

## Plutarch, Hesiod, and the Mouseia of Thespiai

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This study grows out of a number of years of work on Hesiod, rather than on Plutarch. It finds its place in a series of papers on Plutarch because it argues for re-evaluation of the Plutarchan commentary on the *Works and Days*. My primary point rests on the fact that, with reference to the shrine of the Heliconian Muses, Plutarch was a local, and an extraordinarily educated and articulate local. His commentary on the *Works and Days* was an act of piety for his native Boeotia much as his essay on the maliciousness of Herodotus served the same function. His primary concern here was to demonstrate the ethical value of the great Boeotian poet, and in the process he identified as "interpolations" several passages too "trivial" to stand with the rest. But if one looks carefully at the most important interpolation he claims to have identified in the *Works and Days*, its implications are very far-reaching indeed. In fact, when the condemned passage is examined in the context of the other "confessional" passages in Hesiod, it becomes clear that its exclusion calls in question the very idea of a personal and historical Hesiod—a notion that has been examined and subjected to scrutiny only by the two generations of scholarship on archaic Greek poetry since Milman Parry.

Rather than recapitulate here the history of the problem of the Hesiodic corpus, we may simply recall a few facts to serve as a basis for the discussion that follows. First, there is almost no evidence for the state of the text of Hesiod before the Hellenistic period.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the text of Homer—the best available comparandum—was stabilized in the third and second centuries—in the Hellenistic period—to produce what is known as the vulgate, which is both the principal source of the medieval manuscript tradition and the point of departure for modern scholarship.<sup>2</sup> The fourth and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. L. West, Hesiod, *Theogony* (1966) [hereafter, West (1966)], 48–72, and esp. 65–66 on the papyri; M. L. West, Hesiod, *Works and Days* (1978) [hereafter, West (1978)], 75–82.

<sup>2</sup> That the Hellenistic vulgate was a normalization and reduction of the two poems, against the background of the "long" or "wild" texts of the fourth and third centuries is generally accepted (T. W. Allen, *Homer, the Origins and the Transmission* [1924] 271–82, 302–27). Whether that vulgate corresponded to a conservative text predating the "long" texts, and if so, to what degree, are questions more difficult to answer. For a concise survey of the problem, see G.

third centuries knew longer versions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, now largely lost.<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, the Hellenistic reading public was very fond of the poetry of Hesiod. One might even argue that the *Theogony*, *Works and Days*, and *Catalogue of Women* (along with such lost works as the *Astronomy*) came into their own when Hellenistic poets imitated Hesiod (or advertised themselves and their contemporaries as his imitators) and Hellenistic scholars worked to refine the text.<sup>4</sup> My contention is that both the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, though doubtless comprising very old material, much of it far older than any imaginable historical Hesiod, may well have been influenced and shaped even more significantly than the poems of Homer by their normalization (and canonization) in the Hellenistic period.

The historicity of Hesiod is problematic.<sup>5</sup> Along with Homer's, his is one of the two major surviving voices from a larger group of hexameter poets standing at the very beginnings of Greek literary tradition. Of these semi-mythic poets, "Orpheus" would seem to have been little more than a conventional persona, adopted by many poets over many generations. "Musaeus" is more elusive still, and the Homeric corpus, whose speaker maintains a scrupulous anonymity, defies reduction to a single poet's *oeuvre* today as it did in antiquity. Only Hesiod advertises his own identity, organizing his traditional lore around a personality and a series of autobiographical anecdotes so idiosyncratic that it is difficult to read them as purely conventional. The tendency of scholarship in the past 50 years has been to question all the information that such poetry and its parallel biographic traditions offer about its creators,<sup>6</sup> and to view the earliest speakers of Greek poetry—from Homer and Hesiod to Archilochus and Theognis—as personae generated by poetic traditions rather than as creative individuals with recoverable biographies and personalities. The often cited

M. Bolling, *The Athetized Lines of the Iliad* (1944) 5–6. Bolling believed in a recoverable prototype, which he described as "an Athenian text not earlier than the sixth century" (p. 5). Given that the fourth and third centuries (and in Egypt, even the second century) knew substantially longer texts, one is on safer ground assuming that the vulgate was the product of the growing Hellenistic book trade (Allen, 321–27) and so came to dominate the late papyri and to form the principal foundation of the medieval manuscript tradition. It was thus the earliest widely disseminated, normalized written text of the poems, and though it may be possible to refine it and draw certain conclusions about its antecedents, the likelihood that any earlier text of Homer could be confidently reconstructed in its entirety is slight.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. T. W. Allen, *Homer, the Origin, and the Transmission* (1924) 268–69, 301–03.

<sup>4</sup> For citations and echoes in Hellenistic (and other) poetry, see the apparatus of the indispensable *editio maior* of Rzsch (1902). On Hellenistic scholarship on the poems, West (1966) 48–52; West (1978) 63–75.

<sup>5</sup> See G. Nagy, "Hesiod": 43–73 in T. J. Luce, ed., *Ancient Writers* (1982), and cf. Mark Griffith, "Personality in Hesiod," *Classical Antiquity* 2 (1983) 37–65.

<sup>6</sup> The trend begins with Milman Parry, but for recent developments, see Nagy (above, n. 5) and M. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (1981).

polemical passage of Josephus (*Against Apion* 1. 12) that presents Homer as a prehistoric, illiterate bard, whose songs were assembled in later days, is unique evidence for a perception among the ancients of the peculiar status of authorship in archaic Greek poetry.

My purpose here is to add Plutarch to the list of ancient witnesses for the conventional character of the personae of archaic Greek poetry. He will not, however, be such a friendly witness as Josephus. Indeed, Plutarch himself had a large stake in the historicity of these illustrious figures from the dim past, and the author of the *Lives* (and, moreover, of a lost *Life of Hesiod*, if the Lamprias Catalogue is to be believed)<sup>7</sup> cannot be made into a "Parryist" or "Nagyist"—he believed in a historical Hesiod, beyond any substantial doubt. But without any desire on his part to shatter the Hesiodic persona into a figment of convention, Plutarch provides evidence that is important and underappreciated, pointing to a perception among men of letters of the early centuries of the Christian era that *some* elements of the "confessional" Hesiod did not correspond to any historical reality. Rather, they were elaborations that served the interests of the institution that had taken possession of Hesiod and his poetry—the Festival of the Muses sponsored by the people of Thespiai in central Boeotia. When this evidence is juxtaposed with the documented doubts about the authenticity of the Hesiodic *prooimia* voiced by Hellenistic scholars, Plutarch's testimony takes on crucial importance. If scepticism is justified where Crates, Aristarchus, and Plutarch were sceptical, the confessional Hesiod of Ascra, the shepherd of Helicon with his special devotion to the Muses, crumbles into dust. What is left is a body of Hesiodic wisdom poetry whose persona is hardly more individualized or confessional than that of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*. The conclusion that this poetry and its conventions (including the persona of its singer) are the products of a tradition of song rather than an individual singer is modern, but the doubts about the integrity of the information provided by the Hesiodic corpus about its singer were present by the Hellenistic period.

Before turning to the text and to Plutarch's comments on it, it is first necessary to survey the evidence we have for the "Mouseia" of Thespiai, a pentaeteric festival of performance arts, known to Plutarch and to Pausanias. This institution would seem to be the force that perpetuated (if, indeed, it did not create) the highly confessional "Ascrean" bard of the central poems of the transmitted Hesiodic corpus. There is no way of knowing whether there was a Hesiod before there was a festival of the Heliconian Muses, but the Hellenistic scholars and Plutarch provide evidence strongly suggesting that it was after the festival had taken hold of the poems that this highly individualized persona took on its definitive form.

<sup>7</sup> Lamprias Catalogue #35: 'Ἡσιόδου βίος. Sandbach, in the Loeb *Moralia* 15, p. 81, indicates four passages from the *Moralia* containing material that "may have been used in the *Life*."

## Hesiod and the Mouseia of Thespiiai

The Hesiodic topography of western Boeotia is generally well known.<sup>8</sup> It is customary to contrast the nameless, faceless, placeless narrator of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with that of the Hesiodic corpus, who mentions his own name, that of his brother, and provides about a dozen toponyms to give a locus to his song. The exercise in literary-critical fantasy called the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* starts off by saying (suggestively, and perhaps paradoxically) that *both* Homer and Hesiod were the objects of competition among various cities which claimed them as native sons<sup>9</sup>—scarcely credible, in the light of the text with its apparent geographical precision—but in all probability the author's point is simply that all the cities would *like* to claim both poets. He quickly goes on to point out that Hesiod, in fact, settled the question of his home-town in the *Works and Days* (639–40), when he informed us that his father came from Kyme in Asia Minor to live in Boeotia,<sup>10</sup>

And settled next to Helikon in a godawful village  
Called "Barren Oak," bad in the winter, awful in the summer,  
and *never* any good.

There were few doubts expressed in antiquity about the correct location of Hesiod's "Barren Oak" or Ascra.<sup>11</sup> Hesiod, though, hardly impresses the reader as a well socialized member of the community in question. One might suspect that the poet would have alienated his neighbors by giving their village's name a snooty Ionian pronunciation—"Ἀσκηρῆ rather than Boeotian Ἀσκρα—but then, if we are to imagine him a real citizen of a real village of that name, his deprecating portrait of the town would surely be sufficient to guarantee his unpopularity, and his foreign accent and contempt for the jargon of the locals need not be worrisome.<sup>12</sup> No one

<sup>8</sup> Each toponym and the history of its interpretation is discussed in P. W. Wallace, "Hesiod and the Valley of the Muses," *GRBS* 15 (1974) 5–24. This is now supplemented by the Cambridge-Bradford Boeotia Expedition (see below, n. 14). For the archaeology of the valley, see the synthesis by Georges Roux, "Le Val des Muses et les Musées chez les auteurs anciens," *BCH* 78 (1954) 22–48. The initial publications, by Paul Jamot and others (n. 19, below) were fragmentary and Roux's overview came only a half-century later, when much information (and indeed, some of the inscriptions) had been lost. On the inscriptions, see also Werner Peek, "Die Musen von Thespiiai": 609–34 in *GERAS Antoniou Keramopoullou* (Athens: Etaireia Makedonikon Spoudon, 1953).

<sup>9</sup> The problem is in the verbal phrase in the opening sentence, εὐχονται λέγεσθαι. Though it might seem to be saying that all men "boast" that Homer and Hesiod "are called" their own fellow citizens, the sense is more likely to be something along the lines of "rejoice in claiming" or simply "would like to claim."

<sup>10</sup> νάσσατο δ' ἄρχ' Ἑλικῶνος οἰζυρῆ ἐνὶ κώμῃ.

Ἀσκηρῆ, χεῖμα κακῆ, θέρει ἀργαλή, οὐδέ ποτ' ἐσθλή.

<sup>11</sup> The "translation" is based on a gloss in Hesychius. Cf. Nagy, "Hesiod" 64.

<sup>12</sup> If there is a single Boeotian word in the corpus, it is Φικ[α] (= Σφίγγα), *Theog.* 326.

explicitly doubts Ascra's location, but there is no testimony from *anyone* in antiquity (after Hesiod) who claimed to have visited the village of Ascra. There is, of course, the testimony of Pausanias, who visited a valley northwest of Thespiiai to see the shrine of the Muses there, and was shown by the Thespiots who were then in control of the place a hill—no doubt the one now called *Pyrgaki*—with a ruined tower, which they said was the site of Barren Oak, now uninhabited.<sup>13</sup>

The story was not without substance. Though Pausanias could not have verified it, there had been a large village—if not on top of Pyrgaki, then on its slopes, with its center roughly at the confluence of the two streams that form the valley of the Muses. This was determined in the 1982 survey work of the Cambridge-Bradford Bocotia Expedition, which located the site and established a tentative chronology for the settlement based on surface finds.<sup>14</sup>

It is possible that Strabo saw Ascra. He visited Greece as a soldier and probably saw some of the Greek sites he describes. He locates Ascra 40 stadia northwest of Thespiiai,<sup>15</sup> and no doubt he (or his source) had in mind the hill later shown to Pausanias, and much later yet identified as Ascra by 19th-century travelers.<sup>16</sup> Strabo does not say whether the village was inhabited in his time (which was also that of Augustus), and he may have reported the location from an earlier geographer without himself laying eyes on it. The probability is, however, that Ascra was then already a deserted ruin, as it was in Plutarch's time, about a century later. Plutarch's commentary on Hesiod, transmitted through the scholia on the *Works and Days*, relates that the people of Thespiiai destroyed Ascra and that the survivors fled to Orchomenos, some 25 kilometers to the northwest.<sup>17</sup> A generation later, Pausanias saw only a tower—Plutarch surely, and Strabo probably (if he saw anything), saw the same. And so the evidence points to an Ascra obliterated by the Roman period, but still *located* with remarkable precision.

The reason this deserted site of what was apparently never more than an undistinguished village was so easily identifiable is not difficult to find. The valley below may have had few permanent inhabitants, but it was the scene of one of the most important competitive festivals of the arts in Greece.

The excavations in the area initially involved tearing down churches to recover inscriptions on the stones from which they were built. During the 1880's, the French were energetic in their pursuit of this sort of

<sup>13</sup> Pausanias 9. 29. 1–31. 9.

<sup>14</sup> A. D. Snodgrass, "The Site of Ascra," in P. Roesch and G. Amoud, eds., *Actes du Colloque International du CNRS: La Béotie antique* (Lyon, 16–20 mai, 1983), 1985.

<sup>15</sup> Strabo 9. 2. 25.

<sup>16</sup> Wallace (above, n. 8) 6–7, with n. 2.

<sup>17</sup> A. Pertusi, *Scholia vetera in Hesiodi Op. et D.* (1955), ad W & D 633–40 (= Plutarch, *Eic τὰ Ἡσιόδου ἔργα*, fr. 82 [Sandbach]).

archaeological research. They destroyed at least a half-dozen little chapels in the valley of the Muses—one map shows nine,<sup>18</sup> but it is unlikely that the continuity from the daughters of Memory to the various saints and manifestations of the Panaghia honored in this valley is as clear cut as that number might suggest. The result of this demolition was a large corpus of inscriptions that provide an exceptionally rich fund of information about the festival and related institutions.

Perhaps the most interesting of these is a contract of the third century B.C. which represents a reorganization of the contest.<sup>19</sup> The inscription documents the competition's transition from ἀγῶνες θεματικοί—games for prizes—to the more prestigious status of ἀγῶνες στεφανῖται—games for wreaths, or crowns. There was money at stake, and our inscription is among other things a precious indication of the dynamics of the relationship of the unionized performers to the organizers of the festival. Provision is also made for changing the year of the festival—the inscription clearly represents the embodiment in a formal agreement of the reform of an existing festival. Paul Jamot, who published the inscription in 1895, insisted on this and though he dated the inscription to the third century, wrote, "Mais en même temps nous ne pouvons douter que ces jeux n'existassent déjà avant cette époque, puisque le texte est relatif précisément à la réorganisation du concours."<sup>20</sup> Sketchy as they are, the publications of the French excavators of the valley of the Muses are filled with parenthetical remarks of this sort. The material remains recovered belong to the third century or later, but of course, the excavators reiterate, the festival and the cult must have been much older. Their frustration is understandable. The site is linked to Hesiod and yet it has virtually no archaeological record before the third century B.C. G. M. Sifakis has down-dated the decree cited above from a vague "third century" to the period 220–208.<sup>21</sup> This incidentally puts it close to the largest recorded gift to the Muses of Helicon—25,000 drachmas from Ptolemy IV Philopator.<sup>22</sup> This gift at the very end of the third century may account for some of the architectural remains excavated. The valley has yielded some archaic pottery, including that from the surface finds associated with the large village mapped by the Cambridge-Bradford Boeotia Expedition. A spring high up the slope produced a fragment of a bronze cauldron rim with 10 letters of an archaic inscription to some nameless Heliconian deity, but there is little more.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Roux (n. 8, above) 23.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Jamot, "Fouilles de Thespies, les jeux en l'honneur des Muses," *BCH* 19 (1895) 314–16.

<sup>20</sup> Jamot (n. 19, above) 312.

<sup>21</sup> G. M. Sifakis, "Organization of Festivals and the Dionysiac Guilds," *Classical Quarterly* n. s. 15 (1965) 206–14.

<sup>22</sup> P. Roesch, *Thespies et la confédération béotienne* (1965) 221.

<sup>23</sup> A. Plassart, "Fouilles de Thespies et de l'hiéron des Muses de l'Hélicon: Inscriptions (6ème article): Dédicaces de caractère religieux ou honorifique; bornes de domaines sacrés (2),"

The festival, in other words, is attested in the archaeological record only for the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Many of the inscriptions are Roman, and though there may have been interruptions,<sup>24</sup> the Mouseia of Thespias were apparently celebrated until Constantine looted the site to decorate his new capital. Certainly the valley of the stream now called the Arkhontitsa was inhabited before 300 B.C., and the large village there may have been called Askra. But there is nothing to connect the ruined village with the festival, and there is nothing to prevent believing that it was the Thespiots, after they destroyed the village, who developed a festival there, in the period after Alexander. That festival advertised its archaic roots and claimed a special relationship to the traditions of archaic wisdom poetry that went under the name of Hesiod. This connection becomes explicit in inscriptions such as IG VII 1785 (no longer extant), apparently a boundary marker for a revenue-producing property in the valley, belonging to the "Synthytaï of the Hesiodic Muses."<sup>25</sup> There is nothing, however, to show that this landscape or its festival had any real connection with the poems that seemed to stand at the origin of Greek tradition (though there is ample evidence that it advertised such a connection).

Nothing in the archaeological record, then, stands in the way of suggesting that the festival called the Mouseia celebrated Hesiod's Muses and traced its origins to the crusty old Heliconian sage without the slightest historical connection to the tradition of Hesiodic poetry. If the Heliconian cult of the Muses existed before the Hellenistic period, its shrine in the valley of the Arkhontitsa was so insignificant that no trace of it remains. But from the third century on, this institution was demonstrably affluent and conspicuous. That is, when Hesiodic poetry was held in highest esteem, when it was being praised and "imitated" by the poets of Alexandria and was reaching its first substantial reading audience, an important festival of the arts was advertising its connections with that poetry and its singer and claiming both as its own.

BCH 50 (1926) 385. The bronze cauldron rim was found before 1890 at Kriopegathi, traditionally identified as Hesiod's Hippokrene: Wallace (n. 8, above) 16-18.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Jamot (n. 19, above) 364, on the gap in inscriptional evidence from the mid-first century B.C. to the late second century after Christ.

<sup>25</sup> P. Roesch, *Thespias et la confédération béotienne*, 221. Cf. IG VII 4240, discussed by Werner Peek, "Hesiod und der Helikon," *Philologus* 121 (1977) 173-75.

## The Festival and the Text of Hesiod — Plutarch's Evidence

What might the Mouseia of Thespiiai, celebrated in a valley of Mount Helicon from perhaps 300 B.C. to the decline of the pagan festivals in the fourth century after Christ, have done to the surviving text of Hesiod?

Let me repeat that almost nothing is known of the text of Hesiod before the Hellenistic period. There are echoes in other poets, a great abundance of them, which modern editors of Hesiod have gone to great trouble to assemble. Sadly, however, few of these echoes help in dating even specific portions of the poems. There are also a few quotations in later authors, starting with Plato, but these are surprisingly few and not evenly distributed throughout the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*.

There is also the same sort of conflicting testimony about the corpus as that for Homer. While the Boeotians (according to Pausanias) declared only the *Works and Days* to be the work of Hesiod, and not even all of that, others listed as many as a dozen titles. The *Suda* represents a typical opinion regarding Hesiod's *oeuvre*. It lists (s. v. Hesiodos) "the *Theogony*, the *Shield of Heracles*, the *Catalogue of Women of the Heroic Period*, a dirge (for someone named Batrakhos, with whom he was in love), *On the Idaean Dactyls*, and many others."

Widespread doubt about the authenticity of specific bits of information in Hesiod is reflected by Aelian, who remarks parenthetically in a discussion of the Niobids, "The ancients seem not to agree with one another regarding the number of the children of Niobe . . . Hesiod says there were 19, unless the verses are not Hesiod's at all, but like many others have been mistakenly attributed to him."<sup>26</sup>

The disagreement about what was and what was not Hesiodic in the works of Hesiod seems in fact to have been far more pervasive in antiquity than the similar debate on Homer. As Aelian's remarks indicate, it involved not only the authenticity of entire works, but that of sections or even specific verses within works. The debate continues today, with hardly less energy,<sup>27</sup> a half century after the work of Milman Parry forced a reassessment of the concept of authorship in archaic Greek poetry. In fact, however, for all their contradictions, the Hesiodic poems have a demonstrable unity guaranteed by a rich and coherent manuscript tradition. It is not certain, however, whether this unity predates the Hellenistic period. These are (as with the poems of Homer) a group of archaic poems *as conceived by the*

<sup>26</sup> Aelian, *Varia historia* 12. 36.

<sup>27</sup> The most credible recent analysis is that of Friedrich Solmsen, "The Earliest Stages in the History of Hesiod's Text," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 86 (1982) 1-31. Solmsen divides the *Theogony* into multiple strata, from an *ur-Theogony* by way of "Hesiod's additions and revisions" to several levels of "expansions and other changes produced by the rhapsodes." His vast experience of the text of Hesiod guarantees the usefulness of the distinctions he makes, but the entire model is, finally, circular and the conclusions without objective criteria.

first age of Greek culture that included a large reading public and literary scholars in our sense. What went before is unknowable. The literature of archaic Greece as known to us is exclusively a function of the taste and critical acumen of Hellenistic Greece.

Before we turn to the important testimony of Plutarch, a problem that has bothered Hesiod scholars since antiquity deserves attention—that of the *prooimia* to the two poems. Both were suspect in antiquity. The Pergamene scholar Crates athetized both; Aristarchus obelized that of the *Works and Days* (texts of which without *prooimion* are attested).

Any epic poem could have a prologue. The collection called the *Homeric Hymns* consists of prologues of various lengths that might be prefaced to recitations of longer poems. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* come down without prologues, or with very short, closely adapted ones, certainly not usable with any other poem. Still, there is reason to believe that ancient performances of these epics included *prooimia*. But how organic is the relationship between the body of an archaic Greek poem and its *prooimion*? The small size of the sample does not allow any meaningful conclusions, but this is the sort of situation where the taste and perceptions of a later age might be expected to influence the text, to make the decision whether a given archaic poem was separable from its *prooimion*, or integrally and necessarily bound to it.

The comment of the scholiast on Dionysius Periegetes concerning Crates' rejection of the Hesiodic *prooimia* raises a number of problems: "The [*prooimia*] of the *Works and Days* and the *Theogony* might be prefixed to any poem, and therefore Crates rejected them quite rightly [or perhaps: 'in accordance with his principle']."<sup>28</sup>

That is one opinion, and a very respectable one—but it was *not* that of the bulk of the Hellenistic reading public, since the *prooimia* survived to become part of the text known to the Middle Ages. Why, then, did they survive? It is useful here to look at the question backwards, and ask what would be lost from the text of Hesiod and from the content of the two poems by losing the prologues.

First, Hesiod's name would be lost—mentioned only once, in the prologue of the *Theogony* (22)—and along with Hesiod's name would be lost every Boeotian toponym *except* Ascra and Helicon, which occur together in the lines quoted above (p. 4). Gone are the eddying Permessos (identified with the Arkhontitsa), gone is very holy Olmeios, and along with them, Hippocrene and the altar of Zeus on top of Helicon. The Hesiodic landscape is left impoverished and nearly anonymous, and the poet himself without a name. Without the prologues, Hesiod approaches the condition of Homer.

<sup>28</sup> F. Rühl, "Dionysios Periegetes," *Rheinisches Museum* 29 (1874) 83 (Dionysius comments, 64–65): τὸ δὲ τῶν ἔργων καὶ ἡμερῶν Ἡσιόδου καὶ τῆς θεογονίας πάσης ἐστὶ προτάξει ποιήσεως· διὸ καὶ ὁ Κράτης αὐτὰ κατὰ λόγον ἠθέτει.

Last and most significant of all, without the prologues the Heliconian Muses fade into insignificance. Outside the prologues, Hesiod mentions the Muses only five times in the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*. Their descent from Mnemosyne is noted in the *Theogony* (915–17), and they are invoked to aid in the performance of the catalogue of goddesses who bore children to mortals (963–68)—a purely Homeric convention, by which the narrative voice asks for help with an exceptional task of recall of traditional material. The last verse of the *Theogony* (1022), the bridge to the *Catalogue of Women*, makes a similar request.

The two other references to the Muses outside the *prooimia* are in the passage in the *Works and Days* to which I would like finally to turn. It is the digression (if that is the correct term) in the problematic passage on seafaring—*Works and Days* 646–62.

- Εὐτ' ἂν ἐπ' ἐμπορίην τρέψας ἀεσίφρονα θυμόν  
 βούλῃαι χρέα τε προφυγεῖν καὶ λιμὸν ἀτερπέα,  
 δεῖξω δὴ τοι μέτρα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης,  
 οὔτε τι ναυτιλῆς σεσοφισμένος οὔτε τι νηῶν·  
 650 οὐ γάρ πώ ποτε νηί γ' ἐπέπλων εὐρέα πόντον,  
 εἰ μὴ ἐς Εὐβοίαν ἐξ Αὐλίδος, ἧ ποτ' Ἀχαιοὶ  
 μείναντες χειμῶνα πολὺν σὺν λαὸν ἄγειραν  
 Ἑλλάδος ἐξ ἱερῆς Τροίην ἐς καλλιγύναικα.  
 655 ἔνθα δ' ἐγὼν ἐπ' ἀεθλα δαΐφρονος Ἀμφιδάμαντος  
 Χαλκίδα τ' εἷς ἐπέρησα· τὰ δὲ προπεφραδμένα πολλὰ  
 ἄθλ' ἔθεσαν παῖδες μεγαλήτορος· ἔνθα μέ φημι  
 ὕμνῳ νικήσαντα φέρειν τρίποδ' ὠπώοντα.  
 τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ Μούσης Ἑλικωνιάδεσσ' ἀνέθηκα,  
 ἔνθα με τὸ πρῶτον λιγυρῆς ἐπέβησαν αἰοιδῆς.  
 660 τόσσόν τοι νηῶν γε πεκείρημαι πολυγύμφων·  
 ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς ἐρέω Ζηνὸς νόον αἰγιόχοιο·  
 Μοῦσαι γάρ μ' ἐδίδαξαν ἀθέσφατον ὕμνον αἰεΐειν.

This amusing passage was clearly *pari* of the poem as known in the Hellenistic period, but there is a voice of exceptional authority raised against it in antiquity—that of Plutarch.

A scholion on the passage, traceable to the commentary on the *Works and Days* of the Neoplatonist Proclus, reads,<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Fr. 84, Sandbach. There is disagreement about which lines Plutarch branded as an interpolation (ἐμβεβλήσθαι φησιν). Bernardakis (fr. 62, with notes) believed Plutarch considered 13 lines, from 650 through 662, spurious. Sandbach reads the opening phrase more cautiously and retains 650–53, down to the last major syntactic break before mention of Khalkis. Given the oddly self-undercutting tone of the introductory sentence (646–49), along with Plutarch's lack of patience with the playful ironies of the Hesiodic speaker, and the fact that no other Plutarchan comments relating to those lines are preserved, I suspect that the excision went from 646 to 662. Whichever of these conjectures is correct, however, the scholion is explicit that for Plutarch the "real" *Works and Days* started again at 663, and so the references to the Muses remain unavoidably within the "interpolation."

Ταῦτα πάντα περὶ τῆς Χαλκίδος (καὶ) τοῦ Ἀμφιδά- 10  
 μαντος καὶ τοῦ ἄθλου καὶ τοῦ τρίποδος ἐμβεβλήσθαι φησιν  
 ὁ Πλούταρχος οὐδὲν ἔχοντα χρηστὸν. τὸν μὲν οὖν Ἀμφι-  
 δάμαντα ναυμαχοῦντα πρὸς Ἐρετριέας ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ἀηλάντου  
 ἀποθανεῖν· ἄθλα δ' ἐπ' αὐτῷ καὶ ἀγῶνας θεῖναι τελευ- 15  
 τήσαντι τοὺς παῖδας· νικήσαι δ' ἀγωνιζόμενον τὸν Ἡσίο-  
 δον καὶ ἄθλον μουσικὸν τρίποδα λαβεῖν καὶ ἀναθεῖναι  
 τοῦτον ἐν τῷ Ἑλικῶνι, ὅπου καὶ κάτοχος ἐγεγόνει ταῖς  
 Μούσαις, καὶ ἐπίγραμμα ἐπὶ τούτῳ θρυλοῦσι. πάντα οὖν  
 ταῦτα ληρώδη λέγων ἐκεῖνος ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἄρχεται τῶν εἰς  
 τὸν καιρὸν τοῦ πλοῦ συντεινόντων, "ἤματα πενήκοντα." 20

In his discussion of the scholion, M. L. West focused his attention on the problem raised by a phrase, inserted in one version of it,<sup>30</sup> that seems to indicate that the Alexandrians rejected the ten-line passage from 651 to 660. This, then, would be a reasonable attempt to clean up and "restore" the text, based on the perception that the contest of Homer and Hesiod was a "late" invention. These may have been the motives of the Alexandrian scholars, but two facts remain to be explained. First, the survival of the condemned lines,<sup>31</sup> and second, their rejection by Plutarch. One further bit of testimony may explain both.

It is unlikely to have been more than 50 years after Plutarch expressed his contempt for these "frivolous" lines of the received text of Hesiod, that Pausanias visited the valley of the Muses.<sup>32</sup> He reports the usual trivia—Helicon is free of poisonous plants, and hence its poisonous snakes are not as poisonous as those found elsewhere, and so forth. The locals, he tells us, say that Otus and Ephialtes established the cult of the Heliconian Muses—clearly a founding myth fabricated to advertise the antiquity of the shrine. A few verses from a poem already lost in Pausanias's time are cited from a local historian to support the account. And Ascrea? As was previously noted, Pausanias saw only the ruined tower visible today—*Pyrgaki*. He walks on up the valley, admiring the statues in the grove of the Muses and recording the names of the sculptors—his catalogue quite likely includes the statues that stood on the great curved stone base that survives.<sup>33</sup> After various statues of mythical figures and Hellenistic rulers, he arrives at the collection of bronze tripods, and the jewel of the collection is, of course, the

<sup>30</sup> West (1978) 319. The text discussed is Pertusi's (*Scholiorum vetera in Hesiodi Opera et Dies* [Pubbl. dell'Università Cattolica del S. Cuore, n. s. 13, 1955] 205–06), where the phrase ἀθετοῦνται δέκα στίχοι διὰ τὸ τῆς ἱστορίας νεώτερον interrupts the citation from Proclus. The phrase occurs in only one of the 7 manuscripts that have the scholion in one form or another, and probably has nothing to do with Plutarch or even with Proclus.

<sup>31</sup> The lines both of Homer and of Hesiod condemned by the Hellenistic scholars seem generally to have survived in the later manuscript tradition (often with explicit indication of such editorial condemnation).

<sup>32</sup> Pausanias 9. 29–31.

<sup>33</sup> Werner Peek, "Die Musen von Thespiai" (n. 8, above).

tripod Hesiod himself won in Khalkis. Pausanias does not record the inscription, but if the *Contest* can be believed, it read:

Ἡσίοδος Μούσαις Ἐλικωνίσι τόνδ' ἀνέθηκεν  
ὕμνῳ νικήσας ἐν Χαλκίδι θεῖον Ὅμηρον.

Pausanias closes his account of the valley of the Muses with a climb up to Hippocrene, where he is shown a lead tablet with the *Works and Days* inscribed on it, *minus* the ten-line *prooimion*. The locals at the spring did not serve their own interests when they said Hesiod wrote that poem, and no other. What better testimony to support the idea that for once Pausanias was shown a genuine heirloom, displayed without ulterior motive? The locals in the valley of the Muses knew that the *oeuvre* of the poet who by Pausanias's time had been associated with their valley for at least 400 years had been expanded and inflated in every possible way. They seem to have clung to a purist position at their own expense—who knows?—it may even have contained some shred of historical truth.

To return now to Plutarch: he and Pausanias were alive at the same time, though Plutarch was much older than Pausanias. Was Plutarch's rejection of the passage on Hesiod's victory at Khalkis and the tripod simply an echo of the Hellenistic scholars' perception that the *Contest* was fabricated after the time of Homer and Hesiod? On the map of western Boeotia, Plutarch's home town, Chaironeia, lies less than 40 kilometers northwest of the valley of the Muses. He could not fail to know, firsthand, the tripod in the collection there, to which the lines in question were said to refer. Plutarch actually portrays himself against the background of the shrine, in the dialogue called the *Erotikos* (749b).<sup>34</sup>

The obvious conclusion seems to be that Plutarch *knew* that the tripod on display in the grove of the Muses was not what it was claimed to be—that it was in fact an attempt on the part of the attendants of a Hellenistic shrine to fabricate archaic roots. By condemning the passage that described it as an "interpolation," he was pulling the rug from under the prized exhibit, but still more important, he was tacitly indicating his own knowledge that the Hesiodic poems had been tampered with at some stage in their history, in order to accommodate them to the shrine and its artifacts. Without the slightest intention to undermine the personal, historic Hesiod, he was indicating how one element of that persona, one bit of pseudo-autobiographical information, entered the canon, in the service of the festival of the Muses.

<sup>34</sup> The setting of the dialogue can be understood in terms of literary conventions and echoes, and need not be historically accurate. The passages that establish the setting of Plutarch's conversation in the valley of the Arkhontitsa (a conversation fictionally recreated within the *Erotikos* through the mouth of Plutarch's son) do, however, provide sufficient evidence of a knowledge of the topography of the area and the distance from Thespias to the valley to leave little doubt that Plutarch had firsthand experience of the shrine of the Muses.

There are various reasons to believe that this sort of fabrication of an archaic past was a widespread phenomenon among Hellenistic institutions. In Samothrace, in the initiatory sanctuary, there is a Hellenistic building with a conspicuous Mycenaean architectural feature—a relieving triangle.<sup>35</sup> The comparison may be carried further. The building in question, and the whole of the Hellenistic embellishment of the shrine of Samothrace, belong to the time of Apollonius's *Argonautica*, which advertised the importance of the Samothracian mysteries in the Bronze Age—Jason and his crew stopped there to be initiated. Literature and architecture are both called into service to enhance the prestige of the institution. There are examples of archaism in the inscriptions of the valley of the Muses, but if the priests of the Heliconian Muses did not need to represent the archaic roots of their shrine architecturally, the answer may lie in the power of the much more malleable, expressive material at their disposal—the Hesiodic corpus.

Stripped of the passages discussed here—the *prooimia* and the seafaring passage<sup>36</sup>—the Hesiodic corpus has little local color and no Muses—or rather, it has Muses only as Homer has Muses. *With* the prologues and the passage on the tripod, the Hesiodic corpus becomes first and foremost a celebration of the Muses, and the daughters of memory move to center stage.

To summarize what has been suggested here: Proclus, when relaying Plutarch's remarks on the seafaring passage, reports that Plutarch believed *Works and Days* 650–62 was an interpolation. The whole story of the contest on Euboea is lost and along with it something of the (oddly undercut) legitimation of Hesiod's seafaring lore. And along with the story goes the legitimation of the prized artifact displayed in Plutarch's time in the valley of the Muses. A century before Proclus's time, the precinct of the Muses on the slopes of Helicon had been looted for the beautification of Constantinople, and the once-important festival there was a thing of the remote past. But Pausanias was shown the tripod in question, and there can be little doubt that Plutarch was shown it as well. This has not been sufficiently appreciated. Pausanias's visit, in the middle of the second century, was only a few decades after the death of Plutarch. Plutarch lived much of his life near the spot, and even portrays himself there, albeit in a highly conventional manner. It is impossible that Plutarch, a half-century before Pausanias, was not shown the same prized artifact. When he

<sup>35</sup> J. R. McCredie, "A Samothracian Enigma," *Hesperia* 43 (1974) 454–59.

<sup>36</sup> Plutarch does not condemn the entire seafaring passage, and the "interpolation" he points to was not intended to include the passage (633–40) on Hesiod's father's seafaring ventures, which resulted in his settling in wretched Ascra. This represents the core of Hesiodic autobiography that the tradition has generally accepted until recently (Nagy, "Hesiod," 50). The seafaring passage stands out strikingly from the rest of the *Works and Days* for its seeming irrelevance to concerns that could be localized in the dusty little valley far from the sea that is claimed as Hesiod's home, and it is striking that the speaker chooses just this material as the occasion to remind us that he is really speaking to us from the valley of the Muses.

considered the entire passage an interpolation, he was not reacting simply to its lack of seriousness, its failure to live up to the austere standard of edificatory value he set for the text. He was saying with characteristic tact that the priests' prized artifact was a hoax—and he was saying that a 12-line passage of the *Works and Days* was an *aition*, inserted sometime, by someone, to explain that hoax.

The further implications of this interpolation are suggestive. Along with the *prooimia* (themselves questioned in antiquity), the passage lost here is unique in the Hesiodic corpus in suggesting a special relationship between Hesiod and the Heliconian Muses. It is also juxtaposed with and closely related to the passage on Hesiod's father's seafaring activities, which contain the only references to Ascra and to Hesiod's family (beyond Perses, whose name occurs repeatedly in formulas of address).<sup>37</sup>

Plutarch, as an exceptionally educated and sophisticated local informant, may be providing the keys to an understanding of how the diverse body of wisdom poetry we know as the Hesiodic corpus came to be associated with a specific shepherd in a specific landscape in a remote valley of his own native Boeotia.

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<sup>37</sup> The best analogy is the *Kymos* of the Theognidean corpus, probably to be understood as a conventional mute persona rather than a reflection of a historical individual. Cf. A. Ford, "The Seal of Theognis: The Politics of Authorship in Ancient Greece," in *Theognis of Megara*, ed. T. J. Figuera and G. Nagy (1985).