

Theomachy and Theology in Early Greek Myth The Case of the Aeolids¹

In memoriam M. L. West

1. Theomachic myth and 'theology'

In this article I explore the 'theological' implications of a set of archaic Greek stories associated with one particular mythical family, the descendants of Aeolus.² In invoking 'theology' I do not mean, of course, to imply that polytheistic Greek myth pretends to the metaphysical coherence that was attributed to Christianity by the Church Fathers. My points are, rather, three. First, myth carries with it a set of metaphysical assumptions about the rules according to which the cosmos operates. The second is that these assumptions are specific to a particular culture at a particular period. The third is that every mythological telling represents a specific intervention in the necessarily complex set of questions relating to the divine.

Can archaic myth really be understood as a repository for metaphysical ideas? Initially, the answer might seem to be 'no'. Myth long predated the great intellectual revolutions first of Ionia and southern Italy and then of Athens, revolutions that generated reasoned discourse that the Greeks named φιλοσοφία. Yet the abruptness of this transition is not to be taken for granted. The idea of a shift from an earlier, mythical 'mentality' to a later, 'philosophical' one is rooted in the specific concerns of the European Enlightenment, and is no longer tenable.³ Twentieth-century psychoanalysis did little to unsettle this view; indeed by associating myth with dreaming and the subconscious, psychoanalysis at one level merely underlined its 'non-rational' nature. Structuralism took a step forward, certainly, by insisting on the fundamental coherence of mythical thought, but it still tended to present that coherence as different in kind from that of literate cultures: as mystified, as

¹ I am grateful for comments on this paper to those who have discussed its ideas in Oxford, Ann Arbor and Paris.

² The term 'theology' has made a dramatic return to the field of classical studies: see esp. Versnel 2011 and Eidinow, Kindt and Osborne eds. 2016.

³ For an account and critique of this habit see Lloyd 1990.

symbolic rather than rational. Vernant, for one, still spoke of a transition from *mythos* to *logos*.⁴ It is only recent anthropology that has decisively challenged this narrative: in particular, Philippe Descola and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro have insisted that all mythological systems have their own ‘metaphysics’, their own implicit postulates about the interrelated functionings of the universe and its constituent parts.⁵ It is following this school that I posit a metaphysical dimension to archaic mythology. The latter is, for sure, not conventionally philosophical in one respect, in that it is expressed through narrative rather than linear argumentation; but as we shall see, the *Catalogue* at any rate seems to participate in wider contemporary debates, aspects of which, indeed, are shared with Presocratic thinkers.

The stories I shall discuss have to do with the phenomenon of ‘theomachy’, of humans pitting themselves against the divine realm – a stance that never ends well for the humans in question.⁶ Such narratives are, at the broad level, of a kind familiar from a number of archaic and classical genres, most notably Athenian tragedy. They are often understood by modern critics in straightforwardly moralistic terms: they teach us, it is alleged, through the ultimate punishment of the theomach, that it is wrong for mortals to overreach themselves and aim for the joy and/or knowledge that is proper to the gods alone. Theomachic narratives, in this light, are seen as normatively pietistic: ‘In tragedy the positive values of piety were virtually unquestioned ... When characters challenged or violated them, their actions and attitudes required examination’.⁷ Theomachy thus becomes an expression of what is popularly (if inaccurately) referred to as tragic *hubris*,⁸ and its punishment a clear reassertion of the rectitude of conventional religious values.

⁴ E.g. Part 7 of Vernant 1983 is entitled ‘From Myth to Reason’. For a recent refinement of the ‘from *mythos* to *logos*’ narrative (not, of course, Vernant’s invention) see Fowler 2011; and for a critique see Yu 2015.

⁵ Descola 2013; Viveiros de Castro 2014.

⁶ The root θεομαχ- is securely attested first in Euripides’ *Bacchae* of 405 BCE (45, 325, 1255), where it is used in this sense of Pentheus as one who resists Dionysus. It is also, however, used later in a different sense to refer to conflict between the gods, especially in relation to *Iliad* 21 (e.g. Pl. *Rep.* 378d; Heracl. *Quaest. Hom.* 7.14; Σ *Hom. Il.* 21.470).

⁷ Mikalson 1991: 162.

⁸ Fisher 1992 is a comprehensive study of the ancient conception of *hubris*, which counts among its aims the intention to ‘demonstrate, once and for all, the fundamental flaws in what might be called the “traditional view (or views) of

This picture is, however, a simplification, based at least in part in Christian notions of sin. Greek religion certainly knew of order and transgression, and of mortal crime and divine punishment: the *Odyssey* is proof enough of that. But it had neither a unified moral code for humans to follow nor a robust belief in the infallibility of divine monitoring of and response to human ethics. I shall argue that the instances of theomachy that I consider are best understood not simply as straightforward theological protreptics (although they have an element of that), but as opportunities to experiment, in an exploratory mode, with different models of response to the phenomenon of divinity – including forms of scepticism that we might associate with ‘atheism’ (in the looser, extended sense employed by the ancient Greeks).⁹

2. The Age of Commonality

Aeolus, the progenitor of the Aeolids, is a significant personage, one of the sons of Deucalion’s son Hellen, who was the first ‘Hellene’, and in the Greek mythical imaginary also the first human being born after the flood. He (Aeolus) was the eponymous ancestor of the Aeolians, the branch of the Greek *ethnos* that also gave its name to a dialect regionalised primarily in Thessaly, Boeotia and on the Anatolian coast. In the earliest stratum of Greek myth – with which we are concerned here - he is distinct from the lord of the winds, the son of Hippotes known from the *Odyssey*, who lived far from the Greek mainland, and would in post-Homeric times lend his name to the Aeolian isles north of Sicily.¹⁰

hybris,’ and to reveal the misconceptions and oversimplifications which these views imply of the conceptual relationships of many Greek terms, of the supposed activities of the gods, and of the patterns of “tragic” action and suffering’ (1). *Hybris* is, rather, fundamentally an assault on the honour of another.

⁹ On ancient disbelief and atheism see Decharme 1904; Drachmann 1922; Ley 1966; Dorival and Pralon (eds.) 2002; Cancik-Lindemaier 2006; Bremmer 2007; Sedley 2013a; Whitmarsh 2015. The Greek words *atheos* (attested from the fifth century BCE) and *atheotēs* (second century BCE) cover a far wider range of sceptical stances than the English ‘atheist’ and ‘atheism’: the ambiguity in ancient terminology is noted at Diog. Laert. 7.119 (reporting Stoic teaching).

¹⁰ The confusion between the two is irrelevant to the present discussion, but it is nevertheless early and problematic. The Hesiodic *Catalogue* gives the Thessalian five daughters and seven sons (fr. 10.25-34 Most = fr. 10a.25-34 M-W; on the identity of the seventh see below, n. 27; and on the ‘seven sons’ motif cross-

The stories about the first Aeolids – the descendants of our (Thessalian) Aeolus – are preserved in the *Catalogue of Women*, a now-fragmentary epic poem that was in antiquity usually (and probably erroneously) attributed to Hesiod,¹¹ and which modern scholars have variously dated in the large range between the early seventh and the late sixth centuries.¹² The exact date does not matter greatly to the present argument, but it will be important, in due course, to acknowledge that the worldview reflected here was forged during an era of rapid and substantial social, technological and aesthetic change; the poem, I shall argue, reflects the transformative nature of its wider environment. A later date, moreover, would make the *Catalogue* poet an approximate contemporary of Xenophanes, the earliest surviving Presocratic explicitly to confront conventional wisdom about anthropomorphic divinity.¹³

Stories about the earliest humans are inevitably stories about the relationship between humans and gods, for in the earliest times, in the mythical imagination, the two lived in close proximity. There are some hints in archaic poetry that humans are descended from deities: a number of hints suggest that archaic myth imagined them to be the offspring of Melian Nymphs and Giants.¹⁴ The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* offer little help here, since the world described there is by and large a late one in the mythical cycle, in which even the phenomenon of demi-gods (the products of unions between gods and mortals) is relatively rare. The *Odyssey*, however, knows of the Phaeacians, who are said to be *agkhitheoi*, ‘close to the gods’ (Hom.

culturally see West 1985: 28-9); Homer, meanwhile, gives the ‘Tyrrhenian’ six daughters and six sons, who live together in incestuous unions (*Od.* 10.1-9). In Euripides, Canace is apparently the daughter of the Tyrrhenian (Eur. *TrGF Aiolos* ii-ixb); in Apollodorus, however, who may follow the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, she is the daughter of the Thessalian (*Bibl.* 1.7.3).

¹¹ West 1985: 128 suggests that it may be based on a lost Hesiodic original; see also Fowler 1999: 1. In what follows I use the text of Most 2007 for the *Catalogue* (‘Most’), cross-referenced to Merkelbach and West 1990 (‘MW’) – not to be confused with Merkelbach and West 1967, which lacks some crucial later papyrus publications.

¹² Janko 1982: 85-7 (*cf.* 200), for example, dates it to the early seventh century using linguistic criteria; West 1985: 130-7 to the mid-sixth century, on historical grounds. Hirschberger 2004: 45-51 surveys the arguments, tending towards the sixth century (but does not engage with Janko’s data); see also Cingano 2009: 116-17.

¹³ For Xenophanes’ comments on the gods see fr. D8-14 Laks-Most, and below.

¹⁴ Yates 2004.

Od. 5.35, 19.279; *cf.* 7.205, cited below), which ancient commentators understood to mean ‘genetically related’, but which Homer seems to have understood in the looser sense of a ‘special relationship’.¹⁵ As their king Alcinous reports, however, this proximal relationship is precarious, and not to be taken for granted:

αἰεὶ γὰρ τὸ πάρος γε θεοὶ φαίνονται ἐναργεῖς ἡμῖν,
εὔτ’ ἔρδωμεν ἀγακλειτὰς ἐκατόμβας,
δαίνυνται τε παρ’ ἄμμι καθήμενοι ἔνθα περ ἡμεῖς.
εἰ δ’ ἄρα τις καὶ μῶνος ἰὼν ξύμβληται ὀδίτης,
οὔ τι κατακρύπτουσιν, ἐπεὶ σφισιν ἐγγύθεν εἰμέν,
ὥς περ Κύκλωπές τε καὶ ἄγρια φῦλα Γιγάντων.

For always beforehand, at any rate, the gods have appeared
before us in manifest form,
whenever we sacrifice to them glorious hecatombs,
and they feast among us, sitting where we sit.
And if one of us walking the roads alone meets them,
they use no concealment, for we are near to them,
as are the Cyclopes and the wild tribes of the Giants.
(Hom. *Od.* 7.201-6)

The gods’ closeness to the Phaeacians is expressed through their commensality – food rituals being always a salient marker of identity in Homer¹⁶ – and through their avoidance of the human disguise that they normally adopt in connection with human beings (*enargēs* is the regular Greek adjective that marks direct, epiphanic manifestation). But there is also a powerful implication that this is a special people whose specialness is slipping away from them. Alcinous’ words show an awareness that his people’s proximity to the divine is evanescent, set in a present that is already sloping into a past: although he uses the present tense to describe the gods’ habits, he introduces the section with the qualifying phrase ‘always beforehand, at any rate ...’ (αἰεὶ ... τὸ πάρος γε). Odysseus’ arrival among the Phaeacians, indeed, marks the very end of their commonality with the gods – a conclusion that is set quite literally in stone once the Poseidon has forbidden them to convey any more humans by sea, and petrified the ship that carried Odysseus.¹⁷ The poem thus positions itself on a

¹⁵ Hainsworth 1988: 258.

¹⁶ E.g. Vidal-Naquet 1970.

¹⁷ Hom. *Od.* 13.146-82. On this Homeric theme in general see Ford 1992.

temporal cusp, between the last vestiges of the age of commonality and the entirely mundane world that its audience knows.

The memory of a time when humans and gods lived in commonality also appears in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, in a vexed passage. The story provides an aetiology of sacrifice as the primary medium of communication between humans and gods. During a common feast at Mekone, we read, the Titan Prometheus attempted to dupe Zeus by wrapping bones in fat: he thus inaugurated the practice of offering the inedible parts of the sacrificial victim to the gods, and saving the inedible parts for humans. As Vernant has observed, this is a critical moment in the Greeks' myth-history, a moment when sacrifice was established as the primary mode of communication between gods and humans.¹⁸ What is important from our point of view is that this moment appears once again to mark the separation between gods and humans:

καὶ γὰρ ὄτ' ἐκρίνοντο θεοὶ θνητοὶ τ' ἄνθρωποι
Μηκῶνῃ, τότε ἔπειτα μέγαν βοῦν πρόφρονι θυμῷ
δασσάμενος προύθηκε, Διὸς νόον ἔξαπαφίσκων.

For when the gods and mortal men were being divided [?]
in Mecone, with eager spirit [Prometheus] divided up a great

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and, trying to deceive Zeus' mind, set it before him.
(Hes. *Th.* 535-7)

This, Hesiod tells us, is the point where humans and gods ἐκρίνοντο. What does this word mean? κρίνειν normally means 'to judge' or 'to distinguish'. Does it mean that mortals and gods 'were coming to a settlement', as Glenn Most (the Loeb translator) takes it?¹⁹ Or, alternatively (as an scholiast proposes) are we to take it that *the nature of what it is to be a human or a god* was 'being judged'?²⁰ Or is it, as the same scholiast proceeds to claim (even less plausibly), that a decision was being taken about which deities should be paired with which *poleis*?²¹ Most likely of all is that this is the moment when

¹⁸ Vernant 1989. See also Clay 2003: 107-13.

¹⁹ Most 2007 *ad loc.*

²⁰ Σ *ad loc.*: ἐκρίνετο τί θεὸς καὶ τί ἄνθρωπος ἐν τῇ Μηκῶνῃ.

²¹ ἐκρίνετο τίνες θεοὶ ποίους ἀνθρώπους λάχοιεν μετὰ τὸν πόλεμον.

humans and gods ‘were in the process of becoming separated’.²² This event would then mark a similar moment, in a different narrative mode, to the one where Odysseus arrives on Scheria: the conclusion, that is to say, of the era when gods and humans lived in common.

Homer and Hesiod present the age of commonality as defined by commensality. Humans, we are to infer, were still differentiated from gods by their mortality, but lived a life of ease with food provided for them. In the *Catalogue of Women*, however, commensality is additionally linked to sex and reproduction. The ‘women’ who are the subject of the catalogue are impregnated by gods, so as to produce the race of heroes. The proem, which survives in fragmentary form, explicitly links this erotic commingling with the motif of commonality of dining and political decision-making:²³

Νῦν δὲ γυναικῶν φύλον αἰείσατε, ἠδυέπειαι
Μοῦσαι Ὀλυμπιάδες, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,
αἱ τότε ἄρισται ἔσαν [καὶ κάλλιστα κατὰ γαῖαν
μίτρας τ’ ἀλλύσαντο διὰ χρυσέην τ’ Ἀφροδίτην
μισγόμεναι θεοῖσιν [5
ξυναὶ γὰρ τότε δαῖτες ἔσαν, ξυνοὶ δὲ θόωκοι
ἀθανάτοις τε θεοῖσι καταθητοῖς τ’ ἀνθρώποις·
οὐδ’ ἄρα ἰσαίωνες οἰμ[

And now sing of the tribe of women, you sweet-voiced
Olympian Muses, daughters of aegis-holding Zeus –
those women who were the best at that time and most
beautiful on the earth,
and they loosened their girdles and because of golden
Aphrodite
mingling with gods [...] For at that time the feasts were in
common
and in common the councils for the immortal gods and for
mortal human beings;
and yet not equally long-lived [...]

(*Catalogue of Women* fr. 1.1-8 Most, MW (trans. adapted from Most))

²² LSJ s.v. κρίνω offers ‘separate, put asunder, distinguish’ as the primary meaning: cf. e.g. ... ὅτε τε ξανθὴ Δημήτηρ / κρίνη ἐπειγομένων ἀνέμων καρπὸν τε καὶ ἄχνας ... (Hom. *Il.* 5.501-2).

²³ On the wider archaic context for this passage see Hirschberger 2004: 70-2.

Let us note particularly the particle γάρ in line 6, which indicates that the sexual union of gods and mortal women was logically dependent on the commonality of food and decision-making. This does not mean, of course, that gods cannot have sex with mortals without sharing a dinner or a political assembly. The poet's point is, however, a different one: that the age in which sexual unions between gods and mortals was an era, now located categorically in the past (τότε), when sex was only one of a number of activities held in common between gods and humans.

Sexual reproduction, however, adds a different dimension, since it means that the offspring of the gods and mortals in the heroic age carry with them genetic traces of divine ancestry. In fact, the *Catalogue* presents humanity as a whole (at least as we understand it now)²⁴ as genetically divine, since the first modern humans, Pyrrha and Deucalion, were the offspring of the Titans Epimetheus and Prometheus. The heroic race, then, results from the admixture of Olympian and human-Titan blood: it is this that makes heroes 'demigods' (ἡμιθέω[v]), a generic term that covers all of the heroes of the mythical age in general, whatever their actual parentage.²⁵ The myth-historical structure of the *Catalogue* is designed to explicate heroic behaviour as rooted in divine ancestry, for which the age of commonality provides an aetiology – regardless of the exact genealogy of individual cases.

3. The Aeolids: envy towards the gods

This sense that the earliest mortals were close, in several ways, to the gods will be significant for the argument that follows. Let us turn now to consider the specific case of the Aeolids, who seem to have had a particular difficulty letting go of the age of commonality. The Aeolids are given an unexpected prominence in the *Catalogue*, a prominence that has led some to hypothesise an Aeolian origin for the poem itself.²⁶ Yet any suspicion of pro-Aeolian sentiment should be dispelled by a consideration of the criminality that seems to be genetically embedded in this people from the start. As it happens, we have the fragment introducing this family:

²⁴ A previous race of humans was wiped out in the flood.

²⁵ *Cat.* fr. 204.100 M-W = 155.100 Most.

²⁶ Fowler 1999: 8-9.

Αἰολίδαι δ' ἐγένοντο θεμιστοπόλοι βασιλῆες
 Κρηθεύς τ' ἠδ' Ἀθάμας καὶ Σίσυφος αἰολομήτης
 Σαλμωνεύς τ' ἄδικος καὶ ὑπέρθυμος Περιήρης
 Δηϊών] τε μέγ[ας Μάγνης²⁷] τ' ἀριδείκετος ἀνδρῶν
 οἱ πατρὸς ὑψηλοῖς ἐν δώμ]ασιν ἠβῶντες
 τ]ε κοντό τε κύδιμα τέκνα·
 αὔτις δ' Αἰναρέτη τέκεν Αἰόλωι] εὐνη[θ]εῖσ[α
 ἠϋκόμους κούρας πολυήρ]ατον εἶδος ἐχούσας,
 Πεισιδίκην τε καὶ Ἀλκυόνη]ν, Χ[αρ]ίτεσσιν ὁμοίας
 καὶ Καλύκην Κανάκην τε καὶ ε]ύειδέ[α] Περιμήδη·

And sons of Aeolus were born, law-administering kings,
 Cretheus and Athamas and shifty-counseled Sisyphus;
 and unjust Salmoneus and high-spirited Perieres
 and great Deion] and [Magnes] celebrated among men
 who, in their father's lofty houses, when adolescents ...
 ... and they bore famous children.

Again, to Aeolus Aenarete,] bedded with him, bore
 beautiful-haired maidens] who had a [very] lovely form,
 Peisidice and Alcyone,] similar to the Graces,
 and Calyce and Canace and] fair-formed Perimede.

(Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women* fr. 10.25-34 Most = fr. 10a.25-34
 MW (trans. adapted from Most))

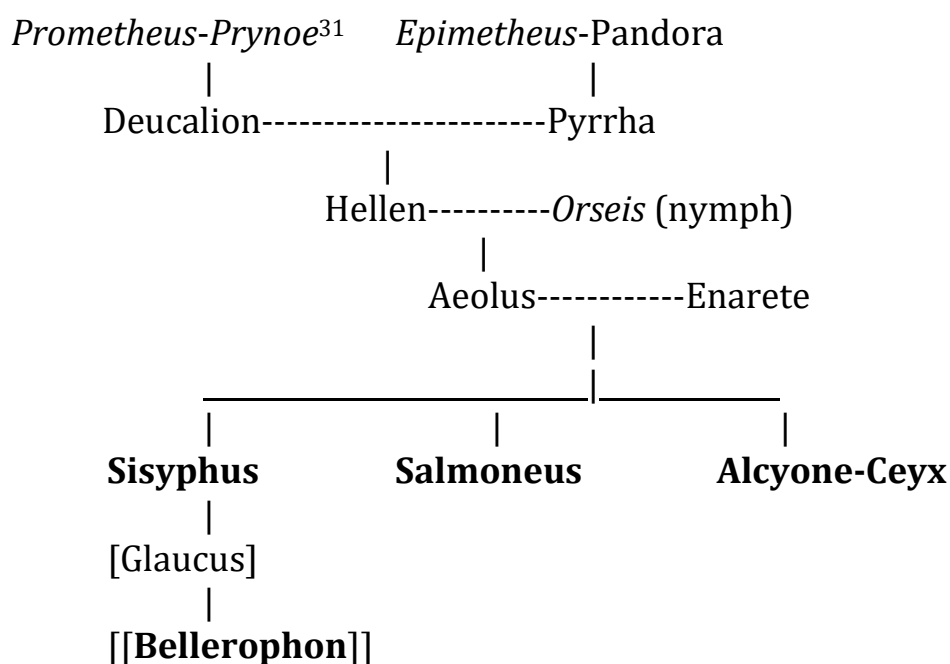
Although θεμιστοπόλοι ('law-administering') seems a positive
 epithet for the descendants, the pun αἰολομήτης (*aiolomētēs*: 'shifty-
 counseled'), used of Sisyphus in the second line of this passage,
 locates a 'shifty' (*aiolos*) quality already in the founder. And in fact
 this is not a happy lineage. Cretheus and Athamas, certainly, are
 accorded no adjectives by the *Catalogue* poet; but while the first was
 unremarkable himself except for founding Iolcus, the second was a
 killer and the subject of fifth-century tragedies.²⁸ Then comes 'unjust'
 (ἄδικος) Salmoneus, to whom we shall return. Next we meet 'high-
 spirited' Perieres. Little is known of him; ὑπέρθυμος ('high-spirited')
 has positive connotations often in the *Iliad*, but in the post-Homeric

²⁷ Following Hirschberger 2004: 186, I have restored this name from Apollod.
Bibl. 1.7.3 (and Paus. 6.21.7), despite the appearance of another Magnes at *Cat.*
 fr. 7-8 West, MW. Μίμας, the other alternative, will not scan (the iota is short).

²⁸ Athamas killed his eldest son Learchus; he was the subject of plays by
 Aeschylus (*TrGF* 1-4a) and Sophocles (*TrGF* fr. 1-10). A curse on his house is
 mentioned by Hdt. 7.197.

period largely carried the negative sense of ‘overweening’, used of monstrous, threatening forces, the *hyper-* prefix marking transgressive excess.²⁹ Deion and Magnes are similarly obscure, and their epithets are positive, if formulaic and unremarkable. The women are then described, positively, but in aesthetic rather than moral terms.

What is surprising, however, is the density of reference to theomachic activity – both in the *Catalogue*, so far as we can judge, and in later mythical reception of these figures. Consider the following (radically abbreviated) family tree, in which the divine figures are indicated by italics and the theomachic figures are highlighted in bold:³⁰



I have included Glaucus and Bellerophon out of completeness, since Glaucus is usually thought of as Sisyphus’ son.³² At least in the post-

²⁹ Cf. Hom. *Od.* 7.59 (of Eurymedon, king of the Giants); Hes. *Th.* 719 (of the Titans).

³⁰ The early parts of the stemma are found in fr. 5 Most; the name of the nymph Orseis is found in Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.7.3.

³¹ The name Prynoe appears only in the *Catalogue* (fr. 5 Most); I have marked her as divine not with certainty but on the grounds that other progenitors in this generation are nymphs.

³² Hom. *Il.* 6.153-4; Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.3; cf. Pind. *Ol.* 13.61-4.

Homeric tradition, Bellerophon attempted an aerial assault on Olympus (using the winged horse Pegasus). In Euripides' *Bellerophon*, he apparently³³ goes one stage further, putting forward an argument denying the existence of gods on the basis of the evidence for injustice in our world (an argument he may have found in the writings of Diagoras of Melos).³⁴ The *Catalogue*, however, states that Sisyphus was denied a lineage by Zeus when he went in search of Eurynome's hand, and that Glaucus was in fact the son of Poseidon by the latter. He is thus part of the wider Aeolid narrative, but not (in the *Catalogue*) genetically connected to the family.

With Sisyphus, Salmoneus and Alcyone and Ceyx, however, we are on surer ground.³⁵ We do not unfortunately have the Sisyphian episode in our surviving parts of the *Catalogue*, but there are two broad traditions that might explain the poet's adjective 'shifty-counseled': either he escaped from the underworld or he chained up Death to prevent humans dying.³⁶ Either way, his crime is to erase the boundary separating mortals from immortals, and so to threaten the special status of gods. It is no doubt because of this mythical identity that the poet (Euripides or Critias) of the famous 'Sisyphus fragment', a dramatic excerpt (from a tragedy or a satyr play) arguing that gods are a human invention for the purposes of social control, put the argument in Sisyphus' mouth.³⁷ Like Bellerophon, then, Sisyphus finds his implicitly atheistic behaviour in the *Catalogue* amplified with explicitly atheistic argumentation in fifth-century drama.

4. Alcyone and Ceyx

³³ Euripides, *Bellerophon TrGF* 5.1 F286 (e.g. 1-2: φησὶν τις εἶναι δῆτ' ἐν οὐρανῷ θεούς; / οὐκ εἰσὶν, οὐκ εἶσ' ...), with Riedweg 1990. Dixon 2014 denies that this speech is given by Bellerophon, but while his caution is welcome the evidence is tenuous.

³⁴ For the possible link with Diagoras see Whitmarsh 2016.

³⁵ There was also an archaic poem called *The Wedding of Ceyx*, associated in antiquity with Hesiod but sometimes denied to him (fr. 202-5 Most = 263-9 MW). Whether this was the same Ceyx is unclear from the scant fragments, which have a strong flavour of Heracles: Merkelbach and West 1965 and Cingano 2009: 125-6 think it is; d'Alessio 2005: 183-6 argues, plausibly to my mind, that we are dealing here with a different Ceyx.

³⁶ Nünlist 2006 has the details.

³⁷ *TrGF* 1 (43) F 19 = B 25 DK. See most recently Davies 1989, Pechstein 1998, O'Sullivan 2012, Sedley 2013b and Whitmarsh 2014.

With Alcyone and Ceyx the ground becomes firmer still. This is a version different from Ovid's famous, romantic telling of the story.³⁸ The relevant part of the *Catalogue* papyrus (fr. 10.86-98 Most) is broken at this point, but enough survives to confirm that Zeus transformed them into the birds that bear their names (the kingfisher and the tern) in punishment for their reckless behaviour. A papyrus fragment of a prose summary held in the University of Michigan fills out the full story:

Ἀλκυόνην τὴν Αἰόλου ἔγημε Κῆ[ϋξ ὁ Φωσφό]ρου τοῦ
 ἀστέρος υἱός. ἄμφω δ' ἤσα[ν ὑπερή]φα[νοι. ἀλ]λήλων δ'
 ἐρασθέντες ἢ [μὲν .].α[.].κ[.]ρνα[.....] Δία κα[λ]εῖ, ≤ὁ δὲ≥ αὐτὴν
 Ἥραν προσηγό[ρε]υσεν· ἐφ' [ῶι ὀργι]σθει[ς] ὁ Ζεὺς
 μετεμόρφωσεν ἀμφοτέρους [εἰς ὄρν]ε[α,] ὡς Ἡσίοδος ἐν
 Γυναικῶν καταλόγῳ.

Ceyx the son of the star Phosphorus ('bringer of light') married Alcyone the daughter of Aeolus. The two of them were arrogant. They loved each other; she [...] called him Zeus, he named her Hera. Zeus was angered at this and metamorphosed them into birds, so says Hesiod in the *Catalogue of Women*. (fr. 12 Most = *P. Michigan inv.* 1447 ii 14-19)

This account can be amplified by reference to two other versions of the story, from Apollodorus and the *Etymologicum Genuinum*, a 9th-century Byzantine compilation that compiles earlier material:

Ἀλκυόνην δὲ Κῆυξ ἔγημεν Ἐωσφόρου παῖς. οὔτοι δὲ δι'
 ὑπερηφάνειαν ἀπώλοντο· ὁ μὲν γὰρ τὴν γυναῖκα ἔλεγεν Ἥραν,
 ἢ δὲ τὸν ἄνδρα Δία, Ζεὺς δὲ αὐτοὺς ἀπωρνέωσε, καὶ τὴν μὲν
 ἄλκυόνα ἐποίησε τὸν δὲ κήυκα.

Ceyx the son of Eosphorus ('bringer of dawn') married Alcyone. They were destroyed for their arrogance. He called his wife Hera, she her husband Zeus. So Zeus made them into birds, transforming her into the 'kingfisher' (*alkuonē*) and him into the 'tern' (*kēux*). (Apollodorus, *Library* 1.53)

³⁸ Ov. *Met.* 11.410-748. On the evolution of the romantic version see Fantham 1979.

Κήυξ ὁ Φωσφόρου τοῦ ἀστέρος γήμας Ἄλκυόνην τὴν Αἰόλου μέγα φρονήσας ἐφ' ἑαυτῷ θεὸς ἐβούλετο νομίζεσθαι, διόπερ ἦ τε γαμετὴ διὰ παντὸς ἐκάλει αὐτὸν Δία κάκεινος Ἥραν. Ζεὺς δὲ ἀγανακτήσας μετέβαλεν αὐτοὺς εἰς ὄρνεα χωρὶς ἀλλήλων βιοῦντα, ἐκλήθη δὲ ἡ μὲν Ἄλκυόνη, ὁ δὲ Κήυξ.

Ceyx the son of the star Phosphorus married Alcyone the daughter of Aeolus and got above himself and wanted to be thought of [or 'worshipped'?] as a god; for this reason his wife always called him Zeus and he called her Hera. Zeus became cross and turned them into birds who lived apart from each other. She was called Alcyone and he Ceyx. (*Etymologicum Genuinum* s.v. Alcyone)

The theomachic behaviour of Alcyone and Ceyx consists in their arrogation to themselves of the status of gods, and indeed of the names Hera and Zeus. The Michigan papyrus and 'Apollodorus' describe this action with the terms ὑπερήφανος/ὑπερηφάνεια ('arrogant' / 'arrogance'; the Byzantine lexicon, meanwhile, states that Ceyx 'got above himself', or literally 'thought big': μέγα φρονήσας). The adjective ὑπερήφανος may of course derive merely from the prose tradition, but there is a chance that it goes back to the *Catalogue* itself. We recall that the obscure Perieres was described with the word ὑπέρθυμος, 'high-spirited' (fr. 10.27 Most; probably in a negative sense, as I suggested above). Similarly, ὑπερήφανος is found in archaic poetry marking wanton behaviour. What exactly the element following the prefix means, however, is obscure.³⁹ The *hyper-* prefix seems to point to excess, as in the parallel formation ὑπερήνωρ, 'over-manly' (i.e. manifesting an excess of masculinity). But the prefix also seems to suggest a desire to move 'above' one's station or 'beyond' proper boundaries. Homer's Nestor uses ὑπερηφανέοντες in connection with the Epeians, a people whom he (Nestor) associates with the Eleians of the north-west Peloponnese, with whom his native Pylians have a dispute over cattle-rustling: presumably they are so described not simply because they are 'arrogant', but also because they transgress the Pylians' territorial

³⁹ Frisk 1970, Chantraine 2009 and Beekes 2010 s.v. are all equally at a loss. The least objectionable guess is a derivation from ὑπερφενής, 'over-wealthy'. Chantraine considers any connection to φαίνομαι 'morphologiquement très peu plausible'.

boundaries and usurp their property.⁴⁰ Hesiod uses ὑπερήφανη of the hundred-armed giants who help Zeus overthrow the Titans: here the word seems to suggest not so much transgression (the Giants are not usurpers in Hesiod) as superhuman size.⁴¹ In the archaic cases, then, ὑπερήφανος seems to refer *both* to a psychological or physical ‘excess’ characteristic of the individual or group, a latent potential for disruptive behaviour, *and* to the manifestation of that potential in specific acts of transgression, of going ‘beyond’ a stipulated sphere.⁴²

There may be additional connotations to the *hyper-* prefix. In the symbolic realm of myth, time and space are coordinated: the deep antiquity of the mythical past is correlated with the supreme physical elevation of the gods, whether they are imagined to be on Olympus or in the heavens themselves. ὑπερήφανος may thus mark not simply a desire to go ‘up’, in spatial terms, to the realm of the divine. It may also suggest a movement back in time, to the period ‘before’ – to the era, I suggest, of commonality. For ὑπέρ as ‘before’, particularly ‘before’ some particularly decisive event, Liddell and Scott cite Thucydides’ reference to the time ‘before the Persian invasion’ (ὑπὲρ τὰ Μηδικά, 1.41), and Plato’s reference in the *Critias-Timaeus* to the time ‘before the destruction’ of Atlantis (ὑπὲρ τὴν φθοράν, Pl. *Tim.* 23c).⁴³

It is possible, then, that the crime of Alcyone and Ceyx lies only in part in their improper mental attitudes:⁴⁴ they may also attempt to go ‘beyond’ mortality, and perhaps even ‘back’ to the age of commonality. This argument is, of course, doubly speculative, based as it is on both later prose summaries of the *Catalogue* and a hypothetical account of the word ὑπερήφανος. Yet if we look to the details of the story, we can begin to see how the ὑπερηφάνεια of Alcyone and Ceyx might in fact have functioned as an attempt to lift

⁴⁰ In the same sentence they are described as ἡμέας ὑβρίζοντες, which I take to be an expansive gloss on ὑπερηφανέοντες (Hom. *Il.* 11.693-5).

⁴¹ In the same sentence they are described as μεγάλοι τε καὶ ὄβριμοι (Hes. *Th.* 147-9).

⁴² This duality is reflected in the lexicographical tradition. Hesych. *s.v.* αὐχῆμα (‘boasting’) gives as synonyms καύχημα (‘vaunting’), ἔπαρσις (‘lifting up’: P tradition only), and ὑπερηφάνεια. Hesych. *s.v.* φρύαγμα (‘insolence’) gives ἔπαρσις (‘lifting up’), μετεώρισμα (‘elevation’), and ὑπερηφάνεια.

⁴³ LSJ (*s.v.* ὑπέρ IV).

⁴⁴ At fr. 10.87 Most seems to suggest that they are ‘damaged in their minds’ (νόου βεβλαμμέν[οι (for the phrase with the genitive construction *cf.* Theog. 223; Hirschberger 2004: 192).

them both ‘upwards’ to the celestial sphere and ‘backwards’ to the earlier era.

In the first place, they both manifest a genetic proximity to the divine. Alcyone is in the fourth generation since the separation of human and gods; and more strikingly, Ceyx is the son of a star, the morning star (what we now call the planet Venus). The celestial origin of Ceyx is surely a factor integral to his ὑπερηφάνεια, his desire for elevation and return.

The second factor that elevates them is their mutual passion: ‘they loved each other’, ἀλλήλων ... ἐρασθέντες, in the words of the papyrus. Let us not forget what a striking and unusual thing a passion between wife and husband was for early Greeks – odd enough, indeed, for Herodotus to single it out in the case of Candaules.⁴⁵ In one of the legible passages of the papyrus, the poet of the *Catalogue* refers to a ‘reckless love’ (μαψαδίηι φιλότητι) between them.⁴⁶ In this case, intriguingly, their erotic excess leads them to promote not themselves individually (as in, for example, the cases of Bellerophon and Sisyphus) but each other. The mirroring effect of their reciprocal desire leads to a mutually reflective narcissistic pact, whereby each is complicit in the other’s superelevation. In time, as tastes and erotic protocols changed, the story of their mutual passion became a more positive one, eventually yielding the ‘romantic’ version of Ovid; but according to the archaic sensibilities reflected in the *Catalogue*, mutual love meant nothing more than a mutually reinforced self-deception, leading each falsely to affirm the other’s divinity.

What is consistent across the three accounts cited above is the importance of naming. In each version, it is the erotically inspired act of *appellation* that seems directly to lead to the punishment: ‘she [...] called him Zeus, he named her Hera. Zeus was angered at this and metamorphosed them into birds’; ‘he called his wife Hera, she her husband Zeus. So Zeus made them into birds ...’; ‘... for this reason his wife always called him Zeus and he called her Hera. Zeus became cross and turned them into birds ...’ At one level, naming is an act of performative (re)designation: since language is to an extent arbitrary, it is possible to bestow new names by *fiat*. And after all, is this not what lovers always do, giddy and exultant with the power to

⁴⁵ οὔτος ... ὁ Κανδαύλης ἠράσθη τῆς ἐωυτοῦ γυναικός (Hdt. 1.8.1).

⁴⁶ Fr. 10.87 Most.

redesign the world so that all language reflects their passions? Viewed in this light, the vengeance exacted by Zeus becomes a form of linguistic policing, an insistence that verbal designations remain where they are. At the same time, however, Alcyone's and Ceyx' acts of verbal redesignation expose the fact that language is a cultural system, and that words are not bound to things by natural ligatures; they can indeed be reallocated by human agency. Can someone become a god, then, simply as a result of a wilful act of naming, born of desire? The *Catalogue* story suggests not, but Greek culture is in fact full of such acts of arbitrary designation. 'That man seems to me to be like a god', begins Sappho's most famous (and admittedly most opaque poem).⁴⁷ To experience one's beloved as godlike is, in early Greek thought, a natural function of desire. The story of Ceyx and Alcyone is ultimately about the perils of mutual obsession, especially in this in-between period when the worlds of gods and mortals are still crystallising into distinct units.

5. Salmoneus

Let us turn finally to Alcyone's brother, Salmoneus, king of Elis. In this case again we have a broken papyrus fragment of the *Catalogue's* account of his misdeed and punishment (fr. 27.2-23 Most), and later versions that are easier to read. Here is the version in pseudo-Apollodorus:

ὕβριστῆς δὲ ὦν καὶ τῷ Διὶ ἐξισοῦσθαι θέλων διὰ τὴν ἀσέβειαν ἐκολάσθη· ἔλεγε γὰρ ἑαυτὸν εἶναι Δία, καὶ τὰς ἐκείνου θυσίας ἀφελόμενος ἑαυτῷ προσέτασσε θύειν, καὶ βύρσας μὲν ἐξηραμμένας ἐξ ἄρματος μετὰ λεβήτων χαλκῶν σύρων ἔλεγε βροντᾶν, βάλλων δὲ εἰς οὐρανὸν αἰθομένας λαμπάδας ἔλεγεν ἀστράπτειν. Ζεὺς δὲ αὐτὸν κεραυνώσας τὴν κτισθεῖσαν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ πόλιν καὶ τοὺς οἰκίτορας ἠφάνισε πάντα.

And being aggressive and wanting to put himself on an equality with Zeus, he was punished for his impiety; for he said that he was himself Zeus, and he took away the sacrifices of the god and ordered them to be offered to himself; and by dragging dried hides, with bronze kettles, at his chariot, he said that he was making thunder, and by flinging lighted torches at the sky he said that he lightened. But Zeus struck him with a

⁴⁷ Sappho fr. 31.1-2 Voigt.

thunderbolt, and wiped out the city he had founded with all its inhabitants.

(Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.89)

Like Alcyone and Ceyx, then, Salmoneus threatens Zeus' prerogatives by seeking to equate (ἐξισοῦσθαι) himself with the king of the gods. Salmoneus, however, goes one step further: if we are to believe Apollodorus (the lacunose *Catalogue* unfortunately contains no evidence for this), he actually denied Zeus sacrifice and claimed those rites for himself. Here then we see the fully theomachic implication of mortals acting as gods: to say 'I am [like] Zeus' is also, reciprocally, to say 'there is no Zeus but me'.

In the case of Salmoneus, again, the criticism focuses in part on his personal characteristics: we can read in the *Catalogue* papyrus that he is 'wicked' (ἀτ[ασ]θάλου, fr. 27.16 Most), and a ὑβριστής ('aggressor', fr. 27.17 Most):

]ν. ὁ δ' ἀγα̃τ[ο πατ]ήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε, ε,
σκληρὸν δ'] βρόντ[ησεν ἀπ'] οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος
]ον δή· ἐτ[ί]ναξε δὲ γαῖαν ἅπασαν.
βῆ δὲ κατ' Ο]λύμπιο [χο]λούμενος, αἶψα δ' ἵκανεν
λαοὺς Σαλμ]ωνῆος ἀτ[ασ]θάλου, οἱ τάχ' ἔμελλον
πείσεσθ' ἔρ]γ' αἰδηλα δι' ὑβ[ρ]ιστὴν βασιλῆα·
τοὺς δ' ἔβα]λεν βροντῆι [τε κ]αὶ αἰθαλόεντι κεραυνῶι.
ὥς λαοὺς ἀπε]τίεθ' ὑπερβ[ασίην] βασιλῆος.
..... ς παῖδάς τε γ[υν]αῖκά τε οἰκῆάς τε,
..... πό]λιν καὶ δῶμα[τ' ...]ίρρυτα θῆκεν αἰστῶς,
τὸν δὲ λα]βῶν ἔρριψ' ἐς Τ[ά]ρταρον ἠερόεντα,
ὥς μή τις] βροτὸς ἄλλος [έ]ρίζοι Ζηνὶ ἄνακτι.

] . The [father] of men and of gods was angered,
and he thundered [hard from] the starry sky
]; he made the whole earth tremble.

He came down from] Olympus in anger, and at once he arrived
among wicked Salmoneus' [people,] who were presently going
to suffer] destructive deeds because of their aggressive
king; he struck them] with thunder and blazing thunderbolt.
Thus he punished [the people] for their king's transgression.
] sons and wife and house-servants,] city and [...]-flowing
mansions,

he obliterated them, and seizing him he hurled him into murky
Tartarus,
so that no] other mortal would contend with lord Zeus.
(Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women* fr. 27.12-23 Most)

It is not simply, however, a matter of punishing Salmoneus for his character flaws. The *Catalogue* also refers to him as contending with Zeus ([ἐ]ρίζοι, final line), and apparently too to his ‘transgression’: ὑπερβ[ασίην], a spatial metaphor that once again suggests going beyond or above the defined limit. In this case it is not erotic desire for the other but fascination with one’s own political power that leads to the attempted elevation. Salmoneus is described in the *Catalogue*, in fact, not just as an ‘aggressor’ but as an ‘aggressive king’ (ὕβ[ρ]ιστήν βασιλῆα); and it is not just with Zeus that he is contending, but (in the final line) ‘Zeus the lord’ (Ζηνὶ ἄνακτι). These qualifications make it clear that Salmoneus’ attempt to supplant Zeus is rooted in his own status as a monarch, and indeed in Zeus’ too.

There are hints, too, that Salmoneus is being treated as a monstrous threat to Zeus’ power, comparable to the *Theogony*’s Titans. ὕβρις and ἀτασθαλία are attributed to a range of figures in the Hesiodic and Homeric poems.⁴⁸ ὕβριστής tends to be used more of monsters, like the Cyclopes;⁴⁹ it is used only twice in early epic of humans.⁵⁰ What is more specifically titanic about Salmoneus is, in fact, Zeus’ response to him: he blasts him with a thunderbolt, and sends him down to Tartarus. Compare the fate of Menoetius the Titan (the brother of Prometheus) in the *Theogony*:

ὕβριστήν δὲ Μενοίτιον εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς
εἰς ἔρεβος κατέπεμψε βαλὼν ψολόεντι κεραυνῶ
εἵνεκ’ ἀτασθαλίας τε καὶ ἥνορέης ὑπερόπλου.

Zeus of the broad gaze cast down violent
Menoetius into Erebus, smiting him with the smouldering bolt
For his wickedness and overbearing manliness.
(Hes. *Th.* 513-5)

⁴⁸ So e.g. the suitors in the *Odyssey*: Hom. *Od.* 1.34, 23.67 etc.

⁴⁹ Hom. *Od.* 9.175; cf. 6.130, 13.201; compare Typhoeus (Hes. *Th.* 307 and the snake at *Cat.* fr. 155.136 Most = 204.137 MW).

⁵⁰ Hes. *Th.* 996: Pelias is a μέγας βασιλεὺς ὑπερήνωρ / ὕβριστής ... καὶ ἀτάσθαλος ὄβριμοεργός; Hom. *Il.* 13.633, of the Trojans.

The Titan Menoetius, like Salmoneus, is violent (note ὑβριστήν) and prone to wickedness (ἀτασθαλίας), and for this reason incinerated and sent down to the dark regions below. What is particularly striking about Salmoneus is that (in explicit contrast to his citizens) he is cast into Tartarus, a place that is otherwise reserved exclusively for malign immortals: it is there that Zeus threatens to hurl disobedient Olympians in the *Iliad* (8.13), and where the Titans themselves are imprisoned in the *Theogony* (721-5). Salmoneus' royal ambition, then, leads him to play a similar mythical role as the Titans who would seek literally to raise themselves into the sky, to elevate themselves to Olympus and to displace Zeus and the other gods. We should recall, indeed, that Salmoneus is not far removed from Titan blood: two of his great-great-grandfathers were of that brood. If it was love that drove Alcyone and Ceyx to see each other as gods, then, in Salmoneus' case it is a misplaced regal self-admiration.

Yet his challenge to Olympus is neither so forceful nor so impressive as that of the Titans; in fact it is rather comic. What is most striking about the story is Salmoneus' use of household objects. Already in the *Catalogue*, he clearly attempts to replicate these mimetically, using pots and pans underneath his chariot for the noise and torches for the lightning. There is surely some delicate humour here: in particular, the use of kitchen utensils is an amusing touch (Greeks, after all, always found the appearance of kitchenware in supposedly 'high' poetry bathetic).⁵¹ These playful touches help to present him as a less than terrifying reviver of the Titanic tradition (and this was no doubt what attracted the attention of the writers of fifth-century satyr plays).

If, however, we attempt to read imaginatively along the grain of Salmoneus' own intentions, we may reconstruct a 'theory' of divinity as a constructed rather than a natural state: it is the product of cultural apparatuses, of embodied behaviour, or props, of language; it is reduced from a metaphysical distinction to a series of iconographic brand signifiers (thunder, lightning, the name). We can think of this 'theory' as an extension of Alcyone and Ceyx' focus on language and naming as the source of divine authority; and indeed we are told by ps-Apollodorus that 'he said that he himself was Zeus' (ἔλεγε γὰρ

⁵¹ Compare e.g. Aeschylus' parodic substitution of ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν for Euripides' iambic line-endings at Ar. *Ran.* 1200-46 (where Whitman 1969 also perceived an obscene pun).

ἑαυτὸν εἶναι Δία), the implication being that to be Zeus all you need to do is to replicate the brand markings.

In Diodorus of Sicily's version on the story, indeed, we find a heavy emphasis on the mechanistic manufacture of the thunder and lightning: 'Consequently he used to make a tremendous noise by means of a machine (μηχανῆς) he contrived (κατασκευάζων) and to imitate (μιμούμενον) in this way peals of thunder'.⁵² Indeed, Salmoneus' crime is precisely mimetic: his crime is that he artificially replicates deity. It is striking, in this connection, how many of the relatively few mentions of Salmoneus in classical antiquity place the emphasis on *mimēsis* and *imitatio*.⁵³ These later accounts cannot, of course, be taken as a contextual frame for the interpretation of the *Catalogue* itself, but they do demonstrate that ancient readers too detected this mimetic aspect in the story.

Indeed, the mimetic connection may go even further than this. In a thought-provoking discussion, Stephen Trzaskoma and R. Scott Smith have observed that the kettles and hides suggest later descriptions of the *bronteion*, the theatrical device for replicating the sound of thunder, which (they believe) had its roots in pre-theatrical ritual practice.⁵⁴ To extend their claim, we might also point to the presence in the theatre (according, at any rate, to the lexicographer of the second century CE Julius Pollux) of a *keraunoskopeion*, a device that produces the visual effects of theatre.⁵⁵ If these (necessarily speculative) hypotheses are correct, then the Salmoneus story becomes a critique of the mimetic accompaniment to contemporary ritual practice.

Salmoneus' crime, then, is expressed via the adoption of artificial techniques that mimic the effects of divinity, techniques that may be rooted in forms of artistic, literary and ritual performance. The issue here, I submit, is an anxiety over the *representation* of the gods at the hands of humans. A proper cultural contextualisation is difficult given the issues of the dating and provenance of the *Catalogue*, but at the very least we can say that it belongs to the period of 150 years

⁵² Diod. Sic. *Bibl.* 6.6.5.

⁵³ Verg. *Aen.* 6.585-595 (*imitatur ... imitabile ... simularet*); Galen *De Meth. Med.* 14.10.18 (μιμούμενος); Max. Tyr. 35.2 (μιμούμενον ... μιμουμένω), pseudo-Hyg. *Fab.* 61 (*imitaretur*).

⁵⁴ Trzaskoma and Scott Smith 2005.

⁵⁵ Poll. 4.127, 130.

from the early seventh century to the late sixth, a period that saw at one end the introduction of colossal anthropoid statues of the gods, in imitation of Egyptian models and at the other end the inauguration of formalised theatre built around the display of the masked, disguised human body in the guise of a god. The fact that humans could themselves now create divinity was, to judge from the Salmoneus story (and to an extent the Alcyone story), a central theological problem. We might think, in this connection, of the celebrated critiques of anthropomorphism, composed by another hexameter poet of the same approximate period, Xenophanes. Consider this example:

ἀλλ' οἱ βροτοὶ δοκέουσι γεννᾶσθαι θεούς,
τὴν σφετέρην δ' ἐσθῆτα ἔχειν φωνὴν τε δέμας τε.

But mortals think gods are born, that they have human garb
and voice and form.
(Fr. D12 Laks-Most = B14 D-K)

Humans falsely believe, Xenophanes argues, that gods are identical to themselves. This belief, I propose, is the obverse of the Aeolid belief that one or one's beloved is identical to a god. In each case, the assimilation of human and god leads to an erasure of the conceptual distinctions between the two. Gods look like mortals, mortals look like gods: at the level of appearance (δόξα), there is little to separate them.

Even more striking, for our purposes, is Xenophanes' direct association between anthropomorphic misidentification and artistic representation:

ἀλλ' εἰ χεῖρας ἔχον βόες <ἵπποι τ'> ἢ ἔ λείοντες
ἢ γράψαι χεῖρεςσι καὶ ἔργα τελεῖν ἄπερ ἄνδρες,
ἵπποι μὲν θ' ἵπποισι, βόες δέ τε βουσὶν ὁμοίας
καὶ <κε> θεῶν ιδέας ἔγραφον καὶ σώματ' ἐποίουν
τοιαῦθ', οἷόν περ καὶ τοὶ δέμας εἶχον <ἕκαστοι>.

Now if horses or oxen or lions had hands
or the power to paint with hands and make the works of art
that men make,
then would horses give their gods horse-like forms in painting
or sculpture, and oxen ox-like forms, even each after its own

kind.

(Fr. D14 Laks-Most = B15 D-K)

What is often overlooked in this fragment is that it is centrally about the power of visual depiction: it is through artistic representation that humans fix and disseminate their erroneous ideas about gods. The *Catalogue's* account of Salmoneus, I suggest, reflects the same anxieties over artistic representation as Xenophanes' critique. It does not, of course, tend towards the same conclusion: Xenophanes argues for the non-existence of Olympian deities on the grounds that they are mere mimetic fabrications, narcissistically devised by humans to mirror their own form; the *Catalogue*, by contrast, reasserts the existence of Olympian deities *despite* the attempts of humans to represent gods mimetically. But both are based in the same observation: that the capacity to depict deity through representation offers humans the possibility of generating gods in their own image, a possibility that challenges the idea of divinity as a distinct realm of existence.

6. Conclusion

The *Catalogue of Women* tells the story of the separation of humans and gods, of the age of commonality. Humans, however, at least in the interstitial phase described in the *Catalogue*, retain their links to the divine sphere, and in certain psychological states – when in love, or when consumed by royal self-belief – can imagine themselves returning to that state of proximity to the divine. All humans are, after all, ultimately descendants of Titans.⁵⁶ But the *Catalogue* is more than just a reflex expression of primal mythology. It is also a sophisticated response to the theological concerns of archaic society, and in particular to the emergence of new technologies of representing divinity, such as monumental sculpture, painting and proto-theatrical ritual. These issues cluster magnetically around the descendants of Aeolus, who seem particularly prone to challenging the boundary between human and god; and in the fifth century at least two of them (Sisyphus and Bellerophon) were given formal atheistic argumentation by dramatic poets. Whether the Aeolids were held (either by the *Catalogue* poet or prior tradition) to be

⁵⁶ In later times, 'Orphics' may have retained this view of an essentially 'Titanic' nature to humanity, as an explanation for the fallibility of mortals: e.g. Pl. *Leg.* 701b-c. For a recent, sceptical view of the evidence, however, see Edmonds 2013: 296-391 (see, however, *contra* Yates 2004: 193-4).

distinctively theomachic (that is, more so than other families) is not clear as things stand; the uneven survival rates for different parts of the poem may have distorted our evidence.⁵⁷ What is more, if the answer is 'yes', then the explanation for that is not obvious either. The central point, however, relates to the ideas explored in these stories. The *Catalogue* does not depict the Aeolids as philosophical atheists, for sure, but it does deploy them as narrative tools to explore contemporary questions about the 'constructedness' of divinity. In the final analysis, the poem sides with Zeus, whose intervention and reassertion of his power cancels any doubt in the matter. The journey towards that ultimate conclusion, however, is an enlightening one, and shows the *Catalogue* poet to be more sophisticated, and more closely attuned to contemporary debates, than many have thought.

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⁵⁷ Willink 1983, for example, argues that the sophist Prodicus (known for his irreligious views) was associated with the mythological Tantalus.

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