KRONOS, ZEUS AND CHEATING POLYSEMY
IN THE SUCCESSION MYTH IN HESIOD'S *THEOGONY*

Scholars have long recognized that deception, deceit, polysemy, ambiguity and cheating are infused and enmeshed in the deep structure of the violent cadences of Olympian succession in the mythography of Hesiod's *Theogony*. Gaia cheats; Kronos cheats; Rhea cheats; Zeus cheats; Prometheus cheats; Zeus cheats more. This paper is ostensibly about the rhythm of deceit and deception in the unfolding of the Olympian order, but it privileges Hesiod's own deceptive poetics in articulating the precise flow of deception in the course of the myths of succession. Hesiod builds into his narrative a significant, intratextual homophony that situates his poetics within the system of cheating and deception that is part and parcel of Olympian succession. I will show that this homophony is related to the themes of power and control, which the poem structures as an opposition between *βίη* and *λόγος*. It will become clear that Zeus' success and Kronos' failure in the course of the succession myth is closely linked to Hesiodic poetics.

The argument will move in steps, beginning with the most famous moment of homophonic deception in literary history, Homer's *Od.* 9.408-414:

> *"ὦ φίλοι, Οὖτίς με κτείνει δόλῳ οὐδὲ βίηφιν."*
> *οἱ δ᾽ ἀπαμειβόμενοι ἔπεα πτερόεντ᾽ ἀγόρευον·*
> *"εἰ μὲν δὴ μή τίς σε βιάζεται οἶον ἐόντα,*
> *νοῦσόν γ᾽ οὔ πως ἔστι Διὸς μεγάλου ἀλέασθαι*
> *ἀλλὰ σὺ γ᾽ εὔχεο πατρὶ Ποσειδάωνι ἄνακτι."*
> *ὣς ἄρ᾽ ἔφαν ἀπιόντες· ἐμὸν δ᾽ ἐγέλασσε φίλον κῆρ,*
> *ὡς ὄνομ᾽ ἐξαπάτησεν ἐμὸν καὶ μῆτις ἀμύμων.*

> *"O brethren, Nobody is killing me with a trap, not by force."*
> *Responding in kind they uttered winged words;*
> *"If nobody is battering you since you are all by your lonesome,*
> *there is no way to escape a bane born from great Zeus*

so pray to your father, the Lord Poseidon."

Thus they spoke going on their way; but my dear heart chuckled,

since my name and superior cunning beguiled them.[1]

Odysseus and his companions find themselves in a precarious predicament; they are trapped inside a cave with a cannibal monster whose idea of ξενία is the consumption of man-flesh, saving the most tasty meat for last, which belongs to 'Nobody', the name that Odysseus smartly gave to Polyphemus upon their initial meeting. Odysseus is not one to be eaten so easily. After the consumption of a few of his comrades Odysseus devises a clever trick (μῆτις): he and his men will drug and blind Polyphemus, and then escape from the cave while clinging to the underside of rams as the herd leave the cave during its feeding time. The plan works to perfection; Polyphemus, egged on by Odysseus, drinks himself into a stupor, which allows Odysseus an opportunity to strike and cauterize the monster's eye with a burning spike. The narrator (Odysseus) states that the Cyclopes, responding to Polyphemus' cries for help, ask if an assailant is stealing his sheep or killing him (ἦ μή τίς σευ μῆλα βροτῶν ἀέκοντος ἐλαύνει; / ἦ μή τίς σ' αὐτὸν κτείνει δόλῳ ἠὲ βίηφιν, *Od.* 9.405-6; their questions come in the form of a direct question that anticipates a negative answer, which results in μή τις being used twice in as many lines[2]). Polyphemus answers: "*Outis* is killing me". Having failed to realize that 'Nobody' is in fact a living, breathing hero who has blinded Polyphemus and is currently trapped inside of the cave, the Cyclopes offer their advice and depart. During this quick exchange, the Cyclopes adhere to strict Greek grammar by replacing the negating particle οὔ with its conditional doppelgänger μή. Essentially, the Cyclopes replace *Outis* with μή τις, which compels Odysseus to reflect on his own μῆτις at line 414. The chain of naming is significant: Odysseus to οὖτις to μή τις to μῆτις and finally back to Odysseus, as the hero shouts out his name to Polyphemus while escaping from the island by ship.[3] This playful

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[1] All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

[2] Podlecki (1961) 129.

[3] To name only a few discussions on this wordplay, see Stanford (1939) 104-106; Podlecki (1961) 125-133, esp. 129-131; Schein (1970) 79-81; Peradotto (1990). Stanford has catalogued the various types of ambiguity used by Greek authors in Aristotelian terms, which he argues are sometimes inflexible with regard to ambiguity since Aristotle 'allowed the danger of dialectical dishonesty in ambiguities to obscure their poetic value – and this even in his literary criticism' (p. 1). This particular instance of word play is due

renaming of 'Odysseus' positions the pronoun (μή τις) in relation to the noun μῆτις in a way that entices the reader both to imagine vividly the performance moment of these lines and to interpret the role of homophony in the poet's organization of his content. No scholar would argue that this homophony is accidental; the playfulness and wit of this scene depend upon – and indeed require – the audience's recognition of the homophony between μῆτις and μή τις. Their differing accents only obfuscate the *oral* performance of Homer's poem. Tone and pitch are not easily definable when put in the context of the vast spectrum and complexity of human vocalization.[4] Perhaps it is the case that the oral and aural nuances of the poet's public performance would have been ambiguous as he sang these lines, and therefore the poet himself might have blended μῆτις/μή τις, thus creating a degree of oral and aural ambiguity.[5] That the acceptance of homophony adds a greater richness to the Polyphemus episode is undeniable. And just as the homophony embodies the cleverness of Odysseus' plan and clever nature, so the μῆτις of the poet takes center stage in his construction of a narrative and a character.

I have begun with the most famous example of paranomasia in Greek literature in order to set on firm ground an identical word play between μῆτις and μή τις in Hesiod's *Theogony*. As the Homeric example shows, the poet (or rather Odysseus in this case) merges paranomasia with μῆτις itself, which Detienne and Vernant describe in this way:

> "Metis is itself a power of cunning and deceit. It operates through disguise. In order to dupe its victim it assumes a form which masks, instead of revealing, its true being. In *mêtis* appearance and reality no longer correspond to one another

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to the ambiguity of pronunciation (προφορά) based on accent (προσῳδία) (p. 45). See p. 105 for a complete discussion of this particular scene where it is 'the only place in Homer where ambiguity and paronomasia motivate a whole episode'.

[4] To quote Stanford (1939) 46-47: Apart from such stereotyped variations of meaning by variation of pitch, there are several other factors in the tone of spoken speech. Volume, timbre, tempo, all play important parts. And nothing is more conducive to subtleties of ambiguity than this complex gamut of tones. By variations of tone the most harmless phrases may be impregnated with sinister and terrifying double meanings. An apparent word of praise becomes mordant censure, the most innocent invitation can become a monstrous proposal. Since pitch is regulated on every Greek word by the conventionalized scale of acute, grave, and circumflex accents, it is clear that if the Greeks were to exploit innuendoes of tone there must be other elements in expressing them than just relative pitch. But note that these only control the relative pitches of each syllable and not the absolute pitch of the voice which might modulate from bass to treble with immense possibilities for suggesting variations of intended tone.'

[5] See Stanford (1939) 45-51.

but stand in contrast, producing an effect of illusion, *apate*, which beguiles the adversary into error leaving him as bemused by his defeat as by the spells of a magician."[6]

Like *μῆτις*, the gift of poetic song encompasses, in the words of Pietro Pucci, 'further paradoxes, contradictions, doubles, polysemies and ambiguities....'[7] Hesiod's poetics are not something that stand apart and outside this system of deception and doubling. *Mêtis* and Hesiodic poetics are doublets of one another. The key to Zeus' success in becoming the king of the Olympians is his command over speech (*logos*). But his speech counteracts the goddess *Μῆτις'* implicit destructive potential (in the form of an unborn usurper) with a power that can challenge and then negate her own dangerous ambiguity.[8]

The myths of succession in the *Theogony* are replate with verbal echoes and iterations which invite the audience to think through the mass of correspondences which connect Kronos and his son Zeus.[9] Kronos' consumption of his children (*καὶ τοὺς μὲν κατέπινε / παῖδας ἑοὺς κατέπινε - and he gulped down his children*, *Theog.* 459 and 467) and Zeus' consumption of *Mêtis* (*ἑὴν ἐσκάτθετο νηδύν / ἑὴν ἐσκάτθετο νηδύν - he cast her down into his belly/womb*, *Theog.* 890 and 899) emphasize that each god chooses consumption as his mechanism for acquiring and retaining kingship.[10] In both cases, the semantically similar acts of consumption are matched by the parallel narrative constructs of ring-composition. The parallels continue: each god is fated to be vanquished by usurping sons (*οὕνεκά οἱ πέπρωτο ἑῷ ὑπὸ παιδὶ δαμῆναι / καὶ κρατερῷ περ ἐόντι - on account that it was fated that he would be overwhelmed by his own son who would even*

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[6] Detienne and Vernant (1978) 21. *Μῆτις*, that destructive force hidden by a deceitful and seductive exterior, must be subordinated and integrated by the king of gods lest he fall prey to its dangerous ambiguity. This effect of illusion and beguilement takes on its most dramatic form in the cosmogonic interplay of succession to the throne of heaven (ibid. 57-105). See also Holmgren (1997) 1-33. Using a semiotic analysis, Holmgren focuses on *μῆτις'* destructive capacity against maleness through its innate femininity and on how the ordering of the cosmos is contingent upon the integration of *μῆτις* into the male order of the universe.

[7] Pucci (1977) 2.

[8] See Detienne and Vernant (1978) 67.

[9] For full and detailed analyses of the structural elements of the succession myth in the *Theogony* see Detienne and Vernant (1978) 57-105. See also West (1966) 16-18 and Angier (1964) 339-340. For a broader discussion of Olympian kingship see Clay (1989) and van Dongen (2011).

[10] *καταπίνω* means 'gulp down' whereas *ἐσκατατίθημι νηδύν* is a clear circumlocution for a semantically related idea, which the scholia glosses as (890) *ἐσκάτθετο. ἐνέβαλε* B*; νηδύν. γαστέρα* B.

be more powerful, *Theog.* 464-465 and ἐκ γὰρ τῆς εἵμαρτο περίφρονα τέκνα γενέσθαι ... αὐτάρ ἔπειτ' ἄρα παῖδα θεῶν βασιλῆα καὶ ἀνδρῶν ἤμελλεν τέξεσθαι - *it had been fated that haughty children would be born from her ... when she was on the verge of giving birth to a son who would become the king of gods and men*, *Theog.* 894-898), and finally both gods consume a μῆτις, a clever trick: Kronos the stone in swaddling clothes, Zeus the goddess *Mêtis* herself. It is at the moment of consumption that the narratives diverge. Zeus avoids his usurpation by swallowing the goddess Μῆτις, thus precluding *Mêtis'* son from becoming the anti-Zeus (Διὸς ἀντὶ, *Theog.* 893). Because Kronos swallows a mere trick (the stone in swaddling clothes), he gives rise to his usurper, the anti-stone (ἀντὶ λίθου, *Theog.* 489), the *telos* of the μῆτις devised by Gaia and Ouranos (*Theog.* 471), Zeus. The difference between the two gods is slight; each god's fortune is dependent on the quality of the μῆτις/Μῆτις he consumes. The narratives are designed to cast in high relief the facts that Kronos and Zeus are both confronted with a (potentially or actually) usurping son, that they choose consumption as their means for retaining their kingship, that they both consume a μῆτις and that their diametrically opposed outcomes are due to the respective μῆτις each god consumes.

The failure and success in the myths of succession are a function of a triangulation among μῆτις, βίη and λόγος. Kronos consumes (κατένιπε) his children as they pass from Rhea's womb (νηδύς) and insufferable pain seizes her (Ῥέην δ' ἔχε πένθος ἄλαστον, *Theog.* 467). At the moment Rhea is about to give birth to Zeus, she beseeches (λιτάνευε, *Theog.* 469) Gaia and Ouranos to plan a clever trick (μῆτιν συμφράσσασθαι, *Theog.* 471). The progenitors of cosmic usurpation plan the *mêtis*, which works to perfection; Rhea gives birth to Zeus, and Gaia – seizing him in her hands (ἐ χερσὶ λαβοῦσα) – hides him in a deep cave underneath the depths of the holy earth (ἄντρῳ ἐν ἠλιβάτῳ, ζαθέης ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης, *Theog.* 483). Rhea, in turn, wraps a stone in swaddling clothes, placing it in the palm of Kronos' hand (ἐγγυάλιξεν, *Theog.* 485) and Kronos, seizing the stone with his hands, places it in his belly: τὸν τόθ' ἑλὼν χείρεσσιν ἐὴν ἐσκάτθετο νηδύν - *then taking the stone in his hands he cast it down into his stomach*, *Theog.* 487. The verbal shift from κατέπινε to ἐσκάτθετο νηδύν is significant; Kronos' consumption of the stone anticipates Zeus' consumption of Μῆτις (*he places her in his belly [seizing her] with enticing words*

- *αἱμυλίοισι λόγοισιν ἑὴν ἐσκάτθετο νηδύν*, *Theog*. 890). [11] Their respective acts of consumption highlight the fact that while both gods place a *μῆτις* into their bellies they consume *μῆτις* by different and antithetical means, as we shall see. At that pivotal moment when cleverness stands between the God-King and his unencumbered throne, one god attempts to negate his usurper through the mechanism of his hands, while his son employs the tongue's power to produce enticing words. So why does Zeus' command of enticing *λόγοι* succeed in defeating his usurper while his father's compulsion to use his hands results in his own dethronement?

Kronos fails because hands in the *Theogony* exemplify *βίη*, that force void of ambiguity and chicanery, what might be termed the anti-*mêtis*. [12] It might be argued that the employment of his hands' force is incapable of matching the destructive ambiguity implicit in *μῆτις*, since hands are most suitable to the strife of physical violence, not to a contest of mental acumen, deception and beguilement. The *Theogony* is explicit in connecting *βίη* to *χείρ*, articulating them as a kind of hendiadys:

> *βίη καὶ χερσὶ δαμάσσας;*
> *having conquered them with the physical violence of his hands.*
> *Theog*. 490

> *ὑμεῖς δὲ μεγάλην τε βίην καὶ χεῖρας ἀάπτους φαίνετε Τιτήνεσσιν*
> *show your great capacity for violence and your unmatchable hands*
> *to the Titans.*
> *Theog*. 649

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[11] Zeus is the first god in the *Theogony* whose speech is described as *logoi*. This has significant implications. Hesiod was taught how to sing songs and compose his *logoi* (*legein*) through the tutelage of the Muses (*Theog*. 26-28), who received their *power* from Zeus as their father and as the first entity in Hesiod's universe to manifest *logoi*. In a sense, Zeus is wholly implicated in the duplicitous *logos* that the Muses teach to Hesiod. Hesiod's language is in fact under the guidance and will of the father of gods, the first to use *logoi* in the cosmos and hence the source of all *logoi*. Thus, Zeus' command of language has authority over how Hesiod composes his words in the formation of the myth through the mediation of the Muses.

[12] In the words of Schein (1970) 80 (in defining *βιάζεται*), 'the embodiment of wholly non-mental physical force.' See also in the *Odyssey* passage above the ironic phrase: *εἰ μὲν δὴ μή τίς σε βιάζεται οἶον ἐόντα·*

χειρῶν τε βίης θ' ἅμα ἔργον

at the same time the work of the physical violence of their hands.

Theog. 677

Hands and physical violence are interchangeable. Hands define those monsters who turn the tide of the ten year struggle with the Titans in favor of Zeus and the Olympians through the force of their brute strength; in essence Kottos, Gyges and Briareos are the physical representations of manifest *βίη* because of the awesome power innate to their hundred hands (τῶν ἑκατὸν μὲν χεῖρες ἀπ' ὤμων αἴσσοντο - *hands shot up from their hundred shoulders*, *Theog.* 149 and 671; δείνοι τε κρατέροι τε, βίην ὑπέροπλον ἔχοντες - *terrible and might, having physical force beyond any weapon*, *Theog.* 670). We can add to this catalogue the description of Typhoeus' hands as implements of physical violence (οὗ χεῖρες μὲν ἔασιν ἐπ' ἰσχύι' ἔργματ' ἔχουσαι - *it had hands that were equipped for deeds of might*, *Theog.* 824). Moreover, hands hold weapons, practical implements for actualizing *βίη* upon the flesh of others. The Hundred-Handers rain boulders down upon the Titans 'from their stout hands' (στιβαρῆς ἐν χερσὶν, *Theog.* 675; βαρέων ἀπὸ χειρῶν, *Theog.* 715) – a phrase used of Zeus' hand as he unleashes his thunderbolts against the Titans (χειρὸς ἄπο στιβαρῆς, *Theog.* 692) – and Chrysaor holds a golden sword in his dear hands (μετὰ χερσὶν φίλῃσιν, *Theog.* 283). Consequently, hands are explicitly connected to *βίη*, they belong to monsters, who personify *βίη's* destructive physical force, and they hold the instruments of *βίη*.[13]

All the remaining references to 'violent' hands in the *Theogony* are related to Kronos, either in his capacity as usurper or in his relationship to divine entities born from the blood of Ouranos, which are physical manifestations of his hands' violent act.[14]

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[13] It is notable that this connection between *βίη* and *χείρ* continues throughout Greek literature; see *Iliad* 12.135, 15.181; Apollonius *Arg.* 3.84; Callimachus, *in Iovem* 67; Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* highlights this relationship most aptly with the creation of the character *Χειροβίη*; Quintus of Smyrna, *Posthomerica* 3.314, 4.258, 4.317 to name only a few references.

[14] There are a few references to hands I have omitted such as *Theog.* 482 (in reference to Gaia seizing Zeus with her hands), 519 and 747 (both in reference to Atlas' 'untiring hands'), 553 (in reference to Zeus' hands as he chooses the white fat of the sacrifice, perhaps an ill-conceived use of the hands), 575 (in reference to Athena's hands' manipulating the 'daedalic veil' of Pandora. This is the first reference of hands in association with an object of 'artistic' creation.), 719 (in reference to the Titans being 'haughty

Kronos' hands are the mechanisms of usurpation with the aid of a sickle, again, a symbol of overt violence held in the hand:

> *ἐνέθηκε δὲ χερσὶν ἅρπην*
> *and Gaia placed the sickle in his hands*
> *Theog.* 174

> *ὃ δ' ἐκ λοχέοιο πάις ὠρέξατο χειρὶ σκαιῇ, δεξιτερῇ δὲ πελώριον ἔλλαβεν ἅρπην*
> *But the child from his lurking place stretched out his left hand, with his right he seized the massive sickle*
> *Theog.* 178

> *τὰ μὲν οὔ τι ἐτώσια ἔκφυγε χειρός;*
> *the genitals did not fly from his hand in vain*
> *Theog.* 182

After Gaia soaks up Ouranos' blood, which poured from the wound of his castration (*Theog.* 183-184), Ash Tree Nymphs, Erinyes and Giants are born, *shining with armor and holding in their hands long spears* (*τεύχεσι λαμπόμενους, δολίχ' ἔγχεα χερσίν ἔχοντας, Theog.* 185-186). Hesiod emphasizes Kronos' forceful act of violence through the repetition of hands in association with weapons and monsters in the space of twelve lines. Kronos employs both hands (*Theog.* 178) to perform the first act of bloodshed in the cosmos and from this blood are born beings, which are the symbolic incarnations of this act – dark monsters holding the implements of overt violence in their hands or entities from whom weapons are made (in the case of the Ash Tree Nymphs) or goddesses who avenge the spilt blood of kin-murder through a reciprocal act of blood-letting. If hands are symbols of physical violence, connected to the monstrous and holders of implements that actualize violence, then Kronos himself holds a unique position in Hesiod's cosmos emphasized by the repetition of hands in the usurpation of

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with their hands'), 756 (in reference to Night holding Sleep in her hands), and 973 (in reference to Ploutos, the child of Jason and Demeter, arriving into someone's 'hands').

Ouranos by Kronos. When confronted with the stone in swaddling clothes one should not be surprised to find that Kronos relies on his hands to destroy a potential usurper.

If Kronos stands at the head of those entities that embody physical violence through the force of their hands, how are we to rectify the fact that Zeus overthrows his father by means of his own hands' violent force (*βίῃ καὶ χερσὶ δαμάσσας*, *Theog.* 490)? Indeed, Kronos' usurpation by his son would imply that Zeus is even more monstrous and violent than his father and, when it came time for the cycle of succession to repeat itself, Zeus would succumb to his usurper by asserting only his *βίη*. What is it about Zeus' use of force that results in the strengthening of his hold over the Olympian throne? Line 490, unlike the description of Kronos' usurpation of Ouranos' position, lacks the specific details with regard to Zeus' manner of usurpation of his father's kingship to make any concrete conclusions regarding his propensity towards physical violence.

We must look to the Titanomachy (*Theog.* 617-735), which dilates the succinct formulation of Kronos' defeat at line 490. In Hesiod's telling of the Titanomachy, the Olympians on Mount Olympus and the Titans on Mount Orthys (*Theog.* 632-633) fight in bitter battle for ten years and there is no end of the strife because both generations of gods had *strained an equal issue of warfare* (*ἶσον δὲ τέλος τέτατο πτολέμοιο*, *Theog.* 638). Gaia advises Zeus to release from their fetters the Hundred-Handers in order to gain the support of these monsters (*Theog.* 617-628). Zeus calls upon their aid (*Theog.* 644-653) and with them he joins the battle *showing forth the force* (*φαῖνε βίην, Theog.* 689) of his lightning, which shakes the earth and threatens to revert the cosmos to its primordial form of Chaos (*Theog.* 700-705). Although Zeus exhibits an awesome power, the narrative twice focuses our attention on the role of the Hundred-Handers in the defeat of the Titans. The first instance occurs before Zeus joins battle (*Theog.* 665-686), when the force of the Titans' and Hundred-Handers' hands begin the work of war, (*χειρῶν τε βίης θ' ἅμα ἔργον ἔφαινον ἀμφότεροι*, *Theog.* 677-678) and the second occurs after Zeus joins battle, when the Titans are overwhelmed and sent down into Tartaros by the rocks thrown by the Hundred-Handers (*οἵ ῥα τριηκοσίας πέτρας στιβαρέων ἀπὸ χειρῶν, Theog.* 715).

The central argument of the Titanomachy is that Zeus, even with the awesome power of the thunderbolt (itself made by the monstrous Cyclopes, *Theog.* 139-146) is unable to defeat Kronos and his ilk until he enlists the *βίη* of the Hundred-Handers. That

Zeus must accept the aid of entities that are able to match the violent force of Kronos' hands with their own again emphasizes the fact that Kronos, and the Titans as a whole, are beings whose greatest asset is their physical violence, and that Zeus' force alone is unable to outmatch that violence of the Titans. Hence the description of Zeus' conquest of Kronos by means of force and hands at line 490 can be more accurately described as Zeus' conquest over Kronos by means of the force and hands of the Hundred-Handers in addition to the force of his lightning-bolt.

A similar argument can be made with respect to Zeus' defeat of Typhoeus. Of all the monsters we encounter in the *Theogony*, Hesiod's description of Typhoeus is truly awesome. He had hands 'made for mighty deeds' (χεῖρες μὲν ἔασιν ἐπ᾽ ἰσχυΐ ἔργματ᾽ ἔχουσαι), a hundred snake heads with as many licking black tongues, fire burning in its eyes, and voices sometimes like the gods, other times like a bull or a lion or a litter of puppies or hissing snakes (*Theog.* 820-835). Typhoeus out-monsters even the most monstrous beasts in the cosmos, and this detailed description suggests that Zeus is about to confront an entity whose capacity for physical violence is unmatchable. The climax of this key episode comes at line 836 in a past contrary-to-fact condition where the real possibility of Typhoeus' kingship is brought into focus only to be nullified by the saving protasis:

> καί νύ κεν ἔπλετο ἔργον ἀμήχανον ἤματι κείνῳ,
> καί κεν ὅ γε θνητοῖσι καὶ ἀθανάτοισιν ἄναξεν,
> εἰ μὴ ἄρ᾽ ὀξὺ νόησε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε.

> *And now the strife would have been unmanageable on that day,*
> *and Typhoeus would have been lord over mortals and immortals,*
> *had not the father of men and gods keenly perceived Typhoeus.*
> *Theog.* 836-838

After Zeus perceives the monster, he attacks the earth, the sea and finally conquers the monster with blows, smiting both the progenitor of the beast – Gaia herself – and her offspring (*Theog.* 839-858). The importance of line 838 becomes clear when we consider

that Zeus' recognition of Typhoeus (ὀξὺ νόησε) is contrasted with Kronos' failure to recognize (οὐδ᾽ ἐνόησε, *Theog*. 488) that he is about to eat the stone in swaddling clothes, which ultimately leads to his own dethronement.[15] Zeus' *νοῦς* precludes the advent of the monstrous God-King Typhoeus in as much as Kronos' *νοῦς* precipitates the advent of Zeus' rule. Consequently, Zeus defeats Typhoeus not so much because he is able to match its monstrous physical violence, but because the mechanism of his mind's ability to anticipate his usurper negates the monster's overwhelming physical prowess.[16] He essentially cauterizes Gaia's womb shut before Typhoeus can come into being.

In the end, the most important point to be made concerning Zeus' war with the Titans and his battle with Typhoeus is that he employs his violent physical force during occasions appropriate to the use of his hands, i.e. during the strife of physical conflict when his adversaries are attacking with their own force of physical violence. There is an appropriateness for the display of Zeus' physical force that drives a small wedge between the inopportune, unrestrained display of force of his adversaries and his own thoughtful and fortuitous use of his thunderbolts' power. But this quality of Zeus – his use of violence in the context of violence – and Kronos' violent inclinations in the context of 'cunning' move us to a third stage of interaction in which Zeus, in the face of succession and *Μῆτις*, resists the fated birth of his usurper by challenging 'Cunning' with (enticing) *λόγοι*, which Hesiod explicitly connects to trickery and beguilement (*δόλῳ φρένας ἐξαπατήσας αἱμυλίοισι λόγοισιν*, *Theog*. 889-890), to lies, a thieving ethic, and masking words (*ψεύδεά θ᾽ αἱμυλίους τε λόγους καὶ ἐπίκλοπον ἦθος*, *W&D* 78; *ψεύδεά θ᾽ αἱμυλίους τε λόγους κρυφίους τ᾽ ὀαρισμούς*, *W&D* 789). Zeus' use of language against *Μῆτις* is the mental equivalent to his use of the lightning bolt against the Titans. Zeus can operate within both systems of succession.

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[15] The only two uses of *νοέω* in the *Theogony*. *νόημα* (*Theog*. 656, spoken by Kottos in acknowledging Zeus' rule) *νόος* (*Theog*. 1002, in reference to Zeus' mind) are also used.

[16] See also Goslin (2010) 370, who shows that "Zeus's suppression of Typhon succeeds in silencing his enemy's 'boundless' voices, but it is essentially a negative action. The birth of the Muses, which follows closely on the Typhonomachy and the division of *timai*, completes the civilizing process through a creative act of ordering. In contract with Typhon, who commingled divine voice and the threat of violence, the new Olympian rule separates these two functions." Central to the Typhonomachy *and* the consumption of *Metis* is the silencing/clarification of the cosmic phonosphere.

Let us now turn to the poetics of the succession myth of Zeus and *Mêtis* where the full significance of Zeus' *logoi* is most dramatically represented. When Zeus absorbs *Μῆτις* by means of *λόγοι*, Hesiod imitates Zeus' conquest over *Μῆτις'* innately destructive ambiguity by ridding his very performance of a potentially dangerous polysemy. In both strands of the succession myth, the narrator – again using syntactic and semantic parallels – articulates Kronos' and Zeus' motivations for the decision to consume divine entities:

> ἵνα μή τις ἀγαυῶν Οὐρανιώνων / ἄλλος ἐν ἀθανάτοισιν ἔχοι βασιληίδα τιμήν.
> *So that nobody else of the illustrious Ouranions might hold the kingly honor*
> *among the immortals.*
> Theog. 461

> ἵνα μὴ βασιληίδα τιμὴν / ἄλλος ἔχοι Διὸς ἀντὶ θεῶν αἰειγενετάων
> *So that no other of the immortal gods might hold the kingly honor besides Zeus.*
> Theog. 892

The parallel clauses call attention to a subtle difference between the gods' similar purposes, and this difference reflects the juxtaposition between the *χεὶρ/βίη* of Kronos and the *λόγος/μῆτις* of Zeus, thereby foreshadowing the consequences that will result from their respective actions. Kronos swallows his children 'so that no other of the illustrious Ouranians might hold the kingly honor'. This translation cannot encompass the full spectrum of meaning, for the purpose clause contains the homophony between the pronoun *μή τις*, 'no one,' and the noun *μῆτις*, 'cleverness,' recalling the Cyclops' episode in the *Odyssey*, where we find an explicit dichotomy between *βίη* and *μῆτις* embodied in the actions of Polyphemus and Odysseus respectively. [17] Hesiod's exploitation of homophony allows an ironic meaning to creep into our interpretation: Kronos swallows his children 'so that another cleverness of the illustrious Ouranians might hold the kingly honor'. Though *ἄλλος* does not match *μῆτις* in gender one should not see this as a

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[17] After Odysseus delights in his cleverness Polyphemus reverts to the use of his hands for his counter attack· *Κύκλωψ δὲ στενάχων τε καὶ ὠδίνων ὀδύνῃσι, / χερσὶ ψηλαφόων ἀπὸ μὲν λίθον εἷλε θυράων, / αὐτὸς δ' εἰνὶ θύρῃσι καθέζετο χεῖρε πετάσσας,...* (*Od.* 9.415-417).

negation of the homophony. Just as in the case of the *Odyssey*, everyone knows that *οὔ τις/μὴ τις* is masculine by context and therefore to understand cleverness would be an ungrammatical reading. However, homophony is effective because of the very fact that its meaning stands outside of the limitations of grammar alone and encompasses a wider spectrum of meaning based upon its ambiguity. We might see the masculine *ἄλλος* as appropriate to the present context since *Μῆτις* does indeed become masculinized. As Holmgren (1997: 1-33) argues, Zeus must masculinize *μῆτις* so that *μῆτις*, a purely feminine quality and destructive to male gods, will no longer have the ability to exert power over the male. In addition, it could be argued that Zeus uses the masculine entity of *logos* to defeat and subordinate the feminine quality of *metis*, thus masculinizing the feminine with the corresponding masculine equivalent to *Metis'* innate polysemy. The *μῆτις* that Gaia and Ouranos plan (*Theog.* 471) asserts the homophonic sense of Kronos' purpose just a few lines earlier.[18] Hence, the ambiguity of Kronos' purpose is carried over into the ambiguity of the stone in swaddling clothes. The trick dupes Kronos as he seizes it in his hands, thereby resulting both in the failure of his intended purpose and ironically the fulfillment of the clause's homophonic sense, for in fact another *μῆτις* does hold the kingly honor, one that is *μῆτιετα* in place of *ἀγκυλομήτης*.

This argument is reinforced by the parallel purpose clause used of Zeus when he follows the advice of Gaia and Ouranos and swallows *Μῆτις*: *ἵνα μὴ βασιληίδα τιμὴν | ἄλλος ἔχοι Διὸς ἀντὶ θεῶν αἰειγενετάων* (*Theog.* 892). Zeus' ability to use deceptive/enticing language challenges the destructive potential of *Μῆτις*, which consequently precludes the language that could result in polysemy. The change of *μή τις* to the unambiguous *μή* is a concrete, verbal sign of Zeus' consumption of *Mêtis* herself and it is as much a *sema* of Zeus' victory over his unborn usurper as the stone in swaddling clothes placed at Delphi signified Kronos' defeat (*Theog.* 500). Zeus literally eats *μῆτις* out of the poet's mouth, thereby avoiding that dangerous homophony that led to Kronos' usurpation. He instead nestles her in his stomach, which causes *Μῆτις* to be reclassified as she who *οἱ* (Zeus) *συμφράσσαιτο θεὰ ἀγαθόν τε κακόν τε* (*Theog.* 900), thus resolving any ambiguity in his actions and in the poet's corresponding choice of words. This is in contrast to the usurpation of Kronos' position where the dangerous

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[18] Similarly in *Od.* 9 where the *mêtis* five lines later invokes the earlier homophony.

ambiguity of *μῆτις* is reflected not only in the threat of the stone in swaddling clothes, but in the duplicitous and equivocal homophony that ensnare the unwitting Kronos.

One might conclude from this analysis of the succession myth that Kronos is replaced by a son whose methods of retaining kingship are of a higher order because he does not resort to the primordial and monstrous tendencies of *βίη*. I think that such a conclusion would not be entirely accurate. We should not see Kronos' defeat and Zeus' success as metaphors for a higher order of governance, marshaled by mental acuity, replacing the meaner order of beast like physical violence. Zeus is, after all, still a shadow of Kronos. Zeus' consumption of *Metis is* violent and primordially grotesque; he accomplishes the same violent act of cannibalistic consumption that his father first performed on his children. In terms of the Cyclopes' episode in the *Odyssey*, Zeus' actions connect him more to the man-eating, monstrous Polyphemus than they do to wily Odysseus. Just because Zeus uses *λόγοι* in no way implies any sort of moralistic value judgment with respect to a lower moral order for *βίη* in terms of *μῆτις* nor does it imply that Zeus is not akin to violent tendencies as suggested in his battle with the Titans and Typhoeus or in his grabbing of the sacrificial meats with his hands at Mekone.[19] It only implies that *βίη* and *λόγος* are two different methods of enacting the will of the stronger party over a weaker party, and that the successful employment of either instrument has more to do with the suitability of the moment than one abstraction being of a higher order than the other. The fact of the matter is that Zeus uses the mechanism of words to vanquish any potential usurper, and in the process he does reenact Kronos' violent decision to swallow potential usurpers. Zeus succeeds because he consciously uses a weapon that is appropriate to the situation and one that could match the destructive ambiguity of *Mêtis* herself by negating her own destructive ambiguity.

The most significant result of Zeus' consumption of *Μῆτις* is not that he has transformed the universe into a more orderly and less violent place through language, nor

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[19] During the distribution of sacrificial parts at Mekone, Zeus fails to act appropriately and in a way that recalls Kronos' swallowing the stone in swaddling clothes. When Prometheus sets out the sacrificial offerings for Zeus, Zeus *χερσὶ δ' ὅ γ' ἀμφοτέροισιν ἀνείλετο λευκὸν ἄλειφαρ* (*Theog.* 553), and as a consequence his *thumos* is angered. Zeus reduplicates the actions of Kronos in a similar setting where a battle of wits is at issue and it might be argued that his failure to pick the better set of sacrificial parts is due to his use of hands in place of the powers of cleverness, which he resorts to after the initial trick of the sacrificial parts.

that he has made himself invincible with respect to the power of cleverness, but rather that Zeus is now able to procreate with other Goddesses without the fear of giving birth to a more powerful son. The true danger of *Mêtis*, in the end, was not her innate cleverness, but the fact that she was fated to give birth to a son who would overthrow his father (*Theog*. 894-898). It is with his ensuing marriages that Zeus creates a cosmos that is harmonious and orderly. Through his marriages to those abstractly meaningful goddesses Themis, Eurynome, Demeter, Leto, Mnemosyne and Hera, Zeus produces a cosmos with the largely beneficial and order-inducing Goddesses the Horai, Eunomia, Dike, Eirene, Moirai, Charitai, Aglaia, Euphrosune, Thalia, Persephone (whose marriage to Hades joins the underworld to heaven), the Muses, Artemis, Hebe, Eileithuia, and finally Athena (*Theog*. 901-926).[20] The overwhelming tendency of these marriages and births is towards a feminine, non-destructive order. Zeus' victory over *Μῆτις* breaks the cycle of usurpation and allows him to commingle freely with Goddesses whose offspring create the conditions for the orderly cycle of seasons, for peace, for justice and for the festivity that accompanies the seasonal cycles of the earth and the civic harmony that results from a just society at peace. It is at this point that we can insert our moral recognition of the universe under the rule of Zeus.[21]

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[20] His marriages also result in the birth of Apollo and Ares, who will both exist as perpetual sons, never as potential usurpers.

[21] This paper is implicitly connected to the debate between Homeric and Hesiodic priority. Is the Hesiodic wordplay an allusion to the *Odyssey* (and the many overlapping themes of *biē*, *mêtis*, and consumption), or does the *Odyssey* flesh out in a more emphatic poetics the paronomasia of the *Theogony*? Or were both examples of wordplay part and parcel of a common oral allusive tradition? See Rosen (1997) for a sobering and economic discussion of the issue of priority.

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