CHAPTER 16

*Sexing and Gendering the Succession Myth in Hesiod and the Ancient Near East**

Adrian Kelly

Introduction

This chapter begins with two apologies, the first to scholars of Near Eastern literature for once again using their texts basically to elucidate something about an early Greek author, and the second to the reader for taking yet another look at such a well-known issue – the relationship between Hesiod's so-called Succession Myth and its various comparanda in the traditions of the Ancient Near East.[1] Both, perhaps, can be justified by the context and purposes of this book. Elsewhere I have argued that there is room for considerable scepticism about the enthusiasm with which Classicists have subscribed to one, rather simplistic, version of *ex Oriente lux*.[2] This conclusion is not driven by a desire to stop Near Eastern literatures from making a 'claim on the Homeric reader' or to avoid a 'committed reading' of those literatures;[3] indeed, this chapter will try to offer such a reading of the Succession Myth in a number of ancient cultures. Instead, my objections are methodological: though it is growing more marginal, the still tenacious Classical approach to this material remains in the grip of a 'parallelomania' which overplays similarities and downplays differences between these traditions, and tries to make individual Greek authors the conduits, if not the actual translators, of Near Eastern material.

It is perhaps no surprise that this should have happened, when we remember that the intellectual parameters of Classics, just like any other

* I would like to thank my former student Laura Wills, from whom I learned much when I first explored this area whilst supervising her undergraduate thesis on Greek and Near Eastern goddesses. I would also like to thank several colleagues – specifically Bernardo Ballesteros Petrella, Renaud Gagné, Johannes Haubold, Ian Rutherford, Selena Wisnom, and especially Christopher Metcalf – for helping me try to overcome the fact that I am only a scholar of early Greek literature.

[1] The term is retained here, despite the just criticisms of van Dongen 2014; its use does not imply any kind of cultural uniformity, but it remains a convenient shorthand.

[2] See Kelly 2008, Kelly 2014. [3] Haubold 2013a: 32.

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discipline, are shaped by its heritage. Two strands in particular have played important roles here: firstly the much later relationship between Greek and Roman literature, and secondly the authority of 'textual criticism' – the process by which the authentic, original version of a text is established by sorting out and weighing its visible, individual manuscript sources. It was almost inevitable that the certainties predicating these relationships and processes should be transposed, with varying levels of self-awareness, back onto the study of early Greek literature.[4] But, aside from being powerfully redolent of Whig history with its parade of epoch-altering heroes, this approach oversimplifies the means, complexities and the length of cultural contacts between Greece and its neighbours, which must stretch all the way back at least into the middle Bronze Age. Instead, we should prefer a 'longue durée' to some of my colleagues' 'big bang' approach.[5]

Traditions in Dialogue

Given these methodological predilections, Classicists have long been drawn to the Succession Myth in Hesiod's *Theogony*, and modern scholarship holds with almost one voice that its similarities with a Hurro-Hittite text of the thirteenth century BCE, known now as the *Song of Emergence* (*CTH* 344), are so thorough and pervasive that they can only be explained in terms of the Greeks borrowing the story from the Hurro-Hittite tradition.[6] Indeed, the most pressing question has for long been not if but when and where this 'event' took place. Moreover, do we opt for a personalised approach, in which Hesiod himself did it, or a more tradition-centred one, where these features were part of Greek epos for many generations before Hesiod himself?[7] Sceptical voices have been

[4] See Currie 2016, which avowedly uses the (much later) Augustan poets and their dynamics as a model for early Greek literary history, and even tries to transpose such a dynamic onto Sumerian and Babylonian poetry.

[5] For examples of this approach, see recently Lardinois 2018 and his Chapter 5 in this volume. For criticism, see Metcalf 2017 (review of Bachvarova 2016). I note, however, that this book and the conference on which it is based reveal the extent to which this kind of enquiry no longer represents the direction of study in the comparative project. See the Introduction, above 1–3.

[6] For recent discussions with (voluminous) earlier bibliography, see West 1997: 103–5, 278–92; Rutherford 2009: 9–36; López-Ruiz 2010: 87–94; Rutherford 2018: esp. 4–6, 12–13. The title has only recently been recovered (Corti 2007; van Dongen 2011: 182 n. 3 terms it the *Song of Going Forth*), and the text is generally linked with other tablets to make what is known as the *Kingship in Heaven Cycle* (a.k.a. the *Kumarbi Cycle*), though even the term 'cycle' is now not uncontroversial: Archi 2009: 211.

[7] The otherwise excellent study of van Dongen 2011: 190, 194f. tries to sketch out Hesiod's own role in the process, but he does not deny the story's currency in Greek contexts at the time, and he

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raised,[8] but there does seem to be a good prima facie case for positing some kind of direct interaction between traditions here.

Before examining the similarities which have given rise to this conclusion, we should take a step back, methodologically and diachronically. When arguments are made about the Greeks 'borrowing' or 'inheriting' elements from Near Eastern cultures, there is usually little or no consideration of what existed before the putative moment of derivation. When, on the other hand, scholars do invoke the Indo-European background in this connection, they are usually trying to deny or qualify that derivation, and so they use that background in an either/or way: if an apparently 'Near Eastern' element in a Greek text can be paralleled in an Indo-European setting, then it is no longer evidence for the influence of the Near East. This is an important argument to invoke against those scholars who are too quick to suggest derivation, especially when they seek to isolate a particular moment or person responsible, but its strength must depend upon the individual example, and preclusive purposes are in any case hardly the limit of the utility or interest to be found in the Indo-European background.

This is especially so in the case of the Succession Myth, which several scholars have studied in a range of Indo-European contexts. Parallels for the 'kingship in heaven' have been found to varying levels of specificity in Iranian, Indian and Norse mythologies: Stig Wikander saw a close parallel with the late tenth-century CE Iranian *Shāhnāmeh* or 'Epic of Kings' (though he too swiftly discounted the effect of earlier Mesopotamian tradition), Dominique Briquel contrasted the hatred and violence in the Greek tradition with the relative peaceability of roughly parallel patterns and motifs in the *Mahābhārata*, and C. Scott Littleton traced the 'same broad framework' in Norse stories of creation.[9] More recently, Nick Allen compared Hesiod's picture with the five generations of god-heroes in the *Mahābhārata* to reconstruct an Indo-European 'protonarrative', with several, though more diffuse, points of contact.[10] But, even leaving aside the question of their relative temporal and historical positioning, none of

proceeds largely on the somewhat subjective basis of 'how ingeniously the tripartite scheme of the theme works in the *Theogony*' (190). Strauss Clay and Gilan 2014 suggest a direct link based on a very small and precise verbal inconcinnity in both Hesiod and the *Song of Emergence*. For a similar range of traditional versus personalised arguments about Homer's relationship to Near Eastern texts and traditions, see Kelly 2008.

[8] See esp. Mondi 1990. [9] Wikander 1952; Briquel 1980, Littleton 1970a (~ 1970b).

[10] Allen 2004; see also Sergent 1997: 333–5.

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these traditions shows the systemic resemblance to the Greek story we see in the *Song of Emergence*, and some details are at best very partial parallels.

We should not, however, therefore simply discount the importance of this material, since

> the Greeks, at the same time as they assimilated oriental contributions, were able to interpret them according to Indo-European conceptions. What matters in the end is not the ultimate provenance of any element of the myth – such as the name of Zeus or the idea of the struggle between the divine generations – but the way in which these features are arranged and presented by the Greeks in a coherent system: … at this level the persistence of Indo-European patterns is sometimes felt, integrating Mediterranean or Eastern material if applicable.[11]

That is, their Indo-European background probably furnished the Greeks with a series of roughly comparable stories about the generational transfer of power in royal and divine contexts which opened the way, as it were, for processes of later interaction.[12] It may be doubted whether there was a consistent Indo-European tradition containing all or most of the elements as known in Hesiod and the *Song of Emergence*,[13] viz. conflict between three generations of gods, mutilation of the first generation, redefinition of the victorious gods, and a final battle between the new regime and the older gods. But we may be sure that without at least some of these similarities, however distantly framed, the interaction between Greeks and Hurro-Hittite culture might well have been 'blocked'.[14]

[11] Briquel 1980: 247: '[l]es Hellènes, en même temps qu'ils ont assimilé des apports orientaux, ont pu les interpréter en fonction de conceptions indo-européennes. Finalement ce qui importe, c'est non la provenance ultime de tel élément du mythe – nom de Zeus ou idée de la lutte entre des générations divines – mais la manière dont ces traits s'ordonnent dans la représentation des Grecs en un système cohérent: … à ce niveau la persistance de schémas indo-européens [se fait parfois] sentir, intégrant le cas échéant des données méditerranéennes ou orientales'; see also Katz 2018: 63: 'an obvious desideratum for the modern study of Hesiod is, therefore, a holistic understanding of how Indo-European prehistory and Near Eastern analogues contribute together to the formation of Hesiodic language and thought'.

[12] Witzel 2012: 65–75 (esp. element 7 on table 2.7), 161 for 'Laurasian' systems and their interaction. For a recent demonstration of the importance of the Indo-European heritage in Greek cosmogonical thinking, see now Mitchell 2018.

[13] Cf. Littleton 1970a: 396–400. Even if we were to decide that 'kingship in heaven' was an Indo-European pattern, or at least a possibility within that tradition, it would not materially change the argument of this chapter, since the Greek myth's similarities with the Hurro-Hittite tradition are much closer and more numerous than with any other known form of this story. For the required caution in these matters, see the comments of Puhvel 1987: 22–3.

[14] See Rutherford, Chapter 11 in this volume, for analysis of why the story of Baal's fight with the Sea does not cross into the Greek world; also below, note 48, on Greek and Indian cosmogonic traditions.

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That the Greek tradition did not suffer this fate is certain. The parallels between the eighth- or seventh-century BCE *Theogony* and the thirteenth-century BCE *Song of Emergence* are well known, and so they are recalled here only briefly. They begin with the sequence Ouranos–Kronos–Zeus on the Greek side closely matched in Anu–Kumarbi–Teššub/Tarhunta on the Hurro-Hittite, showing the threefold transfer of power from the sky god to the cunning god, and then to the Storm God. The particular shared details are also very similar: (i) Kumarbi bites off the genitals of Anu as Kronos lops off the genitals of Ouranos with a sickle, and (ii) both Kumarbi and Kronos swallow a stone, instead of a child, which later becomes a cult object; (iii) the gods of the third generation emerge from the body of the overthrown god (Kronos vomits, Kumarbi gives birth); and (iv) finally, Kumarbi's birthing of Teššub seems also to find some kind of parallel in Zeus's swallowing of Metis and the birth of Athene later in the *Theogony* (886–900, 924–9).[15]

Yet the Hurro-Hittite tradition is not the only one to show some kind of parallel to the *Theogony*'s Succession Myth. The late second-millennium BCE Babylonian Creation Epic, *Enūma eliš*, shares (i) the idea that the father's dislike for his children is the cause of the trouble (Ouranos and Kronos/Apsu), and (ii) the somewhat destabilising role of the primordial female god (Gaia/Tiamat) – an important principle in the Greek, as we shall see, but not quite in the same way for the Hurro-Hittite tradition. Another Babylonian work, the *Theogony of Dunnu* – whose text is dated to the first millennium BCE but whose story is as early as the start of the second millennium – shares with Hesiod a focus on incest and intergenerational violence, but details are sparse.[16]

Though it is clear that some of Hesiod's story is closer to the *Song of Emergence* than the other texts listed here, the evidence does not allow us to reach a firm conclusion on the questions of when and where any interaction took place: some scholars argue for an early cross-over directly through an Anatolian interface in the Late Bronze Age, while others have suggested a more direct route, closer in time to Hesiod in the Early Iron Age, through Neo-Hittite Kingdoms in Northern Syria and/or

[15] For other parallels, esp. those involving Typhaon, and the seminal scattering which gives birth to Aphrodite, see the works listed above, note 6.

[16] For excellent summaries of all this material, see the works listed above, note 6; for English translations, Lambert 2013, López-Ruiz 2014b. For more on the relationship between *Dunnu* and the *Song of Emergence*, see Metcalf, Chapter 8 in this volume.

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Phoenicians in the Levant.[17] This chapter does not seek to lump for one or other route, though a lot of our evidence for the Succession Myth in the Phoenician case comes in the work of Philon of Byblos, a Greek of the first/second century CE, who claims to have access to an old Phoenician cosmogony of 'Sanchuniathon'. Preserved by Eusebius, the bishop of Caesarea in the fourth century CE (*PE* 1.10.1–53), this story seems in many ways to resonate with the Hesiodic tale, and contains several of the same details, such as the castration of Ouranos, who is hostile towards his children, by his son El/Kronos.[18] When read in conjunction with Late Bronze Age Ugaritic texts, such as the fourteenth- or thirteenth-century BCE *Baal Cycle*, this narrative may provide another hint of the traditions from which Hesiod or his forebears could have drawn, but Erik van Dongen was surely right to doubt its independent probative worth: Philon was writing with a good knowledge of Hesiod, and so his evidentiary value is a little questionable.[19] In any case, neither Philon nor the early Ugaritic material shows the crucial feature of the Succession Myth with which we are concerned in this chapter, and so will play no further part in the discussion.

My own view of the interactive dynamic is that it was a process, with several points of contact, beginning in the Late Bronze Age but continuing down into the Early Iron Age, through several conduits. But is that it? Is this all we can say – that on current evidence we cannot be more precise than this? That may well be correct and cautious in genealogical terms, but it's surely not the only way Classicists can seek illumination in the Near East, particularly with this exciting nexus of texts. In an earlier article which no-one has read and even fewer people agree with, I suggested that the distinctive qualities of Homeric battle narrative, when viewed next to the Near Eastern literary representations of combat, show just how different from its neighbours – in fact, how odd – was the early Greek epic tradition in its 'aestheticisation' and 'narrativisation' of battle;[20] these terms simply mean that battle becomes the context and topic for

[17] For a recent, excellent overview of the options, see Rutherford 2018: 17–19, who sensibly refuses to narrow it down in this way.

[18] See Littleton 1970a: 385, Cors i Meya 1999–2000, López-Ruiz 2010: 94–101.

[19] van Dongen 2011: esp. 183–4.

[20] Kelly 2014. For a different view, which gathers details and motifs in the usual manner, see Rollinger 2015. For criticism of this method, see Kelly 2008. Rollinger 2015 faults the latter article for failing to recognise that the process of adaptation changes the material, but we must try to distinguish between similarities that are fortuitous or the result of native developments and those that are actually parallels derived from external sources. Otherwise we have no scholarly method at our disposal – just a cataloguing exercise masquerading as one.

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interesting narrative, rather than simply a usually non-episodic confirmation of the overpowering might of, or divine support behind, the victor, as we find it generally in Near Eastern and Egyptian sources. The question of genealogy – though it tends to point one in the Indo-European direction – seemed less interesting than analogy, viz. what the comparison with other traditions could show us. In this case, it revealed that the Greeks liked long, detailed, dramatic and sinuous descriptions of battle, and were pretty much alone of the Late Bronze Age civilisations in the Aegean basin and Mesopotamia in doing so.

As scholars are increasingly recognising, and as the Oxford conference from which this volume originated made clear, we have to move beyond cataloguing similarities and constructing genealogies, and start thinking about what Near Eastern material tells us in analogical terms – i.e., what each culture or text is doing with shared or common elements. When we turn to the comparative material in this spirit, we notice immediately a big difference between (and within) the Near Eastern and early Greek traditions of the Succession Myth, i.e., the pattern as we find it narrated in Hesiod (but assumed in Homer and worked out in different ways in the *Homeric Hymns*). This difference, in short, is sex and gender, or the role played by these phenomena within the logic of the myth.[21]

Let us look first at the Greek side, both within and beyond Hesiod: here it is always the chief consort working through the children who undermines the father, in a variety of ways.[22] In the *Theogony*, Gaia becomes irritated by her husband's treatment of her and her children. First of all she invites volunteers from among her children to overthrow Ouranos, and then arms Kronos with an adamantine sickle and 'instructs him in the whole deception' (δόλον δ' ὑπεθήκατο πάντα 170; cf. 159–75). Similarly annoyed by Kronos' practice of swallowing her children as soon as they are born, Rheia consults Gaia and Ouranos about the means to prevent the same thing happening to Zeus. On their advice, she goes to Lyktos (where she is received by Gaia) to give birth to Zeus and then hands Kronos a stone in his place (459–91). Hera, the final consort, is shown in Hesiod and beyond as constantly trying to overcome or thwart Zeus's or his sons'

[21] I recognise the differentiation of 'sex' as a biological function from 'gender' as a social construct, in the standard manner, but their close interrelationship in the material makes more focus on this unnecessary in the current chapter. For recent discussions of these issues in the Near Eastern context, see, e.g., Asher-Greve 2001, Parpola and Whiting 2002, Bolger 2008, Asher-Greve and Westenholz 2013: 15–28, Budin 2014, Peled 2016, Cooper 2017; also below, note 28.

[22] See the foundational work of Bonnafé 1985: esp. ch. 5, and now Lye 2018.

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desires, but having very little luck in the process (*Th.* 314–15, 328–9, 927–9).[23] In effect, she is the frustrated 'maternal plotter' in the pattern of the Succession Myth.

Interestingly, Gaia and Ouranos are constantly involved in the subsequent stages of the Succession Myth, often in what have seemed to scholars to be contradictory ways: they advise both Kronos about what could happen to him at the hands of his son (463–5) and Rheia about how to go about making it happen (474–6); they warn Zeus about what could happen to him at the hands of his son (888–900), and Gaia is also on several other occasions said to have guaranteed or aided his succession 'by her plans' (ἐννεσίῃσι πολυφραδέεσσι 494, φραδμοσύνῃσιν 626), whilst she produces Typhaon as the apparently final challenge to Zeus's reign (820–2). Gaia is clearly the dominant figure in this picture of alternating allegiances, and her ambiguity is similarly to be explained by the focus on sex and gender in Hesiod or the Greek tradition more generally,[24] a function of the ambivalence within which female participation and power is framed therein.

Hera's frustration is important, since the repetition of the Succession Myth is prevented in the Greek setting largely by the sexual politics of Zeus, manifest in many separate ways throughout early *epos*. Firstly, he swallows the pregnant Metis and thus himself produces Athene (*Th.* 888–900), whose birth represents the diverted threat to his reign: she shows, by her eternal virginity, that she will not destabilise Zeus by bringing forth a rival to challenge him. Immediately after Athene's birth in the *Theogony* (924–6), Hera produces Hephaistos out of anger with her husband and therefore without his help, and the link between Zeus's parthenogenesis – and Hera's less successful attempt to rival it – is made even clearer in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (307–30f.).

Secondly, this behaviour is entwined with another aspect of Olympian sexual politics, in that Zeus has powerful offspring with several female gods who are not his chief consort – Apollo from Leto, Hermes from Maia, Dionysos from Semele, Heracles from Alcmene, etc. (*Th.* 918–20, 938–9, 940–2, 943–4 etc.). These figures will help to establish his rule by ridding the earth of primeval monsters and creatures whose subversive actions are frequently engendered or encouraged by the Succession Myth female deities: Typhoeus, for instance, is the child of Gaia in Hesiod (and of

[23] See esp. Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 23–103; on Hera's conflict with Zeus's children, see Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2015.

[24] See below, pp. 290–1, for brief discussion of other, later Greek receptions.

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Hera in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, *h.Hom.* 3.307–9), whilst Hera nurses the Lernaian Hydra (314–15) and the Nemean Lion (328–9). These 'monster challengers' of course have a long and varied tradition – Anatolian, Mesopotamian and Ugaritic – but that is not my concern here.[25] But it is neither coincidental nor an empty metaphor that the birth of Typhoeus in Hesiod is achieved by Gaia but explicitly 'through (the plan of) golden Aphrodite' (διὰ χρυσῆν Ἀφροδίτην *Th.* 822). Sex and gender, everywhere.[26]

Thirdly, as the flipside of this coin, Zeus's genealogical self-control is extended to his control over the sexual freedom of others, something made clear by the very structure of the *Theogony* itself, which closes with marriages of decreasing cosmological significance, finally ending with the children of goddesses and their lovers.[27] But it is also a fundamental concept throughout early Greek *epos*, with, e.g., Calypso complaining of the gods' double standards in matters of sexual freedom (*Od.* 5.116–29), Zeus's plan to marry off his daughter Persephone in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, and Aphrodite finding her powers curtailed and turned on her by Zeus in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*.

In other words, the sexing and gendering of the Succession Myth in Hesiod resonates with a process which is foundational, in several different ways, to the whole *Götterapparat* of early Greek *epos*. But when we turn to the Near Eastern material, we do not see this anywhere in any version of the Succession Myth.[28] That is not to say that sexual politics are unimportant in these traditions, as we will see, but the Greeks seem to entwine sex and gender into the very DNA of the myth in a very different, much more obvious, and much more thorough way.

This can be demonstrated by reference to Table 4, where the texts are tabulated by reference to a pattern made up of four elements – marriage, treatment of/attitude to children, maternal plotting, and overthrow. Not all of the texts feature such an arrangement, of course, and one might charge with some justice that the whole concept is too influenced by the conceptual primacy of the Hesiodic story. Nonetheless, tabulation does

[25] For recent re-evaluations of this theme in ancient Near Eastern culture, see the essays in Scurlock and Beal 2013; on the Indo-European tradition, see Watkins 1995, West 2007: 255–9; for the widest possible view, see Witzel 2012: 148–54.

[26] For a different view, see Metcalf 2015a: 183 n. 36.

[27] See Kelly 2007b: 389–94. Whether these closing catalogues are authentically Hesiod's work is not settled, but irrelevant for my point: they were early a part of this poem's tradition.

[28] Studies of gender and divinity in Near Eastern literature are a relatively recent phenomenon: see Lambert 1987, Frymer-Kensky 1992, Harris 2000, Sonik 2009, Asher-Greve and Westenholz 2013, Budin 2014; see also above, note 21.

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Table 4 *The Succession Myth in Hesiod's* Theogony *and Near Eastern texts*

	Hesiod, *Theogony*	Hittite *Kingship in Heaven*	*Enūma eliš*	*Theogony of Dunnu*	
A		**Alalu**		**Ha'in**	
marriage		–		Earth (s.?)	
children		–		?	
maternal plot		–		Earth with Shakkan	
overthrow	Alalu by Anu			Ha'in [killed] by Shakkan	
1	**Ouranos**	**Anu**	**Apsu**	**Shakkan (s.)**	
marriage	Gaia (m.)	–	Tiamat	Earth (m.)/Sea (s.)	
children	Ouranos prevents	–	Apsu hates, Tiamat vexed	?	
maternal plot	Gaia with her children	–	Tiamat refuses	?	
overthrow	Ouranos [castrated] by Kronos	Anu [castrated] by Kumarbi	Apsu [killed] by Ea (ggs.)	Shakkan [killed] by Laḫar, Earth by Sea	
2	**Kronos (s.)**	**Kumarbi**	**(Anšar) Ea/ Tiamat/Qingu**	**Laḫar (s.)**	
marriage	Rheia (s.)	–	Damkina (m.)	Sea (mother)	
children	Kronos eats	Kumarbi gestates	Tiamat et al. hate		
maternal plot	Rheia with children, Gaia/Ouranos	–	Tiamat with children, older gods	?	
overthrow	Kronos by Zeus	Kumarbi by Teššub	Tiamat [killed] by Marduk	Laḫar & Sea [killed] by [x]	
3	**Zeus (s.)**	**Teššub (s.)**	**Marduk (s.)**	**[x] (s.)**	
marriage	Hera (s.) etc.	–	-	River (s.)	
children	Zeus honours	–	Marduk creates	?	
maternal plot	Gaia/Hera	–	–	?	
overthrow	Zeus kills Typhaon	Teššub defeats Lamma, Silver, Hedammu, Ullikummi	–	[x] & River killed by [y] (below)	
4				**[y] (s.)**	**[z] (s.)**
marriage				Ga'u (s.)	Ningestinna
children				?	?
maternal plot				?	?
overthrow				[y] & Ga'u killed by [z]	

allow us to see the texts side by side, and it also shows how individual is the treatment found in the *Theogony*. One of the things which should be immediately clear is the universality in Hesiod of maternal plotting – where the wife/mother plots against the consort/chief god through, or because of, her children's interests.

Now compare this with the Hurro-Hittite *Song of Emergence* (*CTH* 344) where Kumarbi takes over almost all generative functions, both literally in the gods he engenders after swallowing Anu's genitals, and in the four later challengers he produces to overthrow Teššub – Lamma, Silver, Ullikummi and Hedammu (*CTH* 343, 345–6, 348). Though some of these figures are indeed the result of heterosexual intercourse, the agency or attitude of the mother towards the process of succession is entirely undervalued.[29] What matters here is Kumarbi's repeated plans to overthrow Teššub, and throughout the story there is no room for the maternal plotter so prominent in Hesiod. Indeed, as Campbell has most recently argued,[30] the birthing powers of Kumarbi are designed to unify the lines of Anu and Kumarbi in the person of Teššub, and should be considered an innovation on a 'more natural' pattern in which a female deity would be involved, since the story 'transgresses the laws of sexuality and gender in order to underline the power of the male god and his creative role'.[31] For all the similarites with which we began, the difference between the Greek and Hurro-Hittite traditions on this point is striking.

The figure of the maternal plotter is, however, clearly evident in the two Babylonian texts. The first and most obvious is Tiamat in *Enūma eliš*, and her role in plots is shown twice, first *e contrario* where she refuses to join Apsu in his quest to destroy their children, effectively resigning herself 'to her spouse's death for the sake of her children'[32] (I 29–46). It seems to be assumed here that she is naturally considered an essential figure in any such move, since Apsu bothers to try persuading her to join his project, and her failure to assent to the proposal is later brought back on her as a rebuke by the other gods (I 113–20). As they make clear, Tiamat's refusal to plot actually helps to bring about the succession. The second occasion is the more obvious one (I 110–62 and ff.), where Tiamat swiftly moves from being an outraged parent persuaded by her children to attempt the destruction of the new god Marduk (and so glut her anger against Anšar

[29] There is reference to a pregnancy and birth for Earth in this process, but the tablet at this point is severely damaged, and more we cannot say: see Beckman 2011: 31–2. The marginalisation of the female deity has been noted as typical of second-millennium Babylonian texts as a whole: Frymer-Kensky 1992: 70–80, Asher-Greve and Westenholz 2013: 22–8; also below, notes 36 and 38.

[30] Campbell 2013. [31] López-Ruiz 2010: 143. [32] Harris 2000: 84.

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for the overthrow of Apsu) to a monster configured along the lines of the typical challenger to the deity's rule, such as in the Sumerian *Lugale* (*ETCSL* 1.6.2) or the Akkadian *Epic of Anzu*.[33] Though maternality is an important part of Tiamat's initial motivation, her transformation into a terrifying beast at the very least de-emphasises the sexed and gendered elements in her character.[34]

That is not to deny a patriarchal motive or function to the text,[35] not least since Marduk's creation of man (Tablet VI) surely makes a point about the relative importance of the male/female role in his universe, especially next to analogous scenes of human creation elsewhere in Mesopotamia (e.g., *Enki and Ninmah* 1–43 [*ETCSL* 1.1.2]; *Atrahasīs* OB I 189ff., LB II 67ff.; *Epic of Gilgameš* SBV I 94–104).[36] In *Enūma eliš*, Tiamat's twin roles – mother and monster – are mirrored in the duality, almost indeterminacy, of her aims vis-à-vis the Succession Myth: as she is attempting to prevent the succession of Marduk, so she promotes at the same time the succession of her son, and then spouse, Qingu. On both occasions, however, she fails to foster her favoured regime through to the desired end. So here we have a maternal plotter of the general sort we encounter in the Greek tradition, but a thoroughly reconfigured one, where the poet de-emphasises her sexed and gendered maternality in favour of monstrosity, and pointedly makes her fail in the context of intergenerational strife and its transfer of power.

Similarly sexed and gendered, but in a very different way, is the *Theogony of Dunnu*, in which Earth suggests a sexual liaison to her son Shakkan, a coupling which precedes his killing of his father.[37] This sets up the pattern to be repeated over several generations, of a son marrying his mother and/or sister, and killing his father and, sometimes, mother as well – truly a myth to make Oedipus feel a bit of an amateur. Whether intentional or not, the first incest does have a political ramification in the death of Ha'in, and one may suspect (despite the text's laconic nature) that Sea's murder of her mother Earth had something to do with some kind of

[33] See above, note 25.

[34] Harris 2000: 87: 'The very one-sided, misogynistic depiction of the old goddess Tiamat relates to her "masculine" behaviour, which threatened patriarchal norms.'

[35] Cf. Sonik 2009.

[36] See Frymer-Kensky 1992: 70–80; Budin 2014. Selena Wisnom reminds me that only males (Ea, Marduk) are involved in the creation of man in *Enūma eliš*, a strikingly gendered aspect to that poem which is also matched in the way that elsewhere (e.g., *Anzu*) it is the mother who encourages the god to fight the challenger, whilst in *Enūma eliš* that role is played by Marduk's father, Ea. For other mothers, see below, p. 288.

[37] See Lambert 2013: 387–92.

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power conflict arising from their relative status as the wives of Shakkan, and the need to eliminate a rival in the marriage to Laḫar. Fortunately this kind of thing gets resolved in the next three generations, when both father and mother are killed immediately by the new ruler.

So the nexus of sex and gender does play a role in the versions of the Succession Myth we find in the Mesopotamian traditions, though with nothing like the almost formulaic regularity we find in Hesiod: whereas Gaia and Rheia succeed in their efforts to bring about succession (and Hera necessarily fails, repeatedly), Tiamat in *Enūma eliš* unwittingly brings about succession first through non-participation and then through failure; while Earth in *Dunnu* apparently succeeds in her aim of having the husband replaced by her son, but she is then killed by her daughter (who also happens to be her love-rival), thus setting up a pattern in which the mother is invariably murdered at the moment of succession or shortly thereafter. Incidentally, the negative depiction of the maternal figure in these texts is the exception rather than the rule in Mesopotamian literature. For instance, in *Enki and Ninhursag* (*ETCSL* 1.1.1) the latter, despite her anger at Enki, still assists him in his birthing crisis, while in *Enlil and Ninlil* (*ETCSL* 1.2.1), Ninlil perseveres against her ill treatment at the hands of Enlil to bear him children. The mother goddess is more usually supportive in stories of monster challengers, as in the *Epic of Anzu*, where Mami suggests and then advises Ningirsu (OB) or Ninurta (SB) on his quest; or in Ninlil's cautioning of Ninurta after his defeat of Asag in *Lugale*.[38]

In itself, the comparison with the Near Eastern texts helps a Classicist better to understand a distinctive quality about the way in which Greeks shaped this kind of story for their requirements. It is certainly beyond my competence to use this material to make a generalisation about sexual politics in several different Near Eastern civilisations over an enormous time span,[39] but it is striking how the same concern about specifically female usurpation of male power is only *sometimes* found, in a variety of forms, in the Near Eastern traditions, but has been woven deeply into the very fabric of Greek theological narrative. Only the Greek tradition makes

[38] See generally Frymer-Kensky 1992: 14–31, 70–80; Asher-Greve and Westenholz 2013; Gadotti 2014b; also above, note 36, for the ways *Enūma eliš* self-consciously downplays this maternal positivity.

[39] For recent discussions of the status and roles of women in the ancient Near East, see Bolger 2008, Gadotti 2011, Lion and Michel 2016, Stol 2016. For more reasons not to indulge in this kind of generalisation, see van Dongen 2014.

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the goddess a source of constant danger to the upholding of divine order. Sex and gender have become, indeed, almost the foundational concepts of that order.

One should probably pursue the comparison only this far, with the individual traits of these several traditions made clearer by analogy, but the temptation to speculate about genealogy is irresistible. As we have seen, the Greek and Mesopotamian traditions both reflect the destabilising potential of the female in the Succession Myth, though the Mesopotamian goes out of its way to reduce that potential or redirect it through non- or de-sexed and -gendered channels. The Hurro-Hittite tradition is the outlier here, in the way it has Kumarbi take over all generative functionality, but in another sense it shows the same tendency as the Mesopotamian texts in erasing or marginalising the maternal plotter. That is, both of these traditions could be seen as secondary reflections or refractions of an 'original', much simpler pattern of succession, where a (naturally) female figure gives birth to the god who will usurp her husband – the pattern that the Hesiodic version reflects more directly, and uses repeatedly. One shudders to make these sorts of absolutist judgements across cultural and temporal boundaries, but such a reconstruction would imply that the Near Eastern traditions on this point were more complex, developed and sophisticated than the Greek.[40] It would also suggest that there were at least two nodes of interaction, one Anatolian and one Mesopotamian, feeding into the long prehistory of this theme in Greek literature.[41] It is very hard to believe that Hesiod himself was so multicultural or multilingual as personally to combine these two rather different approaches to the Succession Myth for the first time in an Hellenic context.[42]

[40] See Kelly 2014: 53 for a similar suggestion about Greek and Near Eastern attitudes to narrative violence.

[41] See especially Rutherford, Chapter 11 in this volume. He suggests several routes and times of transfer, including the possibility of Minoan intermediaries through Aleppo and Mari in the eighteenth century BCE – even before the Hittite translations of Hurrian material! – which might support my suggestion that the Greek tradition, in its simplicity, preserves a very old version of this tale. A further, fascinating ramification is that 'shared traditions' could then travel back into the Near East on the back of 'Aegean' cultural prestige (as evidenced in Cretan artistic motifs in the Levant). Rutherford's chapter is yet another blow to the simplistic, stemmatological methods typical of Classicists in this area.

[42] As Christopher Metcalf suggests to me, this also sits ill with Hesiod's self-presentation as someone with limited experience of travel (*Op.* 618–94). Though this may well be a conventional element of the persona, it obviously speaks to the kinds of stances which his first audience(s) would have found congenial, meaningful and authoritative.

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Nonetheless, however much fun this kind of speculation may be, even this is a case of *obscura per obscuriora*. Such a conclusion may also be too influenced by the primacy of the Hesiodic model in my conception of the phenomenon, and so – as Pindar (*O.* 1.52) – I stand back. At the least, the comparative evidence shows us how long, how varied, and above all how syncretistic, was the early Greek tradition of the myth. As López-Ruiz has put it,

> [t]he extant versions of these stories . . . bear witness to a rich and complex Eastern Mediterranean pool of mythic traditions in which the Greeks were also diving for many centuries.[43]

The process denoted by this aquatic metaphor, by the way, did not start – and it definitely did not stop – with Hesiod. Though this chapter has focused on his *Theogony* as our primary evidence for the earliest period, there were other early Greek versions of cosmic history, and the process of interaction with the Near East around this story continued long after Hesiod's text had become a classic. We have already mentioned one such figure, Philon of Byblos, but there were several others: in his *On Principles* (125c), the fifth-century CE Neoplatonist Damascius cites Eudemos of Rhodes (fourth century BCE) and an undated Phoenician sage, Mochus, for a Phoenician cosmogony which has no trace of intergenerational conflict, but which contains familiar details like the cosmic egg found in the Orphic tradition.[44] Moreover, it is clear that Berossus (third century BCE), a Babylonian writing in Greek under the Seleucids, clearly knew *Enūma eliš* or something very much like it, summarising its narrative in the first book of his *Babyloniaca*.[45] However it was transmitted into the later Greek world, the continuing influence of the *Song of Emergence* may also be seen in the cosmogony partially preserved in the fourth-century Derveni Papyrus, where Zeus apparently swallows the phallus of Ouranos (frr. 8, 12 Bernabé), becomes pregnant (fr. 12.2–4) and then proceeds to create the world (frr. 15–18).[46] In fact, these later texts are much closer in their details to the Near Eastern traditions,[47] and they have a much better claim than Hesiod's *Theogony* to have been produced by direct and

[43] López-Ruiz 2010: 127.
[44] See López-Ruiz 2010: 130–70; Meisner 2018: 88–118; also Mitchell 2018 for Indian parallels.
[45] See Frahm 2010b, Haubold 2013b and George, Chapter 10 in this volume.
[46] See López-Ruiz 2010: 137–44, 167–9; Meisner 2018: 51–86. For a different view, see Kotwick and Janko 2017: 207–12.
[47] See Burkert 2004: 92; Meisner 2018: 21–44.

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identifiably personalised interaction between specific texts and authors.[48] If anything, Hesiod shows us that the Greeks had been long prepared for these later experiments, providing the broad structural similarities in the narrative which could allow even further and closer cross-pollination. His *Theogony* thus performs the very same role which the Indo-European background played for him and his tradition, forming the landscape from which Near Eastern territory appeared not only recognisable, but attractive. That, however, is a discussion for another day.

Conclusion

As the mother of the main character in *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (1979), the late, great Terry Jones manages to encapsulate – unintentionally, of course, since 'she' is talking about her son's attitude to his uncertain parentage – the Greeks' view of divine power: 'Sex, sex, sex, that's all they think about, eh?' For the early Greeks, the story of Zeus's accession to power and the establishment of his rule was profoundly sexed and gendered in its nature and logic. Not only does Zeus possess and contain the frustrated maternal plotter, not only does he control the sexual behaviour and parturitive potential of the other female gods, not only does he fail to make the same sexual errors as his predecessors in having all his children with one wife – in fact, Hesiod's *Theogony* serves as a charter text for nothing less than eternal male domination. This is the distinctively Greek take on this widespread ancient motif of the Succession Myth: its nexus of sex and gender is more pronounced than in the Hurro-Hittite tradition, which patriarchalises by denying roles and agency to female deities in a context where they might be expected; and it is even more pronounced than in the Mesopotamian tradition, whose texts explicitly show the temporary success, but ultimate defeat, of any such female attempt to undermine the male deity's dominance. Comparative study allows us to see the individual element working within its own context, to determine what is distinctive about each tradition and so, finally, to understand all of them better. Genealogy, at least in the way most Classicists would like to practise it, is neither possible nor particularly profitable. But the analogy remains, and it can tell us a very great deal.

[48] For precisely this development in Greek contact with Indian cosmogonical traditions, see Mitchell 2018. She well shows how inherited similarities allowed greater specific interactions (and prevented 'blocking': see above, note 14), whereby the convergences become much clearer after the increase in direct contact following Alexander's invasion.

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