G.R. Boys-Stones and J.H. Haubold, *Plato and Hesiod*, Oxford University Press, 2010

While Homer's presence in Plato's dialogues has been extensively documented and studied, Hesiod's has largely been neglected. The present volume, which is aimed at filling a gap in our understanding of Plato's complex engagement with Hesiodic poetry, is therefore much to be welcomed. The outcome of a conference held at the University of Durham in 2006, the volume testifies to the liveliness of the exchanges that took place at the time. Abundant cross-referencing between the various contributions gives the volume more unity and coherence than is achieved in most comparable sets of conference proceedings. The book falls into two parts, the first of which is devoted to Plato's relationship with Hesiod in general while the second focuses on Plato's variations on Hesiodic themes in a number of individual dialogues.

A most usefully detailed set of statistical data on Plato's references to Hesiod throughout the corpus is provided by G.W. Most. Arguing from the premise that the traditional chronology of the dialogues is broadly sound and their classification into 'early', 'middle' and 'late' warranted, Most draws a number of conclusions from his data: (1) the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days* are the only Hesiodic works from which Plato ever quotes; (2) Plato takes the *Theogony* to be authoritative only on such issues as the names, etymologies and genealogies of the gods, while he regards the *Works and Days* as a repository of popular wisdom in which is encapsulated a consequentialist conception of justice; (3) only in his 'middle' period does Plato tend systematically to link Hesiod with Homer. In his 'early' and 'late' period, more often than not, he dissociates the two poets; (4) Plato came to be more appreciative of Hesiod as he grew older, by which time it was to the *Works and Days* that he turned more frequently than to the *Theogony*; (5) lastly and most generally, the traditional view of Plato as a critic of Hesiod is oversimplified, scholarly attention having so far been unduly focused on book II of the *Republic* at the exclusion of other passages in the corpus. Although Most's conclusions are based on a chronology and a classification of the dialogues that many—this reviewer included—would disagree with, they are valuable in so far as they constitute a base for the study of Plato's views on archaic poetry in general and Hesiod in particular. Indeed, as it turned out, Most's conclusions provide a point of reference for considering several contributions to this volume. Thus N. Yamagata, covering much the same ground as Most, comes to different conclusions. *Pace* Most, she argues that Plato mostly used Hesiod as a foil to Homer and often cast Hesiod in a sophistic mould. Furthermore, she claims, while Plato's Socrates is fond of Homer, even when he attacks him, the epideictic use of Hesiod in the dialogues is mostly confined to non-Socratic characters.

So much is confirmed, she concludes, by the fact that 'Hesiodic' myths tend to be told by interlocutors other than Socrates and to be ascribed a lower truth-value than 'Homeric' myths. In a finely detailed investigation of Plato's re-interpretation of the Myth of Ages in the *Republic*, Helen Van Noorden adduces additional evidence in support of Most's third conclusion. Far from consistently bracketing Hesiod with Homer, she shows, Plato can prove himself a sensitive interpreter of specifically Hesiodic myths. Socrates' account of declining constitutions, for example, in which extensive use is made of Hesiod's metallic analogies in his creation myth, demonstrates both the extent of Plato's creative appropriation of the myth and his sympathy with what he takes to be Hesiod's ethical intent in the *Works and Days*. More particularly, Hesiod's attempt to convince Perses of the intrinsic value of justice finds a clear echo in the arguments that Socrates addresses to Glaucon and Adeimantus to prove that, appearances notwithstanding, it is ultimately more profitable to suffer injustice than to inflict it. But, as Van Noorden reminds us, Plato's appropriation of Hesiod is no simple matter of ideological consonance. When, in book VIII of the *Republic* (545 D-547 A), Socrates 'quotes' the Muses in support of the view that it is through the admixture of metals that factions are formed in cities, he thereby implies that the Muses are veridical by nature. On Plato's part, this cannot but be a wry comment, directed at the Hesiodic Muses' self-proclaimed ability to tell 'lies that sound like truth' (*Theogony*, 27-28, tr. West) as well as at the 'noble lie' by means of which he proposes to safeguard the political integrity of Callipolis (*Republic* II).

Most's data lends persuasiveness to the thesis of J.H. Haubold who, working from the premise that Hesiod's self-narrated biography is a suitable hermeneutical guide to his writings, argues that the young Muse-inspired shepherd-poet of the *Theogony* gave way to the older, more reflective, knowledgeable and rational farmer-poet of the *Works and Days*. Could it be, Haubold wonders on the basis of an analysis of Plato's reinterpretation of the Myth of Ages in book III of the *Republic*, that it is to this latter Hesiod that later thinkers—Protagoras and Plato in particular—turned 'for a model as to how Muse-inspired poetry gives way to more challenging, more secular, and more properly human attempts to pursue knowledge' (p. 30). Ford's contribution, which focuses on the different ways in which Hesiod's two poems were received at the classical age, might *prima facie* have been expected to offer a positive answer to Haubold's question. But this turns out not to be so since Ford's thesis is that later thinkers, by and large, valued the *Works and Days* as a compendium of popular wisdom rather than as an early attempt at rational reflection on the human condition. Indeed, in the context of an argument designed to show that Plato's attitude to Hesiod was all of a piece with that of his contemporaries and immediate successors, Ford shows that while the *Theogony* tended to be regarded as a repository of traditional lore on

matters such as divine genealogy as well as a source for ancient views on nature, the *Works and Days* was valued mostly as a source of gnomic verse and moral precepts suitable for the edification of schoolchildren. Like Ford, Hugo Koning believes that Plato's various Hesiodic references and allusions are best understood within the tradition of Hesiod's reception. In that tradition Koning distinguishes two strands. In one strand Hesiod is consistently paired with Homer and the two poets are viewed as fountainheads of ancient lore and wisdom; in the other strand, Hesiod is taken to be a proto-intellectual and credited with views on the meaning of words and the classification of the constituent parts of both natural and manufactured objects. Upon the Hesiod of tradition, Koning argues, Plato put his own stamp. When he pairs Hesiod with Homer, it is, more often than not, to deplore his influence upon the minds of his contemporaries. As for Hesiod the intellectual, he turns out to be a more ambiguous figure in the dialogues; although often associated with Sophistic claims and practices, he is also, on occasion, presented as an early proponent of the method of 'separation and categorization, who believes in a one-to-one relationship between words and things, practices etymology, and explains reality by enumerating its constituent elements' (p. 108). This is a bold and tantalising claim which, as Koning himself recognises, would need to be bolstered by far more textual analysis and philosophical justification than could be provided in the context of the present volume.

Barbara Graziosi turns to rhapsodic performances and public speeches as sources for the reception of Hesiod at the Classical Age and for Plato's views on his poetry. A heated exchange between Aeschines and Demosthenes over the interpretation of lines 763-4 of the *Works and Days*, in which Hesiod notes the power of rumour, provides her with an example of how Attic orators could manipulate the text of respected poets for their own, often captious, ends. Graziosi suggests that such practice is likely to have led Plato to distrust poetry on the ground that its meaning cannot be determined. Referring to *Ion* 533C9-535A2, she writes: 'In the *Ion* he [Plato] suggests that, even if the ancient poets themselves could be asked what they meant, they could not offer reliable answers, because poets compose under the influence of divine inspiration, and without true knowledge of what they are saying. In their ignorance and persuasiveness, as well as their fickleness, poets turn out to resemble sophists and orators' (p. 118). Graziosi's inference is overhasty; not only does the passage from the *Ion* that she refers to make no mention of the poets' inability to explain their verse—that particular point is made in the *Apology* 22 A-C—but the orators' practice of misusing famous poetic lines cannot be presented as a ground for distrusting the poets themselves. How could poets be censured for the misuse of their writings by others? In any case it was Plato's Protagoras, rather than Plato himself, who

reputedly treated poets of the archaic age as Sophists *avant la lettre*. Where Graziosi is right, however, is in claiming that the very practice of misquoting poetic lines testifies to the authority of the poetic voice, a fact that helps explaining the distrust of poetry that Plato voiced in the *Ion* and elsewhere. As for Graziosi's view that Hesiod 'implicitly shapes' that dialogue (p. 129) on the ground that he is immune to the line of attack that Socrates there deploys against Homer, it is interestingly paradoxical, but would require more justification than is given in the chapter.

In one of the most ambitious contributions to the volume, George Boys-Stones reflects on Plato's conception of the history of philosophy and the role ascribed to Hesiod in it. 'Plato's history of philosophy', he claims, 'is not a story of linear development... Instead of locating his own work as the culmination of what went before, Plato sees (or represents) pretty well everyone who might have had a claim to his philosophical ancestry as part of a noisy but unproductive tradition characterized by eristic.' (p. 50) In the last footnote to his contribution, Boys-Stones recognises the existence of one signal exception to his generalization, namely Parmenides, whom Plato consistently presents as the one figure who led the way out of what had so far been a static and disputatious tradition. Into this tradition, so Boys-Stones argues, Plato includes not only the Sophists but also Hesiod. Plato's ground for so classifying Hesiod, according to Boys-Stones, is the distinction made in the *Works and Days* between a good and a bad form of *eris*. But, *pace* Boys-Stones, Plato does not consistently present Hesiod as a proto-Sophist. Furthermore, Plato's view that harmonious collegiality is the hallmark of truly philosophical discourse does not necessarily put him at odds with Hesiod. Indeed, in the *Theogony*, 229, *eris* is presented as harmful precisely on the ground that it brings *neilea te pseudeas te logous amphillogias* ('quarrels, lies and disputes'), charges which are not dissimilar to those that Plato would later level at the Sophists. Fortunately, Boys-Stones also draws attention to the more positive aspects of Plato's reception of Hesiod. Hesiod's claim that love flourishes between individuals that are unlike each other, Boys-Stones plausibly claims, found an echo in Plato's conception of erotic attraction as based on need. When erotic attraction is felt towards one who is truly wise, it becomes a propitious ground for the development of the kind of dialectic that leads to the overcoming of stasis and thus makes philosophical progress possible.

Amongst the contributions devoted to individual dialogues, the *Timaeus*, as was to be expected, takes the lion's share. In two very strong chapters David Sedley and Elizabeth Pender explore the different ways in which Hesiod's creation myth is reshaped in the *Timaeus*. Having argued that there is a 'deep isomorphism between the Hesiodic and Platonic theogonies' (p. 258), Sedley turns to the philosophically simpler Hesiodic text to resolve two puzzles in its Platonic counterpart. First puzzle: did the perceptible world of the *Timaeus* come into

being or has it existed of all eternity? Second puzzle: how and why, in the cosmogony of the *Timaeus*, did evil enter the world? Was it, as is commonly assumed, through matter's resistance to the persuasive and formative action of the Demiurge? To the first question Sedley replies that the similarities between Hesiod's chaos and Plato's receptacle warrant the conclusion that, as Hesiod's Chaos 'was the first to come to be' (*Theogony*, 116), the disorderly state of matter that, in Plato's account, preceded the formation of the world is also best understood as having had a beginning in time. Regarding the second puzzle, Sedley's argument is that the popular answer cannot be right since it runs counter to the teleological thrust of the *Timaeus*. For the correct answer, Sedley suggests, we must look to the aetiology of evil in the *Theogony*. Just as Hesiod's Pandora unleashed all manner of evil onto humankind, woman is for Plato the primary 'locus of evil', created as the original degenerate soul, who would henceforth make possible later reincarnations into progressively more irrational souls. Proceeding at a more leisurely and discursive pace, Liz Pender discusses the extent of Plato's engagement with the *Theogony*. The corrections that Plato brought to Hesiod's cosmogony, she shows, all reflect the teleological framework of the *Timaeus*. Indeed, unlike Hesiod's deities, Plato's neither engage in wrong-doing nor harbour hostile emotions; unlike Hesiod's deities, who are locked in dynastic strife, Plato's primal entities cooperate; unlike Hesiod, who portrayed the union of Ouranos and Gaia as inherently conflictual, Plato put forward 'a new and harmonious vision of how the cosmos is fathered and mothered' (p. 237). Further evidence of the teleological character of Plato's myth of origins is the redefinition of the Muses' function as that of prompting human souls to become attuned to divine harmony. Mario Rigali, for his part, concentrates on the Demiurge's address to the assembled gods, a passage notable for the etymological speculations offered in it. These, Rigali claims, show the level of Plato's engagement with, and respect for, a writer known for his propensity to etymologize divine names. The Demiurge's speech to the gods responsible for forming and sustaining the perceptible universe, Rigali argues further, is notable also for its compliance to Plato's own prescriptions to poets in book II of the *Republic*. Andrea Capra develops Nagy's model of the rhapsodic function and the associated notion of 'relay-mnemonics' to present an account of the banquet of speeches in the *Timaeus-Critias*, by Timaeus, Critias and Hermocrates respectively, 'as models for epic performances, not unlike the final myth of the *Republic*' (p. 206). Philosophers' stories and myths, goes Plato's implied message as reconstructed by Capra, are superior to those of poets, for they are true and therefore beneficial to the souls of those who hear them.

Vered Lev Keenan proposes a post-modern reading of the *Symposium*. Taking her cue from Derrida's position on the nature of texts, she construes the dialogue as a *locus* of complex interactions between author, characters, readers and earlier

writers—she naturally concentrates on intertextual references to Hesiod, but might also have included Homer, Empedocles, and a host of others. Turning then to the Hesiodic figure of Pandora, whom she sees as the ‘ultimate erotic phenomenon’ (p. 166), who none the less ‘challenges us to enquire into the enigmatic nature of things’ (p. 170), Lev Keenan draws a bold comparison between Hesiod’s Pandora and Alcibiades’ Socrates. Ugly, Socrates may well be, yet, like Pandora, he can exert sexual attraction. Both Pandora and Socrates, Lev Keenan avers, ‘challenge their beholders to grapple with their enigmatic being and to look for ‘truth’ behind their appearances. If beauty is the touch of transcendence in the phenomenal, if it is a form of visibility that carries within itself a promise of the invisible, then we might say that Pandora and Socrates are each, in their own way, beautiful’ (p. 174). Lev Keenan’s comparison is bold but perhaps not entirely unwarranted; any feeling of implausibility that remains in one’s mind after reading her piece is likely to be due to the heavy construction that she puts on Hesiod’s Pandora as a philosophically significant figure who enables us to go beyond appearances.

Dimitri El Murr and Christopher Rowe end the volume by making a renewed assault on the thorny and recently much debated issue of the interpretation of the myth of the *Politicus*. Does Plato version of the Hesiodic myth describe two phases, as traditionally held, or three phases, as recently argued by Rowe *et al.*? El Murr’s thesis is that it consists of two phases only. On the basis of fragments recorded in the *Deipnosophistae* and elsewhere, El Murr argues that, by the end of the 5th century, a conception of the age of Kronos as a topsy-turvy world in which abundance of all kinds was enjoyed without any need for human exertion had gained currency, mainly through the writings of the poets of the Old Comedy who had adapted the Hesiodic myth in pursuit of satirical and political purposes of their own. Plato’s further adaptation of the myth, El Murr contends, is best understood in the context of such creative appropriation. Together with the ambiguity that attaches to Kronos’ figure in other dialogues, the tradition of altering myths for ideological reasons make it easier to reconcile the presentation of the age of Kronos and that of Zeus in the *Politicus* with the teleology and the political philosophy of the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*. Good and bad do coexist in Plato’s description of the age of Kronos, as indeed they do in his version of the age of Zeus, which is to be regarded as a mythical representation of the (far from ideal) political constitutions prevalent at the time of the dramatic date of the dialogue. For all these reasons, El Murr concludes, it is superfluous to posit an intermediate, third, stage in Plato unfolding of Hesiod’s myth in the *Politicus*. Rather than meeting El Murr’s argument point by point, Rowe, a veteran of the controversy generated by this particular Platonic passage, chose to build on his previous treatments of the myth (1995a, 2002 and 2007b) and to concentrate on the

detail of the Platonic text and the structure it imposes upon the Hesiodic myth. More focused than El Murr on the cyclical nature of the Platonic myth, Rowe argues that between each age of Kronos and each age of iron, there is a transitional stage during which the normal movement of the kosmos is reversed: human beings then emerge from the earth as old, withered and without the wisdom traditionally associated with old age, and grow progressively younger looking before vanishing altogether. By describing that transitional phase as chaotic and miserable, Plato, so Rowe argues, subverts the traditional flattering self-image of the Athenians as autochthonous to Attica and descended from those who lived under a beneficent divine rule. By presenting the rule of Kronos as less than fully beneficent and the transitional phase as inevitably disastrous, Plato is hinting that the Athenians must evolve the art of statesmanship from their own resources. Forceful as El Murr's and Rowe's respective arguments undoubtedly are, they may yet prove insufficient for swaying readers of this volume one way or another. Like this reviewer, they are more likely to continue to sit on that particular fence.

Does a coherent picture of Plato's views on Hesiod the poet and thinker emerge from the volume? Yes and no. Although the contributors have undoubtedly demonstrated that the level of Plato's engagement with Hesiod is deeper than previously recognised, they have also found much to disagree upon on the subject of Plato's reaction to Hesiodic poetry in individual dialogues. This, however, was inevitable in view of the playfulness and fluidity of Plato's literary allusions, which are almost unfailingly made to suit the varying needs of context and argument. In their preface the two editors of the volume express the modest hope of having added *kai te smikron eon*¹ (just a little) to our knowledge of Plato's Hesiod. They have done better than that and produced a book that deserves a place in our libraries.

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¹⁾ *Works and Days*, 360, not 361, as claimed in the Preface, p. 8.