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Classical Inquiries
Studies on the Ancient World from the Center for Hellenic Studies

Revisiting Plato's Rhapsody: A contribution to a colloquium about Poetic (Mis)quotations in Plato

June 26, 2020 Posted By Gregory Nagy listed under By Gregory Nagy Comments off

2020.06.26 | By Gregory Nagy

§0. The text of this essay, as posted here in *Classical Inquiries* 2020.06.26, is a pre-edited version of my contribution to an online colloquium, *Poetic (Mis)quotations in Plato*, the collected essays for which will reside in a special issue of *Classics@*; the guest-editor of that issue is the organizer of the colloquium, Gwenda-lin Grewal. My essay here, presented for inclusion in that colloquium, is intended as an informal guide, aimed primarily at readers who are interested in Plato, to a book of mine bearing the relevant title *Plato's Rhapsody and Homer's Music: The Poetics of the Panathenaic Festival in Classical Athens*. The original printed version of the book appeared in 2002—which is also the dating of a corrected online version. Both versions are listed together as Nagy 2002 in the Bibliography for my essay here. But now there is also a second edition of *Plato's Rhapsody*, listed separately in my Bibliography here as Nagy 2020, which is to be a new online version, housed in *Classical Inquiries* 2020.07.03. The special formatting of this second edition makes it possible to add annotations to my online text—annotations that can be viewed as a kind of *open peer review*. As I explain in a note that prefaces the second edition, the text of this new online version can be annotated by contributors who are invited to make comments on my argumentation, and I too will participate by occasionally making my own additional annotations with reference to my text. In the essay I present here, which as I said is aimed primarily at readers who are interested in Plato, I preview those of my annotations for *Plato's Rhapsody* that have more to do with Plato and less to do with "rhapsody." But the so-called "rhapsodes" conjured by Plato will still play a role in what my readers will now read, and my choice of an illustration for the cover of this essay will, I promise, have its own relevance. And the relevance extends to the title of the colloquium for which this essay is presented: *Poetic (Mis)quotations in Plato*. As I will argue, Plato is keenly accurate in both his quotations and his misquotations of Homer, rivaling the rhapsodes.

Detail of a red-figure calyx krater by the Pantoxena Painter, second half of the 5th

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century BCE, looted from a tomb in Tarquinia. Drawing by Jill Curry Robbins, after photos from an article by Sheramy Bundrick (2015), listed in the Bibliography. Note by GN: as the author of this article argues most persuasively, the figure who is shown here at the moment of ascending the *bēma* or podium is a rhapsode, ready to compete in the performance of Homeric poetry.

§1. For readers who are interested primarily in Plato, the subjects mentioned in the full title of my book, *Plato's Rhapsody and Homer's Music: The Poetics of the Panathenaic Festival in Classical Athens*, may not seem, at first sight, to be of equal interest. Of relatively less interest, I would surmise, is the subject of the Panathenaic Festival in Athens, since that subject is mentioned only four times in works attributed to Plato. Likewise of less interest, it would at first seem, is the subject of "Homer's music," since the linking of the term "music" specifically with Homer does not seem, on the surface, to be all that interesting to Platonists—or maybe even to Plato himself. Of more interest, perhaps, is the subject of *rhapsōidoi* or 'rhapsodes', since an entire Platonic dialogue, called the *Ion*, is all about rhapsodes. Even in this case, however, it would be fair to say that rhapsodes are hardly a preoccupying subject for most Platonists. So, considering the relatively slim prospects for *Plato's Rhapsody* from the viewpoint of potential readers who are interested primarily in Plato, I hope to heighten the level of interest here by trying to show that there is more to this book than meets the eye. *Plato's Rhapsody* has much to say about Plato for Plato's sake.

§2. To highlight what I think are the most interesting things that *Plato's Rhapsody and Homer's Music* has to say about Plato for his own sake, not only for the sake of Homer, I have produced here an inventory of formulations quoted or at times merely epitomized from the book, followed by comments relevant to Plato—comments of mine that some readers may find to be as introspective as they are retrospective. The page-numbers of the formulations as found in the printed version of the book—numbers that are also recorded in the online version—precede in each case the given formulation as it is quoted here:

p. 3
There is a pervasive historical connection, I argue in this book, between two evolving institutions—Homeric poetry and the festival of the Panathenaia in the city of Athens. The testimony of Plato will be crucial to the argumentation.

Comment:
This first quoted formulation requires a special comment—a comment that can be viewed as a good example of what I meant when I said, just a moment ago, that my comments will at times appear to be as introspective as they are retrospective. As I look back at what I have quoted here from the beginning of the book, I admit to some feelings of regret. I now recognize that I have made a bad start here from the viewpoint of those who are primarily interested in Plato for his own sake. I give a misleading impression here: it is as if I were interested in Plato only for Homer's sake.

p. 7
For the moment, we are looking at a possible point of contact between two of the three central subjects of this book, Homer and the festival of the Panathenaia in Athens. I seize this moment to connect the third central subject as well: Plato. Why Plato? It is because he is our primary source of information about points of contact between Homer and the Panathenaia. Without Plato, the available evidence—literary, epigraphical, iconographical—is so meager that we might easily give up hope for reconstructing anything of significance. Even with Plato's help, the evidence is relatively meager. Still, we find in Plato references to Homer and the Panathenaia that are of great importance.

Comment:
Further self-criticism is called for here about my wording: it is as if I were using Plato merely as a source for the cultural history of Homeric poetry as it evolved in the context of the festival of the Panathenaia in Athens.

p. 8
I intend to examine systematically the overall testimony of Plato as an expert—albeit a hostile one—about the cultural legacy of Homeric performances at the Panathenaia.

Comment:
As I look back on my wording here, the self-criticism can be attenuated. We can see some progress now in the presentation of the book's strategy, since Plato's "hostility" to Homer should be of some importance even to those interested in Plato only for Plato's sake.

p. 9–10
By studying both direct and indirect references to the Panathenaia in the works of Plato, supplemented by occasional references in various other literary sources and in the attested epigraphical and iconographical evidence, we find opportunities for reconstructing what might be described as cross-sections or even "snapshots" of seasonally recurring occasions for the performing of Homeric poetry at the festival of the Panathenaia at Athens, dating back to at least as early as the sixth century BCE. A most useful starting-point is the *Hipparkhos* of "pseudo-Plato" [228b–c]:

> Ἱππάρχῳ … ὃς ἄλλα τε πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ ἔργα σοφίας ἀπεδείξατο, καὶ τὰ Ὁμήρου ἔπη πρῶτος ἐκόμισεν εἰς τὴν γῆν ταυτηνί, καὶ ἠνάγκασε τοὺς ῥαψῳδοὺς Παναθηναίοις ἐξ ὑπολήψεως ἐφεξῆς αὐτὰ διιέναι, ὥσπερ νῦν ἔτι οἵδε ποιοῦσιν

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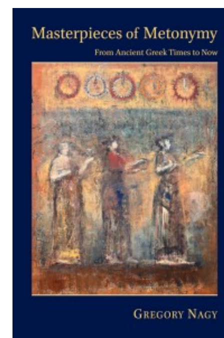

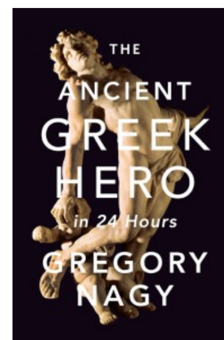

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> Hipparkhos, … who made a public demonstration of many and beautiful accomplishments to manifest his expertise [*sophia*], especially by being the first to bring-over [*komizein*] to this land [= Athens] the poetic-utterances [*epē*] of Homer, and he forced the rhapsodes [*rhapsōidoi*] at the Panathenaia to go through [*diienai*] these utterances in sequence [*ephexēs*], by relay [*hupolēpsis*], just as they [= the rhapsodes] do even nowadays.

Comment:
At p. 10, I drew special attention to two words with rhapsodic implications in this passage: *ephexēs* 'in sequence' and *hupolēpsis*, which I translate as 'relay'. In dramatized dialogue, the corresponding verb of *hupolēpsis*, *hupolambanein*, marks the response of one speaker to the previous speaker: *ephē hupolabōn* 'he said in response' (for example, Plato *Republic* 1.331d, etc.). As for *ephexēs auta diienai* 'go through them [= the *epē* 'poetic utterances' of Homer] in sequence', we may compare the contexts of Plato *Timaeus* 23d3–4 / 24a1–2: *panta … hexēs dielthein* / *ephexēs diienai* 'go through everything in sequence' / 'go through in sequence'.

p. 12 (epitomized)
According to the story in "Plato" *Hipparkhos*, as just quoted, we see that there existed in Athens a custom of maintaining a fixed narrative sequence for publicly performing Homeric poetry at the Panathenaia, with each performing rhapsode taking up the narration where the previous rhapsode left off. Classicists conventionally refer to this custom as the "Panathenaic Rule." The author of the *Hipparkhos* says that this custom was initiated by Hipparkhos, son of Peisistratos, in the era of the tyrants.

Comment (epitomizing from p. 12):
I do not rule out the possibility that this report about Hipparkhos was a historical fact—to the extent that an important political figure like Hipparkhos may well have reformed the custom of epic performances at the Panathenaia. But I insist that there are two far more basic historical facts to be inferred from the story: (1) the author of the *Hipparkhos* says that this custom of relay performances of Homer by rhapsodes at the Panathenaia *was still in effect during his own lifetime* and (2) the custom is described in terms of a customary law, instituted by Hipparkhos in the role of a "lawgiver."

p. 15 (epitomized)
The author of the *Hipparkhos* takes it as a given that the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are a unity, an integral whole, and that this unity is connected with *rhapsodic sequencing*, an institution still current, we are told, in the era of this author. As we have seen, the actual idea of sequencing is marked by the adverb *ephexēs* 'in sequence', as in the passage I have quoted, *Hipparkhos* 228b–c. According to the logic of this and other such passages that I have collected in *Plato's Rhapsody*, the unity of Homeric *composition* is a result of rhapsodic sequencing in *performance*.

Comment:
What I say here will be vitally relevant to what I will say later about Plato's *Ion*, and, still later, about his *Timaeus* and *Critias*.

p. 16 (epitomized)
The principle of *rhapsodic sequencing* is linked to another principle, *relay mnemonics*. The process of maintaining an overall continuum of Homeric narrative requires of Homeric rhapsodes a sustained *mindfulness* about their sequencing of the narrative. Thus the rhapsodes who perform Homeric poetry at the festival of the Panathenaia must to some extent *collaborate* with each other. But they also compete with each other.

Comment:
I elaborate at p. 22 on what we learn from Plato about the competitions of rhapsodes.

p. 22 (epitomized)
The principle of competition in the performance of Homeric poetry by rhapsodes at the festival of the Panathenaia in Athens is evident in Plato's *Ion*. This dialogue is named after a rhapsode named Ion, who hails from Ephesus and who comes to Athens to compete for first prize at the Panathenaia (καὶ τὰ Παναθήναια νικήσομεν, *Ion* 530b2). Plato's wording makes it explicit that the occasion for the performing of Homer by rhapsodes at the Panathenaia is in effect a *competition* or *contest* among rhapsodes, an *agōn* (ἀγῶνα at *Ion* 530a5, picked up by ἠγωνίζου and ἠγωνίσω at a8), and that the agonistic art of the *rhapsōidoi* 'rhapsodes' falls under the general category of *mousikē* (μουσικῆς at a7). Similarly in Isocrates *Panegyricus* 159 the wording specifies that *Homeric* performances were taking place 'in contests of *mousikē*', ἐν … τοῖς τῆς μουσικῆς ἄθλοις.

Comment:
The fact that *mousikē*, 'the art of the Muses', is the word used in Plato's text in referring to the art of a rhapsode who performs Homeric poetry in rhapsodic competitions held at the festival of the Panathenaia in Athens is what originally inspired me to come up with the overall title of my book, *Plato's Rhapsody and Homer's Music: The Poetics of the Panathenaic Festival in Classical Athens*.

p. 22–23
The rhapsode Ion performs Homer not only on such major occasions as the competitions taking place at the festival of the Panathenaia. He also performs Homer on less formal occasions such as the convivial but competitive encounter dramatized in Plato's dialogue *Ion*, where we see the rhapsode being challenged by Socrates to perform a given selection from the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The term "selection" is misleading, however. It implies a purely textual mentality—as if all that Ion had to do was to "quote" some passage that he had read and happened to have memorized. Even the word "quote" can mislead, since it

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could imply *the saying of words that have already been written*. In my own analysis, I continue to use "quote" only in a restricted sense, to mean *the saying of words that have already been spoken*. To signal this semantic restriction, I will continue to use the word "quote" only in quotes, in order to stress that I mean no implications of textuality. In the art of the rhapsode, to "quote" is not to "take" something out of a text, out of context. The rhapsodic "taking" of words requires the mnemonics of continuity. What the rhapsode can do is to *start anywhere* in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and, once started, to *keep going*.

Comment:
My qualified use of the word "quote" here is relevant, of course, to the title of the colloquium for which my essay is presented: *Poetic (Mis)quotations in Plato*. I repeat the essence of the argument I have just presented: in the art of the rhapsode, to "quote" from Homer is not to "take" something out of the text of Homer. In terms of my argument, the mnemonic technique of Homeric rhapsodes does not depend on any text of Homer. And now I extend the argument… To say that a rhapsode may "misquote" from Homer is not to say that the rhapsode may be getting the text of Homer wrong. For him there is no need for such a text. He just remembers the words. No, for a Homeric rhapsode to "misquote" from Homer would be, more basically, a matter of getting the context wrong by taking Homeric words out of context.

§3. At this point, I restart my sequencing of sections in this essay, moving on from section §2 to section §3—and thus interrupting, for the moment, my inventory of formulations derived from *Plato's Rhapsody*. This interruption is needed because I must now signal a temporary shift in orientation. My argumentation in this section §3 will concern readers interested in Homer more than it would ever concern readers primarily interested in Plato, but I will still offer here, in this single section, some commentary intended primarily for Homerists. (A fuller version can be found in Nagy 2018.11.30). The subject here is once again the mnemonic art of Homeric rhapsodes—but, this time, viewed primarily from the standpoint of Homerists. On this subject, I strongly recommend a book by José González, to whom I will hereafter refer as JMG. I highlight not only his balanced argumentation but also his critical survey of secondary bibliography, where he tracks also my own relevant work on rhapsodes. The thoroughness of JMG has I think strengthened exponentially the arguments I have made against the specific idea that Homeric rhapsodes were simply memorizers of a Homeric text and against the general idea of some kind of a stark contrast between a poetically creative *aoidos* 'singer', as represented by Homer, and a supposedly non-creative *rhapsōidos* 'rhapsode'. At stake here in particular is my cumulative interpretation, as best presented in Nagy 2009|2008 (HC 3§§47–76), concerning Plato's metaphor in *Ion* 536a–c comparing divine poetic inspiration to a magnet. The logic of this Platonic metaphor, as I have argued there and in earlier work, including *Plato's Rhapsody*, fits my overall reconstruction of the rhapsodic art. But my reconstruction, which was achieved independently of Plato's metaphor, can be misinterpreted if you think of it merely as an extrapolation that supposedly depends on that metaphor. JMG at 8.3.2 analyzes an example of such a misinterpretation (Pelliccia 2003), adding further analysis at 10.1.

§4. That said, I can now reorient my essay back to Plato and return to my inventory of formulations taken from *Plato's Rhapsody*. Taking up where I left off, I resume my analysis of Plato's portrayal of Ion as a Homeric rhapsode, master of *relay mnemonics*.

p. 23–24 (epitomized)
When Ion is challenged by Socrates to narrate the advice of Nestor to Antilokhos on the occasion of the Funeral Games for Patroklos (*Ion* 537a5–7), the rhapsode straightaway launches into what we understand to be *Iliad* Rhapsody 23.335 and following. The wonder of it all is that the rhapsode knows exactly where to start. Starting off, he proceeds *in medias res*. Not only that: he evidently has the power to continue the narrative in an open-ended way, going on and on until there is some reason—internal or external—for him to stop. Socrates recognizes this early on, and he puts on the brakes before Ion gets too far into the narrative, calling out to the rhapsode: ἀρκεῖ 'that's enough!' (537c1). The rhapsode has not yet gone very far, reaching what we know as *Iliad* Rhapsody 23.340, but the point has already been made: Ion has already proved himself to be a virtuoso rhapsode with phenomenal powers of *relay mnemonics*. In his own turn, Socrates will make his own point. Plato's flow of narrative will provide Socrates with the arguments he needs to undermine Ion's defense of the rhapsode's art or *tekhnē*. The Homeric content of what Ion has already performed gives Socrates ammunition for his own argumentation. In other words, Socrates actually draws on Homeric performance in order to make his argument. As we shall soon see, rhapsodes argue this way themselves.

Not to be outdone in anything by Ion, Socrates then proceeds to show off his own rhapsodic skills. He argues against Ion's arguments by likewise "quoting" Homer and then by engaging in a verbal commentary on his "quotations." In order to "quote" Homer, Socrates performs Homer rhapsodically in his own right, since he too joins Homer midstream—but he does it at three different points of the narrative. In rapid succession, Socrates "quotes" a series of Homeric "passages" in order to out-argue Ion—and even to out-perform him rhapsodically (538d1–3, 539a1–b1, 539b4–d1).

Comment:
My further use of the word "quote" here is once again relevant to the main concerns of the colloquium *Poetic (Mis)quotations in Plato*. As we can see from the analysis I have just epitomized, the Homeric rhapsode needs to avoid any "misquotation" of Homer, yes—but Plato in turn must not be careless about "misquoting" Homer when he stages Socrates as a rival performer of Homer.

p, 24–25
As we see from the *Ion*, then, you can tell a rhapsode where to start performing Homer just by telling him what part of the narrative you want to hear, and you can count on him to start right there. The rhapsode's cue is not a matter of text: it is a matter of mnemonics. You cue him by giving him an idea, and that idea

translates immediately into a specific point within the "stream of consciousness" that *is* the narrative flow of Homer—let us call it Homer's narrative consciousness. I will argue in a moment that the rhapsodes have a word for Homer's consciousness—*dianoia*. As we will see, a key passage is the beginning of Plato's *Ion.* For now, however, let me just dwell a bit further on the simple wonder of it all: the rhapsode has—or thinks he has—complete access to Homer's stream of consciousness, to Homer's authorial intent. By implication, the rhapsode will argue with you by joining Homer midstream at exactly the point where Homer will help him make an argument against you.

We see here the virtuosity of *making mental connections in a competitive situation,* that is, in an *agōn*. The rhapsode's mind, I argue, is trained to connect, to make associations: the rhapsodic competitions at festivals like the Panathenaia require his readiness to take up the narrative where a competing rhapsode has left off. If this argument holds, we have here the essence of the principle of *relay mnemonics* in the art or *tekhnē* of the rhapsode.

§5. Here I interrupt once again the flow of the inventory. This time, the interruption is for a different reason. I now note, somewhat ruefully, that my presentation has already extended far beyond the limits I had originally intended—and yet, I have so far accounted for only the first quarter of the total number of printed pages in *Plato's Rhapsody*. But at least I can comfort myself with the fact that those parts of the book that are most relevant to *Poetic (Mis)quotations in Plato* have already been covered. For the sake of saving time and space, then, I will compress the inventory that follows, restricting myself to abbreviated notes that track the ongoing argumentation.

§6. What follows, then, is a compressed inventory of further notes:

p. 25–32
In the staged dialogue of the *Ion*, Plato's fine-tuned ear for language—not just any language but in this case the technical language of high-class artisans like rhapsodes—has I think picked up on a variety of authentic expressions and turns of phrase that echo the talk of real rhapsodes as they once upon a time practiced their art or *tekhnē*—and even as they once upon a time *spoke about* this real *tekhnē*. I have collected ten examples, but I show here only the third and the fourth and the tenth:

p. 27–28
3. *epaineîn* + *Homēros* (in accusative) 'quote Homer'. (I continue to use the word "quote" without any implications of textuality.) That is, to "quote" Homer *in medias res*, in a specific context and for a specific purpose: *Ion* 536d6, 541e2 (agent noun *epainetēs*, 536d3, 542b4). The specific purposes, as in the *Ion*, have to do with arguing specific points. We may compare the usage of *epaineîn* in Lycurgus *Against Leokrates* 102, where the orator "quotes" Homer in order to make his specific case. Aside from the various specific purposes involved in this activity of "quoting" Homer, there is of course one overriding general purpose, from an Athenian point of view: that is, the State officially "quotes" Homer to its assembled citizens on the occasion of its highest holiday, the Panathenaia, in the format of rhapsodic competitions. On this occasion, each competing rhapsode gets the chance to "quote" Homer before a general audience of 20,000 persons (*Ion* 535d3)—a round figure that seems notionally equivalent to the body politic of Athens. In this case, to repeat, each competing rhapsode would be required to take up the Homeric narrative continuum where the previous rhapsode had left off. We may compare this rhapsodic imperative with the dramatic imperative of one actor's picking up the dialogue where the previous actor had left off. For the moment, I simply point out that this rhapsodic imperative of maintaining continuum is relevant to the etymology of *epaineîn*: 'to continue [*epi*-] making praise [*ainos*] for' (+ accusative of the *laudandus* as the receiver of praise or of the *laudator* as the ultimate giver of praise). By implication, the rhapsodic art of performing Homeric poetry is a continuation of praise poetry. The idea of continuum is explicit in the *epi*– of *epaineîn*.

p. 29
4. *dianoia* 'train of thought', applying primarily to *Homer's* train of thought, not to the rhapsode's: 530b10, c3, d3. The rhapsode can enter into this train of thought at any point of the continuum that is the narrative. He can enter into it midstream, *in medias res.* To be able to join the Homeric narrative in progress is to know the *dianoia* of Homer. As such, the rhapsode is the *hermēneus* 'interpreter' of the *dianoia* of Homer (530c3). Since the rhapsode can become part of Homer's train of thought, of Homer's *dianoia*, he can also *tell* the thoughts *of* Homer as a verbal commentary (that is, not necessarily a written commentary) *about* Homer (530c9). Such 'commenting' thoughts become, by extension, *dianoiai* as well: 530d3. The idea of continuum is explicit in the *dia*– of *dianoia*.

p. 31–33 (epitomized)
10. *dialegesthai* in the sense of 'engage in dialogue' about a given poet: 532b9 (ὅταν μὲν τις περὶ ἄλλου του ποιητοῦ διαλέγηται). This is the word appropriated by Plato's own medium to designate itself: 'to engage in [Socratic] dialogue' or 'to practice dialectic'. Here we see most clearly that the language of Plato is in direct competition with the language of the rhapsode. Moreover, *dialegesthai* is key to the survival of Socrates' language and of his message. Plato is fond of exploring the lonely feeling of helplessness on the part of any author who worries about the future life of his written words, which cannot defend themselves if they come under attack (*Phaedrus* 275e, 276c8). One way out is to use the *tekhnē* 'art' that Socrates calls dialectic, *dialektikē* (276e5). The user of this art can plant words into a receptive *psukhē* (e6), and these words will be fertile (277a1) and not sterile (*akarpoi*: a1) like the words planted on a writing surface (276c8). Unlike those written words, these dialectical words can defend not only themselves but also the one who planted them (276e8–277a1), and they can even reproduce themselves into eternity (277a2–3). The words of Socrates must not suffer the fate of written words: Socrates himself could not be saved from death, but his words must be saved, and the antidote to the death of Socratic words is dialectic, that is,

Socratic dialogue: as Socrates says in the *Phaedo* (89b9–c1), the only death that he would mourn as a genuine extinction is the death of the *logos*—if it should happen that the *logos* cannot be resurrected (*anabiōnai*: 89b10). Socratic *dialegesthai* is vital to the words of Socrates, revitalizing them every time that the reader rereads them. Dialectic is not only the antidote to the death of the words of Socrates: it is also an antidote to the words of the rhapsode. We see a rivalry here in establishing the definitive meaning of *dialegesthai*: rhapsodes had their own form of *dialegesthai*, as we see from the indirect testimony of Isocrates (*Panathenaicus* 18), and of Plato himself (*Ion* 532b9). No wonder Plato's Socrates does not allow the rhapsode Ion to have the last word.

§7. From here on, the compression of my ongoing inventory is intensified:

p. 36–69
This is Chapter 2, to which I gave the title "Epic as Music: Rhapsodic Models of Homer in Plato's *Timaeus* and *Critias*."

p. 36–37 (epitomized)
Plato's *Timaeus* and *Critias* contain valuable references to the performative techniques of *rhapsōidoi* or 'rhapsodes' and to the compositional techniques of Homeric poetry. These techniques belong to the *tekhnē* 'art' known to Plato and his contemporaries as *mousikē.* The word's meaning, as already noted, is self-evident: *mousikē* is the art of the Muses. As I can show from the testimony of inscriptions and other evidence, this term *mousikē* included the 'music' of (1) rhapsodes, (2) citharodes = cithara-singers = singers self-accompanied by the cithara or 'lyre', (3) aulodes = aulos-singers = singers accompanied by the *aulos* or 'reed', (4) cithara-players, and (5) aulos-players. In Plato's time, the high point of this kind of *mousikē* in the civic calendar of Athens was the Festival of the Panathenaia. Primarily by way of the *Timaeus* and the *Critias* of Plato, in addition to his definitive work concerning rhapsodes, the *Ion*, we can make considerable progress in reconstructing a central event in the *agōnes* or 'contests' of *mousikē* at the Panathenaic Festival of Athens, that is, rhapsodic competitions in the performance of Homer. Also, the *Timaeus* and the *Critias* reveal details about the "musical" techniques of rhapsodes and of "Homer" himself. These details provide a basis for understanding the nature of the *Timaeus* and the *Critias* as artistic—even "rhapsodic"—productions in their own right.

p. 59–62 (epitomized)
Plato uses the language of rhapsodes in making a point about individualized rhapsodic style and even individualized rhapsodic content within the framework of an imposed and previously-agreed-upon sequence of narrative. When it is Critias' turn in the *Critias* to take up where Timaeus in the *Timaeus* had left off, Timaeus says: "I hand over [*paradidomen*] to Critias, as prearranged, the continuous discourse [*ephexēs logos*]" (*Critias* 106b: παραδίδομεν κατὰ τὰς ὁμολογίας Κριτίᾳ τὸν ἐφεξῆς λόγον). I draw attention here to the expression *ephexēs logos* 'continuous discourse'. We may compare the rhapsodic expression *ephexēs* in the passage I quoted from "Plato" *Hipparkhos* 228b–c.

Critias responds by saying that he will now "take up the continuous discourse" at the point where it was handed over to him by Timaeus. I draw attention to the precise wording: *dekhomai* 'I take up', with the direct object *ephexēs logos* 'continuous discourse' understood. The whole idea is worded in a noticeably compressed clause marked by the particle *men*, to be followed by an expanded clause, marked by the particle *de*, which expresses the idea that the discourse will now become even more challenging than before, and that the speaker must therefore beg the indulgence of his audience all the more: ἀλλ' ὦ Τίμαιε δέχομαι μέν· ᾧ δὲ καὶ κατ' ἀρχὰς σὺ ἐχρήσω, συγγνώμην αἰτούμενος ὡς περὶ μεγάλων μέλλων λέγειν, ταὐτὸν καὶ νῦν ἐγὼ τοῦτο παραιτοῦμαι … 'all right, then, Timaeus, I'm taking it up [*dekhesthai*] here [that is, the continuous discourse], on the one hand [*men*]; on the other hand [*de*], I ask for the very same thing that you too made use of at the beginning when you asked for indulgence on the grounds that you were about to speak about great [*megala*] things' (*Critias* 106b–c). Critias goes on to say that his subject matter is surely even greater (106c).

The usage of the verb *dekhesthai* 'take up' in this context (106b) is crucial. We may compare the participle of this same verb as applied to Patroklos at *Iliad* 9.191: he sits in a state of anticipation, "waiting" (δέγμενος) for the moment when Achilles will leave off (verb *lēgein*) singing the *klea andrōn* 'glories of heroes'. As I argue, Patroklos is apparently waiting for his own turn to sing, and what we see here in capsule form is "the esthetics of rhapsodic sequencing." The verb *lēgein* 'leave off' is elsewhere attested in explicitly rhapsodic contexts, as in Dieuchidas of Megara (FGH 485 F 6, via Diogenes Laertius 1.57).

Critias remarks that his topic, the genesis of humans, is even more difficult than the topic that had just been treated by Timaeus, the genesis of the gods and of the cosmos, since the audience will demand greater verisimilitude about topics that seem closer to their own world of direct experience (107a–b). Socrates jokingly responds that the topic of the next slated speaker, Hermocrates, will surely become even more difficult (108a–b).

Of course, Plato's readers will never get to see even the beginnings of Hermocrates' topic, since the sequence of a would-be trilogy of *Timaeus*, *Critias*, and *Hermocrates* is cut short well before even the *Critias* can come to a finish. An obvious inference, then, is that Plato never finished his intended trilogy. There is, however, also a less obvious inference that could be drawn: perhaps Plato intended the sequence of *Timaeus*–*Critias* to remain unfinished (such a possibility is mentioned by Clay 1997). In support of this inference, we may point to the open-endedness that typifies Plato's dialectic in general.

Critias' speech stops short at exactly the point where he is about to quote the Will of Zeus (δίκην αὐτοῖς ἐπιθεῖναι βουληθείς 121b–c). Plato's wording evokes the epic theme of the *boulē* or 'Will' of Zeus, as announced at the very beginning of the *Iliad* (1.5: Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή) or at the very beginning of the

Cypria fr. 1.7 ed. Allen (Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή). At the point where Critias' speech stops short, Zeus is about to announce that he will now inflict a Flood on the Golden Generation—the last of a doomed race who have finally exhausted their divine genetic destiny (*moira*) because of their habitual interbreeding with ordinary mortals (*Critias* 121c). This point of stopping short, I argue, is analogous to a given point in epic narrative where one rhapsode could leave off the narration and another rhapsode could take it up.

§8. I cut my inventory short:

pp. 70–101
I leave off before I reach these pages covering the third and last Chapter, to which I gave the title "*Humnos* in Homer and Plato: Weaving the Robe of the Goddess."

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