Narrative manipulation of Medea and Metis in Hesiod's *Theogony*

Medea might reasonably be called one of the most famous female figures of Greek mythology, yet her representation wavers between that of innocent girl, such as in in the Apollonian tradition, and cold infanticide, such as in the Euripidean tradition. Her earliest textual and iconographic representations already anticipate this complexity. While Medea is apparently represented as an innocent girl in the earliest Argonautic account, that of Hesiod's *Theogony*,[1] her earliest 'Corinthian' representations rather seem to depict an authoritative queen with magical, witch-like powers: in Eumelus' *Corinthiaca*, probably composed at some time between the eigth and the middle of the sixth century BC, Jason rules only 'through her',[2] and she (unsuccessfully) attempts to immortalize her children.[3] In sixth-century iconography, she rejuvenates a ram and kills Pelias. Her potential presence in eighth-century BC Corinthian cult further complicates matters. Graf and Johnston argue for the precedence of a Colchian Medea as part of the Argonautic myth; Farnell and Will argue for the precedence of a Medea based in Corinth; and West, following Wilamowitz, maintains that two Medeas originally coexisted and merged by the Archaic era.[5]

While this chapter will not engage with the discussion of Medea's origins, since they are impossible to trace, it will demonstrate that her Hesiodic representation is more similar to her earliest Corinthian depictions and to the Euripidean tradition than may appear at first reading. I will also engage with the scholarly debate regarding the authenticity of the ending of the *Theogony*, since this is where Medea is mentioned. I propose that my re-evaluation of

[1] The story of the Argo is referred to at *Odyssey* 12,70 (Ἀργὼ πᾶσι μέλουσα, 'Argo known to all'), but Medea herself is not mentioned in the Homeric epics. Graf 1997 and Johnston 1997 ignore Medea's absence. Petroff 1966, 6, argues that Medea does not need an introduction. Huxley 1969, 61, and Hall 1989, 35, maintain that Medea must be a post-Homeric creation on the basis of the Homeric figure of Agamede (*Il.* 11,741). See also Gordon 1999, 179, on the connection between Medea and Agamede.

[2] Paus. 2,3,10: δι' αὐτήν, *i.e.* through her kinship with Helios, whom Eumelus depicts as the first king of Corinth.

[3] *Corinthiaca* (fr. 1-9 *EGF*) is dated by Huxley 1969, 64, to the eighth century BC; by Graf 1997, 34, to the seventh; and by West 2002, 109, to the middle of the sixth century BC. On Eumelus, see *infra*.

[5] Graf 1997, 37-38; Johnston 1997, 65-67; Farnell 1896-1909, 1.401-404; Will 1955, 103-118; West 2002, 123-124; Wilamowitz 1924, 234.

her Hesiodic function has implications for our understanding of both Medea's status in early Greek myth and the narrative structures of the *Theogony*, in which I will argue she plays a significant part.

Medea in Hesiod' *Theogony*

In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Medea is mentioned twice near the end of the poem: first in her genealogy (*Theog.* 956-962.),[6] and shortly afterwards, at the end of a list of deathless goddesses who have offspring with mortals (965-968),[7] as Jason's wife in an Argonautic context (*Theog.* 992-1002):

> κούρην δ' Αἰήταο διοτρεφέος βασιλῆος
> Αἰσονίδης βουλῇσι θεῶν αἰειγενετάων
> ἦγε παρ' Αἰήτεω, τελέσας στονόεντας ἀέθλους,
> τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐπέτελλε μέγας βασιλεὺς ὑπερήνωρ,
> ὑβριστὴς Πελίης καὶ ἀτάσθαλος ὀβριμοεργός·
> τοὺς τελέσας ἐς Ἰωλκὸν ἀφίκετο πολλὰ μογήσας
> ὠκείης ἐπὶ νηὸς ἄγων ἑλικώπιδα κούρην
> Αἰσονίδης, καί μιν θαλερὴν ποιήσατ' ἄκοιτιν.
> καί ῥ' ἥ γε δμηθεῖσ' ὑπ' Ἰήσονι ποιμένι λαῶν
> Μήδειον τέκε παῖδα, τὸν οὔρεσιν ἔτρεφε Χείρων
> Φιλλυρίδης· μεγάλου δὲ Διὸς νόος ἐξετελεῖτο.
>
> It was the daughter of Aeëtes, the Zeus-nurtured king,
> whom the son of Aeson, by the will of the immortal gods,
> led away from Aeëtes, when he had finished the many wretched tasks
> which the great overbearing king had imposed upon him,
> Pelias, hubristic and arrogant aggressor.
> When he had finished these, he arrived in Iolcus, having suffered greatly,
> and bringing on his swift ship the girl with darting eyes,
> the son of Aeson made her into his young wife.
> She, indeed, subdued by Jason, the shepherd of men,
> bore Medeus, a son, whom Cheiron, son of Phillyra, raised
> in the mountains. And the purpose of great Zeus was being accomplished.

The discrepancies between Hesiod's narrative and later accounts of the Argonautic tale are striking: while Medea is brought only as far as Iolcus in the *Theogony*, in later texts she

[6] See the section 'Cunning Medea' below.
[7] θεάων φῦλον ... ὅσσαι δὴ θνητοῖσι παρ' ἀνδράσιν εὐνηθεῖσαι | ἀθάναται γείναντο θεοῖς ἐπιείκελα τέκνα (*Theogony* 965-968).

travels around the Greek world (to Iolcus, Corinth, Athens, and then back to Media).[8] In Hesiod, she has only one son with Jason, while she bears two in later traditions.[9] The Hesiodic tale ends with the marriage of Medea and Jason in Iolcus and the birth of their son, creating what one might call a 'happy ending', in sharp contrast with the Euripidean tradition in which Jason abandons Medea, who in her turn commits infanticide. Moreover, contrary to post-Archaic depictions, Medea is at *Theogony* 956-962 a goddess by genealogy.[10] And not only is there no trace of magical abilities or sinister behaviour in Hesiod's depiction of her, but Medea is represented as a passive female, passed from father to husband.

On the surface, no image could be further away from her post-Hesiodic representations. One might argue that Hesiod's agenda accounts for this summary depiction: the *Theogony*, aiming to provide an account of the rise to power of Zeus and of the divine genealogies, would naturally not be concerned with unnecessary elaboration on individual myths of minor figures.But I will presently propose that underneath this summary image a more powerful and potentially more sinister representation of Medea can be exposed.

In order to explore Medea's function in the *Theogony*, it is first necessary to discuss the status of the ending of the poem. For the two passages in which Medea is mentioned form part of the final section of the poem, the authenticity of which is still debated. The current debate harks back to West,[11] who maintained that Hesiod's *Theogony* ends at line 929 and that what follows was written by an inferior post-Hesiodic poet in the sixth century BC. In terms of structure, West argued that the catalogue of goddesses who bear children to mortal men is closer to the *Catalogue of Women* than to the *Theogony*. He found the style of the list 'homogeneously bare and characterless', noting that four formulae concerning marriage

[8] Graf 1997, 21-22.
[9] Their traditional names are Mermerus and Pheres, e.g. in Paus. 2,3,6.
[10] Also in Alcman (*PMGF* 163) and Musaeus (*FGrH* 455 F 2).
[11] West 1966, 48-50.

occur in only this list.[12] West's most persuasive argument is that certain mythological figures have to be connected with historical events which place them in the sixth century: this has a direct impact on any reading of the Medea passages. West proposes that Medea's son, Medeus (1001), must be interpreted as the eponymous founder of the Medes, a historical tribe situated to the South of Colchis, not far from Medea's land of origin. Medea's grandmother, Perseis (956), moreover, might be associated with the Persians. West argues that 'a genealogy that links the names Mede and Persian […] would be hard to imagine before Cyrus' defeat of Astyages in 553 or 549'.[13] According to this interpretation, the figure of Medeus – and hence the Medea passage – belongs to the second half of the sixth century, postdating the seventh-century date traditionally assigned to the *Theogony*.[14] West's historical interpretation is tempting, particularly considering the geographical proximity of Colchis and Media, as well as the similarity between the names of Medea and the Medes.[15] However, his interpretation of the phrase 'and the purpose of great Zeus was being accomplished' (1002) as referring to the exalted future of Medeus as king of the Medes requires further examination.

West's entry for this line reads as follows:[16] 'cf. *h. Herm.* 10, *Il.* 1,5, *Cypr.* 1,7. Phrases of this kind are mostly found in passages where a story is briefly alluded to, see Kirk, *Songs of Homer*, p. 165. There seems to be an implication of some great destiny in store for Medeios. So sch. ἐξετελεῖτο τοῦ Διὸς νοῦς ἵνα βασιλεύσῃ τῶν Μήδων ('The purpose of Zeus was being accomplished so he might rule over the Medes').'[17] While West suggests that this

[12] E.g. μιχθεῖσ' ἐν φιλότητι, 'mingling in love' and διὰ χρυσῆν Ἀφροδίτην, 'through golden Aphrodite'.
[13] West 1966, 430.
[14] West finds parallels to Medeus later in the *Theogony*, in the figures of Phocus (*Theog.* 1004), the eponymous founder of Phocis, and Latinus, Odysseus' son by Circe (*Theog.* 1012) and one of the early Latin kings. For Latinus, see also Virg. *Aen.* 7. See Moorton 1988, 253-259.
[15] References to Medea or Medeus in connection with the Medes are found in later literature: Herodotus, for example, narrates that the Medes were first called Arians but changed their name when Medea arrived among them. Hdt. 7,62. See also Strabo 11,536.
[16] West 1966, *ad* 1002.
[17] West's reference to Kirk 1962, 165, does not add much to support his argument. Kirk does not discuss this specific phrase, but rather other Homeric phrases such as θεῶν ὑπ' ἀμύμονι πομπῇ ('under the blameless escort of the gods', *Il.* 6,171) and ἐπισπόμενοι θεοῦ ὀμφῇ ('following the voice of a god', *Od.* 3,215). He argues that these phrases are used when mortals assume they are being aided by one of the gods, but are unsure of their

line ties in neatly with his historicizing reading of the ending of the *Theogony*, his references to other Archaic texts are in fact more complex than appears at first sight.

In the *Iliad*, a slightly different phrase is used, namely Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή, 'the plan of Zeus was being fulfilled'.[18] At *Iliad* 1,5, this 'plan' refers to the poem's narrative in the first instance, but potentially also to the Trojan War as a whole, which caused the deaths of countless heroes.[19] While the reason behind Zeus' will is left in the background of the Iliadic narrative, the execution thereof is narrated in twenty four books; West's statement regarding the 'brief allusion' to a story thus at least understates the narrative complexity of the issue. In the fifth-century *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 10, the same phrase is used as in Hesiod, here to describe the birth of Hermes which resulted from the liaison of his mother Maia with Cronus. As in the *Iliad*, the phrase is used near the beginning of the poem, anticipating Hermes' pivotal role among gods, particularly as god of cunning, as the hymn goes on to narrate.[20] In short, West's attempt to characterize this phrase as a standard way of alluding to stories lacks persuasiveness. The passage concerning Medea is indeed the only passage where this line seems to be used in a brief allusion to a story, which sets it apart from, rather than connects it to, the other two passages. Moreover, the story of Jason and

identity or means of communication. In the Hesiodic phrase, by contrast, the identity of the deity is explicit. Interpreting the phrase generically as 'Zeus was on Medeus' side' must therefore be avoided, particularly since it is contrasted with a more general reference to the gods in the Medea passage, βουλῇσι θεῶν, 'through the plans of the gods' (993; also 960).

[18] I will not dwell on the difference between νόος and βουλή used in the *Theogony* and the *Iliad* respectively: many translators translate both as 'the will' of Zeus (e.g. Evelyn-White 1914, 153; Krevans 1997, 75, n.15). While νόος might rather refer to a general mental disposition and βουλή to an actual plan or design – see West 1966, *ad* 534 and the LSJ entries for both words – the connotational difference between the two terms in this specific phrase appears slight. Cf. n.18.

[19] The scholiast on *Iliad* 1,5 comments that this plan of Zeus mentioned in the *Iliad* aimed to alleviate the pressure placed on Earth by humans by means of a great war which would decrease their numbers. The alleged fragment from the *Cypria* gleaned from the scholion is in actuality a remark by the scholiast on *Iliad* 1,5, and offers the scholiast's plot summary based on the specific line from the *Iliad*; it does not follow necessarily that this phrase was present in the *Cypria* itself. For the plan of Zeus, see e.g. Yasumura 2011, 38, who argues that 'among a multiplicity of possible interpretations of [Zeus'] plan, the reduction of the population of the earth is but one'. She proposes that Zeus' promise to Thetis to favour the Trojans in compensation for Achilles' slight can be seen as another part of Zeus' plan.

[20] E.g. *h. Herm.* 13.

Medea seems rather insignificant compared with the narratives of the Trojan War and of the birth of Hermes.

Furthermore, West's claim that the phrase regarding the fulfilment of Zeus' purpose refers to Medeus' kingship over the Medes disregards the text, which suggests that Medea's union with Jason and the subsequent education of Medeus by Cheiron *both* fulfil Zeus' purpose. West's historical interpretation neglects the thematic connection which the phrase has with the rest of the epic. Those scholars who argue for the spuriousness of the ending of the *Theogony* might consider this as confirmation that this entire passage must have been composed by a post-Hesiodic poet. In the *Iliad* and the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, however, the phrase Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή, 'the will of Zeus was accomplished', or 'the plan of Zeus was being fulfilled', is strongly connected with the unfolding narrative and with Zeus' personal purpose rather than with a general sense that 'there were great things in store'. It should therefore at least be considered that this may also be the case in the *Theogony*. Rather than interpreting this phrase in isolation from the rest of the poem, as relevant solely for Medeus as ruler of the Medes, I will argue that a strong connection can be revealed between the entire Medea passage (not merely Medeus) and the main agenda of the *Theogony*.

In summary, none of West's arguments is conclusive, and in contrast to Faraone and Teeter's claim that there exists 'a long-standing modern scholarly consensus' regarding the ending of the *Theogony*,[21] many scholars have argued for the authenticity of the poem's ending.[22] In what follows, I will consider the *Theogony* as it exists in its present shape as genuine, including the ending and hence the Medea passages. The question whether they were composed by Hesiod or a post-Hesiodic poet does not affect my argument; nevertheless, my exploration of Medea's Hesiodic function will add strength to the argument regarding the unity of the poem.

[21] Faraone and Teeter 2004, 178.
[22] e.g. Dräger 1993, 27; Arrighetti 1998, 445-447; Malkin 1998, 180-191; and Clay 2003, 162-164.

Medea and the *telos* of Hesiod's *Theogony*

Clay argues that the *Theogony* is not merely concerned with listing all the different divine genealogies, but focuses specifically on narrating the attainment and preservation of Zeus' hegemony. This is discernible in a summary of the epic (which includes the ending as authentic):[23]

1-115	Invocation of the Muses as Zeus' daughters;
116-403	Pre-Olympian genealogies, including the birth of monsters which are slain by heroes; the castration of Uranus by Cronus;
404-52	Portrayal of Hecate as intermediary between the realms of earth, sky, and sea because of Zeus;
453-506	Zeus' birth and struggle for supremacy with his father, Cronus;
507-616	Zeus outwits Prometheus;
617-880	Zeus' war against the Titans and Typhoeus;
881-929	Kingship of Zeus and his marriages, including Zeus' first marriage, to Metis;
930-62	Other unions of deities, including genealogy of Medea;
963-1020	List of goddesses who begot offspring with mortal men, including Medea's marriage to Jason.

Hesiod as narrator clearly manipulates the narrative – and particularly the chronology of events – in order to highlight the teleological nature of the cosmos, its τέλος (*telos*, 'fulfilment') being Zeus' supremacy. This manipulation of the narrative is revealed in the descriptions of key figures and events leading up to Zeus' birth. First, the monsters mentioned among the pre-Olympian genealogies are proleptically coupled with the heroes by whom they are later slain, even though those heroes have not yet been born in Hesiod's chronological narrative: Medusa is said to be killed by Perseus (276-286), Geryones and the Hydra by Heracles (289-294 and 316-318), and the Chimaera by Bellerophon (319-325). As

[23] Clay 2003, 12-30.

all three heroes are connected with Zeus,[24] chronology has been ignored to highlight that, while these monsters may temporarily threaten the stability on earth, they will be incapacitated by Zeus' champions. Second, after the narrative concerning Zeus' birth and struggle for supremacy with his father, Cronus (453-506), one would expect the narrative to continue to the Titanomachy. Instead, Hesiod switches to Prometheus' attempt to outwit Zeus (507-616),[25] which chronologically succeeds the Titanomachy.[26] This strategic story about Zeus' struggle with a potential rival (Prometheus is of the same generation as Zeus and also Titan offspring) again emphasizes Zeus' central place in the cosmos. Only after this story does the narrator return to the Titanomachy and the eventual surrender of the Titans to the Olympians.

Through carefully sustained manipulation of the narrative, Hesiod thus emphasizes Zeus' supremacy as *telos* of the cosmos.[27] Derivatives of the term *telos* indeed appear at strategic points in the narrative. When Gaia asks which of her children will castrate their father, Cronus replies: 'mother, I would promise to fulfill (τελέσαιμι) this task'.[28] Zeus' confrontation with Prometheus is described similarly: seeing through Prometheus' initial deception regarding the division of the sacrificial animal, Zeus 'forethought evils in his mind for mortal men, which he was also about to fulfil (τελέεσθαι)', referring to the creation of Pandora as a punishment for Prometheus' transgression.[29] The defeat of the Titans and Typhoeus, finally, is also connected with the *telos* of the *Theogony* (881-885):

[24] Perseus and Bellerophon through Pegasus' 'status' among the Olympians (285-286 and 325); Heracles as he is the son of Zeus (316) who will later be honoured by his father (526).
[25] Clay 2003, 100. See also Hamilton 1989, 39.
[26] In Aesch. *PB* 218, Prometheus assisted Zeus during the Titanomachy. It was only afterwards, at Mecone, that Prometheus tricked Zeus.
[27] The notion of Zeus *teleios*, the Completer, was already present in the *Iliad*, and particularly developed in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. See Rosenmeyer 1982, 278-279.
[28] *Theog.* 170-171.
[29] *Theog.* 551-552.

αὐτὰρ ἐπεί ῥα πόνον μάκαρες θεοὶ ἐξετέλεσσαν,
Τιτήνεσσι δὲ τιμάων κρίναντο βίηφι,
δή ῥα τότ᾽ ὤτρυνον βασιλευέμεν ἠδὲ ἀνάσσειν
Γαίης φραδμοσύνῃσιν Ὀλύμπιον εὐρύοπα Ζῆν
ἀθανάτων.

But when the blessed gods had accomplished their toil,
and decided on honours through battle with the Titans,
they then indeed urged to be king and rule over the immortals,
through the cunning of Gaia, Olympian far-seeing Zeus.

With the threats of instability removed, the *telos* of the cosmos seems now to have been accomplished: when the battles against the Titans and Typhoeus have been concluded, Zeus becomes king of the gods. Again, the verb τελέω (‘fulfil’) is used, here of the gods in the plural, now with the prefix ἐκ-. While the difference between the two verbs is minimal, the use of the compound verb ἐκτελέω – in contrast with the basic τελέω used in the individual episodes of Cronus and Prometheus – emphasizes the ending of an entire cycle and the establishment of Zeus’ reign. It should be noted that the prefix is used only in this context – and in the Medea passage. This links the Medea passage with the *telos* of the cosmos as interpreted by Hesiod. Compared with the defeat of the Titans and Typhoeus, however, which brings an end to the succession struggles, Medea’s marriage to Jason and the birth of their son seem, as staed above, rather insignificant.

Monstrous Medea

There is, however, another link to the *telos* of the cosmos in the Medea passage. Jason’s journey to Aeëtes’ land is represented as a task to be completed: **τελέσας** στονόεντας ἀέθλους (‘when he had finished the many wretched tasks’ 994). This specific phrase occurs in one other passage in the *Theogony*, namely the description of Heracles’ labours (951). A

link can therefore be established between the two heroes, since, in their respective myths, they both accomplish impossible tasks and marry a goddess. Clay argues that heroes can be interpreted as Zeus' allies on earth; for the female's 'continual impetus for change constitutes a radically destabilizing force in the cosmos'.[30] This desire for change derives from the female procreative ability, as exemplified by Gaia: after procreation with Uranus, she first sides with her children (159-210) and then with her grandchildren (469-506), in effect causing the two generational hegemonic clashes. Once he is in power, Zeus therefore deflects any possible threats from divine female sexuality from the immortal realm to earth by marrying goddesses to heroes: hence the list of goddesses who bear children to heroes, in which both Heracles and Jason feature. As guardians of goddesses, these heroes act as Zeus' police force, ensuring the order of the cosmos is upheld. The parallel construction in the narratives concerning Jason and Heracles suggests that both heroes are particularly connected with the *telos* of the cosmos.

Zeus' purpose, however, is not said to be fulfilled merely by the retrieval of the Fleece (the 'wretched task' achieved by Jason), but by Jason's marriage to Medea and the birth and education of Medeus. The term to describe the marriage is ambiguous. Medea is described as δμηθεῖσα (1000) by Jason. This is the aorist passive participle of δάμνημι, 'I tame', 'I subject', generally used to denote the yoking of animals and the marrying of young girls.[31] My suggestion is that when Hesiod uses this verb in reference to women, the verb is not just an established metaphor that denotes marriage but retains its original force of taming, subduing and subjecting. The actions of gods and men subjecting goddesses and women are seen to be in exact parallel with the actions of gods and men who overcome their opponents in other contexts. Eros, for example, subjects (δάμναται, 120-122) the minds of gods and men, Heracles overcomes (ἐδάμασσε, 330-332) the Nemean lion, and Zeus overpowers both

[30] Clay 2003, 17.
[31] Frisk 1960-72, *s.v.* δάμνημι and Chantraine 1968-1980, *s.v.* δάμνημι. For the yoking of animals, see, e.g., *Il.* 23,655. For marrying girls, see, e.g., *Il.* 18,432.

Cronus (δαμῆναι, 463-465) and Typhoeus (δάμασεν, 857-858). The verb is here used to denote the violent conquest of opponents. The narrator mentions also other goddesses who are δμηθεῖσα ('subdued') by their consorts: Echidna by Orthrus (327), Theia by Hyperion (374), Rheia by Cronus (453), Idyia by Aeëtes (962), and Thetis by Peleus (1006-1007). No information is available about the unions of Echidna, Theia, and Idyia. The *Theogony*, however, narrates in detail the dominance of Cronus in his marriage with Rheia through his persistent consumption of their offspring which led to her eventual betrayal of him. Regarding Thetis, other sources reveal that she had been forced to marry Peleus by Zeus, either because Zeus wanted to punish her for rejecting him,[32] or because it had been prophesied that any son she had would be greater than his father.[33] These examples show how, in the *Theogony*, the motif of 'subduing', expressed by forms of δάμνημι, recurs throughout the narrative; the use of δμηθεῖσα to express subjugation in a conjugal context is just one aspect of a larger pattern.[34]

So far, the Medea passage contains two verbal links with the key theme of the *Theogony*. On the one hand, Jason is represented as an ally of Zeus, similar to Heracles, through the connection with the concept of *telos*. On the other hand, Medea is represented as subdued by Jason – much as the Nemean lion was subdued by Heracles, which supports the link between both heroes. Another link exists between Medea and the Nemean Lion, for the lion's mother, the monster Echidna, is the only other figure in the *Theogony*, apart from Medea, who is called ἑλικώπιδα, 'with darting eyes' (307) as well as ὑποδμηθεῖσα (327). While these verbal parallels between both narratives in the *Theogony* suggest Medea incorporates a degree of monstrosity, the explicit threat of the Nemean Lion – also visible in the narratives containing

[32] *Ehoiai* fr. 57 Most.
[33] Pind. *Isth.* 8,30-35. Yasumura 2011, 13-38, argues that this story underlies the narrative of the *Iliad*.
[34] As Bonnafé 1985, 51, argues regarding the use of δμηθεῖσα, 'l'union sexuelle ne scelle pas nécessairement l'alliance [of the goddesses], elle n'implique pas obligatoirement l'échange et une réciprocité de sentiments'.

Thetis and Echidna – is absent from her description. What we find instead is that Medea is described as a passive female: passed from father to husband, she is not even mentioned by name but merely introduced as Aeëtes' κούρη ('daughter').

Cunning Medea

The result of the absence of Medea's name, however, is that the audience is asked to remember her name from a previous – albeit very recent – passage in which her genealogy was described. This representation is unequalled among other female figures in the *Theogony* and suggests a conscious attempt by the narrator to downplay emphatically Medea's importance. By means of parallels with other goddesses as well as monsters, subtle allusions to Medea's threatening status are thus building up, and Medea's genealogy (956-962) offers further glimpses of her ambiguous status:

> Ἠελίῳ δ᾽ ἀκάμαντι τέκεν κλυτὸς Ὠκεανίνη
> Περσηὶς Κίρκην τε καὶ Αἰήτην βασιλῆα.
> Αἰήτης δ᾽ υἱὸς φαεσιμβρότου Ἠελίοιο
> κούρην Ὠκεανοῖο τελήεντος ποταμοῖο
> γῆμε θεῶν βουλῇσιν Ἰδυῖαν καλλιπάρῃον.
> ἣ δέ οἱ Μήδειαν ἐύσφυρον ἐν φιλότητι
> γείναθ᾽ ὑποδμηθεῖσα διὰ χρυσέην Ἀφροδίτην.
>
> To untiring Helios, the famous Perseis, daughter of Oceanus,
> bore Circe and Aeëtes the king.
> Aeëtes, son of Helios who brings light to mortals,
> married the daughter of Oceanus the perfect stream,
> the fair-cheeked Idyia, through the will of the gods.
> She yielded to him[35] in love and bore him Medea
> with the beautiful ankles, through golden Aphrodite.

[35] οἱ ... γείναθ᾽ ὑποδμηθεῖσα – 'subdued by him she bore him'

A Theagenean reading of Medea's genealogy reveals a thematic unity:[36] the union between fire (Helios) and water (Perseis as daughter of Oceanus) results in Aeëtes. His name might be derived from the name of his city, Αἶα, "land", which makes Aeëtes a "man of the earth".[37] The union of water and fire thus results in earth. The name of Aeëtes' wife, Ἰδυῖα, is the perfect active participle of οἶδα, meaning "she who knows". The union of the elements with knowledge results in Medea. Medea's name is connected with the verb μήδομαι, 'I plan', 'I contrive';[38] but a Greek audience may well have seen a further connection with the verbal noun, μῆτις, originally 'measuring', which came to mean 'skill' and 'craftiness', and the denominative μητιάω, 'I deliberate', 'I contrive',[39] regardless of etymology.[40] Kottaridou argues that, similarly to Athena and her mother Metis, the name of Idyia 'bezeichnet … die Haupteigenschaft der Tochter',[41] suggesting that Idyia's name anticipates Medea's knowledge and cleverness.

Idyia's name, Aeëtes' representation as cunning in later texts,[42] and perhaps even Helios' function as solar deity – which traditionally provides him with the ability to see more than others[43] – reveal that Medea's genealogy is not merely connected by an elemental symbolism similar to that of Gaia and Uranus, but also through craftiness. This is vital to our understanding of Medea's function in the *Theogony*, as *mētis* is a key concept in the poem. This concept is traditionally translated as 'craftiness' or 'cunning intelligence', and is often contrasted with βίη ('violence'): while the latter entails a direct, aggressive approach to one's

[36] Petroff 1966, 124.
[37] For alternative etymologies, see Yarnall 1994, 28; Séchan 1927, 235; and TLG *ad* Aeëtes.
[38] *LIV* 423 *s.v.* **med-*; *mē-* in μήδομαι secondary.
[39] *LIV* 424 *s.v.* **meH*$_1$-.
[40] Beekes 2010, 949, argues that the root **meH*$_1$- > **mē-* influenced an original μέδομαι so as to yield μήδομαι.
[41] Kottaridou 1991, 151.
[42] E.g. Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 4,7.
[43] E.g. he is the one who finds Persephone after she has been kidnapped by Hades: *h. Dem.* 74-89.

adversary, *mētis* involves an indirect approach, traditionally deploying trickery, and adaptation and transformation of oneself to changing circumstances.[44]

Medea and Metis

In his quest for hegemony, Zeus encounters different adversaries: his father Cronus, Prometheus, the Titans and the monster Typhoeus, and finally Metis' unborn son, destined to dethrone his father. The confrontations between Zeus and his opponents take place on two contrasting levels. The war between the Olympians and the Titans, as well as Zeus' battle with Typhoeus, are encounters of βίη: the confrontation is direct, and, in both cases, Zeus and the Olympians are victorious. Zeus' confrontations with Cronus, Prometheus, and Metis structurally enclose the armed combats with the Titans and Typhoeus. None of these conflicts takes place on the level of armed combat; they are, rather, battles of intellect, of *mētis*.

In the *Theogony*, one of Zeus' main epithets is μητίετα,[45] derived from the noun *mētis*. Zeus' adversaries, however, are also described as cunning: both Cronus (*Th.* 18, 137, 168, 473, 495) and Prometheus (*Th.* 546) are called ἀγκυλομήτης ('with crooked counsel'), though they are overcome by Zeus' superior cunning.[46] When the threats of the past and present generations of gods have ceased – both through the violent defeat of the Titans and Typhoeus and by outwitting Cronus and Prometheus – the risk remains that an heir will rise to challenge his father in the future. Zeus, warned by Gaia that a male child born from his first wife, Metis, will stand up against him, swallows not his children – as his father had done – but the mother. Thereby, he removes the risk that more children will be born by putting a stop to the

[44] Detienne and Vernant 1978.
[45] E.g. at 56, 286, and 904. I disagree with Faraone and Teeter 2004, 205, who translate this epithet as 'wise in counsel': the epithet lacks a prefix and should hence mean 'having *mētis*'.
[46] Cronus is called thus when he cuts off his father's genitals. Μήδεα can mean both 'male genitals' and 'plans': by ridding his father of his genitals and therefore of his procreative powers, Cronus also thwarts his plan to retain supremacy. Prometheus is also called αἰολόμητις ('with multi-faceted *mētis*' 511).

entire cycle of procreation, and incorporates Metis' feminine reproductive capacity:[47] for Zeus gives birth to Metis' child, Athena, himself, from his head. Athena, too, is endowed with *mētis*, but as her mother has been removed, she sides with the masculine and is hence no threat to her father's hegemony; as virgin goddess, moreover, she will not produce an heir to challenge Zeus.

And while the names of Metis and Medea can be connected by way of folk-etymology, the link between the two figures goes further when considering their genealogy in the context of the Hesiodic narrative of the succession myth. Clay argues that, throughout the *Theogony*, 'alternative cosmologies' are put forward to that of Gaia and Uranus, but that their potential threat to the hegemony of Zeus is immediately rejected; she mentions the lineage of Oceanus and Tethys (334-370) as the most obvious one, and Metis is indeed one of their offspring. Considering the importance of cunning intelligence in the narrative of the *Theogony*, the subduing of Medea by Jason becomes understandable: similarly to Metis' genealogy, Medea's family tree of cunning figures – particularly Helios, Aeëtes, and Idyia – can be interpreted as yet another alternative theogony and a potential threat to the Olympian hegemony.[48]

These alternative genealogies hence do not merely threaten Zeus through their existence, but through their *mētis*, which challenges Zeus' most powerful characteristic. Medea, similarly to Metis, is the strongest representation of cunning in her family, as her name itself apparently represents the concept, and she might be interpreted as the most

[47] *Pace* Faraone and Teeter 2004, who argue for a moralistic reason for Zeus' swallowing of Metis, in parallel with the role of the goddess Maat in Egyptian myth. However, as Hesiod's adaptation of the Near Eastern myth of the Four Ages demonstrates (West 1997, 312-319), adaptation of elements from other cultures' mythologies does not imply the complete transferral of all elements of that myth. Similarly, there is no need to assume that, because of links between the two myths, the role of Metis in the *Theogony* must thus be the same as that of Maat. The Chrysippus fragment 343 which they use as their strongest argument is separate from the *Theogony*. Other discrepancies between Hesiodic writings, e.g. the different treatments of the Pandora myth in the *Theogony* and *Works and Days* (Fraser 2011), suggest one ought not assume that the *Theogony* passage must be read in the same way as the Chrysippus fragment.

[48] Indeed, what Clay ignores is that Metis' genealogy is also connected with cunning not only through Metis herself, but also through Tethys, who, as so many ocean deities, is associated with shape-shifting, a typical feature of *mētis*. See Detienne and Vernant 1978, 142.

dangerous in her threat to Zeus' hegemony. While Metis is subdued by Zeus himself, Medea, as minor goddess, is subdued by the most appropriate hero linked with the Olympians: Jason. For unlike Heracles, known for his strength and hence an appropriate hero to fight the Nemean Lion and other monsters, Jason is represented as a figure of *mētis* himself in other texts and through his genealogy.[49]

Medeus between monster and hero

As Medeus is named after his mother, he also incorporates cunning, at least in name. Traditionally, a son's name refers to his father's characteristics: Telemachus, for example, represents Odysseus' 'battle far away'. However, as Clay argues, names of monsters in the *Theogony* sometimes refer to their mothers instead.[50] Chrysaor, 'golden sword', for example, refers to the way in which the monster's mother, Medusa, was killed. While Medeus' name is based on his mother's rather than connected with her fate, the mere fact that he is named after his mother rather than his father is anomalous and to some extent connects him, like his mother, with the monsters of the *Theogony* rather than with heroes. Considering the links between Medea and Metis, Medea's son might thus be interpreted similarly to Metis' (potential) son: he might stand up as a rival to Zeus and threaten the stability of the cosmos.

Medeus, however, is educated by Cheiron, the centaur who also educated his father, Jason, and other heroes such as Achilles and Asclepius.[51] A being that might be classified as a 'monster' himself on account of his strange, composite nature thus paradoxically trains

[49] E.g. in Pindar's fourth *Pythian Ode*, Jason is represented as having τέχνη ('skill') (Pind. *P.* 4,249) and having overcome Pelias βουλαῖς ἀκάμπτοις ('with unbending plans') (Pind. *P.* 4,72). While Medea is often connected with Prometheus in myth, Jason is in fact Prometheus' descendant (as descendant of Aeolus and Aenarete, see *Ehoiai* fr. 10.25-34 Most), and he has cunning figures such as Salmoneus and Perieres in his family (*Ehoiai* fr. 10.27 Most). Jason's mother is called Polymede, 'woman of much cunning' (*Ehoiai* fr. 13 Most; Ps.-Apollod. 1,9,16). His cunning nature is thus also inherited, similar to that of Medea. His name, which means 'healer', suggests medical qualities in his early character; see Mackie 2001.
[50] Clay 2003, 156.
[51] Jason: *Ehoiai* fr. 36 Most; Achilles: *Ehoiai* fr. 155,87 Most; Asclepius: *Il.* 4,192-219.

monster-slaying heroes. While centaurs may be portrayed as drunk, lascivious, and lawless,[52] the *Iliad* represents Cheiron as righteous and an expert in medicine (*Il.* 11,832). Cheiron is known as an educator of Olympian heroes; therefore, that Medeus is entrusted to his care and thus removed from his mother's influence indicates the removal of his threat and his integration into the Olympian framework. The narrative might be compared with the removal of Athena from her mother Metis, since, in the *Theogony*, it is the mothers – Gaia and Rheia – who side with their sons in the struggle for hegemony against the fathers.[53]

Medea and Zeus

At first sight, that Zeus' will is accomplished through the birth of Medeus suggests a positive image of the relationship between Jason and Medea, an 'original' happy ending to a myth which, in later texts, develops into a bloody tragedy. Indeed, some scholars have argued that Medea is a wholly positive figure in Hesiod, and that murderous elements were added to the story afterwards.[54] A close reading of the text, however, has so far suggested a more sinister image, and a more ambiguous relationship between hero and goddess. Jason, on the one hand, is represented as an ally of Zeus, similar to Heracles. Medea, on the other hand, while on the surface represented as an innocent girl, is depicted as subdued, similar not only to monsters – to which she is connected also through the naming of her son after her – but also to Zeus' enemies (Cronus, the Nemean Lion). Through her name and cunning lineage, moreover, Medea is specifically connected with Zeus' cunning enemies, actual and potential: Cronus, Prometheus, and Metis.

First, Medea's name connects her with Cronus, since it echoes the way in which he defeated his father, namely by cutting off his μήδεα.[55] Secondly, one might argue that

[52] E.g. Eurytion, *Od.* 21, 293-304; Ps.-Apollod. 1,21; Diod. 4,69,4.
[53] See Yasumura 2011, 91.
[54] E.g. Huxley 1969, 61.
[55] See n.45.

Prometheus' name, traditionally interpreted as 'he who knows in advance', like that of Metis evokes a connection with Medea,[56] a connection which is foregrounded in other texts.[57] Finally, whereas Metis threatens Zeus through her unborn son, Medea does so through Medeus, as both males might incorporate their mother's cunning. Zeus prevails, however, and incapacitates them all: he binds Cronus by restricting him to Tartarus (851), Prometheus by chaining him, and Metis by swallowing her and raising her child Athena. Similarly, Medea is subdued through her marriage to Jason,[58] her son incorporated into the Olympian network through his education by Cheiron. Medea's inclusion in the list of Zeus' adversaries lends balance to the structure of the *Theogony*: while Cronus and Prometheus are Zeus' male opponents from the past and present generations, Metis and Medea represent the potential future threat of an heir both among the gods (Metis' unborn son) and on earth (Medeus). By taming Medea and incorporating Medeus in the Olympian collective of heroes through his education by Cheiron, the *telos* of the cosmos is fulfilled both among the gods and on earth. This explains the presence of the verb ἐκτελέω ('accomplish') not only in the passage concerning the Titans but also in the Medea passage. Further threats, of course, remain to Zeus' reign – such as the threat of Achilles, another son of a cunning ocean deity, Thetis[59] – and the imperfect tense of ἐξετελεῖτο suggests that Medea's submission, as well as the birth of Medeus and his education by Cheiron, is not a true end point but yet one important step towards the stability of Zeus' hegemony.[60]

[56] Chantraine 2,940, argues that '-metheus' is connected with *mētis*.
[57] E.g. Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 3,844-857. See Byre 1996.
[58] It is possible to detect a subtle play on sounds in the roots μηδ and δμη which might have been audible to an ancient Greek audience, as if not only Medea but her cunning too is uprooted by her submission to Jason. Hesiod plays with sounds in other words too: see Mazur 2004.
[59] For Thetis as cunning deity, see Detienne and Vernant 1978, 133-174. One might wonder why the figure of Thetis is not further developed in the *Theogony*, as she poses such a clear threat to Zeus. As Yasumura 2011, 86-87, notes, there are clear similarities between Metis and Thetis. However, Homer develops the potentiality of Thetis because his theme is the heroic destiny of Achilles; similarly, Hesiod foregrounds the story of Metis in order to highlight the birth of Athena and plays down the role of Thetis.
[60] See Lynn-George 1988, 38-39, for a similar argument made concerning the imperfect ἐτελείετο at *Iliad* 1,5.

The question remains why Medea's story is foregrounded in the *Theogony*. There must be a reason why the summary of Medea's myth is singled out – whether by Hesiod or a post-Hesiodic poet – as the 'fulfilment' of Zeus' purpose: there are other genealogies which also pose a threat to Zeus, but which are merely mentioned without further explanation, such as Thetis'.[61] Medea's story might have been selected for special emphasis because of the presence of *mētis* in the narrative, which fits in with the Hesiodic agenda. In Medea, the narrator offers glimpses of a cunning goddess similar to Metis, placed in a cunning lineage which offers an alternative to Zeus' genealogy, and subdued by a similarly cunning hero. The tension in the representation of the union of Medea and Jason demonstrates that the narrator is aware of aspects of elements of Medea's characterization left implicit in the narrative; these aspects, however, can be traced more clearly in other Archaic texts.

Eumelus' *Corinthiaca*, a fragmentary epic in which Jason and Medea rule Corinth, possibly composed contemporaneously with or slightly after the *Theogony*,[62] already refers to the dissolution of Medea's marriage to Jason because of the accidental death of the children.[63] Hera rather than Medea is responsible for their deaths,[64] but Jason nevertheless leaves Medea. A scholium to Pindar's *Olympian Ode* 13,74 explains the link between Hera and Medea:[65]

> At that moment Zeus desired her, but Medea was not persuaded, because she feared the wrath of Hera. Therefore, Hera promised her that she would make her children immortal. However, they died.

[61] See n.58.
[62] *Corinthiaca* fr. 1-9 *EGF*. It is dated by Huxley 1969, 64, to the eighth century BC; by Graf 1997, 34, to the seventh; and by West 2002, 109, to the middle of the sixth century BC.
[63] *Corinthiaca EGF* 3.
[64] In Eumelus' account, Medea ritually 'buries' her children in order to make them immortal, at Hera's behest (e.g. in schol. *ad* Pind. *Ol.* 13,74); in a later account, however, she 'hides' her children in Hera's temple after having killed King Creon, in the hope that they will be safe there from the wrath of the Corinthians (e.g. in schol. *ad* Eur. *Med.* 264).
[65] Paus. 2,3,10-11.

It is impossible to verify whether this narrative belongs to the *Corinthiaca*, but the scholium suggests that, possibly before Pindar's *Olympian Ode* (traditionally dated to 464 BC), an explicit sexual connection was made between Zeus and Medea, in which she rejected his advances similarly to Thetis.[66] This confirms that Medea has the potential to offer an alternative lineage to that of Zeus and Hera, with the potential of providing Zeus with an heir. Johnston argues – based on Medea's foundation of the cult of Hera Acraea,[67] which can be dated to the early eighth century BC[68] – that Medea was initially an important goddess at Corinth with an area of influence similar to Hera. Yet she was dethroned by Hera, her status reduced first to that of a minor goddess and then of a heroine.[69]

In the light of such references to a powerful Medea with possible cult status and linked directly with Zeus, and considering the ambiguity in the Hesiodic portrayal of Medea itself, it seems unlikely that Hesiod was not aware of Medea's ambiguous character, expressed in stories similar in nature to her post-Hesiodic adventures.[70] As the narrator is concerned with the stability of Zeus' reign and Medea is ultimately a liminal figure in the bigger picture, her threat is merely hinted at, to be firmly suppressed by the phrase concerning the accomplishment of Zeus' will.

Conclusion

Verbal parallels link the Medea passage at the end of the *Theogony* with the central narrative of the poem. They hint not at a happy ending for hero and innocent girl, but at tension between a cunning, powerful, monstrous, and divine Medea and an equally cunning hero,

[66] See n.58.
[67] Eur. *Med.* 1378-1383, Zenobius 1,27.
[68] Johnston 1997, 46.
[69] Johnston 1997, 44-70. Yasumura 2011, 39-58, discusses the rebellion of Hera against Zeus at length, arguing that Hera sides with many of his adversaries.
[70] Indeed, the accomplishment of Zeus' will might also refer back to an earlier epic treatment of the Medea myth, which might have featured elements found in extant post-Hesiodic poetry. See e.g. West 2005, 39-64.

Jason – a tension linked to Zeus' struggle for sustained supremacy. While the threatening monstrosity of Medea is left unexpressed, the emphatic persistence of the parallels created with the central narrative asks the audience to question Medea's apparently unambiguous status as daughter and wife. It thus appears that the Hesiodic Medea, rather than being a happy bride, is as complex as her later representations. Her 'original' Argonautic and Corinthian representations are hence more similar than anticipated, and the dichotomy between innocent maiden and powerful witch cannot be maintained – different aspects of her characterization are rather foregrounded or minimized in order to fit the different poets' intentions.

I would like to return to the ending of the *Theogony*. The argument that the ending was composed by a post-Hesiodic poet interprets the Medea passages and, in particular, the line 'and the will of great Zeus was being accomplished' in isolation from their context in the narrative. Considering the passages as intrinsically connected with the narrative of the *Theogony* provides insight not only into the internal dynamics of the poem itself – emphasizing the importance of *mētis* in the narrator's manipulation of the narrative framework justifying Zeus' supremacy – but also into the complex interrelationship of the *Theogony* with other Archaic texts and ultimately into the early representation of Medea. My reading of the Medea passages does not ultimately depend on the authenticity of the poem's ending: indeed, a post-Hesiodic poet might have added and manipulated the figure of Medea in building on what he found. Nevertheless, by demonstrating thematic unity throughout the poem as it has come down to us, my interpretation of the Medea passages lends strength to the thematic unity of the *Theogony*.[71]

[71] I would like to thank the audience of the KYKNOS seminar at Swansea University, where I first presented this argument, for their constructive feedback, and Fritz-Gregor Herrmann and Ian Repath in particular for reading an earlier draft of this chapter.

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