

Handout for:

Hesiod's means of capturing his audience? A possibility for *Works and Days* 1-105
Presented at the CAAS Meeting, Baltimore, Oct. 14, 2011

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#1 Synopsis of *Works and Days* 1-105:

(vv. 1-2) Muses, come and sing of your father Zeus. (3-8) Zeus makes men famous or not, etc. (9-10a) Pay attention and straighten decisions justly, you (Zeus). (10b) I myself hope to tell the reality, Perses (or: to Perses)¹. (11-26) It was not so that there was only one Strife lineage; there are two: One is beneficial; it is the other that supervises cruelties, while the first fosters competitive labor to make men rich. (27-39) You, Perses, avoid the bad Strife and quarrels at the agora that prevent attention to getting the grain in. Let's settle our dispute by means of Zeus-given justice, not like where you once cheated me² by bribing the gift-eating kings. (40-41) They are childish, not knowing how much half is greater than whole, nor the good in mallow and asphodel. (42) The situation of humanity is that the gods hide the means of livelihood. (43-46) Otherwise your life would be easy. (47-49) Zeus hid (something) in his anger at Prometheus's trickery and wrought cares for humanity. (50-58) He hid fire and after Prometheus stole it back, promised to create an evil which men would love. (59) The father of men and gods laughed out loud. (60-68) He ordered Hephaestus, Athena, Aphrodite and Hermes to create an entity with certain mostly negative feminine characteristics. (69-80a) They obeyed: Hephaestus, Athena, Persuasion, the Graces, the Seasons, and Hermes created an entity with more or less those characteristics. (80b-82) Hermes named her Pandora ("All-gift"), because all the gods gave a gift. (83-89) Hermes delivered it to Epimetheus, who forgot the warning of Prometheus not to accept a gift from Zeus, but understood when he received it. (90-92 or -93³) For before this time men were free from pain, etc. (94-95) But (the?) woman opened some jar and dispersed its contents, causing cares for humanity. (96-99) Only Elpis (variously construed as Hope, Expectation, or Anticipation) did not fly out before the jar closed by Zeus's will. (100-104) Otherwise, numerous evils (or: numerous other evils)⁴ abound: silent diseases doom men. (105) Thus it is impossible to evade the mind of Zeus.

#2 Standard breakdown: Proemium, vv. 1-10; theory of two Strifes (11-26); admonition to Perses, 27-41 or -46; Prometheus-Pandora myth, 42- or 47-105.

¹ Of two MS variants, editors invariably print the dative Πέρση, but a long line of other commentators (e.g., Blümer II 24-25 n. 15) prefers the vocative Πέρση.

² I follow a common construal of ἀπράζων ἐφόρεις, but others say that Perses has continued to carry off goods up to the present; still others, that he has (only) attempted to do so.

³ The received view (e.g., West *ad loc.*) is that v. 93 is spurious, but recently some authorities (in particular, Arrighetti *ad loc.*) have defended it.

⁴ ἄλλα has traditionally been construed as adjectival, with the implication that Elpis is also evil, but I take it to be adverbial. Still others consider it adjectival but referred to vv. 90-95 rather than 96-99, so that the silent diseases are "other" than any evils associated with opening the jar.

Recent readings of the poem in general and of vv. 1-105 in particular:

Bartlett (2006): In general: Hesiod starts from a desire to show his brother Perses the best way of life, but in the process must speak at length on justice (thus anticipating political philosophy as such); however, a Muses-backed poet is also needed, to actually interpret justice. In particular: In spite of a certain lack of clarity the proemium leads us to expect that the next portion will speak of Zeus and justice (181); the conflict with Perses is “the immediate occasion or cause” of the poem (181), but the discussion of two kinds of Strife shows the goodness of work in general (182); and the Prometheus-Pandora verses constitute a “counterpart” to the myth in *Theogony*, although the idea that Pandora represents woman is stressed less, while her action with the jar means that humans are condemned to “hope” to transcend their mortality, but in vain (185).

Manakidou (2006): In general: The sole organizing principle of the poem is to show how its various components bear out the distinction between the positive and the negative in Hesiod’s worldview. In particular: The result of the proemium is that henceforth in the poem (I translate) “paraenetic poetry has the central role, and the appearance of the mortal poetic subject and his immediate apostrophe to an addressee are absolutely predictable from” the proemium (293). Differentiation into two Strifes is probably dictated by the proemium’s desire for truth, but their common parentage shows the poet’s faith that positive and negative are intimately connected, so that he needs to present the example of the Strifes programmatically before the poem proceeds with the first apostrophe to its main recipient (295-96). Also, while to be sure both Strifes can exist simultaneously in the world of gods, in that of humans one must choose between them (299). The specific dispute with Perses is the point “for which the poem arises and presupposes as its occasion” (300). As to Prometheus-Pandora, the description is especially marked by stress on the omnipotence of Zeus (310-11), but as Pandora effectively becomes his stand-in she comes to embody the poem’s characteristic simultaneous presence of positive and negative within herself, in that she has a positive external appearance but negative inner traits (311-12). As to Elpis remaining in the jar, the ambiguities are so pronounced as to show that it is up to humans to determine the meaning (313-14),

Most (2006, xxxvi-xxlvii): In general: The poem “provides an exhortation ... to revere justice and to work hard, and indicates how success ... can be achieved by observing certain rules” (xxxvi), and it does so with “a characteristically original version of a [pre-existing] genre of wisdom literature (xlvi). In particular: The proemium extols Zeus and announces the “project” of proclaiming the truth; Perses should shift his allegiance from the bad Strife to the good; and “the Prometheus-Pandora myth” shows why “men suffer illness and must work for a living” (xlvi).

Cassanmagnago (2009, 42-63): In general: The poem features as “themes” the two Strifes, Prometheus and Pandora, the five races (vv. 106-201), and the “trinomial” of Zeus-*dikê*- work; this is expressed in a largely mythical way, but there are “pre-philosophical features” in that the mention of concepts such as *kairos* and *nomos* goes

beyond their mere application in ritualistic prescription. In particular: The dramatic juxtaposition of “you” (Zeus) and “I” in v. 10 says that the truth will be communicated in the sequel, but with the hope that Zeus will do his part (42); the dispute with Perses is the “trigger” (*avvio*) of the poem (46); by opposing the bad Strife Hesiod implicitly opposes the aristocracy that is the nucleus of epic, as being little more than animalistic (47); the Pandora story means that woman is the giver both of life and of death, and Elpis remaining in the jar leaves humanity “cold comfort” (*magra consolazione*) (48-49).

Clay (2009): In general: The poem is marked by a progressive constriction of its sphere of interest from the defining myths of the world, to humans in society, to the immediate concerns of the individual household, to the lowest human physiological functions; it peaks primarily with the implication that the narrator is *panaristos* at v. 293, but a secondary peak occurs momentarily at the poet’s statement of his victory in a contest at 651-62. In particular: The proemium “indicates a cooperative venture [between Zeus and the narrator] involving a division of labor that will structure the following composition” (74); the matter of two Strifes “is but the first example ... whereby one and the same concept may have a positive and negative side” (74); and “the Prometheus story ... explains the human imperative to work” as well as the origin of the evils for humans (76). “Hope” remaining in the jar mirrors the seductive presence of Pandora herself, albeit it makes human mortality bearable (77-78).

Ercolani (2010-2011): In general: the poem is a testimonial in epic form to a Greek wisdom tradition; it has no cohesion or unity. In particular: the focus of vv. 1-10 on Zeus fits well as a proemium to this poem since he both supervises justice and is a chthonic deity who is concerned with farming (2010, 119-20). The bifurcation into two Strifes is one example among others in our poem of *Begriffsspaltung*, whereby a concept is positive or negative according the point of view that considers it; it is dangerous to assume a correction to *Theogony* given that both poems draw on traditional material (2010, 124-25). The historicity of the conflict with Perses is a secondary question, whereas his presence in the poem assists persuading the listener of its precepts because he is a sort of *Sitz-am-Leben* of these teachings (2010, 49-51). As to Prometheus and Pandora, the narrative is another version of that occurring in *Theogony*, although this does not require the reconstruction of a single unique myth; the version we have is “the charter myth of social life” and as such, among other things, “justifies and imposes the necessity of work” (2010, 141), with no hard distinction between practical and ethical aspects (2011, 28); the jar contained evils, and some interpretations that say it contained provisions “do not convince” (2010, 154-55); and the principal interpretations of the retention of *elpis* (which should not be personified) have various arguments for and against them (2010, 156-58), as do still other interpretations (2011, 34-35).

#3 Against some features of the traditional view

(a) On the idea that vv. 1-10 preface the poem:

First, *WD* 9-10 read:

κλῦθι ἰδὼν ἀϊῶν τε, δίκη δ' ἴθυνε θέμιστας
τύνη· ...

Heed, watch and listen, and straighten decisions with justice,
you! ...

But this seems to be a simple allusion to *Th.* 84-86:

... οἱ δέ τε λαοὶ
πάντες ἐς αὐτὸν ὀρώσι διακρίνοντα θέμιστας
ἰθείησι δίκησιν· ...

... And the people,
all of them, look toward (the Muse-inspired king) as he makes decisions
with straight justice.

Secondly, some commentators have indicated that even if the Zeus praised by vv. 3-8 is not the subject of the poem per se, at least he is a subtext; in particular, Clay (above, #2), asserts that the “you-I” juxtaposition of v. 10 prefigures a division of labor that will pertain in the poem. However, all this seems belied by the fact that (as Clay 72-72 acknowledges) Zeus becomes more distant as the poem proceeds; this point has made by many: see especially Beall (2004), who asserts that Zeus does not even govern the sphere treated in the part of the poem that upholds superstitious traditions, 724-59. Finally, most commentators admit that the so-called proemium deviates from the form of such openings as manifested in, e.g., the Homeric Hymns; see most recently Cassanmagnago 948 n. 5.

(b) The idea that the two Strifes determine the poem might be thought supported by Manakidou’s treatment (#2 above), although as she notes dichotomy is already present in the so-called proemium before they are discussed. In general, one might feel that to assign the entire poem to determination by this short segment is overly sweeping.

(c) As to the Prometheus-Pandora verses, as will be discussed shortly there is too much in them that does not correspond to the myth in the other poem to say that they merely constitute another “version” of “the” story. (The view that they do so appears to presuppose an opinion that the early Greeks canonized their myths as did the Hebrews with the stories in the Book of Genesis, for which there is no evidence.) The majority of commentators say in particular that this version begins with “the gods” hiding the means of livelihood at v. 42, not with Zeus acting against Prometheus beginning in 47, but these writers (like the so-called Euhemerists of the Greek Hellenistic period) are confusing the genre of aphoristic statements about what the world is like with the genre of stories. Finally, the wide-spread notion that the so-called version given in our poem is for the purpose of explaining the need for labor falters in the first place because if so, it does this poorly (see #12 below) and in the second place because this explanation is not required: the primacy of justice contained in the succeeding material in the poem explains the need quite well; see Beall (2005-2006, 169-70), with further references.

For further discussion with references, see Beall (2003, Chaps. 1, 2).

#4 WD 11-12:

οὐκ ἄρα μῶνον ἔην Ἑρίδων γένος, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν
εἰσὶ δύο ...

So there was not only one kind of Strife; rather, on earth
there are two. ...

17: τὴν δ' ἐτέρην προτέρην μὲν ἐγείνατο Νύξ ἐρεβεννή.

Gloomy Night bore that one first.

Th. 224-25:

Νύξ ὀλοή· μετὰ τὴν δ' Ἀπάτην τέκε Φιλότητα
Γῆρας τ' οὐλόμενον, καὶ Ἑριν τέκε καρτερόθυμον.

Deadly Night (bore Indignation); and after that one she bore Deceit and
Friendship
and hateful Old Age, and she bore hard-hearted (or: stout-hearted⁵) Strife.

#5 For WD 14 ἡ μὲν γὰρ πόλεμόν τε κακὸν καὶ δῆριν ὀφέλλει, “for the one (Strife) stirs up evil war and conflict,” cf. *Il.* 4.14, 82, *Od.* 24.475. Also, it is easy to believe that τοῦ κε κορεσσάμενος (“glutted with that [stored grain you might engage in quarrels],” WD 33) has in mind τὴν κε κορεσσάμεθα (“[Priam and his wife] might have had a surfeit [of mourning if their son Hector’s death had not been so ignoble],” *Il.* 22.427).

#6 Athena Parthenos draws on a pre-Hesiodic Pandora; see Berczelly (cf. Connelly 72-76), so that we may infer that in describing her Hesiod alludes innovatively to a tradition other than what is cited in *Theogony*. To be sure, some art historians simply assume that the sculpture follows the Hesiodic representation; see especially Hurwit 235-45.

#7 On the previous jar story as a typical First Woman myth, see Beall (1991, 365 with ns. 55, 56).

#8 V. 105, οὕτως οὐ τί πη ἔστι Διὸς νόον ἐξαλέασθαι.

Thus in no way is the mind of Zeus to be evaded.

⁵ The normal epic meaning of καρτερόθυμος.

Th. 613, ὥς οὐκ ἔστι Διὸς κλέψαι νόον οὐδὲ παρελθεῖν.

Thus the mind of Zeus is not to be stolen or gotten around.

Od. 9.411, νοῦσον γ' οὐ πῶς ἔστι Διὸς μεγάλου ἀλέασθαι.

In no way is the disease of great Zeus to be avoided (whereas in our case diseases have just been cited at *WD* 103-4).

#9 Artistry in the proemium, vv. 3-8:

ὄν τε διὰ βροτοὶ ἄνδρες ὁμνῶς ἄφατοι τε φατοὶ τε
ῤῥητοὶ τ' ἄρρητοὶ τε Διὸς μέγαλοιο ἔκητι.
ῤῥέα μὲν γὰρ βριάει, ῤῥέα δὲ βριάοντα χαλέπτει,
ῤῥεῖα δ' ἀρίζηλον μινύθει δαὶ ἄδηλον ἀέξει,
ῤῥεῖα δέ τ' ἰθύνει σκολὶδὸν καὶ ἀγήνορα κάρφει,
Ζεὺς ὑπιβρεμέτης ὃς ὑπέρτατα δώματα ναίει.

Through him are mortal men (made) not-prominent and prominent alike,
famed and not-famed by the will of great Zeus.
For easily he strengthens, and easily brings down the strong,
and easily the illustrious diminishes and the obscure increases,
and yes easily straightens the crooked and the haughty withers,
does Zeus the high-thunderer, who dwells in the highest house.

Aside from the anaphora with ῤῥέα/ῤῥεῖα, note the pairing of opposites ἄφατοι and φατοὶ, etc. in 4-7. There is also word play between διὰ in 3 and Δί' (“[the Muses are to sing] of Zeus”) in 2, and polyptoton (impressive to the Greek ear) involving that Δία, Διὸς in 4, and Ζεὺς in 8. For recent discussion see Beall (2003, Chap. 1), Tsagalis (2006, 187-89; 2009, 142-43), Manakidou 290-92, and (somewhat differently) Ercolani (2010, 29-32).

#10 Artistry in the plan for making the creature. The two male deities Hephaestus and Hermes who are to be involved are named at the *beginning* of a verse, at vv. 60 and 69, respectively, while the two females Athena and Aphrodite are named at the *end* of a verse in between citing the males, at 63 and 65, respectively; see Nicolai 29-30.

#11 Vv. 106-7:

εἰ δ' ἐθέλεις, ἕτερον τοι ἐγὼ λόγον ἐκκορυφώσω,
εἶ καὶ ἐπισταμένος, σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλ्लεο σῆσιν.

If you will, I will thoroughly-relate⁶ to you another *logos*
well and skillfully, and you store it in your heart.

(V. 108 adds a sentiment about something being the same for gods and humans; it is controversial both as to meaning and as to authenticity.)

#12 On the so-called Prometheus-Pandora narrative explaining the need for work, the only possible mention of work in the latter part of the lines in question is the *πόνος* at v. 91, which was far from men before Pandora. The root meaning of the word is “pain,” even though Verdenius *ad loc.* indeed takes it to include labor. See further Most (1993, 88-89).

#13 *h. Hermes* 420- 28 (after Hermes has begun to play his lyre without singing):

... γέλασσε δὲ Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων
γηθήσας, ἐρατὴ δὲ διὰ φρένας ἤλυθ' ἰωὴ
θεσπεσίης ἐνοπιῆς καὶ μιν γλυκὺς ἕμερος ἦρει
θυμῶ ἀκουάζοντα· λύρη δ' ἐρατὸν κιθαρίζων
στῆ ῥ' ὅ γε θαρσήσας ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ Μαιάδος υἱὸς
Φοίβου Ἀπόλλωνος· τάχα δὲ λιγέως κιθαρίζων
γηρύετ' ἀμβολάδην, ἐρατὴ δέ οἱ ἔσπετο φωνή, κραίνων
ἀθανάτους τε θεοὺς καὶ γαῖαν ἐρεμνὴν,
ὡς τὰ πρῶτα γένοντο καὶ ὡς λάχε μοῖραν ἕκαστος.

... Phoebus Apollo laughed
in his joy: the lovely sound went to his innards
from the divine music, and sweet longing seized
his heart from listening; and then, playing his lyre pleasantly,
the emboldened son of Maia stood to the left
of Phoebus Apollo and forthwith, playing clearly,
sang as a prelude⁷ – and pleasantly his voice followed – treating
the immortal gods and dark earth,
how they first arose and how each got his portion.

Cf. Power 186-87, where he considers that what Hermes sings in vv. 427-33, i.e., before Apollo speaks, is the proemium. (To be sure, this would imply that Hermes never gets to the main song, although others interpret 427-33 to be an actual song, most recently Richardson 206 – although, paradoxically, he agrees with the construal of ἀμβολάδην as indicating a prelude.) On the general subject see Power 185-200.

⁶ West *ad loc.* and others believe the verb ἐκκορυφώσω simply means “summarize,” but my translation assumes that ἐκ- is an intensive prefix; see Beall (2003, Chap. 3 n.2).

⁷ So Power (186-87) and others, although some render ἀμβολάδην as something like “lifting (his voice).”

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