BOOK REVIEW

Hesiod's Theogony: From Near Eastern Creation Myths to Paradise Lost. By STEPHEN SCULLY. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xi + 268. Hardcover, $85. ISBN 978-0-19-025396-7.

This ambitious book spans two important areas of Hesiodic scholarship. The one is concerned with Near Eastern sources or antecedents of Hesiod's Theogony. Groundbreaking studies such as Peter Walcot's Hesiod and the Near East and Martin West's commentary on the Theogony (both 1966) established Hesiod's Near Eastern connection as a scholarly field, now so central to the debate that it warranted its own chapter in the 2009 Brill Companion to Hesiod (Ian Rutherford's "Hesiod and the literary traditions of the Near East"). More recent still, and of particular relevance to Scully's theme, is Carolina López-Ruiz's 2010 When the Gods Were Born: Greek Cosmogonies and the Near East.

Such studies, however, look only back. Scully takes the discussion further, by looking not only to Hesiod's predecessors but also to his successors, crossing into a second scholarly field: that concerned with the reception of Hesiod's poetry. There has been a recent wave of interest in Hesiodic reception, some of which has focused on a particular author (George Boys-Stones' and Johannes Haubold's Plato and Hesiod, 2010; Ioannis Ziogas' Ovid and Hesiod: The Metamorphosis of the Catalogue of Women, 2010), some on the reception of the Works and Days (Richard Hunter's 2014 Hesiodic Voices) or even of one passage of the Works and Days (Helen Van Noorden's 2015 Playing Hesiod: The 'Myth of the Races' in Classical Antiquity). Scully's book is the first of the wave to focus on the reception of the Theogony.

In his Introduction, Scully does an impressive job of integrating Hesiodic cosmogony with Freudian psychology, Darwinism, and the latest discoveries in astrophysics, effortlessly making archaic texts current and relatable while drawing attention to their complexities (they are "bolder" and "more expansive" than Freud's myths, 8). No student could fail to engage with the Theogony on some level (if not many) after being taken on this whistle-stop tour, and reading Scul-

ly's Introduction has certainly made me think differently about how I might present Hesiod's poetry.

Chapter 1 offers an initial comparison of the Theogony and Genesis. Scully writes: "the ancient understanding of monotheism gravitates towards a polytheism of sorts … Greek polytheism equally gravitates towards monotheism" (22–23)—just one of many examples of the author's ability to boil down complex concepts without reducing them. Quite the contrary: such synthetic statements seem to add impact, and to challenge our way of thinking about the ancient world. General themes are identified, and begin to shape the book and our approach to the texts. At page 28 Scully writes: "we could characterize both creation myths as being concerned with balance." They share many other characteristics too, but Scully is leading us towards a particular reading.

That reading focuses on "civic lessons" (18) and the polis. Throughout the book, Scully foregrounds "the civic orientation of the Theogony" (27), and in Chapter 2 he approaches it as "a political poem and a hymn to Zeus" (30). Other readings, such as that which treats Olympus as an oikos or family unit, are acknowledged but ultimately sidelined in favour of a polis structure. This is the only chapter dedicated exclusively to the Theogony, and as such a strict focus is unavoidable. The result is the author's personal take on the poem (e.g. "The Theogony, as I read it … ," 47), tracing a certain trajectory: "a poet moving toward philosophy … turning a mythic story into something approaching political science and political allegory" (30).

This "civic orientation" is only one thread: but it is one to which the subsequent chapters can neatly be tied. Near Eastern parallels, with which Chapter 3 is concerned, are approached not only as succession myths but more specifically as city-state succession myths: and, again, "comparing the Theogony to the Enûma Elish enables us to articulate more fully how, in addition to being a creation myth, Hesiod's poem is also a hymn to Zeus and a hymn to Olympus" (63). In the incredibly rich fourth chapter ("The Theogony in the Archaic and Classical Periods"), Scully focuses on "Hesiod's concern for social justice and concord" (121), tracing his abiding influence from Parmenides to Pindar, Anaximander to Aeschylus. Chapter 5 continues with the Hellenistic and Roman periods, complementing the comprehensive survey of ancient literature with a consideration of the Theogony in the Arts and in education.

The most compelling chapter of Scully's book is the sixth, which takes the Theogony out of the Late-Antique "shadows of literary history" and follows its renaissance from the Byzantine period on. In the final section on Milton's Para-

dise Lost, Scully slows the pace and returns to close reading as in the initial chapter on the Theogony itself: indeed the argument that Paradise Lost "owes as much to Hesiod as it does to Genesis" (178) brings us full circle to the comparisons of Chapter 1. In this case study of Hesiodic reception, Scully provides a nuanced analysis that shows Milton "writing through and against the pagan poem" (171).

To examine the Theogony, its antecedents, and its reception, all within fewer than 300 pages, is no mean feat. Necessarily, much of the analysis is cursory, and the reader becomes acquainted with many of the texts through synopsis and paraphrase. This contrasts with for example the close reading of the Near Eastern sources provided by Johannes Haubold's Greece and Mesopotamia (2013), and may leave some readers wanting more detail: but one cannot, of course, have everything in one book. With its diachronic structure, this book tells a story. It is a story which has a distinct way of carrying the reader along with it, and by the final pages one cannot help but join with the author in lamenting the passing of ancient Greek polytheism, and the loss of the memory of a "pagan vision of Olympian paradise" (183).

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