66.

the poet assumes that the audience knows. Also, if Pandora needs her skill in speech to get to the jar, it cannot be a sort of cornucopia, because she would have access to it anyway–supervising food stores is a wife's job in the Greek world–and it unlikely to have been in her possession all along.

The second myth is explicitly presented as a short version:

> Εἰ δ' ἐθέλεις, ἕτερόν τοι ἐγὼ λόγον ἐκκορυφώσω
> εὖ καὶ ἐπισταμένως· σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῇσιν
> ὡς ὁμόθεν γεγάασι θεοὶ θνητοί τ' ἄνθρωποι (*WD* 106–108)[26]
>
> If you wish, I shall recapitulate another story, correctly and skillfully, and you lay it up in your spirit: how the gods and mortal human beings came about from the same origin.

Strikingly, the verb ἐκκορυφώσω, "give the headings," implies that a fuller version of this narrative would be possible. Whether anyone ever told a more extended version is a different question. There is certainly much in these accounts of the Races that is left in mystery: why the Golden Race vanished, for example. We do not learn why the gods created human beings at all, or why they made such unsatisfactory ones. More significantly, the myth says very little about the material conditions of any Race after the Golden, who lived in abundance:

> καρπὸν δ' ἔφερε ζείδωρος ἄρουρα
> αὐτομάτη πολλόν τε καὶ ἄφθονον· (*WD* 117–118)
>
> the grain-giving field bore crops of its own accord, much and unstinting,

The formal, awkward introduction of the Myth of Races reflects the poet's awareness of both contradiction and complementarity in the two narratives. This complementarity provides at least one reason for the omissions. If the Myth of Races

[26] 108 has often been doubted, since neither narrative actually traces humans and gods to the same origin; it is athetized by ERCOLANI 2010 *ad loc*, p. 167.

were told without Prometheus-Pandora, it could have included an account of material degeneration (the present world does not have self-growing crops), but in its present content that theme has been addressed already. The poet does not need to explain that life in his own time is difficult because only hard work produces food. Since the poem so directly addresses the theme of justice, it could perhaps function without a mythic support for that theme, so a performance with Prometheus-Pandora but without the Myth of Races would be possible. But it is also possible that not every performance developed every theme.

So I am suggesting that if the poet performed only part of what is now *Works and Days*, he might well have included only one of the narratives, while those included could have been longer and easier to interpret. In any single and fleeting performance, it would not be so important that the message of each segment be correctly weighed in relation to all the others. Some audiences might hear different versions of the poem on different occasions, and these would balance each other. Audiences who knew the poet would be less likely to misunderstand. Sometimes, the poet might find one aspect especially relevant to a particular audience on a particular occasion, and might choose to develop one segment and omit another. The time available for a performance would differ, and the performance would adapt. Indeed, a poet who frequently performed for the same audiences in a limited region, as Hesiod must have if he actually lived in Ascra, would have an incentive to maintain his audience's engagement either by performing different works or by varying those that were within his repertoire. Once a composer seeks to fix future performance, however, including performances not under the composer's control and even after his death, the poet would want to address a generic audience. The project of creating such a version almost demands that the poet consider especially carefully what he wants to convey. It would not be surprising if the poet

felt that it was essential to balance the poem's messages, so that no audience could be misled.

We tend to assume that writing brings more logic to poetic and narrative composition, but the fixed form of an archaic text may seem less coherent than a version produced for a particular occasion because it has to present a complicated message in a limited time.

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