

The Ambivalent Nature of Gaia and the Human Condition in the Poems of Hesiod

Stan KIRK

Abstract

This paper investigates how the ancient Greek poet Hesiod develops the dual nature of the earth goddess Gaia and the causal relation of this nature to the human condition. Specifically, it shows how this is accomplished through his narrative of her actions toward her mate and offspring, through the dual natures of several of her offspring, and through her connection with the Underworld. Furthermore, it demonstrates how Hesiod uses subsequent goddess figures to elaborate aspects Gaia's nature and transpose these aspects into the human condition. It also points out several significant allusions to Gaia's fundamental relation to technology. Additionally, certain narrative devices used by Hesiod to further elaborate various aspects of Gaia's nature are discussed. For comparative purposes, brief references are made to earth goddesses in other traditions, including the Japanese earth goddess Izanami.

Introduction

This study is about the strikingly ambivalent nature of the ancient Greek goddess, Gaia, and how the Greek poet Hesiod, in his *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, uses various narrative strategies to elaborate this dual nature and relate it to the human condition. Gaia's important role in the *Theogony* is immediately evident as she comes into being very early in the creation story, being born directly out of Chaos (*Th.* 116f.). She immediately becomes a base for subsequent gods and begins her creative activity by giving birth to various deities. She continues her central and active role throughout the early narrative of the *Theogony*, most notably in the various episodes of the succession myth. After the succession myth her role appears to diminish as the power of Zeus becomes more prominent. However, she re-appears as she gives birth to Zeus' final and most formidable enemy, the monster Typhoeus (*Th.* 820-880), and again to counsel the gods to ratify Zeus' sover-

eignty (*Th.* 883-4). She does not play a prominent role as an active deity in the *Works and Days*, but “*the earth*,”¹ in which man’s livelihood is hidden and which man must cultivate, does figure prominently throughout.

In this paper, I will show how Hesiod develops the ambivalent nature of Gaia and its causal relation to human miseries, first through her actions toward her mate Ouranos and their offspring Cronos and Zeus, and secondly through the ambivalent natures of several of her offspring. Next I will discuss the various ways in which Gaia is closely linked in the Hesiodic narrative with the Underworld, Tartaros, and what this implies about her nature and its relation to the human world. Then, I will demonstrate how Hesiod uses the subsequent goddess figures of Aphrodite and Hecate to yet further symbolize and elaborate Gaia’s positive and negative aspects, and also to transpose them from the divine realm into the human condition. Throughout this study I will also point out what I believe are several significant allusions to Gaia’s fundamental relation to technology, which, as far as I have been able to ascertain, have scarcely even been mentioned in previous scholarship. I will also discuss how Hesiod employs certain narrative devices to emphasize and elaborate various aspects of Gaia’s nature, such as repetition of key themes in parallel episodes, intentional ambiguity for suggestive effect, assimilation of entities and synecdochic reconstruction. Some relevant parallels between Gaia and earth goddesses in other myth traditions, such as the Japanese earth goddess Izanami, will also be mentioned.

1. Gaia’s fundamental role in formation of the primitive cosmos

The fundamental importance of Gaia’s role in the creation, early differentiation and physical development of the cosmos becomes obvious early in the *Theogony*. She is the second entity to come into being (following Chaos) and is immediately described as *eurusternos* (*Th.* 117, meaning *broad-breasted*)² and as the everlasting secure seat of all the other deities (*Th.* 116-18). Her vastness expressed by this description is the first mention of the existence of space and matter. The coming into being of Tartaros deep inside her develops the concept of space further (i.e. depth). Her parthenogenetic birth of Ouranos as her equal and as another everlasting base for the gods continues this fundamental spatial development and differentiation. Hence, even at this initial stage, Gaia is already the central spatial refer-

1 It should be kept in mind that the Greek text, unlike English with its upper and lower case letters, does not clearly distinguish between *the earth as matter* and *Earth as goddess*, as the term *gaia* is used to refer to both.

2 Also a cult title of the earth at Delphi (West 1966, ad loc.).

ence point and main agent of production, nurture and progress in the primitive cosmos. These basic characteristics that she brings to the cosmos are also fundamental prerequisites for an environment where human life is physically possible. Thus her role at this stage seems completely positive.³

I would also suggest that, through her central role in the physical transformation of the world from undifferentiated matter into an ordered and shaped entity, Gaia also partakes in some of the fundamental functions of a prototypical maker or *fashioner* which are also the essence of the technological skills such as iron working and pottery. It must be admitted that she is not overtly portrayed as an active maker like the creator deities who clearly *fashion* in other well-known creation stories. For example, in the *Timaeus*, the earth is explicitly fashioned by a transcendent demiurge deity (29A) in the manner of a craftsman who brings it from a state of disorder into one of order (30A). Likewise in the *Metamorphoses*, the making of the world is described as a process of differentiation and ordering from chaos by a deity who moulds the earth into a ball (I. 35). This deity is also called a *fabricator* of the world (I. 57). Hesiod's creation story, by contrast, lacks a transcendent male demiurge and his world instead takes shape spontaneously through the female Gaia's giving birth to deities that represent a process of differentiation and ordering.⁴ However, it remains that Gaia, like the demiurge deities, still plays a central role in a creative process consisting of differentiation and ordering of an originally undifferentiated and unordered state, and hence is implicitly related to the fundamental essence of technology.

2. Gaia's harmful aspect towards her own mate and offspring

Ouranos is Gaia's first offspring (*Th.* 126-27) and with her and Tartaros forms the basic categories of space, as mentioned above, sharing in her role as a secure seat for the Olympian gods. He is also her first mate, and the first sire of her sexually reproduced children (*Th.* 132f.), thus sharing in her early creativity. However,

3 For a detailed discussion on the importance of Gaia in the narrative as the basic spatial reference point as well as initiator and determiner for activity in the cosmos, particularly with regard to the various conflicts of the succession myth, see Sussman 1978, esp. 61-67. Sussman's emphasis is on what she sees as the positive creative results of Gaia as cause and controller of action.

4 A slightly closer parallel to Gaia is in the Mesopotamian Atrahasis, lines 190-276 (O'Brien and Major 1982, 81-3), where mankind is fashioned from clay by the birth goddess Nintu who is assisted in the molding process by 14 other birth goddesses. While the creation here is not of the cosmos, it does illustrate creation as a technological or artisanal process in which the mother goddess is fundamentally involved. Yet Nintu's act of making also differs from that of Gaia in that Nintu and her birth goddess assistants clearly fashion their creation from clay, whereas Gaia does not. The Greek goddess Athena would seem to be an obvious parallel to Gaia in this regard as she is associated with the earth and technology, but her masculinization could be raised as an objection to this.

this creative process takes a paradoxical twist when he tries to suppress the birth of their offspring, thereby paining and angering Gaia. In rightfully protecting the birth of their children against this evil repression of her fertility by Ouranos, Gaia also shows herself to be deceitful, violent and destructive towards the reproductive powers of her mate. Specifically, she contrives a “deceitful and evil device” (*Th.*160), and *fashions* a large and grotesque sickle (*Th.* 161-62), an instrument which in other contexts has agricultural and hence productive connotations, to be violently used as a destructive weapon against his reproductive organs. Then she tries to instigate their joint offspring to share in her vengeance against her own mate and their own father (*Th.* 162f). She herself sets up the ambush, places the weapon in her son Cronos’ hands, and gives him the detailed instructions of how to attack his sire (*Th.* 173-75). Finally Ouranos is drawn by his sexual longing for her into the elaborate trap that she had devised and set up (*Th.*176-78). In other words, she herself does everything to bring about the grotesquely violent ruin of Ouranos and his reproductive ability except the actual swinging of the sickle.

There have been various interpretations of this episode. Although Hesiod himself does not explicitly portray this incident as a separation of Gaia and Ouranos, it is commonly understood as a version of the widespread *separation of earth and sky* motif. Lang, for example, compared it with parallel episodes in the myths of the Maori and other “savages” in various parts of the world. In each case, Heaven and Earth were at one time united but were separated by one or more of their offspring.⁵ West also notes this widespread ancient notion that heaven and earth were originally conjoined or close to each other and were somehow separated into their present situation by various means.⁶ Hence this incident, however violent, is seen as a necessary part of the early differentiation and ordering of the world. West also sees the Hesiodic version of the separation myth as related to the first stage of the Oriental succession myth and specifically links it to Hittite, Hurrian, and Babylonian versions.⁷ Psycho-analytic interpreters have discerned a ‘proto-oedipal’ character in the myth, specifically in the incest of Gaia with Ouranos and then, symbolically, with Cronos, and in the reciprocal hatred between Ouranos and his sons. This view also sees the mutilation of Ouranos as symbolic parricide.⁸ The Myth-Ritual school tries to link this episode to oriental fertility rites. Podbielski, for instance, tries to demonstrate that the castration of Ouranos and the resulting

5 Lang 1893, 45-51.

6 West 1966, 211-12.

7 West 1966, 212.

8 Podbielski 1984, 208-9.

fertilization of Gaia by the blood of his severed organs are linked to oriental fertility and initiation rites involving self-mutilation (literal and symbolic) intended to stimulate the fecundity of the earth goddess and thereby ensure agricultural fertility and even human immortality.⁹ While he predictably fails in his attempt to establish conclusively a direct link between these rituals and the Hesiodic myth, there does at least appear to be a parallel between the myth and the rites in that both reflect some relation between mutilation of the male and an increase in the fertility of the earth. It is noteworthy that several of the diverse interpretations attach a positive significance to this episode of grotesquely destructive sexual violence, whether it consists of a progressive dialectic of order and disorder leading to a higher level of order, or of fertility and destruction of fertility resulting in a higher degree of fertility.

For the purpose of this study, it is the ambivalence of Gaia in this narrative that is important. Here Gaia, while portrayed as a positive earth-mother goddess, is also shown to be her own negative opposite—vengeful, deceitfully scheming, grotesquely violent, and emasculating—toward Ouranos who is her own first offspring, mate, and sire of her subsequent offspring. Although there is a brief burst of fertility from Ouranos' blood (perhaps an image of the rain that yet falls from heaven to fertilize the earth) and severed members, as far as the remaining narrative is concerned, his powers (sexual and otherwise) and significant activity are virtually ended by her revenge.

It must be acknowledged that Ouranos also plays an important causal role in this episode as it is his initial attempt to suppress Gaia's fertility that provoked her attack against his fertility. His act is described in negative moral terms. It is called an "evil deed" (*kakon ergon*, *Th.* 158). Gaia calls him an "evil father" (*patros atasthalou*, *Th.* 164) and urges their offspring to punish his "evil outrage" (*kakēn lōbēn*, *Th.* 165), and in 171-2 Cronos calls him a "father of bad repute" (*patros dusōnumou*, *Th.* 171-2). This provocation by the male Ouranos precludes reducing the cause of the problem to the female Gaia. However, in the end, the negative aspect of Gaia becomes a much more significant force than that of Ouranos since she is the victor. It is the primal power of the female Gaia that overcomes and destroys that of the male Ouranos. Her violence triumphs over his; hers is more elaborate and crafty than his, more severe and grotesque, and ultimately more successful and permanent as she continues to play the central causal role throughout the divine history told in the *Theogony*.

9 Podbielski 1984, 210f.

The tension between Gaia's positive and negative aspects thus expressed anecdotally in this episode is also indicated by her epithets. Positively, she was previously described as *eurusternos* (*broad-breasted*, *Th.* 117), which emphasizes her physical vastness as the earth and as the everlasting base of the gods. This positive aspect is continued in this episode, where, as the mother protecting her offspring, she is called *mētera kednēn* (*good mother*, *Th.*169). However, she is also twice described here as *Gaia pelōrē*, (*Th.* 159, 173), which, while sharing with *eurusternos* the connotation of immense, also has more negative connotations:

In Hesiod...the *pelor* group is never used for things that are simply large. Aside from Gaia, adjectival forms describe the snake portion of Ekhidna and the sickle used to castrate Ouranos (179). The nouns refer exclusively to monsters, specifically Typhoeus (twice), Ekhidna, and the Gorgon. *Gaia pelōrē* then is not simply big, not simply huge—she is monstrous... the available English translations regularly misrepresent it, dulling its pejorative force. But Hesiod's Mother Earth is a much more vicious creature than these translations imply, and her viciousness is summed up in the repeated epithet.¹⁰

The same negative-positive aspects of Gaia are again manifest in the aftermath of her actions. Positively, her 'anti-fertile' behavior paradoxically leads to a new burst of fertility and development as the very blood of the castrated organs of Ouranos fertilizes her to produce more deities, and his severed organs combine with the sea to produce another important fertility deity, Aphrodite (*Th.* 181-206). And, if the castration is interpreted as a 'separation of earth and sky' motif, a further ordering of the cosmos is seen to result. The positive developments that result from this conflict have caused some to conclude that "paradoxically conflict in the Theogony is not destructive; rather, conflict enhances and expands the creative potential of sexuality by ensuring that the end product of sexual attraction, new being, will be able to act upon the world."¹¹ This conclusion is surely an overstatement. While conflict does have an extremely important creative aspect, especially on the cosmic level, its destructive impact on the prototypical family is likewise obvious, as Lambertson properly emphasizes:

Ouranos and Gaia represent the antithesis of the ideal human society ruled by *dikē*. They represent a vision of the funda-

¹⁰ Lambertson 1988, 72-3.

¹¹ Sussman 1978, 61.

mental state of the universe as an unstable tension between male lust and jealously hoarded power on the one hand, and on the other, ultimately triumphant female rage and resentment of subjection to that lust and power—a rage that finally destroys the sexuality, and by the same stroke the anthropomorphic identity of the male partner.¹²

It will be seen that this emphasis also on the negative destructive aspect of conflict in both the divine and human realms appears repeatedly throughout Hesiod's poems. Hence it remains that Gaia is shown in this early episode, both at the anecdotal and lexical level, to have opposite positive and negative aspects to her nature, with both productive and destructive consequences. Even though these destructive consequences have a positive aspect in that they are closely intertwined with an increase of fertility and ordering in the cosmos, their negative effects are not thereby minimized.

Finally, I would argue that this episode ties Gaia again to technology. Previously I suggested that she embodies the essence of technology through giving birth to deities that represent the fundamental transformation of the shapeless world into a world having basic physical features. But here she explicitly *fashions* (*teuxe*, *Th.*162) from adamant a great sickle, a forged instrument normally associated with agriculture and hence fertility. Hence its making by Gaia here and its use to attack Ouranos' fertility, which in fact results in a new burst of fertility from Gaia and from the mutilated genitals, expresses the ambivalent natures both of technology and of Gaia herself.

Later, a parallel manifestation of Gaia's ambivalent nature occurs, when, in the very process of protecting and nurturing her grandson Zeus, she turns against and contrives the downfall of her own son and the sire of Zeus, Cronos, in spite of having previously promoted and protected him (*Th.* 453-506). This time it is Rhea who is the wife offended by her mate's attempt to suppress the birth of their offspring, and who desires protection for her offspring and vengeance against her offending husband. But it is Gaia who again plays the most active role in bringing it about. Together with Ouranos she prophesies to Rhea what will happen and sends her to a safe place to give birth. Then Gaia herself takes the baby Zeus, hides him, and raises him by herself, thereby again showing her nurturing and protective function. But in this process of nurturing and protecting Zeus, she deceives her own son Cronos and gets him to swallow the swaddled stone, thus leading to his

12 Lambertson 1988, 75.

eventual violent overthrow by his son Zeus.

While this episode of the succession myth lacks the vivid sexual imagery of the first¹³ and does not involve a grotesque physical attack against the reproductive organs of the sire by the wife and the offspring, it does show Gaia again manifesting both her positive and negative aspects. As before, she protects and nurtures the offspring, but in doing so contrives the overthrow of the sire, who also happens to be her own offspring. She also plays the most active and important role in bringing the overthrow about, and continues to instigate and play the major role in family conflict, particularly gender and inter-generational conflict.¹⁴ Paradoxically, this apparently anarchic role of Gaia also leads positively to the rise of the world order of Zeus, which Hesiod frequently sanctions and praises (e.g. *Th.* 47-9).

Subsequently Gaia yet again manifests her dual nature, this time toward her grandson Zeus. After his rule appears to have been established, thanks in fact to her protective guile and nurturing power, she suddenly gives birth to his most formidable enemy, the monster Typhoeus who tries to overthrow him (*Th.* 820-880).

The authenticity of this episode has been disputed principally because of supposedly ‘un-Hesiodic’ vocabulary, numerous parallels with the preceding Titanomachy that make it appear to be an imitation, and the fact that lines 881f. seem to follow directly from the Titanomachy, making the Typhoeus episode seem an abrupt and unnecessary insertion. The fact that Zeus’ previously close ally Gaia suddenly turns against him by producing this dreadful enemy is also regarded as an impossible contradiction. Thus some dismiss the episode as an interpolation, while others maintain its general authenticity by admitting minor interpolations, attributing the apparent irregularities to Hesiod’s poetic shortcomings, or arguing that this episode at least does not contradict Hesiod’s program.¹⁵ While it is beyond this study to discuss most of these problems,¹⁶ the objection based on the apparent contradiction in Gaia’s behavior towards Zeus is of special relevance to our purpose.

I believe this problem results from not taking due account of the extent of Gaia’s

13 See Sussman 1978, esp. 65 for a discussion of sexual imagery in the succession conflicts.

14 Prier 1974, 7: “It is Earth again who is the agent of a generation’s destruction, and it is important, I think, to mark her influence as a kind of underlying ground against which the logistics of the poem play. Her presence is of major importance for all three generations.”

15 Among those who reject the authenticity of the Typhoeus passage are Mazon 1960, 15-16 (focusing on the abruptness of the episode and the contradictory behavior of Gaia), Solmsen 1949, 53 n.172 (a good brief statement of several reasons against), and Kirk 1962, 76f. (mostly on the basis of unusual vocabulary). Stokes 1962, 33-36 and West 1966, 381-2, argue for its general authenticity.

16 Apart from the problem of whether this episode is an interpolation or not, I accept it as an integral and cohesive part of the larger narrative, as my discussion will make clear.

ambivalent nature as already developed in the two previous episodes of the succession myth where she craftily contrived and brought about through a younger offspring the violent overthrows of Ouranos and Kronos, both of whom she had previously borne and established in their supreme positions. As this pattern has been established twice already, it should therefore not be surprising, and is even predictable, that she would also eventually turn against her grandson Zeus once he has been established, even though she had also previously rescued, protected, and raised him. The main deviation from the recurring pattern here is that she does it not through a formidable offspring fathered by the incumbent Zeus, but rather through one produced through her union with Tartaros.¹⁷

That Gaia gave birth to this dreadful monster deliberately and with malignant intent finds further textual support in this passage. For instance, it is strongly suggested by her apparent identification with him through their sharing the *pelōr* epithet and also by her apparent sharing in his defeat. First she is called *Gaia pelōrē* when she gives this monster birth (*Th.* 821). The *pelōr* epithet is applied to Typhoeus when his heads are burned off by Zeus (*Th.* 856), to Gaia a mere two lines later when she groans in what seems to me sympathy at his defeat, and again to her when she is burning (*Th.* 861). It is also reinforced by echoes between Gaia and Typhoeus in the iron smelting metaphor. Typhoeus is *struck down* (*plēgentos*) by the bolts of Zeus and is on fire in the mountain glens (*oureos en bēssēisin*) in lines 854-61. Starting from line 861, it is Gaia who is on fire and being melted, just like iron which is *overcome* (*damazomenos*) in the mountain glens (*oureos en bēssēisi*). Rather than portraying Typhoeus as a distinct god here, Hesiod seems to be identifying and even conflating Gaia here with her offspring Typhoeus to the extent that he becomes a manifestation of her very essence.¹⁸ And, by conflating Gaia with Typhoeus who is fathered by Tartaros and is confined in Tartaros after

17 In his detailed structuralist analysis of this passage, Blaise (1992) goes even further by arguing that this episode is not only consistent with the larger narrative, but in fact follows a necessary logic of the narrative and of the nature of Gaia. Specifically, the establishment of Zeus' order by the defeat of the Titans brings a static sterility to the cosmos that denies Gaia's reproductive nature in a manner parallel to the established rules of Ouranos and Cronos. Therefore, although she was his ally in overthrowing the sterile rule of Cronos, she necessarily turns against him from the time that his rule tends toward this static sterility, and she produces Typhoeus in response. Furthermore, this outcome is also necessary to achieve the final structural completion of the cosmos. Previously Zeus had defeated and subjugated the offspring of Ouranos and Gaia, that is, the heavenly powers. Now, by mating with Tartaros to produce another challenger to Zeus, she forces him to confront and integrate the lower world into the cosmos. Hence Blaise also concludes that this episode illustrates "yet another dialectic movement which characterizes the interventions of Gaia: her reaction against the existing order is never in effect purely negative, but, in conformity with her very essence, must contribute to the constitution of a completed world" (358, my translation). While I am not convinced of the larger cosmic structural necessity that Blaise sees as driving Gaia's actions, nor his attempt to authenticate all the details of the episode by trying to demonstrate their role in this cosmic necessity, I think that his analysis is very good in that it takes due account of the role of Gaia's ambivalent nature in explaining the rationale for her attack against Zeus.

18 Blaise 1992, 366-7.

his defeat, Hesiod is by extension also reinforcing the assimilation of Gaia with Tartaros.¹⁹

This extended simile of iron smelting in the subjection of Typhoeus and his mother Gaia again raises the paradoxical connection of Gaia's violent destructive aspect to human technological and cultural advance, the implication being again that even the most negative aspects of Gaia and the horribly violent conflict that she brings about play an indispensable positive role in the dialectical advance to higher levels of order and, in this case, technological progress. It further implies the role of human culture in at least partially subjecting and channeling into positive technological use the dangerous natural elements (specifically fire here), which are otherwise extremely destructive. Even Gaia's negative effects can be partially overcome and utilized through technology. This recurrence of paradoxical aspects of Gaia's nature in parallel episodes also demonstrates the use of repetition in the Hesiodic narrative as a device to elaborate, particularize and emphasize a general theme, namely Gaia's dual nature.²⁰ This narrative strategy will also be apparent in the following discussion of Gaia's elaboration through her offspring.

An interesting parallel with the Japanese earth goddess, Izanami, in the *Kojiki* [Record of Ancient Matters] (Book 1, Chapter 7) is noteworthy here. In the Japanese story, the fire god is given birth by Izanami, and through his destructive fire mortally burns her genitalia during his birth. Paradoxically, while on the point of death, she gives birth (from the excrement caused by her mortal illness) to several significant deities of mining and metal, clay and pottery, and of agricultural fertility. Her mate then avenges her death by violently slaying the fire god with his sword. The description of the fire god's death, his bleeding, and the deities born from his blood as it drips from the sword onto the rocks also takes the form of a metaphor of the process of iron smelting and sword making. This seems to reflect a similar dialectic to that which is found in the story of Gaia, and also a similar relation between the earth mother goddess and the production and advancement of human technology and culture. This close relation of technology to the Japanese earth goddess suggests that in Japanese myth, agricultural fertility and technological production are closely intertwined rather than distinguished. This is one more cue to fundamentally question the distinction imposed by some modern interpret-

19 To be discussed below under Gaia and Tartaros.

20 See also Blaise 1992, 354-5 for a discussion of the problem of the repetitions in the Typhoeus episode of the Titanomachy and his view about the important role of repetition in Hesiodic narrative to elaborate and particularize global themes. Cf. also Sussman 1978, 69: "The conflict with Typhoeus parallels and magnifies the conflict with the Titans, just as the Zeus-Kronos conflict both repeats and magnifies the Kronos-Ouranos conflict."

ers of Hesiod between the “artificial” products of technology and the “natural” production of the earth.

3. Gaia’s production of ambivalent offspring related to human woes

It almost goes without saying that as the mother and foundation of numerous gods and, by extension, all that they represent, Gaia will play a primal role in the origins of all the positive and negative things that will arise in the universe, both in the divine and human realms. From the beginning she is abundantly fertile both in her non-sexual and sexual production of offspring. Following her own emergence, she immediately gives birth to primarily positive children who represent the fundamental shaping and ordering of the environment where men will live such as the Sky, Mountains, Sea, Okeanos, Hyperion. She also produces others such as Themis and Mnemosyne (*Th.* 126-36), who represent abstract concepts that contribute to moral ordering and harmony, and hence to benefits for humans. However, many of her children and their subsequent offspring are more ambivalent and are also associated with opposition to the ordering of the world, its harmony, and consequently, to human well-being.²¹

A good example is her first offspring Ouranos, whose positive role in representing with her the very basic ordering of earth and sky and negative role in suppressing her fertility and instigating the various types of conflict was discussed above. But it must also be remembered that Gaia is genealogically the ultimate source of his ambivalent nature as it was she who gave birth to him and hence to his characteristics.²² And in light of her own ambivalent nature, her production of such a son is not surprising.

Ouranos’ evil aspect is also extended to their youngest son Cronos, who is described as terrible and hostile towards his father (*Th.* 137-38). He performs the first child-parent violence, which is portrayed as extreme and grotesque. Later, he repeats his father’s evil deed of trying to prevent the birth of his own offspring, this time by swallowing them at their birth (*Th.* 459-67). Thus he exceeds the scope of Ouranos’ evil as he embodies both child-to-father hostility (and the re-

21 The extent of the negativity of some of these offspring is not given its due account by some such as Prier 1974, 5, who, in emphasizing the polar opposition between Earth and Chaos, states that in contrast to the generations from Chaos, the “generations from Earth are, on the other hand, generally positive in character.” It will become clear in this dissertation that I think the ‘polarities’ sought in Hesiod by some scholars are in fact themselves more ambiguous and less ‘polar’ than they are often made out to be.

22 Zeitlin 1995, 83: “Once Gaia emerges independently after the neuter entity of Chaos, the female principle is established once and for all, and indeed is the source of the male principle [Ouranos] derived from it.”

sulting violence) and father-to-child hostility.

I would further argue that Gaia's ambivalent nature is elaborated, though elliptically, through the appearance here in the narrative of the Erinyes as her offspring. Fertilized by the drops of blood from the severed genitals of Ouranos, Gaia produces the Erinyes, Giants, and Melian Nymphs (*Th.* 185-187) the roles of which are not elaborated in this passage. However, although little is known of the Erinyes' nature in Hesiod's time, they do play an important role in later literature where they are seen to have both a positive role in upholding justice, especially family justice, and also a terrifying and vindictive aspect. In Homer they avenge various kinds of wrongdoing, but most often violence against blood kin, and in later literature their concern with blood kin crime becomes even more predominant. However, in addition to punishing such crimes, they also incite them,²³ thus paradoxically displaying an opposite aspect of their nature opposed to order. While they often correct injustice, they occasionally act spontaneously and unprovoked, causing *ātē*, the "mental blindness or delusion that leads men into disastrous acts" and are "essentially maleficent."²⁴ In this regard Iles Johnston comments as follows:

The double-sidedness of the Erinyes' behavior—sometimes they punish crime among blood kin, sometimes they incite it—should not trouble us. It is typical for Greek divinities to display both protective and destructive tendencies within their areas of concern.²⁵

Admittedly, the characteristics of the Erinyes in later literature cannot be simply projected back onto Hesiod's obscure and elliptical version of them. But their appearance at this point in his narrative as a product of the violent family crime against Ouranos and soon before Ouranos' pledge of vengeance does suggest strongly, I think, that even in Hesiod's time they were already associated positively with punishing violent wrongdoing within the family and negatively with inciting such violence.

Hence, through these dual aspects of their nature and their position in Hesiod's narrative, they reflect and further particularize Gaia's protective aspect and also her vindictive and violently destructive aspect towards her own family and kin. I

23 Iles Johnston 1999, 252-3.

24 Sommerstein 1989, 7-8.

25 Iles Johnston 1999, 256.

would further suggest that these essentially violent and conflict-ridden Erinyes, as sexually produced offspring of the deceitfully contrived violence that entered the sexual act between Gaia and Ouranos, also embody and reinforce the association, first manifest in Gaia, of sexual love with deceit and violent conflict.

In contrast to the Erinyes, the Cyclopes and Hundred-Handers are described in more detail (*Th.* 139-56) and hence their ambivalent nature is more obvious. On the one hand their existence turns out to have a positive aspect as they are later absorbed into Zeus' ordering of the world and play an important role in the establishment and maintenance of his orderly government. But their grotesquely powerful appearance at their birth and hatred for their father in this passage foreshadow horrid violence and particularly offspring-father conflict. Brown explains their negative role as follows:

The Cyclopes and Hundred Arms are both symbols of monstrous violence in the cosmos: both of them have freakish physical traits which makes them monsters; both of them are psychologically characterized as "violent" or "unruly"; and both of them possess an accumulation of force. These monstrous forms of violence were brought into the world by the first patriarchal authority, Sky; but Sky can do nothing with his own unruly offspring except repress them by shutting them up in the bowels of their mother Earth, thus setting in motion the cycle of retaliatory violence that leads to the downfall of both himself and his son Cronos.²⁶

Perhaps it is Brown's Freudian/Jungian approach that leads him to emphasize Ouranos rather than Gaia as the source of these monstrous creatures. But the text emphasizes Gaia as their preeminent source. Indeed Ouranos begat them, but Gaia, who had also previously given birth to Ouranos himself, is the one who gives them birth, and it is her important birthing role that is emphasized in the *Theogony*. The role of Ouranos in production is peripheral and secondary by comparison, as Brown elsewhere seems to acknowledge.²⁷

Through her birth of the Cyclopes Gaia is associated with fire and the technology that it makes possible, as they are said to give Zeus his thunder and fashion (*teuchein*) his lightning bolt (*Th.* 141). They are also said to have been hidden

²⁶ Brown 1953, 24.

²⁷ Brown 1953, 16: "The beginning-term in the sequence of rulers is Sky, but the beginning-term in the procession of Being is Earth; not only the line of rulers, but in fact, the whole realm of Being is descended from Earth."

inside Gaia (*Th.* 505) until their release by Zeus, indicating that Gaia herself is the source of fire and technology. Consequently, the Cyclopes' simultaneous association with disorderly power and the process of technology expresses again the ambivalent nature of both technology and their mother Gaia.

Gaia's destructive aspect is also developed through her genealogical relation to numerous other disorderly and dangerous monsters. Through her union with her previous offspring Pontos she produces Phorkys and Keto (*Th.* 237-38), who then initiate a whole line of monstrous reproducing deities including the Graiai (*Th.* 270), the Gorgons (*Th.* 274), Geryones (*Th.* 287), the Echidna (*Th.* 295-7), Orthus (*Th.* 309), Cerberus (*Th.* 310-11), the Hydra (*Th.* 313-15), the Chimaira (*Th.* 319), the deadly Sphinx which ruined the Cadmeans (*Th.* 326), the Nemean lion which was a '*pēma*' to men (*Th.* 326-32) and the great serpent (*Th.* 333-35).

Finally, through her union with Tartarus, Gaia produces the most formidable and threatening monster of all, Typhoeus (*Th.* 821), already discussed above. His very description (*Th.* 823-835) is the epitome of extreme unruly power which causes chaos in the world and which almost enabled him to overthrow Zeus' orderly government. His description is reminiscent of Gaia's previous monstrous offspring the Cyclopes and the Hundred-Handers, though on a much greater and fiercer scale, yet another example of Hesiod's tendency to repeat and elaborate a theme through a series of entities. More immediately of concern for men, in spite of his imprisonment in Tartaros he remains the source of the harmful winds that destroy ships and sailors on the sea, and men's crops on the land (*Th.* 869-80).

4. Gaia's connection with Tartaros

Gaia's positive and negative aspects are also manifest in her close relation to Tartaros which is first apparent in their coming into being. Although not sexually produced, they both appear at the same time along with Eros (*Th.* 115-120), almost as if they were triplet siblings. The same passage shows that Gaia and Tartaros are closely related cosmographically, as Tartaros is located 'in the innermost part (*muchōi*) of earth' (*Th.* 119).²⁸ The later description of Tartaros seems to differ by putting it far below the earth; it is as far below the earth as heaven is above

28 The authenticity of lines 118-119 is questioned, one reason being that they are ignored by various later authors including Plato (*Symp.* 178B) and Aristotle (*Metaph.* 984a27), cited by West 1966, 193-4. But West points out that they are present in all the manuscripts of Hesiod. Another objection seems related to the cosmographic inconsistency of Tartaros coming into being at this point. West goes to considerable and in my view unnecessary pains to remove this apparent inconsistency, which I think arises from an unwarranted attempt to impose a canon of cosmographic consistency on Hesiod's poetry.

the earth (*Th.* 720-21), equal to the distance of a nine-day fall of an anvil (*Th.* 723-25). But even here it is still clear that Gaia is as closely cosmographically related to Tartaros as she is to her first mate, Ouranos. This connection is later reinforced by the sexual relation between Gaia and Tartaros, which results in the birth of the monster Typhoeus. Typhoeus reinforces the genealogical relation between Gaia and Tartaros by mating with the Echidna, the offspring of Gaia's daughter Keto, to produce several more unruly and destructive monsters (*Th.* 306f.).

Hence this close relation between Gaia and Tartaros must be seen as having ambiguous consequences. The cosmographic relation of Gaia with Tartaros positively plays a fundamental role in the early development and ordering of the cosmos by providing it with a basic spatial and directional (up and down) framework.²⁹ Also, although Hesiod does not overtly emphasize it, the Underworld has a strong association with the fertility of the earth, as is indicated elsewhere by the figures of Persephone and Pluto,³⁰ an association surely present in the mind of Hesiod's audience. However, in the *Theogony* the close relation of Gaia and Tartaros mostly has negative consequences, which especially become apparent in the above offspring from their sexual union.

Hesiod also portrays Gaia, together with Tartaros, as major physical or geographical sources of many of the miseries that afflict humans. Her offspring (through Keto) the monster Echidna, for example, was born in a cave (*Th.* 295-97), and dwells in a deep cave in the inner parts of the earth (*Th.* 300-304), where as already mentioned, she mated with Typhoeus, who dwells in the Underworld, to produce yet more monsters. Typhoeus himself had been given birth by Gaia through her union with Tartaros (*Th.* 821-22), and after his defeat was consigned to live in Tartaros (*Th.* 868). From there he produces the winds that wreak destructive havoc on human life on the face of the sea and also destroy agriculture on the earth (*Th.* 869-80). Keto's last offspring, the terrible serpent, lives in a cave "in the earth at its farthest limits" (*Th.* 334-35), that is near the border of Earth and the Underworld. In the description of the Underworld we are told that Tartaros is the dwelling of Night (*Th.* 744-5), the majority of whose offspring (*Th.* 211-32) represent a wide variety of human woes. Near her, Hypnos and Thanatos have their dwelling (*Th.* 758-9). Hypnos goes forth to soothe men, but Thanatos goes forth to irrevocably seize them (*Th.* 762-66).

²⁹ Sussman 1978, 61.

³⁰ For example Hom. Hymn. Dem., 488-9.

These various images and associations between Gaia and Tartaros are so strong as to blur the distinction between them to the extent that Tartaros seems to become part of Gaia herself. This assimilation of Gaia with ambivalent Tartaros serves to emphasize and elaborate further Gaia's ambivalent nature and to translate its effects into the human condition.

Gaia's assimilation with Tartaros also gives her yet another contact with technology, specifically metal-working. The relation of Tartaros with technology is first suggested by the image of the bronze anvil (obviously associated with metal-working) falling from Heaven to Earth and then to Tartaros (*Th.* 721-25). It is further indicated by the wall of bronze that has been built around Tartaros (*Th.* 726), a bronze door set up by Poseidon (*Th.* 732) and a bronze threshold (*Th.* 810). In addition to these references to worked bronze, there is also mention in the description of Tartaros of columns of silver (*Th.* 779) and a pitcher of gold (*Th.* 784). These repeated allusions to metal-working in the description of Tartaros also foreshadow the simile of metal-smelting in the subsequent episode of her fire-producing offspring Typhoeus (*Th.* 859-67) where Tartaros, Gaia, fire and metal-working are again brought together. They also provide another illustration of Hesiod's use of allusion to repeat and subtly emphasize an important theme.³¹

5. The embodiment and elaboration of Gaia's ambivalent aspects in some subsequent goddess figures

Marilyn Arthur describes what she sees as a narrative strategy in the *Theogony* of dealing with the negative threatening aspects of the primal female power embodied in Gaia by synecdochically reconstituting those aspects in subsequent female figures who are then subordinated to the rule of Zeus. She specifically describes the strategy as follows:

The female in the poem is handled in the metonymic mode, which uses displacement and synecdoche (including synecdochic condensation), through which a new entity is built up out of a multiplicity of synecdochic details. Thus, in the course of the poem a number of female characters are introduced, primarily through extended digressions, who survive as members

³¹ My view that allusion plays such a significant role as a literary device in Hesiod is supported by the common tendency in early Greek poetry, especially folk and wisdom literature, to use gnomic and enigmatic expressions to convey a more extended meaning.

of the Olympian order, and whose position and character are directly linked with the Olympian rule of Zeus. These characters are Aphrodite, Styx, Hekate, and Pandora. At the same time, the female figures of the succession myth are displaced from positions of dominance as their poetic characteristics are variously distributed among the goddesses of the Olympian order and the tribe of women descended from Pandora.³²

It could be objected that the numerous correspondences and similar functions that exist between these various goddesses might well be explained historically by the natural overlap between various female deities who were adopted from different regions and hence predictably shared some similar religious functions and personality traits. It might further be objected that a poet of Hesiod's piety would not resort to such a rhetorical and symbolic use of religious deities as Arthur's interpretation implies. Put another way, the question revolves around whether Hesiod is primarily using his poetry in the service of religion (in which case we would expect an account of the gods that is in close accord with their usual natures as objects of cult) or whether it is the poetry that adopts and refashions the deities for an agenda not limited to, or even other than, elaborating religious cult. While I reject a purely rhetorical/symbolic interpretation, the previous discussion indicates that Hesiod is indeed selecting and to a rather high degree refashioning the characteristics of his gods in order to achieve a poetic purpose not limited to and in some cases considerably removed from their actual roles in cult, in spite of the fact that his own religious sentiment does often show through. The previously noted cases of Hesiodic repetition and conflation make it both plausible and likely that Hesiod would also use other female figures as symbols to continue to repeat, particularize, and thus further elaborate the complex nature of his first great goddess, Gaia.

Thus I will try to show that the remarkable number of correspondences several of the female figures in the *Theogony* bear to each other and to Gaia herself are part of a narrative strategy. However, while not denying Arthur's view that this is part of Hesiod's strategy to replace the primal power of Gaia with that of Zeus and deal with the dangers posed by female power by reconstituting it in female figures subject to male control, I see it more importantly as a device to symbolize and further elaborate the enduring aspects (negative and positive) of Gaia's primal power

32 Arthur 1982, 65. Arthur makes no reference to historical mother goddess theory, and seems rather concerned with how the subjugation of the female power to male power in Hesiod relates to the social and legal position of the female in the *oikos* and *polis*.

as the earth mother.³³ I will discuss this specifically in relation to Aphrodite and Hecate, whom I see as two such deities in a continuum between Gaia and Pandora.

Aphrodite is the first great goddess after Gaia whose coming into being and nature are treated in detail in the *Theogony*. There are some basic differences between the portrayals of her and of Gaia. For instance, it was noted that Gaia, while given descriptive epithets (*eurusternos*, *pelōr*, *kednē*), is described even more vividly by her actual deeds and offspring in the anecdotal sections of the succession myth. By contrast, the section on Aphrodite (*Th.* 190-206) is compressed into a mere seventeen lines and relies more on epithets and a rather labored etymology. And there is no anecdotal description of her actual deeds. In contrast to the emphasis on Gaia's own prolific birthing, there is no mention here of Aphrodite giving birth to any offspring.³⁴ Also, while Gaia's negative actions towards the males Ouranos and Cronos are clearly provoked by the males' wrongdoing against the fertility and offspring of herself and Rhea, there is no such direct male provocation of the negative aspect of Aphrodite, except in the indirect sense that she was born out of the conflict initiated by the offense of Ouranos against Gaia.

The emphasis in this passage on Aphrodite's erotic aspect and the absence of overt reference to any fecundity of her own have led some to assert that she embodies only the former, and thus is very distinct from Gaia who embodies both. For example, Arthur sees her primarily expressing "female sexuality construed as desire rather than fecundity" in contrast to Gaia, in whom both aspects are present.³⁵ Lévêque also asserts that this emphasis on sexual allure distinguishes Aphrodite from the 'mothers of fertility/fecundity', and he adds that these two sectors are normally separate.³⁶

I believe that this distinction between sexual allure and fertility is unwarranted. Although Aphrodite's relation to fertility is not so overtly expressed as that of Gaia, her simultaneous embodiment of vegetative fertility and erotic desire is unmistakably indicated by the striking images of her own origin and plant-like growth from the foam of the severed genitals and even more obviously by the growth of grass around her feet (*Th.* 190-95). This imagery conflates the power of erotic attraction with vegetative fertility, and thus the tendency to see a distinction

33 The purpose of this in the program of the *Theogony* will be discussed in the Conclusion chapter.

34 Aphrodite's sexual union with Anchises and birth of Aeneas (*Hom. Hymn. Aphr.*) does seem like an isolated departure from her normal role.

35 Arthur 1982, 67.

36 Lévêque 1988, 56.

between them is contrary to the sense of the text.³⁷

Likewise they were also merged in Gaia, though in an inversely proportional manner. Whereas in Gaia fertility was emphasized and erotic attraction was only briefly alluded to as an aspect of it (i.e. when Ouranos is drawn into her trap by it), in Aphrodite erotic attraction is emphasized while her relation to fertility is only alluded to as an aspect of her erotic power. Thus, like Gaia, Aphrodite must be understood as a goddess of both erotic allure and fertility, aspects which are seen to be inseparable from each other.³⁸

Aphrodite also shares Gaia's connection to the triad of sexual allure, deceit, and the resulting conflicts and woes. At first glance, her portrayal appears to emphasize the positive side of erotic attraction, since with her emergence the narrative turns away from the previous grotesquely violent portrayal of erotic attraction in the Gaia-Ouranos story to her more cheerful and seemingly benign charm accompanied by the above-noted imagery of vegetative growth (*Th.* 201-206). However, the brief reference to her deceitful aspect accompanied by sexual love (*Th.* 205-206) suddenly recalls the relation between deceit, sexual attraction, and the consequent entrapment and castration of Ouranos through the trap set by Gaia in the previous episode. So in fact she does not seem so completely benign or positive after all, but rather shares in the most negative aspects of Gaia. In the subsequent enumeration of the baneful children of Night, deceit and erotic love are again coupled (*Th.* 224) and juxtaposed with their negative siblings Doom, Death, Blame, Woe, Old Age, and Strife, further reminding us that their combination in Aphrodite is very negative indeed.

Aphrodite's association with conflict and other woes is further strengthened by the positioning of her emergence and description in the larger narrative, immediately following the above noted story of Gaia's conflict with Ouranos, involving his being sexually lured into her craftily contrived trap and his resulting castration, out of which Aphrodite herself was born. Thus, Aphrodite "originated from an act of sexual violence."³⁹ Her description is then immediately followed

37 Furthermore, although in a passage separate from her description, Aphrodite is said to have given birth to Phobos, Deimos and Harmonia after mating with Ares (*Th.* 933-7).

38 Another example of Aphrodite's simultaneous association with erotic allure and fecundity is found in the well-known fragment of Aeschylus' *Danaides*, where she claims to cause the sexual union of Heaven and Earth and consequently Earth's ensuing fecundity involving both vegetative and animal fertility (Smyth 1963, 395-6). For a dated but useful discussion of Aphrodite's association with earth vegetation goddesses in some of her cults, see Harrison 1991, 638-41.

39 Marquardt 1982, 284.

by Ouranos' prophecy that further retribution, that is, more violent conflict, is sure to follow. As Aphrodite's birth and description are so closely framed in a context of past and future conflict, her own close association with conflict is even more unmistakable. This leads Arthur to view Aphrodite as "*pars pro toto* for the first section of the poem, while her character itself is built up as a synecdoche of the attributes associated with Gaia and the struggle with Ouranos."⁴⁰ At first this might seem like an exaggeration. However, Blaise makes a similar claim about Typhoeus as embodying and uniting the plurality of the previous monsters and conflicts that have arisen from Gaia,⁴¹ and it is arguable that Pandora and her jar embody all the correlations of the previous female figures (Aphrodite and Hecate) with Gaia. Thus it appears that Hesiod not only tends to use a multiplicity of individual entities to repeat, particularize and elaborate the nature of Gaia, as we have been attempting to show, but he likewise has a tendency to do so through an opposite device; namely uniting in a singular key entity the various qualities of a plurality of previous entities.

Finally, Aphrodite, while a goddess, is said to perform her functions among both the gods and mortals (*Th.* 201-6), and so also performs an important mediating function of translating these various aspects from the divine realm to the human realm.

Thus, through his portrayal of the various aspects of the sex and fertility goddess Aphrodite, Hesiod is not merely describing and introducing her into his narrative as a goddess in her own right. Rather, he is also using her as a device to repeat and thereby to further emphasize and elaborate the erotic and fertile aspects of the earth-mother goddess Gaia, and also to simultaneously re-emphasize the inseparability of erotic allure and fertility. Additionally, by repeating Gaia's association with deceit and violence through his portrayal of Aphrodite's character and his positioning of her in the narrative, Hesiod is reemphasizing the association of erotic allure with deceit and violent conflict. Furthermore, by stating that her sphere of activity includes both the divine and human realms, he is using her to elaborate Gaia's causal role in the production of all kinds of human woes. And, very importantly, through this ambivalent nature of Aphrodite that causes both fertility and conflicts, Hesiod is again asserting that even the most negative aspects of Gaia, and the violent conflict and destruction that result from these aspects, are somehow linked to the forward movement of fertility, and by implication, human

40 Arthur 1982, 68.

41 Blaise 1992, 359-61.

life and agriculture.

Hecate gets a fuller and more interesting development as an active goddess than Aphrodite. The only scholarly consensus concerning Hesiod's image of Hecate seems to be about her uniqueness. Her genealogy, treatment by Zeus, almost universal range of *timai*, cultic image, and close involvement in a wide range of human affairs set her apart from all the other goddesses in the *Theogony*. As well, it is generally agreed that her apparently positive image here contrasts significantly with the numerous later attestations to her in later sources which give her a more "chthonic" and "sinister" nature associated with, for example, the dead, the moon, crossroads, torches and dog sacrifices.⁴²

The authenticity of this hymn has been disputed on the grounds that Hesiod would not have shown such apparent religious enthusiasm for a deity,⁴³ and due to linguistic and stylistic peculiarities thought to be uncharacteristic of him.⁴⁴ Against the first objection, West tries to argue that Hesiod was a zealous devotee of Hecate and is in fact not merely composing an encomium but rather a "gospel."⁴⁵ I find his argument unconvincing, especially since, as I will argue, Hesiod's admiration for this goddess is not so unqualified and zealous as West thinks, and in fact he is rather using her symbolically to elaborate Gaia's ambivalent nature. I do find West's refutation of the linguistic and stylistic objections of Kirk more convincing. But rather than dwell on such points, I accept this hymn as likely written by Hesiod primarily on the basis of its important and cohesive role in the overall structure of the narrative, as will become clear below.

While the authenticity of the Hymn to Hecate is now widely accepted, the interpretations of Hesiod's Hecate and her function in the larger narrative are diverse. Some seek what they see as her mother earth or nature goddess aspects in her later coupling with known nature goddesses such as Artemis,⁴⁶ but as Strauss Clay notes, "Hesiod's Hecate does not resemble a *potnia therōn* or a "grande déesse de la nature."⁴⁷ Marquardt compares the Hesiodic Hecate with two unidentified *potnia therōn* goddesses depicted on two eighth century Boeotian vases, only to admit herself that the comparison is inconclusive.⁴⁸

42 Boedeker 1983, 79; also Iles Johnston 1999, esp. 203-4.

43 Eg. Wilamowitz, cited by West 1966, 277.

44 Kirk 1962, 80.

45 West 1966, 276-8.

46 Marquardt 1981, 256; Mazon 1969, 24.

47 Strauss Clay 1984, 28.

48 Marquardt 1981, 259: "Although there are some suggestive similarities between the Boeotian vases and the Hesiodic portrait, it is impossible to identify either depiction as Hecate. There are details which conflict with the Hesiodic portrait, and those that appear to correspond cannot be identified with certainty."

Due to her apparent differences with the later Hecate, I believe that Hesiod's Hecate is best approached initially within her Hesiodic context.⁴⁹ More specifically, my main concern is to inquire what are the implications of Hecate's portrayal in the Hesiodic narrative for the claim that Hesiod uses subsequent female figures symbolically to repeat, particularize and elaborate the dual nature of Gaia.

In contrast to Gaia and Aphrodite, Hecate appears to be portrayed by Hesiod in a mostly positive light. She has none of the destructive sexual love, deceit, and conflict that characterized these previous goddesses. Rather she represents primarily many of the positive aspects that we would expect from a benevolent earth mother goddess. She is twice called a *kourotrophos* (*Th.* 450, 452) and is mostly a giver of good things to men. Hence she recalls and further particularizes the positive nourishing aspect of Gaia, especially as this description of her immediately precedes and provides a transition to the story of how Gaia protects Zeus at his birth and then actually nurtures and raises him.⁵⁰

There is a tendency to emphasize exclusively this positive aspect of Hecate. For instance, Arthur describes her as a sign of "the positive pole of female potency" and as "the first female in the poem who is presented in a wholly positive light."⁵¹ According to West, she is "completely free from lunar, magical, chthonic, and bloody associations; indeed, of the four realms that constitute the universe in 736-7, Tartarus is the sole one in which she has no share."⁵² Likewise Iles Johnston writes, "Far from displaying any frightening traits, she is highly praised as a goddess who can bring a variety of benefits to different people—fishermen, kings, and children, to mention just a few. Even after she begins to be associated with the restless souls, the beneficent side of her personality does not disappear."⁵³ In other words, according to these interpretations, the early Hecate about whom Hesiod writes is completely positive, and only begins to take on her darker negative aspect considerably later.

However, to see Hecate in such unqualifiedly positive terms is to ignore the fact that, as Iles Johnston herself emphasizes in her discussion of the Erinyes, it is

49 On this I agree with Strauss Clay 1984, 30: "Progress can still be made in illuminating the features of Hecate, but it must be based on the assumption that sufficient clues toward an interpretation reside within the confines of the poem. Both the structure of the "Hymn to Hecate" and its pivotal position in the *Theogony* throw light on Hesiod's purpose as well as the significance of the goddess in Hesiod's theology."

50 Zeitlin 1995, 78-79.

51 Arthur 1982, 69.

52 West 1966, 277.

53 Iles Johnston 1999, 204-5.

characteristic of all the Greek deities to have both a positive and negative aspect.⁵⁴ So surely we must be suspicious from the start of any interpretation of Hesiod's Hecate that would render her exclusively positive.

These overly positive interpretations of Hesiod's Hecate also ignore some obvious allusions in the text to her unfavorable side that indicate that, in addition to her own obviously positive aspect, like Gaia and Aphrodite she simultaneously has an opposite negative aspect, even if it is only mentioned briefly and not portrayed so overtly and shockingly as with the former two goddesses. Specifically, her giving of good things is unpredictable as it is repeatedly qualified by her willingness to give. She bestows honor and wealth on him *whose worship she receives favorably* (*Th.* 418-20), she greatly helps and benefits *he whom she wills* (*Th.* 429), *whom-ever she wills* is distinguished in the assembly (*Th.* 430), in battle she readily extends victory and honor to *those whom she wills* (*Th.* 431-33), she is good to stand by those horsemen *whom she wills* (*Th.* 439). The obvious implication is that if she wills to give these good things, she can likewise refuse to give them.⁵⁵ This somewhat unpredictable will of Hecate becomes more obviously ominous when she is said not only to give a good catch as she wills, but also to take away a catch even as it appears about to be caught (*Th.* 442-43). Still more dangerously, she can either increase or severely decrease livestock depending on her will (*Th.* 444-447). In other words, she can and does deliberately take away human livelihood, particularly alimentary livelihood, thus causing human hunger and misery.

It is suggested by Strauss Clay that "some of her late associations with magic and crossroads may not be unrelated to the arbitrary willfulness Hesiod ascribes to her."⁵⁶ I would concur and further propose that her later associations with the chthonic world and the dead are not unrelated to her unpredictable giving and taking, which are both characteristics of the Underworld as the source of fertility and wealth on the one hand, and as the source of evils that destroy life and fertility on the other. It is hard to imagine that Hecate's later attested chthonic aspects were completely absent from her image in the *Theogony*. Hence it seems that Hesiod's portrayal of her is intended to rouse in the minds of his audience her ambivalent

54 Iles Johnston 1999, 269: "All Greek gods have two sides to their personality. None are completely beneficent or completely maleficent. Even Hades had his more positive side, in which he appeared under the names of Pluton or simply Theos."

55 Strauss Clay (1984, 34) is among the few to note this negative aspect of Hecate: "Yet in each sphere her good will forms an essential ingredient of success—just as its absence seems to lead to failure. Consequently, Hecate must not be regarded as simply beneficent...for that constitutes only half her power and neglects her darker side...The essential character of Hecate then, resides in the easy exercise of arbitrary power over success or failure in every human enterprise."

56 Strauss Clay 1984, 27 n.4.

chthonic associations.

Consequently, she must be viewed as having a significant negative aspect together with her positive aspect, although it is the latter that is emphasized by Hesiod. While she further particularizes and elaborates primarily the positive aspects of Gaia, to some degree she also, through her negative chthonic aspects of unpredictably withholding and taking away human livelihood, elaborates Gaia's negative aspect and translates it down into the human condition.

Thus both Hecate and Aphrodite can be seen to play a mutually balancing and complementary role in the narrative, and particularly in relation to Gaia. Whereas Aphrodite embodies mostly Gaia's dangerous erotic, deceitful and violent aspects but also, to some degree, her fertile aspect, Hecate, by contrast, embodies primarily Gaia's positive giving and nourishing aspect, but also to some degree her negative taking and grudging aspect. In this sense the portrayals of Aphrodite and Hecate combine to elaborate the ambivalent nature of Gaia in an inversely proportional manner.

Conclusion

This chapter will summarize the results of the foregoing analysis and then discuss their implications for the understanding of Hesiod's poems and his use of myth.

Gaia's importance in the creation and development of the cosmos is expressed by her being the foundation and source of other being, the basic reference point for further spatial development and differentiation, the main agent of action and progress, and the mother of deities representing the formation of the basic physical features of the world. Her central role in this process of transformation further suggests her fundamental relation to technology.

Her ambivalent nature is first shown by her actions towards her mate and offspring. She displays her positive protecting and nurturing aspect towards her offspring, but also her negative destructive aspect toward Ouranos. Paradoxically, their mutual attack against each other's fertility leads to a higher level of cosmic order and fertility. Yet this prototypical victory of primal female power over the male gives it a frightening aspect.

This ambivalence is also apparent in epithets emphasizing her nurturing and destroying aspects. Her fundamental relation to technology is explicitly indicated by her fashioning the large grotesque sickle as a weapon, itself a symbol of the ambivalence of both technology and Gaia. Her ambivalence towards her own

offspring is repeated by her role in the parallel overthrow of her son Cronos and her birth of Typhoeus to overthrow her grandson Zeus, and again it brings higher levels of order and fertility. This dialectic is also manifest in her assimilation to Typhoeus through the smelting metaphor, which repeats the relation between her negative aspects and technological progress. However, the associated conflict causes natural disasters and suffering in the human realm. These recurring parallel roles of Gaia demonstrate Hesiod's tendency to use repetition and assimilation as devices to emphasize and elaborate her ambivalent nature.

Her ambivalence is also manifest genealogically. Positively, she produces offspring that contribute to the early development and ordering of the universe. Ouranos contributes to the early ordering of the universe but instigates the cycle of violent conflict. The rule of Cronos also represents a higher level of ordering, yet he assumes and expands the evil nature of Ouranos. Her birth of the Erinyes, set right after the story of her own violent retribution and viewed in light of their primarily malevolent role in other early literature, indicates that they embody and elliptically elaborate her vindictive and destructive aspect. The Cyclopes and Hundred-Hander, although later employed to maintain Zeus' order, at their birth embody grotesque unruly power, and their hatred for their father foreshadows yet more offspring-father conflict. They also show Gaia to be a source of fire for technology, and their ambivalence illustrates the ambivalence of both technology and Gaia. Her progeny also includes numerous other fierce and unruly monsters, some of which are explicitly destructive and deadly for men.

Gaia's ambivalence is also developed through her close relation with Tartaros, indicated by their almost simultaneous coming into being, cosmographic proximity in the basic structuring of the universe, sexual reproduction of harmful offspring, and joint role as the location from whence go forth the woes that afflict mankind. These shared aspects seem to assimilate them into a single entity and hence the imagery of metal-working in the description of Tartaros gives her another connection to technology and its ambivalence.

Her nature is further elaborated through the narrative strategy of synecdochically reconstructing it in the figures of Aphrodite and Hecate. Aphrodite's persona repeats some aspects of her nature, especially the triad of sexual allure, deceit and conflict. It also conflates erotic allure, vegetative fertility and fecundity so that she shares all these aspects with Gaia, and reaffirms that even the negative aspects of sexual allure are linked to the progress of fertility. Her activity in both the divine and human realms transposes Gaia's nature and its effects into the human realm.

Hecate's portrayal is more complex. In contrast to Gaia and Aphrodite, she is primarily a positive nurturer and protector, but she is also a taker who causes human hunger and misery. This unpredictable giving and taking alludes to her chthonic nature. Therefore, although she primarily emphasizes Gaia's positive aspect, she also to some degree elaborates her opposite negative aspect. Like Aphrodite, her role in both realms transposes the effects of her ambivalent nature into the human realm.

These results have important implications for understanding the nature of Hesiod's poems, particularly the *Theogony*. That there is a continual and coherent unfolding of Gaia's nature throughout the various episodes of the narrative, and that even problematic sections (such as the Typhoeus episode and the Hymn to Hecate) which have traditionally been rejected as interpolations do in fact play integral roles in this unfolding, supports the view that the *Theogony* is a unified work with a coherent agenda. Even if it could be proven that these sections were added later, the fact that they cohered with the text and play such an important role in elaborating Gaia strongly indicates this overall unity and coherence.

There are also implications regarding the scholarly dispute regarding whether the gods of the *Theogony* are intended by Hesiod to reflect their roles in cult or are to be viewed primarily as rhetorical symbols of the human condition. If it is correct that Gaia's nature is intentionally repeated and symbolically elaborated by subsequent figures placed at strategic positions in the narrative (e.g. the positioning of the Erinyes right after Gaia's vengeance), it has to be concluded that Hesiod's agenda inclines more towards using the gods as symbolic elaborations of the human condition than to reflect their roles in cult. Yet this does not establish that the divorce of these gods from cult is total. Specifically, the difference of the Hesiodic portrayal of Hecate from other literary references that more closely reflect her actual role in cult indicates that she is being largely reinvented by Hesiod to achieve his poetic agenda. And yet, as I argued, the Hesiodic references to her giving and taking nature do allude to her chthonic goddess aspect, indicating that while she has been significantly remolded by Hesiod, she is not completely divorced from her role in cult.

The agenda of the *Theogony* is often stated to be an account and legitimization of the rise of Zeus and the establishment of his order, and also to reflect the historic demotion of the once prominent earth goddess Gaia and the chthonic religious system by the Olympian deities. While the findings of this study do not refute that these are important aspects of Hesiod's agenda, they also indicate that he is

emphasizing the enduring nature of the primal power of Gaia rather than her complete subjugation by Zeus, and the continuing coexistence and tension between the Olympic powers represented by Zeus and the chthonic powers represented by Gaia. The roles of 'Gaia figures' such as Hecate, for example, in Zeus' order, do not indicate supplantation but rather a tension and even synthesis between these two fundamental powers in the universe. Gaia and Zeus are not the "alpha and omega of Hesiod's cosmic history," but rather both continue to play fundamental roles in the state of the cosmos and the human condition. While there is a move from the primacy of female power to that of the male, female power remains a continuing and potent underlying force.

This leads to an understanding of why Hesiod uses subsequent figures in a symbolic way to repeat, particularize and elaborate the nature of Gaia and its effects on the human condition. The description of the complexity and enduring power of her ambivalent nature is such that it cannot be adequately expressed only by the direct references to her in the narrative. This strategy also expresses that her primal power, even if subjugated to that of Zeus and the Olympians, continues to be a fundamental force in the history of the gods and men. Hence, while acknowledging that the story of the ascension of Zeus is also the story of the demotion and subjugation of the primal power of Gaia, this study has also emphasized the importance, extent and enduring nature in the Hesiodic narrative of her primal power and ambivalent nature, and the extent of its effects on both the cosmic and human conditions. Thus the importance of her role in the Theogony deserves more recognition than it tends to receive in most recent Hesiodic scholarship, which in many cases is ideologically predisposed to seek male subjugation of the female in the text. Possibly this neglect is due in part to a reaction against the excessive emphasis on Gaia and the chthonic aspects of Greek myth and religion by Harrison and her contemporaries, and against the universal great goddess theory they adopted. Perhaps it is also due to the dramatic ascension and superiority of Zeus in the narrative, and his clear role as the conscious determiner of the human condition in both accounts of the Prometheus myth, which has led to an overly exclusive scholarly focus on the human condition as related primarily to the justice of Zeus problem played out in the Zeus-Prometheus conflict. While the overt importance of Zeus' cosmic power and relation to the human condition is undeniable, particularly in the Prometheus story, it remains that Gaia's powerful and enduring presence as both an active and underlying force becomes increasingly clear when the larger Hesiodic narrative is taken into sufficient account.

This study has also emphasized the importance and extent of the negative aspect of Gaia's ambivalence which also has not received sufficient scholarly recognition. Such a recognition is seen to resolve some perplexing problems in the narrative such as the apparent contradiction in Gaia's birth of Typhoeus to overthrow her grandson Zeus.

The most striking result of this investigation of Gaia's nature has been the emergence of her fundamental relation to technology and the arts, an aspect of her nature that appears to have been almost completely ignored in previous scholarship. Yet this aspect is clearly demonstrated by her repeated association with various aspects of technology through her role in the formation and ordering of the cosmos, her fashioning of the sickle, her birth of the Cyclopes (and hence of the technical fire they represent), her assimilation to Tartaros and the metalworking he embodies, and her assimilation to Typhoeus in the violent smelting metaphor. She is so fundamentally related to technology through these images that the ambivalence of this technology itself becomes an extension of her own ambivalence. Thus, as the great earth mother goddess, she embodies and is the source not only of "natural" or agricultural production, but also of the "artificial" production of technology, in effect eliminating this distinction, which I believe, is unduly foisted on Hesiod by modern scholars. This aspect of Gaia which, we noted, also finds a clear analogy in the Japanese mother earth goddess Izanami's giving birth to offspring representing both "natural" and "artificial" production, further implies that the role and definition of the very term or category *earth mother goddess* needs to be broadened to include a more universal and inclusive nature of the kinds of production she performs and fosters. Additionally, it requires a re-examination of the current female-as-nature and male-as-culture notion, which seems to be obliterated in Hesiod's portrayal of Gaia, just as it is in the Japanese story of Izanami.

This fascinating parallel between Gaia and Izanami's roles in relation to the origin of technology further suggests that a more detailed comparison of these primal earth goddesses, who are from the myths of two very different and distant countries, would yield fruitful results. Specifically, such a future study could compare in more detail how the narratives of the *Theogony* and the *Kojiki* develop the paradoxically dual natures of the earth goddesses, their roles in the origin of technology, and their impact on the ancient Greek and Japanese notions of the human condition with its mixture of goods and evils.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arthur, M.B., "Cultural Strategies in Hesiod's Theogony," *Arethusa* 15 (1982), 63-82.
- Athanassakis, A.N. transl., *The Orphic Hymns: Text, Translation and Notes* (Missoula, 1977).
- Bachofen, J.J., *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right*, trans. R. Manheim (Princeton, 1967).
- Blaise, F., "L'épisode de Typhée dans la Théogonie d'Hésiode (v. 820-885): La Stabilisation du Monde," *Revue des Etudes Grecques* 105 (1992), 349-370.
- Boedeker, D., "Hecate: A Transfunctional Goddess in the Theogony?" *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 113 (1983), 79-93.
- Boardman, J., "Pandora in Italy." *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique Supplement* 38 (2000). 51-56.
- Brown, N.O., *Hesiod's Theogony* (New York, 1953).
- Burkert, W., *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, 1985).
- Buxton, R.G.A., *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1982).
- Clay, D., "The World of Hesiod." *Ramus* 21 (1992). 61-78.
- DuBois, P., "Eros and the Woman," *Ramus* 21 (1992), 97-116.
- Farnell, L.R., *The Cults of the Greek States* 2 (New York 1977: orig. Oxford 1896).
- Frazer, J.G., *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion*. Abridged ed. (New York, 1922).
- Goodison, L., *Death, Women and the Sun* (London, 1989).
- , Ed., *Ancient Goddesses: The Myths and the Evidence*, Eds. Lucy Goodison and Christine Morris (Madison, 1998).
- , "Beyond the Great Mother," in Goodison and Morris (London, 1998), 113-32.
- Halperin, D., J. Winkler and F. Zeitlin, eds. *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* (Princeton, 1990).
- Iles Johnston, Sarah, *Restless Dead: Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley, 1999).
- Kirk, G.S., "The Structure and Aim of the Theogony," in *Hésiode et Son Influence, Entretiens Sur L'Antiquité Classique VII* (Généve, 1962), 62-95.
- Lamberton, R., *Hesiod* (London, 1988).
- Lang, Andrew, *Custom and Myth* (London, 1893).
- Lévêque, P., "Pandora ou la Terrifiante Fémininité," *Kernos* 1 (1988), 49-62.

- Lindsey, J., *The Clashing Rocks: A Study of Greek Religion and Culture and the Origins of Drama* (London, 1965).
- Loraux, N., "On the Race of Women and Some of its Tribes: Hesiod and Simo- nides," in *The Children of Athena*, trans. C. Levine (Princeton, 1993), 72-110.
- Marquardt, P.A., "A Portrait of Hecate," *American Journal of Philology* 102 (1981), 243-260.
- , "Hesiod's Ambiguous View of Women", *Classical Philology* 77 (1982), 283-291.
- Mazon, P., *Hésiode* (Paris, 1960).
- Meskel, L., "Twin Peaks: The Archaeologies of Çatalhöyük," in Goodison and Morris (Madison, 1998), 46-62.
- Moore, M., "Ge." *LIMC*. 171-77.
- O'Brien, J. and Major, W., *In The Beginning: Creation Myths from Ancient Meso- potamia, Israel, and Greece* (Chico, 1982).
- Penglass, C., *Greek Myths and Mesopotamia; Parallels and Influence in the Ho- meric Hymns and Hesiod*, (London, 1966).
- Philippi, D. L., *Kojiki: Translated With an Introduction and Notes* (Tokyo, 1968).
- Podbielski, H., "Le Mythe Cosmogonique dans la Théogonie d'Hésiode et les Rites Orientaux", *Les Etudes Classiques* 52 (1984), 207-216.
- Pucci, P., *Hesiod and the Language of Poetry* (London, 1977).
- Prier, R. A., "Archaic Structuralism and Dynamics in Hesiod's Theogony," *Apeiron* 8 (1974), 1-12.
- Said, S. "Les Combats de Zeus," *Revue des Études Grecques*, 90 (1977), 183-210.
- Séchan, L., "Pandora, l'Eve Grecque," *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé* 23 (1929), 3-36.
- Simon, E., *Festivals of Attica* (Madison, 1983).
- Sinclair, T.A., *Hesiod: Works and Days* (London, 1932).
- Sissa, G., *Greek Virginity*. trans. A. Goldhammer (Cambridge, 1990).
- Strauss Clay, J., "The Hecate of the Theogony," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 25 (1984), 27-38.
- Stokes, M.C., "The Typhoeus Episode," *Phronesis* 7 (1962), 33-36.
- "Hesiodic and Milesian Cosmogonies I," *Phronesis* 7 (1962), 1-33.
- Sussman, L., "The Birth of the Gods: Sexuality, Conflict and Cosmic Structure in Hesiod's Theogony," *Ramus* 7 (1978), 61-77.
- West, M.L., *Hesiod: Theogony* (Oxford, 1966).
- , *Hesiod: Works and Days* (Oxford, 1978).

--, *The East Face of Helicon* (Oxford, 1997).