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The earliest phases in the reception of the *Homeric Hymns*

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Introduction

It has been argued that Hesiodic poetry, like Homeric poetry, contains references to four aspects of oral poetry: composition, performance, reception, and transmission.¹ In the present project, I argue that the poetry of the *Homeric Hymns*, as oral poetry, similarly contains references to all four of these aspects. In making this argument, I will concentrate on the reception of the *Hymns*, analyzing the internal evidence of references to the *Hymns* within the *Hymns* themselves along with the external evidence of early references we find elsewhere, especially in the comments of Thucydides on the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. In the course of making my argument, I will refer to interconnecting arguments I have published elsewhere in the pursuit of related projects.² [[280|281]]

I use the term reception here not in the narrow sense that applies in studies of literature, where this term conventionally refers to whatever happens after a given piece of literature is composed for transmission to the public. A broader sense of the term is needed if we are dealing with oral traditions.³

The phenomenon of reception in oral traditions is connected with the transmission of any composition by way of performance. In any oral tradition, the process of composition is linked to the process of performance, and any given

¹ The argument is made in Nagy, “Hesiod and the Ancient Biographical Traditions” (2009), hereafter abbreviated as *HB*, with reference to Most (2006a) xix-xx, who mentions all four aspects. The argumentation of Most differs, however, from my own (see especially *HB* 273).

² These projects are represented especially by twin books that I abbreviate as follows: *HC* = *Homer the Classic* (2008/2009) and *HPC* = *Homer the Preclassic* (2009/2010). I refer also to these related books: *BA* = *Best of the Achaeans* (1979; 2nd ed. 1999), *PH* = *Pindar’s Homer* (1990a), *GM* = *Greek Mythology and Poetics* (1990b), *PP* = *Poetry as Performance* (1996a), *HQ* = *Homeric Questions* (1996b), *PR* = *Plato’s Rhapsody and Homer’s Music* (2002), *HR* = *Homeric Responses* (2003), *HTL* = *Homer’s Text and Language* (2004c).

³ The next three paragraphs derive from what I said in *HB* 282-283.

composition can be recomposed each time it is performed. The performer who recomposes the composition in performance may be the same performer who composed it earlier, or it may be a new performer, even a succession of new performers. The point is, such recomposition-in-performance is the essence of transmission in oral traditions. And this kind of transmission is the key to a broader understanding of reception.⁴

Unlike what happens in literature, where reception by the public happens only after a piece of literature is transmitted, reception in oral traditions happens during as well as after transmission. That is because the process of composition in oral traditions allows for recomposition on each new occasion of performance for a public that sees and hears the performer. In oral traditions, there is an organic link between reception and performance, since no performance can succeed without a successful reception by the public that sees and hears the performer or performers.

The link between reception and performance affects the actual content of the composition performed before a given public. That is because the performance of a given composition can speak about itself. For example, the performance can say things about the context of performance or even about the performer or performers. What is said, however, will be subject to change from performance to performance, and such change can actually affect the content of the composition by way of recomposition-in-performance.⁵ [[281|282]]

Contexts of reception: the case of the Homeric Hymn (3) to Apollo

On the basis of external evidence about one of the *Homeric Hymns*, combined with the internal evidence of that *Hymn* and of other *Hymns*, we can say in general that the *Homeric Hymns* were performed at festivals. The primary external evidence comes from Thucydides (3.104.2-6), who quotes two passages from a composition that we know as the *Homeric Hymn (3) to Apollo*.

In what follows, I give the text of those two parts in its entirety, together with the framing text of Thucydides. I will add after the text of each part of the *Hymn* as quoted by Thucydides the corresponding text of the medieval transmission, noting in my footnotes some of the most salient textual differences between the Thucydidean quotation and the medieval transmission of the *Hymn*. As I argue in the book *Homer the*

⁴ For an example of concrete applications of theories about transmission, I cite my work on the oral poetics of the ancient Greek symposium (Nagy 2004b).

⁵ PP 207-225

Preclassic, most if not all of these textual differences are a matter of authentic formulaic variations.⁶

Here, then, are the two parts of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* as quoted by Thucydides (3.104.2-6):

{3.104.2} ἀπέχει δὲ ἡ Ῥήνεια τῆς Δήλου οὕτως ὀλίγον ὥστε Πολυκράτης ὁ Σαμίων τύραννος ἰσχύσας τινὰ χρόνον ναυτικῶ καὶ τῶν τε ἄλλων νήσων ἄρξας καὶ τὴν Ῥήνειαν ἐλὼν ἀνέθηκε τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι τῷ Δηλίῳ ἀλύσει δῆσας πρὸς τὴν Δήλον. καὶ τὴν πεντετηρίδα τότε πρῶτον μετὰ τὴν κάθαρσιν ἐποίησαν οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τὰ Δήλια. {3.104.3} ἦν δέ ποτε καὶ τὸ πάλαι μεγάλη ξύνοδος ἐς τὴν Δήλον τῶν Ἰώνων τε καὶ περικτιόνων νησιωτῶν· ξύν τε γὰρ γυναῖξί καὶ παισὶν ἐθεώρουν, ὥσπερ νῦν ἐς τὰ Ἐφέσια Ἴωνες, καὶ ἀγῶν ἐποιεῖτο αὐτόθι καὶ γυμνικὸς καὶ μουσικὸς, χοροὺς τε ἀνῆγον αἱ πόλεις. {3.104.4} δηλοῖ δὲ μάλιστα Ὅμηρος ὅτι τοιαῦτα ἦν ἐν τοῖς ἔπεσι τοῖσδε, ἃ ἐστὶν ἐκ προοιμίου Ἀπόλλωνος·

ἀλλ' ὅτε Δήλῳ, Φοῖβε, μάλιστά γε θυμὸν ἐτέρφθης,
ἔνθα τοι ἔλκεχίτωνες Ἰάονες ἠγερέθονται
σὺν σφοῖσιν τεκέεσσι γυναῖξί τε σὴν ἐς ἀγυῖάν·
ἔνθα σε πυγμαχίῃ τε καὶ ὀρχηστυῖ καὶ ἀοιδῇ
150 μνησάμενοι τέρπουσιν, ὅταν καθέσωσιν ἀγῶνα.

[Beginning of a point of insertion: The preceding verses, as quoted by Thucydides, correspond to the following verses as transmitted by the medieval manuscript traditions of the *Homeric Hymn* (3) to *Apollo*, 146-150.]

ἀλλὰ σὺ Δήλῳ, Φοῖβε, μάλιστ' ἐπιτέρπεται ἦτορ,
ἔνθα τοι ἔλκεχίτωνες Ἰάονες ἠγερέθονται
αὐτοῖς σὺν παίδεσσι καὶ αἰδοίῃς ἀλόχοισιν.
οἱ δέ σε πυγμαχίῃ τε καὶ ὀρχηθμῷ καὶ ἀοιδῇ
μνησάμενοι τέρπουσιν, ὅταν στήσωνται ἀγῶνα.

[End of point of insertion. Now, to resume what Thucydides is saying ...]

{3.104.5} ὅτι δὲ καὶ μουσικῆς ἀγῶν ἦν καὶ ἀγωνιούμενοι ἐφοίτων ἐν τοῖσδε αὖ δηλοῖ, ἃ ἐστὶν ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ προοιμίου· τὸν γὰρ Δηλιακὸν χορὸν τῶν γυναικῶν ὑμνήσας ἐτελεύτα τοῦ ἐπαίνου ἐς τάδε τὰ ἔπη, ἐν οἷς καὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπεμνήσθη·

{165} ἀλλ' ἄγεθ', ἰλήκοι μὲν Ἀπόλλων Ἀρτέμιδι ξύν,
χαίρετε δ' ὑμεῖς πᾶσαι. ἐμεῖο δὲ καὶ μετόπισθε
μνήσασθ', ὅπποτε κέν τις ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων

⁶ HPC I§26 (in the footnotes).

ἐνθάδ' ἀνείρηται ταλαπείριος ἄλλος ἐπελθών·
 ὦ κοῦραι, τίς δ' ὕμιν ἀνὴρ ἥδιστος ἀοιδῶν
 ἐνθάδε πωλεῖται, καὶ τέω τέρπεσθε μάλιστα;
 ὑμεῖς δ' εὖ μάλα πᾶσαι ὑποκρίνασθαι ἀφήμως.⁷
 τυφλὸς ἀνὴρ, οἰκεῖ δὲ Χίῳ ἔνι παιπαλοέσση.

[Beginning of another point of insertion: the preceding verses, as quoted by Thucydides, correspond to the following verses as transmitted by the medieval manuscript traditions of the *Homeric Hymn* (3) to *Apollo*, 165-172.]

165 ἄλλ' ἄγεθ', ἰλήκοι μὲν Ἀπόλλων Ἀρτέμιδι ξύν,
 χαίρετε δ' ὑμεῖς πᾶσαι· ἐμεῖο δὲ καὶ μετόπισθε
 μνήσασθ', ὅπποτε κέν τις ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων
 ἐνθάδ' ἀνείρηται ξεῖνος ταλαπείριος ἐλθών·
 ὦ κοῦραι, τίς δ' ὕμιν ἀνὴρ ἥδιστος ἀοιδῶν
 170 ἐνθάδε πωλεῖται, καὶ τέω τέρπεσθε μάλιστα;
 ὑμεῖς δ' εὖ μάλα πᾶσαι ὑποκρίνασθαι ἀφ' ἡμέων.⁸
 τυφλὸς ἀνὴρ, οἰκεῖ δὲ Χίῳ ἔνι παιπαλοέσση.

[End of point of insertion. Now, to resume what Thucydides is saying ...]

{3.104.6} τοσαῦτα μὲν Ὅμηρος ἐτεκμηρίωσεν ὅτι ἦν καὶ τὸ πάλαι μεγάλη ξύνοδος καὶ ἑορτὴ ἐν τῇ Δήλῳ· ὕστερον δὲ τοὺς μὲν χοροὺς οἱ νησιῶται καὶ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι μεθ' ἱερῶν ἔπεμπον, τὰ δὲ περὶ τοὺς ἀγῶνας καὶ τὰ πλεῖστα κατελύθη ὑπὸ ξυμφορῶν, ὥς εἰκός, πρὶν δὴ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τότε τὸν ἀγῶνα ἐποίησαν καὶ ἵπποδρομίας, ὃ πρότερον οὐκ ἦν.

{3.104.2} [The island of] Rheneia is so close to Delos that Polycrates, tyrant of the people of [the island-state of] Samos, who had supreme naval power for a period of time and who had imperial rule [= *arkhein*] over the islands, including Rheneia, dedicated Rheneia, having captured it, to the Delian Apollo by binding it to Delos with a chain. After the purification [*katharsis*], the Athenians at that point made for the first time the quadrennial festival [*pentetēris*] known as the Delia. {3.104.3} And, even in the remote past, there had been at Delos a great coming together of Ionians and neighboring islanders [*nēsiōtai*], and they were celebrating [= making *theōria*]

⁷ This variant reading ἀφήμως, as preserved here in the quotation by Thucydides, is to be contrasted with the variant reading ἀφ' ἡμέων found in the medieval manuscript tradition of the *Homeric Hymn* (3) to *Apollo*. See the next note.

⁸ This variant reading ἀφ' ἡμέων in the medieval manuscript tradition of the *Homeric Hymn* to *Apollo* is to be contrasted with the variant reading ἀφήμως in the quotation by Thucydides. See the previous note.

along with their wives and children, just as the Ionians in our own times come together [= at Ephesus] for [the festival of] the Ephesia; and a competition [*agōn*] was held there [= in Delos], both athletic [*gumnikos*] and musical [*mousikos*], and the cities brought [*anagein*] song-and-dance groups [*khoroi*]. {3.104.4} Homer makes it most clear that such was the case in the following verses [*epos plural*], which come from a prooemium [*prooimion*] having to do with Apollo:

But when in Delos, Phoebus, more than anywhere else, you delight [*terpesthai*] in your heart [*thumos*],
there the Ionians, with khitons trailing, gather
with their children and their wives, along the causeway [*aguia*],⁹
and there with boxing and dancing and song
they have you in mind and delight [*terpein*] you, whenever they set up a competition [*agōn*].

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[Beginning of a point of insertion: The preceding verses, as quoted by Thucydides, correspond to the following verses as transmitted by the medieval manuscript traditions of the *Homeric Hymn* (3) to *Apollo*, 146-150.]

But you in Delos, Phoebus, more than anywhere else delight [*terpesthai*] in your heart [*ētor*],
where the Ionians, with khitons trailing, gather
with their children and their circumspect wives.
And they with boxing and dancing and song
have you in mind and delight [*terpein*] you, whenever they set up a competition [*agōn*].

[End of point of insertion. Now, to resume what Thucydides is saying ...]

{3.104.5} That there was also a competition [*agōn*] in the craft of music [*mousikē* (*tekhne*)], in which the Ionians went to engage in competition [*agōnizesthai*], again is made clear by him [= Homer] in the following verses, taken from the same prooemium [*prooimion*]. After making the subject of his *hymnos* the Delian song-and-dance group [*khoros*] of women, he was drawing toward the completion [*telos*] of his words of praise [*epainos*], drawing toward the following verses [*epos plural*], in which he also makes mention [*epi-mnēsthēnai*] of himself -

165 But come now, may Apollo be gracious, along with Artemis;
and you all also, hail [*khairēte*] and take pleasure, all of you [Maidens of Delos].
Keep me, even in the future,

⁹ On this *aguia* as the *via sacra* of Delos, see Aloni (1989) 117-118.

in your mind, whenever someone, out of the whole mass of earthbound
humanity,
while here [in Delos], after arduous wandering, someone else, asks this question:
“O Maidens, who is for you the most pleasurable of singers
170 that wanders here? In whom do you take the most delight [*terpesthai*]?”
Then you, all of you [Maidens of Delos], must very properly respond
[*hupokrinasthai*], without naming names:¹⁰
“It is a blind man, and he dwells in Chios, a rugged land.”

[Beginning of another point of insertion: the preceding verses, as quoted by
Thucydides, correspond to the following verses as transmitted by the medieval
manuscript traditions of the *Homeric Hymn* (3) to *Apollo*, 165-172.]

165 But come now, may Apollo be gracious, along with Artemis;
and you all also, hail [*khairete*] and take pleasure, all of you [Maidens of Delos].
Keep me, even in the future,
in your mind, whenever someone, out of the whole mass of earthbound
humanity,
comes here [to Delos], after arduous wandering, as a guest entitled to the rules
of hosting, and asks this question:
“O Maidens, who is for you the most pleasurable of singers
170 that wanders here? In whom do you take the most delight [*terpesthai*]?”
Then you, all of you [Maidens of Delos], must very properly respond
[*hupokrinasthai*] about me:¹¹
“It is a blind man, and he dwells in Chios, a rugged land.”

[End of point of insertion. Now, to resume what Thucydides is saying ...]

{3.104.6} So much for the evidence given by Homer concerning the fact that there
was even in the remote past a great coming together and festival [*heortē*] at Delos;
later on, the islanders [*nēsiōtai*] and the Athenians continued to send song-and-

¹⁰ See the note above on the variant ἀφήμως, as attested in this quotation by
Thucydides (3.104.5). In *HC* 2§27n25, I make an argument for interpreting ἀφήμως to
mean ‘without naming names’. The adjective ἄφημος was understood to be a synonym
of ἀπευθής (as we see in the scholia to Aratus 1.270.2). This word ἀπευθής is used in the
sense of ‘without information’, as in *Odyssey* iii 88 and 184. When the Delian Maidens
are asked to respond to the question ‘who is the singer?’, they respond without naming
names, that is, without giving information about the singer’s name.

¹¹ As we have seen, the variant ἀφ’ ἡμέων ‘about me’ is attested in the medieval
manuscript tradition, while the variant ἀφήμως, which I interpret to mean ‘without
naming names’, is attested in the quotation by Thucydides. I think that both ἀφ’ ἡμέων
and ἀφήμως can be explained as authentic formulaic variants.

dance groups [*khoroî*], along with sacrificial offerings [*hiera*], but various misfortunes evidently caused the discontinuation of the things concerning the competitions [*agōnes*] and most other things - that is, up to the time in question [= the time of the purification] when the Athenians set up the competition [*agōn*], including chariot races [*hippodromiai*], which had not taken place before then.

Thucydides 3.104.2-6

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As we can see from this account by Thucydides, the setting for the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* was the festival of the Delia on the island of Delos (3.104.2). This festival is viewed here in the historical context of a major reorganization of the Delia, undertaken by the city-state of Athens (3.104.6). At the time of that reorganization, which can be dated to the winter of 426 BCE, this festival of the Delia was the central event that gave meaning to the Delian League, a political and cultural confederation of Ionian city-states that eventually came under the control of what we now know as the Athenian maritime empire.¹²

In the passage I just quoted, Thucydides explicitly compares the Delia, as a seasonally recurring pan-Ionian festival celebrated at Delos, with the Ephesia, a seasonally recurring pan-Ionian festival celebrated on the mainland of Asia Minor, in Ephesus (3.104.3). The Ephesia, as a festival, had been a rival of the Panionia, which had once been the premier pan-Ionian festival in Asia Minor.¹³ Clearly, the festival of the Delia rivaled those other two festivals as an expression of Ionian identity, and this identity was ultimately re-defined by the city-state of Athens in its claimed role as the metropolis or ‘mother city’ of all Ionian city-states. Such a role was foundational for the genesis of the Athenian maritime empire.¹⁴

In the context of referring to the pan-Ionian festival of the Delia as celebrated on the island of Delos, Thucydides links this festival to the politics of empire. In this context, he is taking for granted the immediate political reality, which was the Athenian maritime empire, and he is highlighting an earlier reality, which was an earlier maritime empire that took shape in the sixth century BCE under the rule of Polycrates of Samos: as we have seen in the passage I quoted, Thucydides describes Polycrates as ‘tyrant of the people of [the island-state of] Samos, who had supreme naval power for a period of time and who had imperial rule [= *arkhein*] over the islands’ (3.104.2 Πολυκράτης ὁ Σαμίων τύραννος ἰσχύσας τινὰ χρόνον ναυτικῶ καὶ τῶν τε

¹² Hornblower (1991) 527 and Rhodes (1994) 258-259.

¹³ HPC II§§237-238, 246-261. On the festival of the Panionia, I cite the foundational work of Frame (2009), especially ch. 11.

¹⁴ HPC I§§15-23, II§§19-23.

ἄλλων νήσων ἄρξας). For Thucydides, the maritime empire of Polycrates in an earlier time was a predecessor of the Athenian maritime empire in the historian's own time.¹⁵

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The wealth, power, and prestige of the Athenian empire are reflected in the magnificent spectacle of the Delian festival as celebrated in the era described by Thucydides, after the reorganization of 426 BCE. Such magnificence, as we can infer even from the historian's understated description, is given a full-blown treatment in the reportage of Plutarch in his *Life of Nikias* (3.5-7). At a later point, we will consider the perspective of Plutarch's reportage. For now, however, I concentrate on the perspective of Thucydides as he proceeds to reconstruct earlier phases of the festival of the Delia on the basis of the two passages he quotes from the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*.

In the *Hymn* as quoted by Thucydides, Delos is described as a festive center where representatives of all Ionian cities converge in a grand assembly to validate their common origin by celebrating a pan-Ionian festival (verses 146-150). The historian is saying that this description of the festival indicates a prototype of the Delia, to be contrasted with the re-organized version of the festival, which as we have seen can be dated to 426 BCE. After that date, the festival of the Delia was celebrated on a quadrennial basis: as Thucydides says (3.104.2), 'after the purification [*katharsis*], the Athenians at that point made for the first time the quadrennial festival known as the Delia' (καὶ τὴν πεντετηρίδα τότε πρῶτον μετὰ τὴν κάθαρσιν ἐποίησαν οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τὰ Δήλια). The wording *prōton* 'for the first time' here refers to the first time that this festival was celebrated as a *pentetēris* or 'five-year festival' (by way of inclusive counting), that is, on a quadrennial basis (to restate by way of non-inclusive counting). Clearly, the wording does not refer to the first time that this festival was ever celebrated.

Thucydides says that there had been also an earlier Athenian *katharsis* of Delos, and that it took place at the initiative of the Peisistratos of Athens (3.104.1). This earlier *katharsis* signals an earlier Athenian inauguration of the same festival of the Delia at Delos. Besides Thucydides, Herodotus too (1.64.2) refers to this earlier *katharsis* 'purification', and he specifies that it was initiated by Peisistratos.¹⁶

This earlier moment in the history of the Delia goes back to some point within a period of time that lasted from 546 to 510 BCE, when Peisistratos and his sons were 'tyrants' of Athens. Thucydides views this earlier moment as a precedent for the later moment, in 426 BCE, when this festival was reorganized by Athens in the era of the

¹⁵ HPC II §§239-244, 252, 254.

¹⁶ Hornblower (1991) 527.

Athenian democracy. In terms of what Thucydides is saying, there was already a prototype of the Athenian maritime empire in the era of the Peisistratidai in the sixth century BCE, and there was already a [[285|286]] version of the festival of the Delia that reflected the realities of that earlier empire.¹⁷

In the era of the Peisistratidai, we find a major complication in the history of Delos and the Delia. As we can see from the account that I have quoted from Thucydides, control of Delos and the Delia by the Peisistratidai of Athens must have shifted to Polycrates of Samos for a brief period in the late 520s BCE, though it must have shifted back to the Peisistratidai after the death of Polycrates in 522, which had led to the collapse of his pan-Ionian empire.¹⁸

This complication has left its mark in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* as we know it. As we can see from the mention of Polycrates in the account I have quoted from Thucydides, this *Hymn* was once performed in the period when control of Delos and the Delia shifted temporarily from the Peisistratidai to Polycrates.¹⁹ Thucydides signals the occasion of such a performance when he tells about the chaining of the island of Rheneia to the island of Delos by Polycrates. On this occasion, according to later sources, Polycrates organized an event that resembled a combination of two festivals, the Delia and the Pythia, for an ad hoc celebration on the island of Delos.²⁰ The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, which offers praise for both the Delian and the Pythian aspects of the god Apollo, fits the occasion. And this occasion has been dated to 522 BCE.²¹ Soon thereafter, in the same year 522, Polycrates was overthrown and killed by the Persians. Peisistratos had died earlier, in 528/7.

An ancient Athenocentric view of Homer

The indications about a performance of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* at the festival of the Delia on the island of Delos in 522 BCE need to be [[286|287]] correlated with the idea of a prototypical performance of the *Hymn* by Homer himself. In order to understand this idea, we must first consider how Homer was viewed in Athens at that time.

¹⁷ Hornblower (1991) 520.

¹⁸ For a sketch of the relative chronology, involving Naxos as well as Samos and Athens, see Aloni (1989) 46-47, 54-55, 62-63, 122-123.

¹⁹ *HPC* I§33.

²⁰ Zenobius of Athos 1.62; *Suda* s.v. *tauta kai Puthia kai Dēlia*; for a fuller collection of sources, see Aloni (1989) 35n2, 83n1.

²¹ Burkert (1979) 59-60 and Janko (1982) 112-113; West (1999) 369-370n17 argues for 523, but his dating criteria depend on whether or not we posit a perfect match between the datable events narrated by Herodotus and Thucydides.

I view that time in the historical context of the period when Athens was ruled by the Peisistratidai, 546 to 510 BCE. Within that period these rulers appropriated not only Delos and the pan-Ionian festival of the Delia. They appropriated Homer as well. And they did so by making the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* the primary repertoire for performance at the most important festival in that city, the Panathenaia.²²

This appropriation did not happen all at once. Still, there was a most decisive moment that led to it, and we can see that moment in the following description of an initiative taken by one of the sons of Peisistratos, Hipparkhos, when he ‘brought over’ (*komizein*) the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to Athens for performance there at the seasonally recurring festival of the Panathenaia:

Ἰππάρχῳ, ... ὃς ἄλλα τε πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ ἔργα σοφίας ἀπεδέξατο, καὶ τὰ Ὀμήρου ἔπη
πρῶτος ἐκόμισεν εἰς τὴν γῆν ταύτην, καὶ ἠνάγκασε τοὺς ῥαψοδοὺς Παναθηναίοις ἐξ
ὑπολήψεως ἐφεξῆς αὐτὰ διέναι, ὥσπερ νῦν ἔτι οἶδε ποιοῦσιν.

Hipparkhos, ... who publicly enacted many and beautiful things to manifest his expertise [*sophia*], especially by being the first to bring over [*komizein*] to this land [= Athens] the verses [*epos* plural] of Homer, and he required the rhapsodes [*rhapsōidoi*] at the Panathenaia to go through [*dienai*] these verses in sequence [*ephexēs*], by relay [*ex hupolēpseōs*], just as they [= the rhapsodes] do even nowadays.

“Plato” *Hipparkhos* 228b-c

Partly on the basis of this passage, Martin West has argued that Hipparkhos arranged for the first complete performance of the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by *rhapsōidoi* ‘rhapsodes’ competing at the festival of the Panathenaia that was celebrated in 522 BCE (starting on 19 August).²³ In the book *Homer the Preclassic*, I in turn have argued that these epics had been ‘brought over’ (*komizein*) to Athens from the island state of Chios, along with Homer’s notional descendants, called the *Homēridai*, who were the official performers of these epics in Chios.²⁴ [[287|288]]

I find it relevant to highlight here a passing reference in Plato to a garland of gold that the rhapsode Ion of Ephesus expects to win in competition for first prize in rhapsodic performance of Homer at the feast of the Panathenaia: Ion is quoted as

²² HPC I§25.

²³ West (1999) 382.

²⁴ HPC I§§53-54, 141-156. The use of the word *komizein* in this passage (“Plato” *Hipparkhos* 228b), in expressing the idea that Hipparkhos ‘brought over’ to Athens the *epē* (= *epos* plural) ‘verses’ of Homer, is parallel to the use of the same word *komizein* in expressing the idea that Hipparkhos also ‘brought over’ to Athens the poet Anacreon - on a state ship, from the island of Samos (228c). These two initiatives are relevant to my overall argumentation about the shaping of the Panathenaia by the Peisistratidai (HQ 81n50).

saying that this garland will be awarded to him by the *Homēridai* (*Ion* 530d). As I argue in the book *Homer the Classic*, this reference to the *Homēridai* shows that the Athenians in the late fifth century (which is the dramatic time of the *Ion*) recognized the *Homēridai* of Chios as the official regulators of rhapsodic competitions in performing the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* at the Panathenaia in Athens.²⁵

From what we saw earlier in the narrative about Hipparkhos, son of Peisistratos, it was this historical figure who ‘brought over’ (*komizein*) these ‘sons of Homer’, the *Homēridai*, from Chios to Athens.

In this light, we can see more clearly the significance of the fact that the speaker in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* says explicitly that his home is the island of Chios (171-173). Such a Chiote signature on the part of the speaker was for Athenians a sign of their claim to the ownership of Homer. When Thucydides recognizes the speaker of the *Hymn to Apollo* as Homer (3.104.4, 5, 6), he is expressing an Athenocentric point of view by equating Homer, poet of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as performed at the Panathenaia in Athens, with Homer of Chios, the notional ancestor of the *Homēridai*, who is envisioned as performing the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* at the Delia in Delos.²⁶

From an Athenocentric point of view, then, the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are all composed by Homer, ancestor of the *Homēridai*. And all this poetry is composed in a meter known as the dactylic hexameter, which as we will see is the primary medium of performance for rhapsodes in general and for the *Homēridai* in particular.

An ancient post-Athenocentric view of Homer

From a post-Athenocentric point of view, by contrast, the man from Chios who speaks in the *Hymn to Apollo* is not Homer but a rhapsode by the name of Kynaithos, who may or may not be one of the *Homēridai*. This Kynaithos may be speaking in Homeric hexameters as if he were Homer, but he is not Homer. A passage that represents this alternative point of view comes from the scholia for Pindar’s *Nemean* 2:

‘Ομηρίδας ἔλεγον τὸ μὲν ἀρχαῖον τοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ Ὀμήρου γένους, οἳ καὶ τὴν ποίησιν αὐτοῦ ἐκ διαδοχῆς ἦδον· μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα καὶ οἱ ῥαψῳδοὶ οὐκέτι τὸ γένος εἰς Ὀμηρον ἀνάγοντες, ἐπιφανεῖς δὲ ἐγένοντο οἱ περὶ Κύναιθον, οὓς φασὶ πολλὰ τῶν ἐπῶν ποιήσαντας ἐμβαλεῖν εἰς τὴν Ὀμήρου ποίησιν. ἦν δὲ ὁ Κύναιθος τὸ γένος Χῖος, ὃς καὶ τῶν ἐπιγραφομένων Ὀμήρου ποιημάτων τὸν εἰς Ἀπόλλωνα γεγραφὼς ὕμνον

²⁵ HC 3§36.

²⁶ HPC I§§138-140.

ἀνατέθεικεν αὐτῷ. οὗτος οὖν ὁ Κύναιθος πρῶτος ἐν Συρακούσαις ἐραψώδησε τὰ Ὅμηρου ἔπη κατὰ τὴν ξθ' Ὀλυμπιάδα, ὡς Ἰππόστρατός φησιν.

Homēridai was the name given in ancient times to those who were descended from the lineage of Homer and who also sang his poetry [*poiēsis*] in succession [*ek diadokhēs*]. In later times, (it was the name [[288|289]] given also to) rhapsodes [*rhapsōidoi*] who could no longer trace their lineage back to Homer. Of these, Kynaithos and his association became very prominent. It is said that they are the ones who made many of the verses [*epos* plural] of Homer and inserted [*en-ballein*] them into his [= Homer's] poetry [*poiēsis*]. Kynaithos was a Chiote by lineage, and, of the poetic creations [*poiēmata*] of Homer that are ascribed to him [*epigraphēin*] as his [= Homer's], it was he [= Kynaithos] who wrote [*graphein*] the *hymnos* to Apollo and attributed it to him [= Homer].²⁷ And this Kynaithos was the first to perform rhapsodically [*rhapsōideîn*] in Syracuse the verses [*epos* plural] of Homer, in the 69th Olympiad [= 504-501 BCE], as Hippostratus says [FGH 568 F 5].

Scholia for Pindar *Nemean* 2.1c lines 1-10

It can be argued that the ultimate source for this compressed and elliptic account transmitted in the scholia for Pindar is Aristarchus of Samothrace, head of the Library of Alexandria in the second century BCE.²⁸ As for the dating of Kynaithos by Hippostratus, the time-frame of 504-501 BCE for his rhapsodic performance in Syracuse is comparable with the date proposed for the performance of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* on the occasion arranged by Polycrates of Samos: as we have seen, that date could be 522 BCE.²⁹ So the performer for that occasion could have been Kynaithos himself.

The scholia for Pindar have more to say about this Kynaithos:

Φιλόχορος δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ συντιθέναι καὶ ράπτειν τὴν ᾠδὴν οὕτω φησὶν αὐτοὺς προσκεκλησθαι. δηλοῖ δὲ ὁ Ἡσίοδος λέγων·

ἐν Δήλῳ τότε πρῶτον ἐγὼ καὶ Ὅμηρος ἀοιδοὶ
μέλπομεν, ἐν νεαροῖς ὕμνοις ράψαντες ἀοιδὴν,
Φοῖβον Ἀπόλλωνα χρυσάορον, ὃν τέκε Λητώ.

²⁷ Martin (2000b) 419n58 suggests that the phrasing here could mean instead: 'and dedicated it to him [= Apollo]'. See also Collins (2004) 184.

²⁸ See HTL 28-29n14, where I argue that Aristarchus is the basic source for the statement up to the portion mentioning the testimony of Hippostratus concerning the date of a rhapsodic performance by Kynaithos in Syracuse.

²⁹ Again I refer to Burkert (1979) 59-60, Janko (1982) 112-113, and West (1999) 369-370n17 (who argues for the date 523 instead of 522).

ῥαψωδῆσαι δέ φησι πρῶτον τὸν Ἡσίοδον Νικοκλῆς. Μέναιχμος δὲ ἱστορεῖ τοὺς ῥαψωδοὺς στιχωδοὺς καλεῖσθαι διὰ τὸ τοὺς στίχους ῥάβδους λέγεσθαι ὑπό τινων. ἄλλως. Ὀμηρίδαι πρότερον μὲν οἱ Ὀμήρου παῖδες, ὕστερον δὲ οἱ περὶ Κύναιθον ῥαβδωδοί· οὗτοι γὰρ τὴν Ὀμήρου ποίησιν σκεδασθεῖσαν ἐμνημόνευον καὶ ἀπήγγελλον· ἐλυμήναντο δὲ αὐτῇ πάνυ. αἰεὶ οὖν τὴν ἀρχὴν ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον ἐκ Διὸς ἐποιοῦντο προοιμιαζόμενοι, ἐνίστε δὲ καὶ Μουσῶν.

Philochorus [FGH 328 F 212] says that they [= *rhapsōidoi*] were called that [= *rhapsōidoi*] on the basis of the idea of composing, that is, stitching together, the song. Proof for this comes from Hesiod, who says [= Hesiod F 357]:

In Delos, back then at the very beginning, I and Homer, singers [*aoidoi*], sang-and-danced [*melpēin*],³⁰ stitching together [*rhaptēin*] a song in new *humnoi*, making Phoebus Apollo the subject of our song, the one with the golden weapon, the one born of Leto. [[289|290]]

Niccles [FGH 376 F 8] says that Hesiod was the first to perform rhapsodically [*rhapsōideîn*]. The investigations of Menaechmus indicate that rhapsodes [*rhapsōidoi*] were called verse singers [*stikhōidoi*] because verses [*stikhoi*] were called staffs [*rhabdoi*] by some people. Here is another version: the *Homēridai* were in former times the descendants of Homer, but then, in later times, they were a group comprised of Kynaithos and his associates, who were called *rhabdōidoi* [staff-singers]. For these [= Kynaithos and his associates] are the ones who used to bring back to memory and to perform the poetry [*poiēsis*] of Homer, which had been scattered. But they mistreated [*lumainesthai*] it [= the poetry]. And they [= the *Homēridai*] always started with a prooemium [*prooimion*], making mostly Zeus their point of departure and occasionally the Muses.

Scholia for Pindar *Nemean* 2.1d lines 14-29

In the first part of the relevant Pindar scholia, as quoted earlier, it was claimed that Kynaithos and his associates ‘interpolated’ (*en-ballein*) additional hexameter verses and ascribed to Homer various other compositions. Supposedly, rhapsodes like Kynaithos illegitimately interpolated additional verses to augment the original verses of Homer.³¹

In the second part of these same scholia, as quoted just now, it is claimed that Kynaithos and his group ‘mistreated’ the body of Homeric poetry. As we can see from

³⁰ The verb *melpēin* / *melpēsthai* and the noun *molpē* convey the combination of singing and dancing: PH 12§29n62 (= p. 350) and n64 (= p. 351).

³¹ HPC I§160.

the claims in the first part, this alleged mistreatment involved the adding of hexameter verses that were not originally Homeric.

To test the supposition that Kynaithos added verses to Homer's own verses, let us consider the structure of the *Homeric Hymn (3) to Apollo* as we have it. This hymn appears, at least on the surface, to be a combination of two originally separate hymns, and so it seems reasonable to understand the Pindaric scholia to mean that Kynaithos did add verses to an earlier hymn composed by Homer. In terms of such an understanding, the verses supposedly added by Kynaithos could be described as Hesiodic rather than Homeric. Here is why. These verses constitute the part of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* that celebrates the god Apollo as he was worshipped at Delphi. In other words, the referent of these verses was the Pythian [[290|291]] Apollo, not the Delian Apollo who was worshipped at Delos. And, as Richard Martin has shown, the verses of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* celebrating the Pythian Apollo are distinctly Hesiodic in style, whereas the verses celebrating the Delian Apollo are distinctly Homeric.³² By the term "Hesiodic" he means the style that is characteristic of the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*; by "Homeric" he means the style that is characteristic of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.³³

If Kynaithos himself really performed the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* at the festival of the Delia at Delos in 522 BCE, it follows that this would-be descendant of Homer could have conflated a *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* with a rival Hesiodic *Hymn*, treating the Hesiodic version as an aspect of an overall Homeric tradition.³⁴

In terms of such an ancient post-Athenocentric point of view, then, the real Homer would have performed a *Hymn to Apollo* that was more simple than the augmented *Hymn* as performed by Kynaithos of Chios, and the supposedly original *Homeric Hymn* would have celebrated only the Delian Apollo at Delos, not the Pythian Apollo at Delphi.

Other ancient views of Homer

Such an ancient view of Homer must have been based on the evidence of an ancient text of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* that featured both the Delian and the Pythian portions as they have survived to this day. To be contrasted are other ancient views that must have been based simply on the hearing of a performance, not on the reading of a text.

³² Martin (2000b).

³³ HPC I§174. See also Petrović (2012 and 2013).

³⁴ HPC I§175. As for why the *Hymn to Apollo* survives as a Homeric and not as a Hesiodic Hymn, I offer an explanation in HB 302.

For audiences who heard a rhapsode perform the *Hymn* on a given occasion at the festival of the Delia, what would matter is not the identity of the rhapsode but the identity of the poet who was being re-enacted by the rhapsode. Similarly, for audiences who heard rhapsodes perform the Homeric *Iliad* or *Odyssey* on a given occasion at [[291|292]] the festival of the Panathenaia, what would matter is the simple fact that the rhapsodes re-enact Homer.

Here and hereafter, I equate the concept of ‘re-enactment’ with the concept conveyed by the Greek word *mimēsis*, which I hereafter write simply as *mimesis*. As I argue in the book *Poetry as Performance*, when the Homeric rhapsode performs the words that say ‘tell me, Muses!’ (*Iliad* II 484) or ‘tell me, Muse!’ (*Odyssey* i 1), this ‘I’ is not just a representation of Homer: it is Homer.³⁵ In other words, the rhapsode is re-enacting Homer by performing Homer, and he is Homer so long as the *mimesis* stays in effect, so long as the performance lasts. From the standpoint of the *mimesis*, the rhapsode is a recomposed performer: he becomes recomposed into Homer every time he performs Homer.³⁶

From this point of view, the rhapsode who adds verses in the act of performance does not necessarily disqualify himself as a re-enactor of Homer. The adding of verses is an act of interpolation only in terms of a text, not in terms of a performance.

Evidence from Life of Homer narratives

What I just said about the adding of verses is a theme that is actually attested in a text that belongs to a set of texts known as the *Life of Homer* narratives.³⁷ Before I show the attestation, however, I offer a general formulation about the significance of such narratives:³⁸

The *Life of Homer* traditions represent the reception of Homeric poetry by narrating a series of events featuring purportedly “live” performances by Homer himself. In the narratives of the *Lives*, Homeric composition is consistently being situated in contexts of Homeric performance. In effect, the *Lives* explore the shaping power of positive and even negative responses by the audiences of Homeric poetry in ad hoc situations of performance. To put it another way, the narrative strategy of the *Lives* is a staging of Homer’s reception.

My describing the *Life of Homer* traditions as a staging converges with my aim to show that the narratives of these *Lives* are myths, not [[292|293]] historical facts,

³⁵ PP 61.

³⁶ Again, PP 61. See also Papadopoulou (2004) and Petrović (2012).

³⁷ For background on these narratives, see HPC I §§55-136 (also Nagy 2004a).

³⁸ HPC I §§57-58.

about Homer. To say that we are dealing with myths, however, is not at all to say that there is no history to be learned from the *Lives*. Even though the various Homers of the various *Lives* are evidently mythical constructs, the actual constructing of myths about Homer can be seen as historical fact.

And the point I have just made about *Life of Homer* narratives applies also to *Life of Hesiod* narratives.³⁹

That said, I am ready to show the attestation I have found in the *Life of Homer* narratives where even the figure of Homer himself is viewed in the act of adding verses to his own compositions. It happens in the *Herodotean Life of Homer*, which is composed in the Ionic dialect and which reflects a political and cultural perspective that is favorable to the island state of Chios.⁴⁰ In this narrative, we catch the figure of Homer himself in the act of ‘interpolating’ (*en-poiēîn*) by adding verses glorifying Athens while composing the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in Chios (*Herodotean Life* 379-399).⁴¹ Homer eventually leaves Chios and sails off for Athens, expecting to perform there his augmented version of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* after a stopover in Samos (*Herodotean Life* 483-484); when he sets sail from Samos, however, Homer makes the mistake of making another stopover, on the island of Ios, and he dies there before he can reach his final destination, which would have been Athens (*Herodotean Life* 484-516).⁴²

As we see from this example taken from the *Life of Homer* traditions, Homer can be viewed as a prototypical performer whose compositions come to life in his performances.

Unlike the *Herodotean Life of Homer*, where Homer composes for performance in Athens though he never reaches Athens, another *Life of Homer* narrative shows another outcome. This narrative, known as the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, is derived from the work of Alcidamas, an Athenian intellectual who flourished in the fourth century BCE.⁴³ According to the narrative of the *Contest*, [[293|294]] the figure of Homer does in fact get to perform in Athens (276-285), and then he goes on to perform in other major cities of

³⁹ HB 278-280.

⁴⁰ In citing from the *Herodotean Life of Homer*, I follow here the page- and line-numbering of the edition by Allen (1912).

⁴¹ HPC I§§94-98. At I§153, I offer an explanation for a complication that we see here in the *Herodotean Life of Homer*: while this narrative accepts the idea that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as composed in Chios by Homer were later performed at the Panathenaia in Athens, it differs from other such narratives by undermining the genealogy of the *Homēridai* of Chios.

⁴² Commentary in HPC I§§91-99, 141, 144, 154.

⁴³ In citing from the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, I follow again the page- and line-numbering of the edition by Allen (1912).

the Helladic mainland, especially Corinth (286-287) and Argos (288-314). Homer's long-awaited songmaking tour of the Helladic mainland, which failed to take place in the *Herodotean Life of Homer*, is realized in the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*.⁴⁴

Homer as performer of the Hymn to Apollo in a Life of Homer narrative

Just as Thucydides attributes the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* directly to Homer, so too does the Athenocentric narrative of the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*:

ἐνδιατρίψας δὲ τῇ πόλει χρόνον τινὰ διέπλευσεν εἰς Δῆλον εἰς τὴν πανήγυριν. καὶ σταθεὶς ἐπὶ τὸν κεράτινον βωμὸν λέγει ὕμνον εἰς Ἀπόλλωνα οὗ ἡ ἀρχή

μνήσομαι οὐδὲ λάθωμαι Ἀπόλλωνος ἑκάτοιο.

ῥηθέντος δὲ τοῦ ὕμνου οἱ μὲν Ἴωνες πολίτην αὐτὸν κοινὸν ἐποίησαντο, Δῆλιοι δὲ γράψαντες τὰ ἔπη εἰς λεύκωμα ἀνέθηκαν ἐν τῷ τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος ἱερῷ. τῆς δὲ πανηγύρεως λυθείσης ὁ ποιητὴς εἰς Ἴον ἔπλευσε πρὸς Κρεώφυλον

After he [= Homer] stayed a while in the city [of Argos], he sailed over to Delos to the festival [*panēguris*] there. And, standing on the Altar of Horn he speaks the *hymnos* to Apollo, the beginning of which is

I will keep in mind and not leave out of mind Apollo, who makes things work from afar.

Then, after the *hymnos* was spoken, the Ionians made him [= Homer] their common citizen [*koinos politēs*]. And the people of Delos, writing down his verses [*epos plural*] on a white tablet [*leukōma*], dedicated them in the sacred space of Artemis. Then, after the festival [*panēguris*] was declared to be finished, the Poet [*poiētēs*] sailed to Ios to meet Kreophylos.

Contest of Homer and Hesiod 315-322

As I argue in *Homer the Preclassic*, the myth about Homer in this narrative amounts to an aetiology of the festival of the Delia.⁴⁵ (By *aetiology*, I mean a myth that motivates an institutional reality, especially a ritual.⁴⁶) Also, this myth about Homer in Delos motivates the institutional reality of Homeric reception, just as surely as it motivates the institutional reality of the festival that defines Homer as the model

⁴⁴ Commentary in *HPC* E§53

⁴⁵ *HPC* I§§124-136.

⁴⁶ *BA* 16§2n2 (= p. 279).

performer at that festival. And this reception depends on the basic idea that Homer comes to life in performance.⁴⁷ [[294|295]]

Homer and Hesiod as performers of the Hymn to Apollo in another Life of Homer narrative

In the myth we have just seen about the performance of Homer at the festival of the Delia, there is no mention of anyone else performing at that festival. So we do not expect to see anyone other than Homer performing at the Delia. But there exists an alternative myth that shows another performer performing along with Homer at that same festival, and that other performer turns out to be Hesiod. This alternative myth is embedded in the verses of the Hesiodic fragment that I quoted earlier:

ἐν Δήλῳ τότε πρῶτον ἐγὼ καὶ Ὅμηρος ἀοιδοὶ
μέλπομεν, ἐν νεαροῖς ὕμνοις ῥάψαντες ἀοιδὴν,
Φοῖβον Ἀπόλλωνα χρυσάορον, ὃν τέκε Λητώ.

In Delos, back then at the very beginning, I and Homer, singers [*aoidoi*],
sang-and-danced [*melpein*], stitching together [*rhaptein*] a song in new *humnoi*,
making Phoebus Apollo the subject of our song, the one with the golden
weapon, the one born of Leto.

Hesiod F 357

In terms of the myth embedded in these verses, Homer and Hesiod collaborated with each other by producing two *Hymns*, that is, two *humnoi* - one performed by Homer and the other performed by Hesiod.

Myths about contests of Homer and Hesiod

For the moment, I will concentrate on the idea of these two performances, not on the actual mode of performing. In the myth that we have just observed, the reference to performances by both Homer and Hesiod at Delos can be viewed as part of a vast complex of variant myths centering on the myth of a competition between the figures of Homer and Hesiod in a contest that will determine which of the two is the better poet. In the example we have just seen, the idea of an actual competition is only implicit, since the myth confines itself to showing the two poets in the act of producing two *Hymns* together. As we are about to see, however, the idea of competition is explicit in other examples.

I begin with two references to such a competition in the overall narrative of the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*. In the first of these two references, there is a passing

⁴⁷ HPC I§130.

mention of a contest of Homer and Hesiod at Aulis in Boeotia (54-55). In the second reference, we find the [[295|296]] beginning of an extended narrative about another contest between these two figures, which takes place at Chalkis in Euboea (68) on the occasion of funeral games commemorating the death of a king named Amphidamas (63-64). In the course of this extended narrative, which takes up a huge portion of the overall narrative of the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, Homer is ultimately defeated by Hesiod in the poetic competition held at Chalkis, though the narrative attributes the victory of Hesiod to the favoritism of a contemporary king who declares Hesiod as the winner and who thus overrules the favorable reception that Homer is accorded by the populace attending the contest (62-214).

It has been argued that the myth of the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* as mediated by Alcidas was his own invention, based on a passing reference in Hesiodic poetry to a poetic contest that Hesiod had won in Chalkis (*Works and Days* 650-659).⁴⁸ But the argument that this myth was invented by Alcidas in the fourth century BCE is untenable. Even in terms of this argument, it has to be admitted that the verses quoted in the text of the *Contest* as the verses of Homer and Hesiod themselves “were already current in the fifth century.”⁴⁹ And there is ample evidence to show that the myths embedded in the text of the *Contest* must be far earlier than even the fifth century BCE.⁵⁰

As I will now argue, one version of the myth of the contest is embedded even in the Hesiodic *Works and Days*. And, as I will argue thereafter, another version is embedded in the *Homeric Hymn* (3) to Apollo.

An embedded myth about the Contest of Homer and Hesiod in the Hesiodic Works and Days

In the Hesiodic *Works and Days*, we see such a trace in a variant verse reported by the Hesiodic scholia. In this variant verse, Hesiod is declaring that his adversary in the poetic contest that he won in Chalkis was Homer himself: [[296|297]]

ὕμνῳ νικήσαντ' ἐν Χαλκίδι θεῖον Ὅμηρον
defeating god-like Homer with (my) *humnos*, at Chalkis

Hesiod *Works and Days* scholia for verse 657a ed. Pertusi

instead of

ὕμνῳ νικήσαντα φέρειν τρίποδ' ὠτῶντα

⁴⁸ West (2003) 299.

⁴⁹ West (2003) 299.

⁵⁰ HB 300.

winning with (my) *humnos*, (I say that I) carried away (as a prize) a tripod with handles on it.

Hesiod *Works and Days* verse 657

The variant verse mentioning Homer is also attested in the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* (213-214), where it is part of an epigram ascribed to Hesiod, who reputedly composed it in celebration of his victory over Homer.

All this is not to question whether the variant verse as attested in the medieval manuscript tradition of the *Works and Days* (657) is genuine to the Hesiodic tradition. This verse mentioning the tripod itself may be just as genuine as the verse mentioning Homer. And each one of these two alternative verses is composed in an epigrammatic style that characterizes the verses that follow (658-659) as also the verse that precedes (656). Though both of these two variant verses may be genuine, the one that directly mentions Homer must have been phased out in the course of the poem's crystallization into a fixed text.⁵¹

An embedded myth about the Contest of Homer and Hesiod in the Homeric Hymn (3) to Apollo

In the *Homeric Hymn (3) to Apollo*, there is no explicit reference to the names of either Homer or Hesiod, and there is no explicit reference to a competition between the two. But there is an implicit competition in the form of a competing set of two parts of one *Hymn*. One of these two parts of the *Hymn*, as we have seen, is addressed to Apollo as worshipped at the festival of the Delia at Delos and the other is addressed to Apollo as worshipped at the festival of the Pythia at Delphi. The competition between these two parts of one *Hymn*, as we have also seen, is all-pervasive, if Martin is right that the Delian part is composed in a Homeric style while the Pythian part is composed in a Hesiodic style.⁵² [[297|298]]

And the winner of this implicit competition between Homer and Hesiod must be in this case Homer, not Hesiod, since the Delian part of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* predicts the superiority of Homer to all other poets every time he returns to the Delia. In response to the question addressed to the Maidens of Delos, 'Who is the most pleasurable of singers that wanders here, in whom do you (Maidens) take the most delight [*terpesthai*]?' (verses 169-170), the Delian Maidens must declare that the greatest singer of them all is the blind man who dwells in Chios (verse 172). This blind man, ancestor of the *Homēridai* of Chios, must be Homer himself, who keeps eternally

⁵¹ HB 304, with reference to further argumentation in GM 78.

⁵² Martin (2000b). See also Petrović (2012).

returning to the seasonally recurring festival of the Delia to ask the same eternal question that calls for the same eternal response.⁵³

The ‘someone’ who asks the Delian Maidens the question that leads to their response is described as a wanderer who comes to the Delia and will be hosted there (verses 167-168). In the version as transmitted in the medieval manuscript tradition, the use of the wording *tis* ‘someone’ (verse 167) leaves open the option of imagining the same singer returning again and again, in an eternal loop, with each seasonal recurrence of the festival of the Delia. As for the version as transmitted in the quotation made by Thucydides from the *Hymn*, the variant wording *tis ... allos* ‘someone else’ (verses 167-168) leaves open the same option.⁵⁴

It remains to be seen how the identity of Homer depends on his interaction here with the Delian Maidens in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. But first, we must consider further the theme of Homer’s eternal return at the festival of the Delia.

Homer and Hesiod as rhapsodes

When the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* says that Homer the wanderer returns eternally to the Delia, what is really being said is that Homer gets to be re-enacted year after year by wandering rhapsodes who compete at each new seasonally recurring occasion of the festival. The idea is that Homer gets to be re-enacted eternally by rhapsodes. As we have already seen, the ‘I’ or ‘me’ in rhapsodic performances of Homeric poetry is notionally Homer himself, not the rhapsode. And I must now add that the same principle applies to Homer’s eternal competitor, Hesiod. [[298|299]]

Not only are Homer and Hesiod re-enacted by rhapsodes. They are imagined as performing like rhapsodes in their own right. The variant myths about a primal contest of Homer and Hesiod stem from the idea that these two poets performed like rhapsodes, and this idea in turn stems from variant rhapsodic traditions in the transmission of Homeric and Hesiodic poetry. The existence of such rhapsodic traditions is acknowledged by Plato, as when Socrates imagines Homer and Hesiod themselves in the act of ‘performing in the manner of rhapsodes’ (*rhapsōideîn*) as they ‘go wandering around’ (*perierkhesthai*) from city to city (Plato *Republic* 10.600d-e ῥαψωδεῖν ... περιόοντας).

⁵³ HC 2§§38-39.

⁵⁴ At verse 168 of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, according to the version quoted by Thucydides 3.104.5, the wanderer who arrives at Delos is described as *allos* – seemingly some person ‘other’ than the speaker. Even in terms of this variant, my formulation holds: this seemingly ‘other’ person becomes the same person as the speaker – once the response of the Delian Maidens to that ‘other’ person is actually quoted by the speaker.

The wording we find here is strikingly similar to the wording we find in the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, where Homer is explicitly pictured as a rhapsode who wanders from city to city: ποιήσαντα γὰρ τὸν Μαργίτην Ὅμηρον περιέρχεσθαι κατὰ πόλιν ῥαψωδοῦντα ‘having made [*poieîn*] the [comic poem] *Margites* [in the city of Colophon in Asia Minor], Homer went wandering around [*perierkhesthai*] from city to city, performing in the manner of rhapsodes [*rhapsōideîn*]’ (55-56).⁵⁵ After his poetic competition with Hesiod at Chalkis (72-211), Homer is said to continue his life as a wandering rhapsode, and the wording echoes the earlier wording we saw just a moment ago: περιερχόμενος ἔλεγε τὰ ποιήματα ‘as he went wandering around [*perierkhesthai*], he was telling his poetic creations [*poiēmata*]’ (255).

Rhapsodic competition and collaboration

I focus on the symmetrical image, as verbalized by Plato’s Socrates, of Homer and Hesiod as itinerant professional *rhapsōidoi* ‘rhapsodes’ who perform at urban festivals (Plato *Republic* 10.600d-e). A prime example of such performances is the tradition of rhapsodic competitions in performing Homeric and other epic poetry at the festival of the Panathenaia in the city of Athens. And, as we can see most clearly from the surviving evidence about that tradition, rhapsodic performances at such a festival were not only competitive: they were also collaborative. [[299|300]]

At the festival of the Panathenaia, already in the era of the Peisistratidai, competing rhapsodes were required to take turns in performing by relay the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as we saw in the passage I quoted earlier from the Platonic *Hipparkhos* (228b-c):

Ἰππάρχῳ, ... ὃς ἄλλα τε πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ ἔργα σοφίας ἀπεδέξατο, καὶ τὰ Ὅμηρου ἔπη πρῶτος ἐκόμισεν εἰς τὴν γῆν ταύτην, καὶ ἠνάγκασε τοὺς ῥαψωδοὺς Παναθηναίοις ἐξ ὑπολήψεως ἐφεξῆς αὐτὰ διέναι, ὥσπερ νῦν ἔτι οἶδε ποιοῦσιν.

Hipparkhos, ... who publicly enacted many and beautiful things to manifest his expertise [*sophia*], especially by being the first to bring over [*komizein*] to this land [= Athens] the verses [*epos* plural] of Homer, and he required the rhapsodes [*rhapsōidoi*] at the Panathenaia to go through [*diienai*] these verses in sequence [*ephexēs*], by relay [*ex hupolēpseōs*], just as they [= the rhapsodes] do even nowadays.

“Plato” *Hipparkhos* 228b-c

In such rhapsodic performance by relay, collaboration was fused with competition, since the rhapsodes competing at the Panathenaia would be expected to collaborate

⁵⁵ I back up this interpretation of the text in *HPC* I§§103-107.

with each other in the process of performing, by relay, successive parts of integral compositions like the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.⁵⁶

The regulating of rhapsodes in their relay performances, as we see it at work in the description we read in the Platonic *Hipparkhos*, did not originate at the festival of the Panathenaia at Athens, even if Hipparkhos can be credited with the initiative of bringing over to Athens, for the Panathenaia of August 522 BCE, the *Homēridai* of Chios for the purpose of regulating the rhapsodic performances of the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* at that Athenian festival. As the work of Douglas Frame has shown, such regulation of rhapsodic performance by relay, as represented by the *Homēridai*, was already operational in the late eighth and early seventh centuries at the festival of the Panionia held at the Panionion of the Ionian Dodecapolis in Asia Minor.⁵⁷ Still, since the practice of regulating the relay performances of rhapsodes can be seen most clearly in the case of the Panathenaia in Athens, I will refer to this practice as the Panathenaic Regulation.⁵⁸

The model I have developed so far, where rhapsodes collaborate as well as compete in the process of performing, by relay, successive parts of integral compositions like the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, can be used to explain the unity of these epics as they evolved over time.⁵⁹ And now it can also be used to explain the unity of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* as a fully integrated composite of two *Hymns*. The [[300|301]] prototypical event of performing such a composite of a Delian *Hymn* composed by Homer and of a Pythian *Hymn* composed by Hesiod is dramatized in the Hesiodic fragment that I already quoted earlier:

ἐν Δήλῳ τότε πρῶτον ἐγὼ καὶ Ὅμηρος ἀοιδοὶ
μέλπομεν, ἐν νεαροῖς ὕμνοις ῥάψαντες ἀοιδὴν,
Φοῖβον Ἀπόλλωνα χρυσάορον, ὃν τέκε Λητώ.

In Delos, back then at the very beginning, I and Homer, singers [*aoidoi*],
sang-and-danced [*melpein*], stitching together [*rhaptein*] a song in new *humnoi*,

⁵⁶ PR 36-69. For a comparative perspective on the concept of competition-in-collaboration, see PP 18.

⁵⁷ Frame (2009) ch. 11. Also, I agree with Frame's argument (pp. 583-584) that the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as epic traditions, "reached Athens almost immediately after they took root on Chios, and that even earlier they may have begun to be known in Athens directly from the Panionia." In terms of this argument, Hipparkhos can be credited only with the actual authorization of the *Homēridai* as regulators of epic performances by rhapsodes at the Panathenaia in Athens.

⁵⁸ More on the Panathenaic Regulation in HC 2§297 and HPC I§§37-43, 47, 54, 144, 166-168, 229-231; II§§109-110; E§69.

⁵⁹ PR 42-47.

making Phoebus Apollo the subject of our song, the one with the golden
weapon, the one born of Leto.

Hesiod F 357

The word *rhaptein* ‘stitch together’ as used in these verses is a reference to the performances of rhapsodes, since the word *rhapsōidos* means, etymologically, ‘he who stitches together [*rhaptein*] songs [*aoidai*]’.⁶⁰ As for the word *melpein* ‘sing-and-dance’ as also used here, I need to postpone my analysis until we reach a later point in the argumentation.

As we can see from these verses, a rhapsodic performance of a *Hymn to Apollo* at the Delia in Delos was not necessarily envisioned as one performance by one rhapsode. There could be successive rhapsodic performance by successive rhapsodes, even by successive *Homēridai*, who could be re-enacting Homer and Hesiod in succession. And such succession would require collaboration as well as competition.

In making this point, I draw on the relevant wording in the scholia for Pindar’s *Nemean* 2 (1c), focusing on the expression *ek diadokhēs* with reference to the relay singing of the *Homēridai* of Chios: οἱ καὶ τὴν ποιήσιν αὐτοῦ ἐκ διαδοχῆς ᾤδον ‘and they [= the *Homēridai*] also sang his [= Homer’s] poetry [*poiēsis*] by taking turns [*ek diadokhēs*]’.

This expression *ek diadokhēs* is conventionally translated as ‘in succession’.⁶¹ But such a translation leaves it open whether the ‘succession’ is from ancestor to descendant or from one participant to another while taking turns. In *Homer the Preclassic*, I analyze examples of this expression where we see both senses, succession by heritage and succession by relay.⁶² [[301|302]] We find an example of the first sense in the scholia for Pindar’s *Olympian* 6 (158a), where Hieron is said to have inherited a priesthood *ek diadokhēs* ‘in succession’ from one of his ancestors. We find an example of the second sense in the scholia for Pindar’s *Pythian* 12 (25 ed. Semitelos), where the three Graiai are said to share one eye and one tooth, using them *ek diadokhēs* ‘in relay’, that is, by taking turns. There is another example in Aristotle’s *Physics* (5.227a28-29): καὶ οἷον ἡ λαμπὰς <ή> ἐκ διαδοχῆς φορὰ ἐχομένη, συνεχὴς δ’ οὐ ‘and just as the torch race by relay [*ek diadokhēs*] is locomotion that is consecutive but not continuous ...’. Moreover, the expression *ek diadokhēs* can mean ‘taking turns’ in contexts where it is used together with *allēlois* ‘with each other’. A case in point is a passage from Aristotle (F 347.15 ed. Rose via Aelian *Varia Historia* 1.15) where he describes how a mother bird and a father bird warm the eggs in their nest by taking turns (*ek diadokhēs*) with each other (*allēlois*). In *Homer the Preclassic*, I produce further examples of such a sense of

⁶⁰ PP 61-69.

⁶¹ So West (1999) 368.

⁶² HPC I§§163-164.

relay, but here I confine myself to just one more: in the scholia D for *Iliad* I (604), *ek diadokhēs* refers to the relay singing of the Muses: καὶ αὐταὶ Ἀπόλλωνος κιθαρίζοντος ἐκ διαδοχῆς παρὰ μέρος ἦδον ‘and they, while Apollo was playing the *kithara*, were singing in relay [*para meros*], by taking turns [*ek diadokhēs*]. I will return to this last example at a later point in my argumentation.

On the basis of the examples we have just seen, besides other examples, I have put together this formulation about rhapsodic traditions of relay performance, applying the terms synchronic and diachronic as pioneered by Saussure:⁶³

The synchronic succession of relay singing may be a ritualized way of representing the diachronic succession of singing Homer’s songs from one generation to the next. In order to represent this diachronic succession of generations, there has to be a synchronic grouping of these generations as a corporation of practitioners. That corporation is named as the *Homēridai*, the ‘descendants of Homer’. In the act of performance, the descendants are all synchronized as one corporation who incorporate the ancestor by taking turns in re-enacting him. The same can be said about, say, the mother bird and the father bird that feed their young in relay: that principle of relay is the model for the idea that each new generation has to follow the practice of the previous generation in feeding the young. Or again, the principle of the relay in the Athenian torch race is a ritualized way of expressing the continuity of the tradition of torch racing in and of itself. We may compare the idea of the *Asklēpiadai*, notional descendants of the prototypical physician *Asklēpios*, who are figured as a corporation of physicians who practice medicine by continuing the practice of their ancestor. So also the *Homēridai*, notional descendants of *Homēros*, are figured as a corporation of singers who continue the practice of singing Homer. For them to sing in relay is a synchronic ritualization of the diachronic continuity.

In the scholia for Pindar’s *Nemean* 2 (1c), the idea that members of this corporation of the *Homēridai* sing the poetry of Homer in relay, taking turns, is then followed up by the idea of generational succession. But the legitimacy of this succession is questioned. From an Aristarchean perspective, the successors of Homer are not genuinely doing what their predecessor had done, and so they are not genuine. So they are illegitimate. This supposedly illegitimate corporation described as οἱ περὶ Κύναιθον ‘Kynaithos and his association’ engage in various poetic activities like ‘interpolating’ (*en-ballein*) additional verses to augment the supposedly genuine verses of Homer or ‘ascribing’ (*epi-graphein*) to Homer a *hymnos* that they composed on their own. Even though the statement as recorded in the scholia for Pindar

⁶³ Again, *HPC* I§§163-164. For my use of the words synchronic and diachronic, see *HR* 1, with reference to Saussure 1916:117.

rejects the poetic activities of ‘Kynaithos and his associates’ as illegitimate, typical of those who are more recent than the genuine Homer, it nevertheless sets up a parallel between them and the *Homēridai* – as associations of performers. By implication, just as the *Homēridai* sing Homer as a group, taking turns, so too ‘Kynaithos and his associates’ sing Homer as a group, taking [[302|303]] turns. Whatever it is that ‘Kynaithos and his associates’ may do, the statement is explicit about what is done by the *Homēridai*: they sing the poetry of Homer ‘by taking turns’ (*ek diadokhēs*).

This formulation applies primarily to the model of the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as relay poetry performed by the *Homēridai*, but it can apply secondarily to the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, in the sense that Homer and Hesiod can be imagined as performing by relay. And, in this kind of relay performance, Homer and Hesiod would have to be collaborating with each other while they are competing with each other.

There are traces of this theme of rhapsodic relay even in the narrative of the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, the setting of which is Chalkis. In this case, however, the balance between competition and collaboration is markedly uneven, and the narrative makes it evident that the unevenness stems in part from the faulty and even unfair regulation of this contest at Chalkis by the king who presides. In the course of the unfairly regulated competition between Homer and Hesiod in this narrative, Hesiod has the advantage of testing Homer unilaterally by challenging his rival to perform a variety of feats in poetic improvisation (72-204). Still, even though the terms of this particular [[303|304]] competition are shown to be unfair, the formal characteristics of Hesiod’s quoted poetic challenges and of Homer’s quoted poetic responses are in fact typical of what we find in ancient reportage concerning rhapsodic competitions that actually took place in the historical period extending from the sixth into the fourth century BCE.⁶⁴

At one point in the narrative of the *Contest*, after Homer has already countered successfully the initial poetic challenges thrown at him by Hesiod, he is challenged with what is meant to be an impossible poetic task:

ὁ δὲ Ἡσίοδος ἀχθεσθεὶς ἐπὶ τῇ Ὀμήρου εὐημερίᾳ ἐπὶ τὴν τῶν ἀπόρων ὥρμησεν
ἐπερώτησιν καὶ φησι τούσδε τοὺς στίχους·

Μοῦσ’ ἄγε μοι τά τ’ ἐόντα τά τ’ ἐσσόμενα πρό τ’ ἐόντα
τῶν μὲν μηδὲν ἄειδε, σὺ δ’ ἄλλης μνήσαι αἰοιδῆς.

ὁ δὲ Ὀμηρος βουλόμενος ἀκολούθως τὸ ἄπορον λῦσαι φησὶν·

⁶⁴ Collins (2004) 177-178, 185.

οὐδέ ποτ' ἄμφι Διὸς τύμβῳ καναχήποδες ἵπποι
ἄρματα συντρίψουσιν ἐρίζοντες περὶ νίκης.

Hesiod, irritated with Homer's success, resorted to the posing of unsolvable riddles [apora], (and he started by) saying the following verses:

Come, Muse, sing for me things that are and that will be and that have been
once upon a time,
yes, sing them, and, of all these things, sing nothing, but you must have in mind
the rest of the song.⁶⁵

Then Homer, wishing to find a consequential way of solving an unsolvable riddle [aporon], said:

Never around a tomb of Zeus will horses with clattering hooves
smash up the chariots they draw as they compete for victory.

Contest of Homer and Hesiod 94-101

Another version of this competitive exchange is provided by Plutarch (*Banquet of the Seven Sages* 10 pp. 153f-154a), who says that it was another poet, Lesches of Lesbos, who challenged Hesiod by way of quoting his own verses about saying nothing about everything (Lesches *Little Iliad* F 23 ed. Allen), to which Hesiod responded by way of quoting verses of his own about the impossible event of a funeral for Zeus (p. 56.2-3 ed. Wilamowitz). In the version of the myth as we have just seen it in the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, by contrast, the verses that match closely the verses quoted by Lesches are attributed to Hesiod (97-98), whereas the verses that match closely the verses quoted by Hesiod are attributed to Homer (100-101).⁶⁶

⁶⁵ I interpret the expression ἄλλης ... ἀοιδῆς in this passage to mean 'the rest of the song', not 'another song'. At a later point, I will examine further contexts of this and other related expressions, showing that these expression refer to the poetics of rhapsodic relay, where one rhapsode takes over from the previous rhapsode in performing what becomes one song by way of the relay. In the present context, the challenge in the riddle is this: how can you sing 'the rest of the song' in competitive relay with the previous singer if you cannot sing anything about the past, present, and future? Homer rises to the challenge by singing, in competitive relay, about an event that is surely exempt from the past, present, and future because it can never happen, and that event is the death of Zeus, to be commemorated by funeral games held in the god's honor. If we chose the alternative interpretation, 'another song', then the point of Hesiod's challenge would be blunted, because there would be no difficulty in responding to the challenge of simply performing 'another song', which would not need to be a distinctly different song and could even be any other song at all.

⁶⁶ HB 303; further analogies are discussed there.

The parallelism of Homer and Hesiod as symmetrically matched poetic opponents is formalized only at the very end of the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, when the storytelling reaches the final phase of the contest (176-210): “It is only when each poet is asked to recite the finest piece of his poetry that their abilities can be weighed against one another.”⁶⁷

This last part of the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* is what comes closest to what we see in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, which combines the best of Homer as a master of this form of poetry with the best of Hesiod as a rival master.⁶⁸ But Hesiod, unlike Homer, is a recessive figure in this *Hymn*, which after all represents the legacy of the *Homēridai*. In the end, the *Hymn to Apollo* survives as a *Homeric Hymn*, not as a Hesiodic one. The figure of Hesiod could perhaps have defeated Homer at the festival of the Pythia in Delphi, just as he defeats him at Chalkis, but Hesiod cannot defeat Homer at the festival of the Delia in Delos, where Homer as the ancestor of the *Homēridai* must have his own victory.⁶⁹ [[304|305]]

A distinction between rhapsodic and choral performance

The theme of a victory by Homer over Hesiod at the Delia in Delos is linked with the theme of Homer’s interaction with the Delian Maidens in the *Hymn*. This interaction, as the text of the *Hymn* makes clear, leads to Homer’s status as a pan-Hellenic celebrity: once Homer leaves Delos behind after his performance there, he will wander from city to city throughout the Hellenic world (174-176), spreading the poetic *kleos* ‘fame’ of the Delian Maidens (174), and this fame will be a reciprocation of the fame of his own poetry, which is thus universalized (173). So this fame, stemming from Homer’s interaction with the Delian Maidens at the Delia, is essential for his victory at that festival. But there is a distinction to be noted here: although Homer wins by way of performing as a rhapsode, the Delian Maidens with whom he interacts are performing in a mode that is not rhapsodic but choral. This distinction between rhapsodic and choral performance turns out to be vital for an understanding of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and of all the *Homeric Hymns*.

Before we proceed, I must note that I use the words choral and chorus in the ancient sense of the Greek word *khōros*, which means ‘song-and-dance group’ or ‘choral

⁶⁷ West (2003) 200.

⁶⁸ Such a combination of hymns, I should note, could have been performed solo as well as by relay. Even a solo performance, however, would have accommodated a re-enactment of a relay from Homer to Hesiod, so long as the principle of performing by relay was in any case embedded in the conflated composition.

⁶⁹ On a potential competition between Homer and Hesiod at Delphi, see *HB* 300-303. A related topic, as I show there, is the appropriation of Hesiodic poetry by the Peisistratidai of Athens.

group of singers-dancers', to be contrasted with the everyday meaning of the modern English word 'chorus', which fails to convey the aspect of dancing that complemented the aspect of singing in the ancient Greek word *choros*.⁷⁰

That said, I begin by elaborating on the point I just made, that the performance of the Delian Maidens in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* is pictured as choral. Wording that indicates such performance is evident from the references in the *Hymn* to their singing (verse 161 ὕμνον αἰδοῦσιν, verse 164 αἰοιδή) and to their dancing to the rhythm of percussive instruments (verse 162 κρεμβαλιαστύν).⁷¹

In this context of choral performance, I highlight the fact that the Delian Maidens in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* are described as masters of mimesis or 're-enactment' (verb *mimēisthai* at verse 163).⁷² This reference is saying something that is fundamentally [[305|306]] true about choral performance in general, which as we know from the surviving textual evidence is highly mimetic. A most striking example in general is the extant body of choral lyric poetry composed by such masters as Simonides and Pindar.⁷³

What I just said about choral performance applies to rhapsodic performance as well: this medium too is highly mimetic. A most striking example is the interaction of Homer with the Delian Maidens in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. As we have seen, Homer re-enacts the Maidens by quoting what they say, which is said not in their own choral medium but in the rhapsodic medium of the *Hymn*.⁷⁴ So the medium of rhapsodic performance shows that it can make a mimesis of the medium of choral performance as exemplified by the Delian Maidens, who are the absolute masters of choral mimesis. This way, Homer demonstrates that he is the absolute master of rhapsodic mimesis.

⁷⁰ PH 1§8 (= p. 20).

⁷¹ Peponi (2009). She notes the iconographical evidence showing Muses in the act of dancing to the rhythm of these instruments. The parallelism of the Muses and the Delian Maidens in this regard is relevant to what I have to say later about other such parallelisms.

⁷² Commentary in HC 2§27n22.

⁷³ In the case of Pindar's victory odes, for example, the speaking 'I' can make a mimesis of everyone and anyone who may be relevant to the act of praising the victor: the laudator, the laudandus, the *kōmos*, an optional *choros* embedded within the *kōmos*, the ancestor, the athlete, the hero, and so on. Pindar's odes also make mimesis of a wide variety of poetic functions, including what Bundy (1972) describes as a "hymnal" function (pp. 55-57). As Bundy shows, Pindar's odes can even make mimesis of "the actual process of thought in arriving at its goal" (p. 59n59; see also pp. 61-62).

⁷⁴ HC 2§40.

As absolute masters of choral mimesis, the Delian Maidens in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* are parallel to the Muses in the Hesiodic *Theogony*, who are pictured as an idealized chorus (7 χορούς, 63 χοροί) as they sing (10/44/65/67 ὅσσαν ἰεῖσαι, 68 ὅπῃ καλῇ) and dance (3-4 πόσσ' ἀπαλοῖσιν | ὀρχεῦνται, 8 ἐπερρώσαντο δὲ ποσσίν, 70 ἐρατὸς δὲ ποδῶν ὑπο δοῦπος ὀρώρει). And, further, the figure of Homer as an absolute master of rhapsodic mimesis is parallel to the figure of Hesiod in the *Theogony*, who re-enacts the Muses by quoting what they say but who says it not in the choral medium of the Muses but in the rhapsodic medium of the *Theogony* (99-101 αὐτὰρ ἀοιδὸς | ... κλεῖα προτέρων ἀνθρώπων | ὑμνήσει).⁷⁵ [[306|307]]

On the basis of these and other parallels between the Delian Maidens of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and the Muses of the Hesiodic *Theogony*, I have argued that the Maidens of the Hymn are in fact local Muses of Delos:⁷⁶

In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the Delian Maidens are described as the *therapnai* 'attendants' of the god Apollo (157), and they are addressed by the poet of the *Hymn* with the hymnic salutation *khairate* 'hail and take pleasure' (166), in conjunction with the god Apollo (165). With his salutation of *khairate* (166), the poet is asking the Delian Maidens to accept the *kharis* 'favor' of his song and to give him their 'favor', their *kharis*, in return. The hymnic salutation *khairate* / *khairate* is used in the *Homeric Hymns* to address the given god / gods presiding over the performance of each given *Hymn*.⁷⁷ Similarly in the Hesiodic *Theogony*, the figure of Hesiod addresses the Muses with the hymnic salutation *khairate* (104) in the context of naming them, in conjunction with Apollo, as the divine sources of poetic power (94-95).

There is a symmetry here between the poet of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and Hesiod as the poet of the *Theogony*. I focus on the fact that the Delian Maidens are addressed with the hymnic salutation *khairate* in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (166) just as the Olympian Muses are addressed with the hymnic salutation *khairate* in the *Theogony* (104). This symmetry indicates that the poet of the *Homeric Hymn* is in effect addressing the local Muses of Delos, who are divine in their own right.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ I use the term *rhapsodic* here in a sense that resembles the usage of Meyer 1933, though I distance myself from the idea that *rhapsodic* is not *cultic*. This idea leads to the further idea of a dichotomy between "rhapsodic" hymns and "cult" hymns. Both these ideas shape the thinking of Bundy (1972) 73; also Bundy (1962[1986]) 46; more in Miller (1986) 1-6. I find it important that Miller p. 4 entertains the view that "the rhapsodic and the 'cult' hymn share a common origin."

⁷⁶ HB 284.

⁷⁷ GM 58.

⁷⁸ On the transformation of the Hesiodic Muses in the *Theogony* from local Heliconian goddesses to Panhellenic Olympian goddesses, see HB 285.

That said, I come back to my argument that the Delian Maidens in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* make mimesis by way of choral performance, while Homer makes mimesis by way of rhapsodic performance. On the basis of the parallelisms we have just seen between the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and the Hesiodic *Theogony*, I argue that the Delian Maidens, as Homer's local Muses in the *Hymn*, are a divine model for the performance of *humnoi* by Homer just as the Muses in the *Theogony* are a divine model for the performance of *humnoi* by Hesiod.⁷⁹

Thucydides on choral performance by the Delian Maidens at the Delia

As we saw in the passage I quoted from Thucydides (3.104.5), the historian refers to the Delian Maidens as *gunaikes* 'women' [[307|308]] who perform in a 'song-and-dance group', that is, in a *khōros* (τὸν ... Δηλιακὸν χορὸν τῶν γυναικῶν). I will start with this reference to choral performance at the Delia as I examine further the testimony of Thucydides on the relationship of the Delian Maidens and Homer.

When Thucydides refers to this group as a *khōros* of local 'women', not Muses, he is simply following his usual practice of downplaying details of myth and ritual. But I argue that the Delian Maidens who perform at the festival of the Delia in Delos are simultaneously Muses as well as real-life performers participating in a chorus of local girls or women, since the role of divinity can be appropriated by participants in a chorus during choral performance.⁸⁰ That is to say, the Delian Maidens as a local female chorus can re-enact the Delian Maidens as local Muses.⁸¹

What is essential for now is that even Thucydides accepts the idea that the chorus of Delian Maidens with whom Homer himself interacted in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* is somehow a prototype for the choruses that perform at the Delia in historical times. Relevant is the wording of Thucydides where he makes these further remarks about the performances of choruses at the Delia (3.104.6): 'So much for the evidence given by Homer concerning the fact that there was even in the remote past a great coming together and festival [*heortē*] at Delos; later on, the islanders [*nēsiōtai*] and the Athenians continued to send [*anagein*] song-and-dance groups [*khōroi*], along with sacrificial offerings [*hiera*]' (τοσαῦτα μὲν Ὅμηρος ἐτεκμηρίωσεν ὅτι ἦν καὶ τὸ πάλαι μεγάλη ξύνοδος καὶ ἑορτὴ ἐν τῇ Δήλῳ· ὕστερον δὲ τοὺς μὲν χοροὺς οἱ νησιῶται καὶ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι μεθ' ἱερῶν ἔπεμπον).

⁷⁹ HC 2§40.

⁸⁰ HB 284-285 (also Nagy [2006] 317, 319-320).

⁸¹ See also Calame (2001) 30, 104, 110

For city-states to *anagein* ‘send’ their local choruses to perform at festivals like the Delia was considered to be part of a ‘sacrifice’, as conveyed by the word *hiera* ‘sacrificial offerings’ in the description I just quoted from Thucydides.⁸² In fact, as I show in a study of epigraphical and literary sources dating especially from the fourth century BCE, a traditional word for ‘festival’ was *thusia*, which literally means ‘sacrifice’.⁸³

There is a most relevant attestation of both these words, *hiera* ‘sacrificial offerings’ and *thusia* ‘sacrifice, festival’ in an account [[308|309]] concerning the celebration of the Delia at Delos in the glory days of the Athenian empire. This account, which gives a full-blown description of the magnificent spectacle of choral performances at the Delia, comes from Plutarch’s *Life of Nikias* (3.5-7):

μνημονεύεται δ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ περὶ Δῆλον ὡς λαμπρὰ καὶ θεοπρεπῆ φιλοτιμήματα. τῶν γὰρ χορῶν, οὓς αἱ πόλεις ἔπεμπον ἄσομένους τῷ θεῷ, προσπλέοντων μὲν ὡς ἔτυχεν, εὐθὺς δ’ ὅχλου πρὸς τὴν ναῦν ἀπαντῶντος ἄδειν κελευομένων κατ’ οὐδένα κόσμον, ἀλλ’ ὑπὸ σπουδῆς ἀσυντάκτως ἀποβαινόντων ἅμα καὶ στεφανουμένων καὶ μεταμφιεννυμένων, ἐκεῖνος ὅτε τὴν θεωρίαν ἤγεν, αὐτὸς μὲν εἰς Ῥήνειαν ἀπέβη, τὸν χορὸν ἔχων καὶ τὰ ἱερεῖα καὶ τὴν ἄλλην παρασκευήν, ζευγμα δὲ πεποιημένον Ἀθήνησι πρὸς τὰ μέτρα καὶ κεκοσμημένον ἐκπρεπῶς χρυσώσεσι καὶ βαφαῖς καὶ στεφάνοις καὶ αὐλαίαις κομίζων, διὰ νυκτὸς ἐγεφύρωσε τὸν μεταξὺ Ῥηνείας καὶ Δήλου πόρον, οὐκ ὄντα μέγαν· εἴθ’ ἅμ’ ἡμέρα τὴν τε πομπὴν τῷ θεῷ καὶ τὸν χορὸν ἄγων κεκοσμημένον πολυτελῶς καὶ ἄδοντα διὰ τῆς γεφύρας ἀπεβίβαζε. μετὰ δὲ τὴν θυσίαν καὶ τὸν ἀγῶνα καὶ τὰς ἐστιάσεις τὸν τε φοῖνικα τὸν χαλκοῦν ἔστησεν ἀνάθημα τῷ θεῷ ...

Nikias is remembered for his ambitious accomplishments with regard to Delos - accomplishments most spectacular in all their splendor and most worthy of the gods in all their magnificence. Here is an example. The choral groups [*choroi*] that cities used to send (to Delos) for the performances of songs sacred to the god (Apollo) used to sail in (to the harbor of Delos) in a haphazard fashion, and the crowds that would gather to greet the ship used to start right away to call on the performers to start singing their song. There was no coordination, since the performers were still in the process of disembarking in a rushed and disorganized way, and they were still putting on their garlands and changing into their costumes. But when he [= Nikias] was in charge of the sacred voyage [*theōria*] (to Delos), he first took a side trip to the island of Rheneia, bringing with him the choral group [*choros*] and the sacrificial offerings [*hiereia*] and all the rest of the equipment. And

⁸² Relevant also is the word *anagein* ‘bring’ here, since this verb, with *choroi* as its direct object, “seems to describe a typically religious ‘contribution’.” So Kowalzig (2007) 71.

⁸³ PR 40-41, 48-49, 52-53, 83.

he brought with him a bridge that had been made in advance, back in Athens, to fit the present occasion, and this bridge was most splendidly adorned with golden fixtures, with dyed colors, with garlands, with tapestries. Overnight, he took this bridge and spanned with it the strait between Rheneia and Delos - not a very great distance.⁸⁴ Then, come daylight, he led the procession in honor of the god and brought across the bridge to their destination the performers of the choral group [*khoros*], who were outfitted most magnificently and were all along performing their song. Then, after the sacrifice [*thusia*] and after the competition [*agōn*] and after the feasting, he set up as a dedication to the god the (famous) bronze palm tree ...

Plutarch *Life of Nikias* 3.5-7

This description by Plutarch, composed half a millennium after the events described, still features the essential ritual concepts of *hier(ei)a* ‘sacrificial offerings’ and *thusia* ‘sacrifice, festival’.

And we know that the practice of sending choral groups to perform at Delos, as attested in this narrative about events taking place in the second half of the fifth century, was in full bloom already in the first half of the fifth century BCE, when choruses sang and danced choral songs composed by such master poets as Simonides and Pindar. The primary evidence comes from surviving fragments of their choral songs.⁸⁵ [[309|310]]

In one of these choral songs, composed by Simonides to be performed at the Delia in Delos, the Delian Maidens themselves are actually called upon to shout a choral cry (F 55a3): [όλολύ]ξατε Δαλίων θύγατρες ‘shout the cry of *olologē*, daughters of the Delians’.⁸⁶

The majority of these choral songs performed in honor of Apollo can be identified as *paianes* ‘paeans’.⁸⁷ And there is an explicit reference to such a paean as chorally performed by the Delian Maidens themselves at Delos:

παιᾶνα μὲν Δηλιάδες
 <ναῶν> ὕμνοῦσ’ ἀμφὶ πύλας
 τὸν Λατοῦς εὖπαιδα γόνον,
 εἰλίσσουσαι καλλίχοροι·

⁸⁴ This spanning of the strait between the islands of Rheneia and Delos must have been interpreted as the ritual equivalent of the earlier chaining together of the two islands by Polycrates, as narrated by Thucydides 3.104.2.

⁸⁵ This evidence has been surveyed and analyzed by Kowalzig (2007) ch. 2.

⁸⁶ Kowalzig (2007) 64-66

⁸⁷ Kowalzig (2007) 57,

παιᾶνας δ' ἐπὶ σοῖς μελάθοις
κύκνος ὥς γέρων ἀοιδὸς
πολιᾶν ἐκ γενύων
κελαδήσω· τὸ γὰρ εὔ
τοῖς ὕμνοισιν ὑπάρχει.

A paeon do the Delian Maidens
sing as a *humnos* around the temple gates,
singing (Apollo) the true child of Leto
as they swirl, and they have such a beautiful *choros*.
I too, singing paeans at your palace,
aged singer that I am, like a swan,
from my graybearded throat,
will send forth a cry. For whatever is real
has a place to stay in my *humnoi*.

Euripides *Herakles* 687-695

As we can see from this reference in a choral song composed by Euripides, the Delian Maidens are described as performing the kind of choral song that is known as the *paian* 'paeon', which is equated here with the performing of a *humnos*.⁸⁸

The equation is made clear in the syntax of the wording, which can be analyzed in two steps. First, the verb *humneîn* 'sing a *humnos*' takes as its inner object the song that is sung as a *humnos*, and this song is in fact a *paian* 'paeon'. Second, the same verb *humneîn* takes as its outer object the name of the god Apollo, who is both the object of praise and the subject of the song that is the *humnos*. When I use the expression subject of the song here, I mean the subject matter, not the grammatical subject. In the grammar of a *humnos* as a song, the divinity that figures as the subject of the song is in fact the grammatical object of the verb of singing the song. [[310|311]]

The ritual context of such choral performance is made evident in a paeon (*Paeon* 12) composed by Pindar to be performed at Delos by a chorus sent there from the island state of Naxos (line 2, [Νᾱ]ξόθεν), and the context of the actual performance of the paeon is highlighted as a *thusia* 'sacrifice' (also line 2, θυσί[α]).⁸⁹ In this same paeon by Pindar (*Paeon* 12), performers belonging to a local female chorus, who are described as *enkhōriai* 'the local ones', are said to be shouting a ritual cry (line 19, [..]εφθέγξαντο δ' ἐγχώριαι). It has been argued, plausibly, that this local female chorus can be identified

⁸⁸ See Kowalzig (2007) 66 and, in general, Henrichs (1996).

⁸⁹ Kowalzig (2007) 60.

with the Delian Maidens.⁹⁰ And I note with great interest that this local female chorus is evidently interacting with the visiting male chorus sent from the island state of Naxos. The precise nature of such choral interaction is most likely to be mimetic: for example, the visiting male chorus may be re-enacting the performance of the local Delian Maidens,⁹¹ much as the visiting rhapsode Homer is re-enacting the performance of the Maidens in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*.⁹²

Thucydides on rhapsodic performance by Homer at the Delia

From the evidence, then, of choral songs actually performed at the festival of the Delia in Delos, it is clear that the Delian Maidens are envisaged as performers of choral songs such as paeans.⁹³ And it is also clear that the verb *humneîn*, which I have been translating as ‘sing a *humnos*’, expresses in those songs the ideal of choral [[311|312]] performances by the Delian Maidens. From the wording of Thucydides, however, it is just as clear that the historian understands this same verb *humneîn* as a word that applies to the performing of a *humnos* by Homer himself. And the problem is, the Homeric form of performance is not choral but rhapsodic.

We can see the problem more clearly when we consider again the wording used by Thucydides in referring to the Delian Maidens (3.104.5), τὸν ... Δηλιακὸν χορὸν τῶν γυναικῶν ὑμνήσας, which I have been translating this way: ‘after making the subject of his *humnos* the Delian song-and-dance group [*khōros*] of women ...’. Thucydides may well have imagined the Delian Maidens as simply a chorus of local women whom Homer is praising, but the historian’s use of the verb *humneîn* says something different, showing that the Delian Maidens are not only the object of Homer’s praise but also the subject of a *humnos* addressed to divinities and telling all about these divinities.

⁹⁰ Kowalzig (2007) 66-67.

⁹¹ Kowalzig (2007) 71 argues that “the Naxians performing *Paeon* 12 ... themselves become, as it were, the *Deliades*.” I disagree, however, with her idea (p. 67) that these Delian Maidens are “local women in myth” as well as “local women in ritual.”

⁹² On the re-enacting of mythical performances of female *khōroi* by way of the ritual performances of male *khōroi*, see Power 2000 on *Bacchylides Ode* 13; also Nagy (2011 forthcoming).

⁹³ In this context, I return to a point I made earlier, when I noted the parallelism between the Panionian festival of the Delia at Delos and the Panionian festival of the Ephesia at Ephesus. I think that this parallelism is relevant to another parallelism - between the choral performances of the Delian Maidens at Delos and the choral performances of the so-called Lydian Maidens at Ephesus. For ancient references to the Lydian Maidens, and for a brief analysis of these references, I cite *PH* 10§31 (= pp. 298-299).

The use of the verb *humneîn* here by Thucydides is in fact an accurate syntactical replica for what is actually being said to divinities and about divinities in the *Homeric Hymns* in general, not only in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* in particular. For example, in the *Homeric Hymn* (4) to *Hermes* (verse 1), the object of *humneîn* and the main subject to be praised is the god *Hermes*. We see comparable uses of *humneîn* at the beginnings of *Homeric Hymns* 9 (*Artemis*), 14 (*Mother of the gods*), 31 (*Helios*): ὕμνει Μοῦσα at verses 1, 1, 2 of *Hymns* 4, 9, 14 and ὕμνεϊν ... ἄρχεο Μοῦσα at verse 1 of *Hymn* 31. So also in the *Homeric Hymn* (3) to *Apollo*, as we see at verses 177-178, the object of *humneîn* ‘singing the *humnos*’ and the main subject to be praised is the god *Apollo*: αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν οὐ λήξω ἐκηβόλον Ἀπόλλωνα | ὕμνέων ἀργυρότοξον ὃν ἠΰκομος τέκε Λητώ ‘as for me, I will not stop making *Apollo* the subject of my *humnos*, the one who shoots from afar, the one with the silver bow, the one who was born of *Leto* with the beautiful hair’. In this last example, the performer who sings the praises of *Apollo* is figured as *Homer* himself.

In the *Delian* part of the *Homeric Hymn* (3) to *Apollo*, the figure of *Homer* is singing the praises of the god *Apollo* and, secondarily, of the *Delian Maidens* as the local *Muses* of the god. As we have already seen, these *Maidens* are described as the *therapnai* ‘attendants’ of the god *Apollo* [[312|313]] (157), and the figure of *Homer* addresses them with the hymnic salutation *khairete* ‘hail and take pleasure’ (166), in conjunction with the god *Apollo* (165).

Here I repeat a relevant fact, that the hymnic salutation *khairē* / *khairete* is used in the *Homeric Hymns* to address the given divinity or divinities presiding over the performance of each given *Hymn*. Similarly in the *Hesiodic Theogony*, the figure of *Hesiod* addresses the *Muses* with the hymnic salutation *khairete* (104) in the context of naming them, in conjunction with *Apollo*, as the divine sources of poetic power (94-95). So the *Delian Maidens*, just like the *Muses*, receive the same form of hymnic salutation that all the divinities of the *Homeric Hymns* are eligible to receive.

At the very moment when *Thucydides* is getting ready to quote the verses in which the figure of *Homer* gives the *Delian Maidens* his hymnic salutation, the historian describes as an act of *epainos* ‘praise’ what *Homer* is about to do (3.104.5): τὸν γὰρ Δηλιακὸν χορὸν τῶν γυναικῶν ὑμνήσας ἐτελεύτα τοῦ ἐπαίνου ἐς τάδε τὰ ἔπη ‘after making the subject of his *humnos* the *Delian song-and-dance group* [*khoros*] of women, he was drawing toward the completion [*telos*] of his words of praise [*epainos*], drawing toward the following verses [*epos plural*]’. From this wording of *Thucydides*, we see that the verses in which *Homer* addresses the *Delian Maidens* are morphologically parallel to verses that address divinities like the *Muses* or even *Apollo* himself in the *Homeric Hymns*.

The performing of humnoi by the Delian Maidens and by the Muses

We have already seen that the figure of Homer ‘sings a *humnos*’, as expressed by the verb *humneîn*, in the *Homeric Hymn* (3) to Apollo, at verses 177-178, where the object of *humneîn* and the main subject to be praised is the god Apollo himself (αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν οὐ λήξω ἐκηβόλον Ἀπόλλωνα | ὕμνων ἀργυρότοξον ὃν ἠΰκομος τέκε Λητώ). But now we will see that the Delian Maidens themselves can be shown in the act of ‘singing a *humnos*’, as expressed by the same verb *humneîn*: it [[313|314]] happens earlier on in the same *Hymn*, at verses 158-159, and once again the object of *humneîn* and the main subject to be praised is the god Apollo himself, though he is accompanied this time by his divine mother and sister, Leto and Artemis (αἶ τ’ ἐπεὶ ἄρ πρῶτον μὲν Ἀπόλλων’ ὕμνήσωσιν, | αὗτις δ’ αὖ Λητώ τε καὶ Ἄρτεμιν ἰοχέαιραν).

The fact that the Delian Maidens are shown here in the act of ‘singing the *humnos*’, as expressed by *humneîn*, shows that they are acting as Muses: we have already seen the same verb *humneîn* in contexts where the Muses themselves are called on to sing the praises of a given divinity who presides over a given *humnos*, as at the beginnings of *Homeric Hymns* 4 (Hermes), 9 (Artemis), 14 (Mother of the gods), 31 (Helios): ὕμναι Μοῦσα (at verses 1, 1, 2 of *Hymns* 4, 9, 14) and ὕμνεῖν ... ἄρχεο Μοῦσα (at verse 1 of *Hymn* 31).

Here I need to review what I said before about the context of *humneîn* in the *Herakles* of Euripides (687-689), where the agents of praise for Apollo are envisaged once again as the Delian Maidens: in this context, the verb *humneîn* means not just ‘sing a *humnos*’ but also, more specifically, ‘sing a *humnos* to and about a divinity’, taking as its inner object the song that is sung as a *humnos* and as its outer object the name of the divinity who is the subject of the song. I repeat my formula: in the grammar of a *humnos* as a song, the divinity who figures as the subject of the song is in fact the grammatical object of the verb of singing the song.

All this is not to say that the Delian Maidens, or the Muses, for that matter, sing only the praises of gods. To make this point, I start by noting that the Delian Maidens also sing about ‘men and women of ancient times’, as we see in the full version of the description that tells about the performance of the Maidens in the *Hymn to Apollo* (verses 158-161):

αἶ τ’ ἐπεὶ ἄρ πρῶτον μὲν Ἀπόλλων’ ὕμνήσωσιν,
αὗτις δ’ αὖ Λητώ τε καὶ Ἄρτεμιν ἰοχέαιραν,
μνησάμεναι ἀνδρῶν τε παλαιῶν ἥδ’ ἐ γυναικῶν
ὕμνον αἰίδουσιν, θέλγουσι δὲ φύλ’ ἀνθρώπων.

And after they [= the Delian Maidens] make Apollo, first and foremost, the subject of their *humnos* [*humneîn*], and, right after him, Leto and Artemis, the one who delights in her arrows, then they [= the Delian Maidens] take note of men and women of the past as they [= the Delian Maidens] sing their *humnos*, enchanting all the tribes of humans.

Homeric Hymn (3) to Apollo 158-161

[[314|315]] The noun *humnos* here at verse 161 of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* applies evidently to subjects other than the subject of gods as we see them being praised in the *Homeric Hymns*.

Similarly, the Muses in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* include subjects that are other than their main subject, Apollo, in their own singing of the *humnos*, as we can see in this description of the Muses as they ascend to the heights of Olympus:⁹⁴

Μοῦσαι μὲν θ' ἅμα πᾶσαι ἀμειβόμεναι ὀπὶ καλῇ
ὕμνευσίν ῥα θεῶν δῶρ' ἀμβροτα ἡδ' ἀνθρώπων
τλημοσύνας, ὅσ' ἔχοντες ὑπ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι
ζώουσ' ἀφραδέες καὶ ἀμήχανοι, οὐδὲ δύνανται
εὐρέμεναι θανάτοιο τ' ἄκος καὶ γήραος ἄλκαρ·

In the meantime (as the Muses are ascending to Olympus), they are taking turns, all of them, as they sing with their beautiful voice, making as the subject of their *humnos* [*humneîn*] the immortalizing gifts of the gods (yes, I can see it all⁹⁵) and, when it comes to humans, (they make as the subject of their *humnos*) the things that humans have to endure - all the things they have to deal with, since humans are under the power of the immortal gods, and they live out their lives without the right thoughts and without the right solutions. They are unable to discover the remedy for death and the prevention of old age.

Homeric Hymn (3) to Apollo 189-193

As we can see in this passage, a *humnos* that begins with a divinity or divinities as its opening subject can then move on to stories of the human condition as its next subject.

⁹⁴ On the “politics of Olympus,” see *GM* 48-49 and Clay 1989 9-10; also *HB* 295n64.

⁹⁵ The particle ἄρα / ῥα / ἄρ ‘so, then’ has an “evidentiary” force, indicating that the speaker notionally sees what is simultaneously being spoken. See Bakker 2005:12n, 80, 84, 97-100, 104, 146, 172n33.

In *Homer the Classic*, I analyze at length and in detail the surviving evidence about such stories, which take the form of poetry composed in hexameters and transmitted in rhapsodic performances.⁹⁶

And what kinds of stories could be told in such rhapsodic performances? Closest to home, such stories could be about humans in the era of heroes, as we find them in some of the larger *Homeric Hymns* (as in the case of Anchises in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*). Or they could be about heroes as we find them in epic poetry like the *Homeric Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Such a subject is announced in the *Homeric Hymn* (32) [[315|316]] to *Selene* (17-20).⁹⁷ Or again, they could be about heroes in genealogical poetry. Such a subject is announced in the *Homeric Hymn* (31) to *Helios* (17-19).⁹⁸ Such a subject is also announced in the part of the Hesiodic *Theogony* that tells of mortals begotten or conceived by immortals (starting at verse 965). In the case of the *Theogony*, the part of the narrative that tells about the genesis of heroes comes after the initial part of the composition, where the figure of Hesiod performs a *humnos* (33 ὑμνεῖν) that praises the Muses (34), who are themselves the models for the performing of a *humnos* (11/37/51 ὑμνεῦσαι, 70 ὑμνεύσαις).⁹⁹

A parting of ways between choral and rhapsodic performances of the humnos

In what we have seen so far, the performing of the *humnos* in the *Homeric Hymns* is visualized mostly as a choral activity. And the choral aspects of performing the *humnos* are shown most clearly in descriptions of the Muses, who are the idealized performers of the *Hymns* and who are represented as singing and dancing in an ideal form of choral performance. But the fact remains that the real form of performing *humnoi*, when these *humnoi* are *Homeric Hymns*, must be rhapsodic, not choral, since these *Hymns* are composed in hexameter, which is a decidedly rhapsodic form of performance. So we see here a parting of ways between rhapsodic and choral performances of the *humnos*.

The rhapsodic form of performing the *Homeric Hymns* affects even the idealized descriptions of the Muses in these *Hymns*, since these Muses reveal some traits of rhapsodic as well as choral performers. In the last quotation I showed from the *Homeric Hymn* (3) to *Apollo*, for example, we can see an allusion to the poetics of rhapsodic relay in the description of the Muses in the act of performance: these goddess are said to be ‘taking turns, all of them, as they sing with their beautiful voice’ (verse 189, Μοῦσαι μέν

⁹⁶ HC 2§§110-117.

⁹⁷ HC 2§110.

⁹⁸ Again, HC 2§110.

⁹⁹ HC 2§§112-114.

θ' ἅμα πᾶσαι ἀμειβόμεναι ὀπὶ καλῇ). Relevant is what we have already read in the scholia D for *Iliad* I (604), where the phrase *ek diadokhēs* refers to relay singing by the Muses: καὶ αὖται Ἀπόλλωνος κιθαρίζοντος ἐκ διαδοχῆς παρὰ μέρος ἦδον 'and they [= the Muses], while Apollo was playing the kithara, were singing in relay [*para meros*], by taking turns [*ek diadokhēs*']'. [[316|317]]

Aside from such sporadic examples, however, the majority of references to the performing Muses in the *Homeric Hymns* show them in a purely choral setting. By contrast, the references to the performing Homer in the *Homeric Hymn* (3) to *Apollo* show him in the act of rhapsodic performance.

It can happen, however, that the idealized choral form of performing the *Homeric Hymns* affects even the otherwise realistic descriptions of rhapsodic performance. A case in point is the Hesiodic fragment in which we have found an embedded version of the myth about a contest between Homer and Hesiod:

ἐν Δήλῳ τότε πρῶτον ἐγὼ καὶ Ὅμηρος ἀοιδοὶ
μέλπομεν, ἐν νεαροῖς ὕμνοις ῥάψαντες ἀοιδὴν,
Φοῖβον Ἀπόλλωνα χρυσάορον, ὃν τέκε Λητώ.

In Delos, back then at the very beginning, I and Homer, singers [*aoidoi*], sang-and-danced [*melpein*], stitching together [*rhaptein*] a song in new *humnoi*, making Phoebus Apollo the subject of our song, the one with the golden weapon, the one born of Leto.

Hesiod F 357

Here the verb *melpein* 'sing-and-dance' explicitly conveys a combination of singing and dancing.¹⁰⁰ So this example illustrates once again the point I made earlier, that rhapsodic as well as choral performances are highly mimetic.

Still, the fact remains that there is a parting of ways between rhapsodic and choral performances of the *hymnos* that is this *Hymn*. And, as we will now see, Thucydides is aware of the gap produced by such a parting of ways.

Thucydides on the gap between choral and rhapsodic performances of the Homeric Hymn to Apollo

As we saw earlier, Thucydides says at one point that the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* actually refers to the practice of sending choral performers to the Delia (3.104.3-4). At a later point he adds that, while this practice was continued up to the time when the Athenians reorganized the festival in 426 BCE, other related practices had already been

¹⁰⁰ PH 12§29n62 (= p. 350) and n64 (= p. 351).

discontinued (3.104.6): ‘but various misfortunes evidently caused the discontinuation of the things concerning the competitions [*agōnes*] and most other things - that is, up to the time in question [= the time of the purification] when the Athenians made the competition [*agōn*], including chariot races [*hippodromiai*], [[317|318]] which had not taken place before then’ (τὰ δὲ περὶ τοὺς ἀγῶνας καὶ τὰ πλεῖστα κατελύθη ὑπὸ ξυμφορῶν, ὥς εἰκός, πρὶν δὴ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τότε τὸν ἀγῶνα ἐποίησαν καὶ ἵπποδρομίας, ὃ πρότερον οὐκ ἦν). As I will now argue, one of the aspects of the festival of the Delia that had been ‘discontinued’, in terms of the reconstruction offered by Thucydides, was the practice of performing rhapsodically the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, to be contrasted with the continuing practice of sending choral performers to that festival.

As the wording of Thucydides indicates here, what had been discontinued at the Delian festival were *agōnes* ‘competitions’ other than the competitions in choral performance. Earlier in the passage I have quoted, Thucydides describes such non-choral competitions in terms of two categories (3.104.3): ‘and a competition [*agōn*] was held there [= in Delos], both athletic [*gumnikos*] and musical [*mousikos*]’ (καὶ ἀγὼν ἐποιεῖτο αὐτόθι καὶ γυμνικὸς καὶ μουσικός). The first kind of *agōn* ‘competition’ mentioned here by Thucydides is self-evident: it is *gumnikos* or ‘athletic’, as exemplified by the contests of boxing mentioned in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (verse 149). As for the second kind of *agōn* ‘competition’ mentioned here, however, it can easily be misunderstood: it is an *agōn* that is *mousikos*. So far, I have translated this word *mousikos* as ‘musical’, but I must now point out that a *mousikos agōn* is a competition that involves more than what we mean when we say ‘musical’. More generally, a *mousikos agōn* is a competition in recitative as well as sung forms of performance. Such recitative forms of performance, as we are about to see, are basically rhapsodic, as exemplified by the *Homeric Hymns*.

In the same extended passage I quoted at the beginning from Thucydides, he refers to this same kind of competition also as *agōn mousikēs*, which I have translated so far as ‘competition in the craft of music’. Here again is his wording (3.104.5): ‘that there was also a competition [*agōn*] in the craft of music [*mousikē (tekhnē)*], in which the Ionians went to engage in competition [*agōnizesthai*], again is made clear by him [= Homer] in the following verses, taken from the same prooemium [*prooimion*]’ (ὅτι δὲ καὶ μουσικῆς ἀγὼν ἦν καὶ ἀγωνιούμενοι ἐφοίτων ἐν τοῖσδε αὖ δῆλοϊ, ἃ ἐστὶν ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ προοιμίου). Here again, though I have so far translated *agōn mousikēs* as ‘competition in the craft of music’, I must now point out that the adjective *mousikē*, which describes the understood noun *tekhnē*, refers to a craft that is more than simply ‘musical’. More [[318|319]] generally, as we are about to see, the *tekhnē* or ‘craft’ of *mousikē* refers to forms of rhapsodic as well as sung performance.

Decisive comparative evidence comes from the terminology concerning the competitions at the festival of the Panathenaia in Athens. In the Aristotelian *Constitution of the Athenians* (60.1), there is an explicit reference to the ‘competition [agōn] in *mousikē*’ (τὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς μουσικῆς) at the Panathenaia. The author goes on to say that ten magistrates called *athlothetai* ‘arrangers of the contests [athloi]’ were selected by lot every four years to organize the festival of the Panathenaia, and one of their primary tasks was the management of this ‘competition [agōn] in *mousikē*’. According to Plutarch’s *Pericles* (13.9-11), the Athenian statesman Pericles reformed this competition in *mousikē* when he was elected as one of the *athlothetai*.¹⁰¹

In such contexts, the word *mousikē* is a shorthand way of saying *mousikē tekhnē*, meaning ‘craft of the Muses’, that is, ‘musical craft’. As I am now arguing, however, it is misleading to think of ancient Greek *mousikē* simply in the modern sense of *music*, since the categories of ‘musical’ performers at the Panathenaia included not only *kitharōidoi* ‘kithara-singers’ and *kitharistai* ‘kithara-players’ and *aulōidoi* ‘aulos-singers’ and *aulētai* ‘aulos-players’ but also *rhapsōidoi* ‘rhapsodes’.¹⁰² And the medium of rhapsodes performing at the Panathenaia was *recitative* and thus not ‘musical’ in the modern sense of the word. By *recitative* I mean (1) performed without singing and (2) performed without the instrumental accompaniment of the *kithara* or the *aulos*.¹⁰³

In the historical period, as we see especially in the evidence from the fourth century BCE, the competitive performances by rhapsodes at the Panathenaia were limited to the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. These performances, as I have argued in *Homer the Classic*, were ‘musical’ only in an etymological sense, and the medium of the rhapsode was actually closer to what we call ‘poetry’ and farther from what we call ‘music’ in the modern sense of the word. Still, the fact remains that the performances of rhapsodes belonged to what is called the ‘competition [agōn] in *mousikē*’ (τὸν [[319|320]] ἀγῶνα τῆς μουσικῆς), just like the performances of citharodes, citharists, aulodes, auletes, and so on.¹⁰⁴

We find in Plato’s *Ion* an explicit reference to the recitation of Homeric poetry by rhapsodes competing in the ‘competition [agōn] in *mousikē*’ at the Panathenaia (*Ion* 530a).¹⁰⁵ And there is another such explicit reference in *Speech* 5 of Isocrates, the *Panegyricus* (159), where the speaker describes as an ancestral Athenian institution the

¹⁰¹ Rhodes (1981) 670-671.

¹⁰² PR 38, surveying the evidence from inscriptions (especially IG II² 2311) and from literary sources (especially Plato’s *Ion* and *Laws*).

¹⁰³ PR 36, 41-42.

¹⁰⁴ HC 3§29.

¹⁰⁵ I have analyzed this passage in PR 22, 37-38, 99.

performing of Homeric poetry in competitions at the Panathenaia, referring to these competitions as *athloi* ‘contests’ in *mousikē* (ἐν τε τοῖς τῆς μουσικῆς ἁθλοῖς).

As I have already argued, the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, which is composed in hexameter, just like the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, was a rhapsodic medium. And so, just like the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, this *Homeric Hymn* would have been performed in the context of an *agōn* ‘competition’ in the craft of *mousikē*. This is understood by Thucydides when he says (3.104.3) ‘and a competition [*agōn*] was held there [= in Delos], both athletic [*gumnikos*] and musical [*mousikos*], and the cities brought song-and-dance groups [*khoroī*]’ (καὶ ἀγὼν ἐποιεῖτο αὐτόθι καὶ γυμνικός καὶ μουσικός, χορούς τε ἀνῆγον αἱ πόλεις) and when he says later (3.104.5) ‘that there was also a competition [*agōn*] in the craft of music [*mousikē* (*tekhnē*)], in which the Ionians went to engage in competition [*agōnizesthai*], again is made clear by him [= Homer] in the following verses, taken from the same prooemium [*prooimion*]’ (ὅτι δὲ καὶ μουσικῆς ἀγὼν ἦν καὶ ἀγωνιούμενοι ἐφοίτων ἐν τοῖσδε αὖ δηλοῖ, ἃ ἐστὶν ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ προοιμίου).

In the wording of Thucydides here (3.104.5), I highlight the ‘also’ (καὶ) in the expression ‘that there was also a competition [*agōn*] in the craft of music (ὅτι δὲ καὶ μουσικῆς ἀγὼν ἦν). Since Thucydides is referring to what Homer is about to say about his own performance in the verses about to be quoted, it is clear that *mousikē* must be understood here as including not only the performances of choral groups but also the performance of the *Homeric Hymn*, which is a rhapsodic medium composed in hexameter.

So the *agōn* ‘competition’ in *mousikē* at the Delia in Delos, according to the understanding of Thucydides, had once included the performance of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. And of course it also included the performances of *khoroī* ‘choruses’ as part of an overall [[320|321]] *mousikos agōn*.¹⁰⁶ And the *mousikos agōn* matched an overall *gumnikos agōn* or athletic competition. In the verses that Thucydides quotes as supporting evidence from the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, there is reference made to boxing, dancing, and song, as we have already seen (verse 149).

But then, sometime after the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* was first performed, according to the understanding of Thucydides, most aspects of both the *mousikos agōn* and the *gumnikos agōn* were ‘discontinued’ until the Athenians re-established them in the year 426 BCE. I repeat the relevant wording of the historian (3.104.6): ‘later on, the islanders [*nēsiōtai*] and the Athenians continued to send song-and-dance groups

¹⁰⁶ I analyze in HC 3§§77-94 the meaning of *mousikē* in Plato’s *Laws*. In that analysis, I should have mentioned also Strabo 10.3.9-10 C467-468. See Petrović (2013). I note with special interest what Strabo says about Plato and the Pythagoreans at the beginning of 10.3.10 C468.

[*choroi*], along with sacrificial offerings [*hiera*], but various misfortunes evidently caused the discontinuation of the things concerning the competitions [*agōnes*] and most other things - that is, up to the time in question [= the time of the purification] when the Athenians set up the competition [*agōn*], including chariot races [*hippodromiai*], which had not taken place before then' (ὕστερον δὲ τοὺς μὲν χοροὺς οἱ νησιῶται καὶ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι μεθ' ἱερῶν ἔπεμπον, τὰ δὲ περὶ τοὺς ἀγῶνας καὶ τὰ πλεῖστα κατελύθη ὑπὸ ξυμφορῶν, ὥς εἰκός, πρὶν δὴ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τότε τὸν ἀγῶνα ἐποίησαν καὶ ἵπποδρομίας, ὃ πρότερον οὐκ ἦν).

This statement about the continuity of the practice of sending *choroi* 'choruses' to perform competitively at the Delia in Delos matches the evidence we have already considered about the performances of choral songs like paeans at the Delia in the era of Simonides and Pindar. And the corresponding statement about discontinuities matches our lack of evidence for any other continuity. Evidently, among the practices that had lapsed before 426 BCE was the seasonally recurring performance of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, despite the prediction we hear within the *Hymn* about the eternal continuity of this practice. And it is not at all clear whether the Athenians restored this practice in 426 BCE. What they did restore, however, is a set of practices that match the practices then current at their own great festival, the quadrennial Panathenaia, as we see from the reference made by Thucydides to a new quadrennial format and the inclusion of such new events as chariot racing.¹⁰⁷ [[321|322]]

The word *hiera* 'sacrificial offerings', applied by Thucydides in the context of the Delia (3.104.6), is surely applicable in the context of the Panathenaia as well. The same can be said about the word *thusia* in the sense of 'festival', as we have seen it used by Plutarch along with the word *hier(ei)a* in referring to the Delia (*Life of Nikias* 3.5-7). A prime example of such an overall sacrificial context is the great Athenian festival of the Panathenaia, to which Plato's Socrates refers as a *thusia* (*Timaeus* 26e).¹⁰⁸

The Athenocentrism inherent in the reorganization of the festival of the Delia at Delos is made explicit in the myth that connects Theseus, as culture hero of Athens, with the Delia: he is described as the founder of an *agōn* 'competition' there (Plutarch *Theseus* 21.3).¹⁰⁹ Though the Athenocentrism is left implicit in the account of Thucydides, the underlying idea is unmistakable: "Thucydides claims, as Athenian propaganda must have done at the time, that the Athenians were not creating something new but reviving an ancient Ionian festival."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ See Rhodes (1994) 260.

¹⁰⁸ *PR* 53.

¹⁰⁹ Hornblower (1991) 523; Rhodes (1994) 258.

¹¹⁰ Rhodes (1994) 259.

The setting of the festival of the Delia as reorganized in 426 BCE is parallel to the setting of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* itself. In terms of the *Hymn*, as quoted and interpreted by Thucydides, the speaker in this setting is the speaker of the *Hymn*. And Thucydides recognizes the speaker of the *Hymn* as Homer (3.104.4, 5, 6). The ancient historian thinks he is quoting the words of Homer himself as he quotes from the *Hymn* the verses we recognize from the medieval manuscript transmission of Homer (Thucydides 3.104.4 / 5: *Hymn to Apollo* 146-150 / 165-172). This thinking of Thucydides is a most valuable piece of evidence about ancient ideas of Homer. It goes to the root of the conventional Athenian idea of Homer.¹¹¹

An occasion for performing a Homeric Hymn

We may conclude from the testimony of Thucydides that the festival of the Delia had undergone many changes over the years leading up [[322|323]] to 426 BCE. But one thing clearly remained a constant, and it is captured by the word *agōn*, which means literally ‘competition’. When Thucydides refers to the festival of the Delia in the passages I quoted above, he uses this noun not once but several times (once at 3.104.3, once at 3.104.5 [along with the verb derived from the noun], twice at 3.104.6). In the text of the *Homeric Hymn* itself, the same noun *agōn* is used in referring to the festival, at verse 150. And what kind of ‘competition’ takes place at this festival? In the words of the *Hymn* as quoted by Thucydides, there is ‘singing and dancing’ as well as ‘boxing’: ‘and there with boxing and dancing and song | they have you in mind and delight [*terpein*] you, whenever they set up a competition [*agōn*]’ (verses 149-150 ἔνθα σε πυγμαχίῃ τε καὶ ὀρχηστῷ καὶ ἀοιδῇ | μνησάμενοι τέρπουσιν, ὅταν καθέσωσιν ἀγῶνα). So, evidently, the contests were ‘musical’ as well as ‘athletic’. In using these words ‘musical’ and ‘athletic’, I am following directly the wording used by Thucydides in considering the evidence of the verses he quotes from the *Hymn* (in this case, verses 149-150). Here again is his wording (3.104.3-4): ‘a competition [*agōn*] was held there [= in Delos], both athletic [*gumnikos*] and musical [*mousikos*], and the cities brought song-and-dance groups [*khoroî*]. Homer makes it most clear that such was the case in the following verses [*epos* plural], which come from a prooemium [*prooimion*] having to do with Apollo’ (καὶ ἀγὼν ἐποιεῖτο αὐτόθι καὶ γυμνικὸς καὶ μουσικός, χορούς τε ἀνῆγον αἱ πόλεις. δηλοῖ δὲ μάλιστα Ὅμηρος ὅτι τοιαῦτα ἦν ἐν τοῖς ἔπεσι τοῖσδε, ἃ ἔστιν ἐκ προοιμίου Ἀπόλλωνος).

In another one of the *Homeric Hymns* we see an explicit reference to such a festival that served as a setting for the competitive performance of a *Hymn*. It happens in *Homeric Hymn* (6) to *Aphrodite* 19-20, which refers explicitly to the occasion of the festival where the performance of this *Hymn* is taking place: δὸς δ’ ἐν ἀγῶνι | νίκην

¹¹¹ See also Graziosi (2002) 222-226, who adduces Choricus *Laudatio Marciani* 2.3.

τῷδε φέρεσθαι, ἐμὴν δ' ἔντυνον ἀοιδίην 'I pray to you [= Aphrodite] to grant that in the competition [*agōn*] that is at hand I may win victory. Arrange my song'.

It seems to me unjustifiable to assume that a performer could win such a victory by performing a *Homeric Hymn* in competition with other performers performing other such *Hymns*. The competition, I will now argue, is not between *Hymns*. Each *Hymn* has something [[323|324]] additional that is part of the same *Hymn*. And the competition includes not only each *Hymn* but also that additional something that is part of each *Hymn*. In making this argument, I introduce a word that Thucydides uses twice in referring to the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*: that word is *prooimion*, which I have until now translated simply by way of a Latin term borrowed from the Greek, 'prooemium'. As far as Thucydides is concerned, the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* is 'the *prooimion* of Apollo', and it is from this *prooimion* that he quotes the words of Homer (3.104.4/5, ἐκ προοιμίου Ἀπόλλωνος / ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ προοιμίου).

The essential characteristic of a *prooimion* is that it starts a performance. To back up this formulation, I return to an ancient paraphrase that I have already quoted in a larger context but have not yet highlighted. This paraphrase concerns the *Homēridai*, and we find it in the scholia for Pindar's *Nemean* 2.1 (d): αἰεὶ οὖν τὴν ἀρχὴν ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον ἐκ Διὸς ἐποιοῦντο προοιμιαζόμενοι, ἐνίοτε δὲ καὶ Μουσῶν 'and they [= the *Homēridai*] always started with a *prooimion*, making mostly Zeus their point of departure and occasionally the Muses.' This wording paraphrases the genuine wording of Pindar, which is a mimetic rewording of a genuine 'prooimion of Zeus' as performed by the *Homēridai* (Pindar *Nemean* 2.1-3):

Ὅθεν περ καὶ Ὀμηρίδαι | ῥαπτῶν ἐπέων τὰ πόλλ' ἀοιδοί | ἄρχονται, Διὸς ἐκ
προοιμίου.

(Starting) from the point where [*hothen*] the *Homēridai*, singers, most of the time begin [*arkhesthai*] their stitched-together words, from the *prooimion* of Zeus ...

Besides Pindar's imitation, there is an actual attestation of a *Homeric Hymn* to Zeus. It is highly compressed, consisting of only four verses:

Ζῆνα θεῶν τὸν ἄριστον ἀείσομαι ἡδὲ μέγιστον
εὐρύοπα κρείοντα τελεσφόρον, ὅς τε Θέμιστι
ἐγκλιδὸν ἐζομένη πυκινούς ὅαρους ὀαρίζει.
Ἴληθ' εὐρύοπα Κρονίδη κύδιστε μέγιστε.

I will sing Zeus as my subject, best of the gods, and most great,
whose sound reaches far and wide, the ruler, the one who brings things to their
outcome [*telos*], the one who has Themis

attentively seated at his side, and he keeps her company with regular frequency.
[[324|325]]

Be propitious, you whose sound reaches far and wide, son of Kronos, you who
are most resplendent and most great.

Homeric Hymn (23) to Zeus

As I argue at length in *Homer the Preclassic*, Zeus is figured as a transcendent hymnic subject: he can preside over a *humnos* even if that *humnos* is being performed at a festival sacred to another god. This way, Zeus gets to preside over a *humnos* that leads to a transcendent form of epic, which is a hymnic consequent of the ‘*prooimion* of Zeus’. And that epic form is the poetic legacy inherited by the ‘descendants of Homer’, the *Homēridai*.¹¹²

Transition

Here I will shift gears in order to give a working definition of the technical terms (1) hymnic subject and (2) hymnic consequent. And, in the process of defining these two terms, I will address the basic meanings of the Greek words *humnos* and *prooimion*.

The hymnic subject

By hymnic subject, I mean the divinity who is invoked in a *humnos* or ‘hymn’, as in a *Homeric Hymn*.

Up to now, I have avoided using the word hymn with a lower-case h as a translation of *humnos*. Only with reference to the *Homeric Hymns*, which do qualify as *humnoi* in the Greek language, have I equated *humnos* with hymn. From here on, however, I will use the English word hymn as the equivalent of Greek *humnos* in general, since we are about to see convergences between the ordinary uses of English hymn and the programmatic uses of Greek *humnos* in choral as well as rhapsodic forms of performance. What I say here about the [[325|326]] noun hymn applies also to the adjective hymnic. That said, I am ready to explain further what I mean by the term hymnic subject.

In a hymn, the invoked divinity who presides over a given festival is the subject of the hymn. In the grammar of the *Homeric Hymns*, for example, the divinity who figures as the subject of any hymn is normally the grammatical object of the verb of singing the hymn (as at the beginnings of *Homeric Hymns* 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32). In the logic of the *Homeric Hymns*, the divinity

¹¹² HPC I §§242-259.

that presides over the occasion of performance becomes continuous with the occasion and thus becomes the occasion.¹¹³

And this occasion of the *humnos* is notionally perfect because the god who is the occasion is perfect. Such perfection is expressed by way of the word *eu-humnos* (εὐθυμνος) ‘good for hymning’, as in the sublime aporetic question that is asked twice in the *Homeric Hymn* (3) to *Apollo* (verses 19 and 207).¹¹⁴

πῶς γάρ¹¹⁵ σ’ ὑμνήσω πάντως εὐθυμνον ἔόντα

For how shall I hymn you, you who are so absolutely [*pantōs*] good for hymning [*eu-humnos*]?

The theology, as it were, of this aporetic question can be formulated this way:¹¹⁶

Faced with the absoluteness of the god, the performer experiences a rhetorical hesitation: how can I make the subject of my *humnos* something that is perfect, absolute? The absoluteness of this hymnic subject is signaled by the programmatic adverb *pantōs* ‘absolutely’, which modifies not only the adjective *eu-humnos* ‘good for hymning’ but also the entire phrasing about the absoluteness of the subject.¹¹⁷ The absoluteness of the god *Apollo* is continuous with the absoluteness of the *humnos* that makes *Apollo* its subject. This *Homeric Hymn* is saying about itself that it is the perfect and absolute *humnos*. As such, it is not only the beginning of a composition but also the totality of the composition, authorizing everything that follows it, because it was begun so [[326|327]] perfectly. And the source of the perfection is the god as the subject of the *humnos*.

The naming of the divinity as the subject of the *humnos*, together with the initial describing of the divinity, is the notionally perfect beginning of the *humnos*, and this beginning is the *prooimion*. Whereas the word *prooimion* refers only to the start of the continuum, the word *humnos* refers to both the start of the continuum and the continuum itself. The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* is a perfect example: it refers to itself in

¹¹³ HC 2§83.

¹¹⁴ On the term *aporetic question*, see Bundy (1972) 47. On “apologetic” and “aporetic” rhetorical strategies, see Bundy p. 59n59; also pp. 60–61 and 65.

¹¹⁵ At verse 19 of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the manuscript reading is γάρ, while at 207, it is τ’ᾶρ.

¹¹⁶ HC 2§24.

¹¹⁷ On the syntax of *pantōs* ‘absolutely’ as an overall modifier of absolute phraseology, see for example Solon F 4.16 ed. West and the commentary in Nagy (1985) 59–60, *PH* 9§7n38 (= p. 256).

terms of a *humnos* (verses 158, 161, 178), while Thucydides refers to it explicitly as a *prooimion* (3.104.4, 5).¹¹⁸

The etymology of the compound noun *prooimion* ‘prooemium’ indicates that the word is a metaphor referring to the world of pattern weaving: the word means literally the ‘initial threading’ of a song, parallel to the etymology of Latin *exordium*, which likewise means ‘prooemium’ in poetic and rhetorical contexts and which can likewise be traced back to the basic idea of an ‘initial threading’ or, to say it more technically in terms of fabric work, *exastis* or ‘selvedge’.¹¹⁹

As for the etymology of the simplex noun *humnos*, it has in common with the compound noun *prooimion* a metaphorical reference to fabric work, but in this case the fabric work is not specified as pattern weaving. If I am right in explaining the etymology of *humnos* in terms of the root *huph-* as in *huphainein* ‘weave’, the basic idea conveyed by this noun is weaving in general, not pattern weaving in particular.¹²⁰

The hymnic consequent

By hymnic consequent, I mean a performance, epic or otherwise, that follows the performance of a *humnos*. In *Homer the Classic*, I explore at length the formal relationship between the concept of *humnos* and the concept of epic as a hymnic consequent.¹²¹ Here I review only one aspect of that relationship, which is the device of metabasis.

Here are three most telling examples from the *Homeric Hymns*: [[327|328]]

χαῖρε θεὰ Κύπριοι ἐϋκτιμένης μεδέουσα·

σεῦ δ’ ἐγὼ ἀρξάμενος μεταβήσομαι ἄλλον ἐς ὕμνον.

Hail and take pleasure [*khaire*], goddess, queen of well-founded Cyprus.

But, having started off from you, I will move ahead and shift forward
[*metabainein*] to the rest of the *humnos*.

Homeric Hymn (5) to Aphrodite 292-293

καὶ σὺ μὲν οὕτω χαῖρε θεαί θ’ ἅμα πᾶσαι ἀοιδῇ·

αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ σε πρῶτα καὶ ἐκ σέθεν ἄρχομ’ ἀείδειν,

σεῦ δ’ ἐγὼ ἀρξάμενος μεταβήσομαι ἄλλον ἐς ὕμνον.

¹¹⁸ HC 2§89. See also Petrović (2013).

¹¹⁹ HC 2§92. See also PP 63n20 and PR 72, 81, with reference to Latin *ex-ordium* as a semantic equivalent of Greek *pro-oimion*.

¹²⁰ HC 2§91, with bibliography on alternative etymological solutions.

¹²¹ HC 2§§97, 109, 113-114, 116.

So, with all this said, I say to you [= Artemis] now: hail and take pleasure [*khaire*],
and along with you may all the other goddesses [take pleasure] from my
song.

As for me, I sing you first of all and from you do I start off [*arkhesthai*] to sing.

And, having started off from you, I will move ahead and shift forward
[*metabainein*] to the rest of the *humnos*.¹²²

Homeric Hymn (9) to Artemis 7-9

καὶ σὺ μὲν οὕτω χαῖρε Διὸς καὶ Μαιάδος υἱέ·

σεῦ δ' ἐγὼ ἀρξάμενος μεταβήσομαι ἄλλον ἐς ὕμνον.

χαῖρ' Ἑρμῇ χαριδῶτα διάκτορε, δῶτορ ἐάων.

So, with all this said, I say to you [= Hermes] now: hail and take pleasure, son of
Zeus and Maia.

And, having started off from you, I will move ahead and shift forward
[*metabainein*] to the rest of the *humnos*.

Hail and take pleasure [*khaire*], Hermes, giver of pleasurable beauty [*kharis*], you
who are conductor [of *psukhai*] and giver of good things.

Homeric Hymn (18) to Hermes 10-12

The transition in each of these passages, as marked by *metabainein* ‘move ahead and shift forward’, is predicated on the idea of a perfect beginning. The idea is, ‘I begin, starting from the god’. The process of transition or metabasis, signaled by the verb *metabainein*, is activated by the hymnic salutation *khaire* / *khairete*, which I interpret as ‘hail and take pleasure’. Implicit in these imperative forms of the verb *khairein* is the meaning of the related noun *kharis*, which conveys the idea of a ‘favor’ achieved by reciprocating the pleasure of beauty. Making this idea explicit, I have formulated this paraphrase of *khaire* / *khairete* in the context of all its occurrences in the *Homeric Hymns*:

Now, at this precise moment, with all this said, I greet you, god (or gods) presiding
over the festive occasion, calling on you to show favor [*kharis*] in return for the
beauty and the pleasure of this, my performance.¹²³

What drives the performative gesture of *khaire* / *khairete* is the fundamental idea that
the reciprocal favor of *kharis* is the same beautiful thing as the pleasure that it gives. To
give such pleasure, I argue, is the key to success in reception.¹²⁴

¹²² Note the wording in the beginning of this hymn, in verse 1: Ἄρτεμιν ὕμνει Μοῦσα
‘make Artemis, O Muse, the subject of my *humnos*’.

¹²³ HC 2§99. See also Bundy (1972) 44, 49. For more on the rhetoric of seeking the
pleasure of the gods, see his p. 62n65.

After the signal *khairē / khairēte* in the *Homeric Hymns*, the actual process of metabasis can be activated. This process is made explicit in the expression we have just seen in the three passages that I quoted, μεταβήσομαι ἄλλον ἐς ὕμνον ‘I will move ahead and shift forward [*metabainein*] to the rest of the *hymnos*’ (*Homeric Hymns* 5.292-293, 9.7-9, 18.10-12). The word *hymnos* in the wording ἄλλον ἐς ὕμνον in the *Homeric Hymns* marks the whole performance, so that ἄλλον ἐς ὕμνον means not ‘extending into another performance’ but ‘extending into the rest of the performance’.¹²⁵ So also the expression ἄλλης ... ἀοιδῆς in other *Homeric Hymns* means not ‘another song’ but ‘the rest of the song’, as in the following example: [[328|329]]

πρόφρονες ἀντ’ ὥδῃς βίοντον θυμήρε’ ὀπάζειν.

αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ σεῖο καὶ ἄλλης μνήσομ’ ἀοιδῆς.

You [= Demeter and Persephone] be favorably disposed, granting me a
livelihood that fits my heart’s desire, in return for my song.

As for me, I will keep you in mind along with the rest of the song.

Homeric Hymn (2) to Demeter 494-495

Other examples of this type include *Homeric Hymn (3) to Apollo* 545-546, *Homeric Hymn (4) to Hermes* 579-580, *Homeric Hymn (6) to Aphrodite* 19-21, *Homeric Hymn (10) to Aphrodite* 4-6, *Homeric Hymn (19) to Pan* 48-49, *Homeric Hymn (25) to the Muses and Apollo* 6-7, *Homeric Hymn (27) to Artemis* 21-22, *Homeric Hymn (28) to Athena* 17-18, *Homeric Hymn (29) to Hestia* 13-14, *Homeric Hymn (30) to Gaia* 17-19, *Homeric Hymn (33) 18-19 to the Dioskouroi*.¹²⁶

Here is the way I summarize my findings about these transitions, which I describe in terms of metabasis:¹²⁷

Metabasis is a device that signals a shift from the subject of the god with whom the song started – what I have been calling the hymnic subject – and then proceeds to a different subject – in what must remain notionally the same song. Ideally, the shift from subject to different subject will be smooth. Ideally, the different subject will be

¹²⁴ With reference to the use of *khairis* in the *Homeric Hymn (24) to Hestia* (5), Bundy (1972) 83 speaks of a “concern for the pleasure of a critical audience as well as for that of the god.”

¹²⁵ *PH* 12§33 (= pp. 353-354), following Koller (1956) 174-182; see also Bakker (2005) 144, disagreeing with Clay (1997) 493. Further discussion in Petrović (2012).

¹²⁶ These and other such examples of the expression ἄλλης ... ἀοιδῆς have been described in terms of a “break-off formula” by Bundy (1972) 52-53, even though he recognizes the “transitional” function of this formula (pp. 52). I find the term “break-off” misleading because it blunts the idea of “transitional” (for more on Bundy’s use of the term “transitional,” see his p. 87).

¹²⁷ *HC* 2§109.

consequential, so that the consequent of what was started in the *humnos* may remain part of the *humnos*. This way, the transition will lead seamlessly to what is being called ‘the rest of the song’. In other words, the concept of *humnos* is the concept of maintaining the song as the notionally same song by way of successfully executing a metabasis from the initial subject to the next subject. The initial subject of the god and the next subject are linked as one song by the *humnos* in general and by the device of hymnic metabasis in particular. What comes before the metabasis is the *prooimion*, the beginning of the *humnos*. What comes after the metabasis is no longer the *prooimion* – but it can still be considered the *humnos*.

I bring this section to a close by quoting the relevant words of Elroy Bundy:
 “Beginnings, middles, and ends: the meaning of literature resides in its transitions.”¹²⁸

The staging of a humnos in the Homeric Odyssey

My formulation of the meaning of *humnos*, as I develop it in *Homer the Classic*, is relevant to an ongoing performance by the singer Demodokos as represented in Rhapsody [[329|330]] viii of the *Odyssey*. The ongoing performance, as I argue in *Homer the Preclassic*, is signaled by the word *humnos* at verse 429 of Rhapsody viii. And the occasion for this ongoing *humnos* is an ongoing festival, as signaled by the word *dais* ‘feast’ at the same verse 429.¹²⁹ As I argue further, this ongoing performance of Demodokos in Rhapsody viii is envisaged as an alternative to and rival of the epic about to be performed by Odysseus in Rhapsodies ix through xii of the *Odyssey*. And what makes the performance of Demodokos so different from the later performance of Odysseus? As I argue still further in *Homer the Preclassic*, Demodokos is represented as performing forms of song that resemble (1) the epic form of the epic Cycle, in the case of his first and third songs, which are about the Trojan War, and (2) the hymnic form of the *Homeric Hymns*, in the case of his second song, which is about the love affair of Ares and Aphrodite.¹³⁰ By contrast, Odysseus is represented as performing a form of song that resembles the epic form of the Homeric *Odyssey* itself.

There is no time and no space for me here to elaborate fully on my relevant arguments as I develop them in *Homer the Preclassic*, since they extend over twenty-five paragraphs of sustained argumentation. Instead, I have to content myself here with an outline divided into ten points. What now follows is that outline:

¹²⁸ Bundy (1972) 59n58.

¹²⁹ HPC I§223.

¹³⁰ HPC I§§188–223.

(1) Each of the three songs of Demodokos in Rhapsody viii of the *Odyssey* starts with a new hymnic *prooimion*, and each one of these three new *prooimia* is followed by a new hymnic consequent.¹³¹

(2) In the case of the first and the third songs, the hymnic consequent is epic poetry about the Trojan War. In the case of the second song, the hymnic consequent is a choral song and dance that makes a mimesis of the love affair of Ares and Aphrodite (370-380; supplemented by 262-265); in the overall narration, the performance of choral song and dance is preceded by an embedded narration of this love affair, performed by Demodokos and quoted by the rhapsodic medium of the Homeric *Odyssey* (266-366). In effect, the rhapsodic medium is making a mimesis of the mimesis made by the choral medium.¹³²

(3) Just as the *Homeric Hymns* have hymnic *prooimia* and allow for metabasis to follow, so also the third song of Demodokos has a hymnic *prooimion* followed by a metabasis, which is performed by Demodokos after the disguised Odysseus challenges him to *metabainein* ‘move ahead and shift forward’ to the story of the [[330|331]] Wooden Horse in the epic narration of the Trojan War (492 μετάβηθι).¹³³ This poetic act of moving ahead makes it possible to shift the narrative forward from what had been narrated in the first song of Demodokos, which had started his ongoing epic narration of the Trojan War, and thus the third song can jump over what had been narrated in the second song. Such a shifting form of epic narration, as embedded in Rhapsody viii of the *Odyssey*, is analogous to the forms of epic that could have been introduced by the *Homeric Hymns*. And such a form of epic is typical of the epic Cycle.¹³⁴

(4) Although the metabasis as successfully executed in the third song of Demodokos may be typical of the general epic form of the Cycle, it is antithetical to the specific epic form of the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which was shaped by what I have already described as the Panathenaic Regulation of rhapsodic relay.¹³⁵ This regulation, as we have seen, requires each successive performer of Homeric poetry to continue the epic performance at exactly the point where the anterior performance left off. And so, unlike the *Homeric Hymns* and unlike the third song of Demodokos, the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* allow for no metabasis - except for the metabasis performed by Demodokos himself as a rival of Odysseus.¹³⁶

(5) Just as the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* allow for no metabasis, these two epics allow for no hymnic *prooimia* either. Such a *prooimion* is missing at the start of both

¹³¹ HPC I§§242.

¹³² HPC I§§207-208.

¹³³ HPC I§§225-226.

¹³⁴ HC 2§307.

¹³⁵ HC 2§§297, 304.

¹³⁶ HPC I§240.

the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.¹³⁷ And it is also missing at the start of Rhapsody ix of the *Odyssey*, which is the start of an embedded rhapsodic performance by Odysseus himself. To be contrasted with this regulated rhapsodic performance of Odysseus, starting with Rhapsody ix and extending all the way to the end of Rhapsody xii, are the three unregulated performances of Demodokos in Rhapsody viii, each of which is preceded by a distinctly hymnic *prooimion*.¹³⁸

(6) The god invoked in each one of the three hymnic *prooimia* performed by Demodokos in Rhapsody viii turns out to be one and the same god, but the identity of this god is revealed only in Rhapsody xiii, after both Demodokos and Odysseus have finished their rival performances. Retrospectively, we can see that both these rival [[331|332]] performances took place in the context of an ongoing festival, which is stylized as a *dais* ‘feast’ in Rhapsody viii (429; also at 61).¹³⁹

(7) The word *agōn* ‘competition’ in Rhapsody viii (259, 260, 380) points to the festivities that have been ongoing at this festival ever since it started with an animal sacrifice (59-61), which inaugurates the *dais* ‘feast’ (61). Here I recall the *Homeric Hymn* (3) to *Apollo*, where we have seen this same word *agōn* ‘competition’ used with reference to the recurrent festival of *Apollo* on the island of *Delos* (150). In the *Odyssey*, the feasting and the competition that start in Rhapsody viii continue all the way through the narrative performed by Odysseus in Rhapsodies ix through xii, lasting all night. Then, when dawn finally arrives in Rhapsody xiii (23), there is another animal sacrifice (24), and this time the divine recipient of the sacrifice is mentioned by name: he is *Zeus* himself (25). This god, as I argue, is the transcendent hymnic subject of the *Homēridai*.¹⁴⁰

(8) In the course of time, the *prooimion* of the *Homēridai* gets detached from its epic consequent, which can be either the *Homeric Iliad* or the *Homeric Odyssey*, and these two epics can then develop their own abbreviated *prooimia*, which are non-hymnic – that is, without the naming of a hymnic subject.¹⁴¹

(9) In the case of the *Homeric Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the ancient reception of these epics featuring *prooimia* that are non-hymnic goes back to the age of *Callimachus*. In that age, the old poetic form of the *prooimion* as represented by the *Homeric Hymns* was rethought as a new genre, separable from the old poetic form of the epic consequent.¹⁴²

(10) The *Hymns* of *Callimachus*, which preclude an epic consequent, are the clearest examples of this new genre, which is still known to this day as a hymn.¹⁴³

¹³⁷ There survives, however, a variant *Iliadic prooimion*, addressed to the Muses and *Apollo*: see *Vitae Homeri et Hesiodi* ed. Wilamowitz 1929:32.16-20; I analyze this variant in *HPC* I§260.

¹³⁸ Again, *HPC* I§240.

¹³⁹ *HPC* I§298.

¹⁴⁰ Again, *HPC* I§298.

¹⁴¹ *HPC* I§§284-289.

¹⁴² *HC* 2§§118-122.

¹⁴³ *HPC* I§287. See also Petrović (2012).

Was the hymn a genre in its earliest attested phases?

I argue that the answer to this question is no. As we have seen in the earliest textual evidence, the *humnos* in the sense of ‘hymn’ can take [[332|333]] on a variety of different forms and functions, both choral and rhapsodic.¹⁴⁴ So the hymn transcends the concept of genre - at least, until the era of Callimachus. At best we can apply to the hymn the larger concept of a supergenre, just as Richard Martin applies this larger concept to epic.¹⁴⁵

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¹⁴⁴ I note with interest that the stylized hymn to Apollo as described in *Iliad* I 472-474 figures itself as a paean (473 παῖνον); see Bundy (1972) 74.

¹⁴⁵ Martin (2005) 17. Also Martin (1997).

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