

BARBARA GRAZIOSI

*Inventing  
Homer*

THE EARLY RECEPTION OF EPIC

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## PREFACE

João Guimarães Rosa, one of the great epic authors of our time, once said that a book is sometimes greater than a man. The present study is devoted to Homer, rather than the Homeric poems, yet I do not disagree with Guimarães Rosa. The reason why I focus on the poet Homer is that the ways in which he was conceptualised in antiquity help us to understand how his poems were received. Ancient images of Homer are in many ways different from modern ones, and this is one of the reasons why they have been disregarded. For example, Homer is often represented as a humble figure, rather than an aristocrat; as someone pleasing everyone, rather than the courts of kings; and as the author of a vast number of poems, not only the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Precisely because ancient conceptions of the poet are different from modern ones, they tend to expose our unspoken assumptions, and reveal forgotten but influential ways of thinking about the poems.

While preparing this book, I have become aware of another way in which Guimarães Rosa's words can be interpreted. I would never have managed to write it without the help of my family, friends and teachers, or without the financial support of several institutions. I am grateful to Marco Fernandelli, whose teaching influenced my decision to persevere in the study of classics, and to the tutors of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, who provided an ideal environment for doing so. In Cambridge, Pat Easterling supervised the Ph.D. dissertation on which this book is based: that the three years devoted to it were enjoyable as well as demanding is due in no small measure to her guidance, criticism and support. My two examiners, Simon Goldhill and Richard Buxton, helped me to focus on the broader implications of my thesis and offered precious detailed comments. Ewen Bowie, Paul Cartledge, Rachel Foxley, Emily Greenwood, Liz Irwin, Robin Osborne, Michael Reeve and Sabine Vogt read drafts of the book or of individual chapters: I am



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ABBREVIATIONS OF EDITIONS AND WORKS OF REFERENCE

Pertusi	<i>Scholia vetera in Hesiodi Opera et Dies</i> , ed. A. Pertusi, Milan, 1955
Pfeiffer	<i>Callimachus</i> , ed. R. Pfeiffer, 2 vols., Oxford, 1949–53
PMG	<i>Poetae Melici Graeci</i> , ed. D. L. Page, Oxford, 1962
PMGF	<i>Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> , ed. M. Davies, vol. 1, Oxford, 1991
P Oxy	<i>Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , eds. B. P. Grenfell, A. S. Hunt et alii, London, 1898–
RE	<i>Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , eds. A. Pauly, G. Wissowa et alii, Stuttgart, 1893–1980
Rose	<i>Aristotelis Fragmenta</i> , ed. V. Rose, third edition, Leipzig, 1886
Schoene	<i>Eusebi Chronicon libri duo</i> , ed. A. Schoene, 2 vols., Berlin, 1866–75
Schwartz	<i>Tatiani Oratio ad Graecos</i> , ed. E. Schwartz, Leipzig, 1888
SM	<i>Pindari Carmina cum fragmentis</i> , eds. B. Snell and H. Maehler, Leipzig, 1987–89
Stallbaum	<i>Eustathii Commentarii in Odysseam</i> , ed. G. Stallbaum, 2 vols., Leipzig, 1825–26
Taillardat	<i>Suétone: Περὶ βλασφημιῶν, περὶ παιδιῶν</i> , ed. J. Taillardat, Paris, 1967
TGrF	<i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> , eds. R. Kannicht, S. Radt and B. Snell, Göttingen, 1971–
Uhlig	<i>Dionysii Thracis Ars Grammatica</i> , ed. G. Uhlig, Leipzig, 1883
van der Valk	<i>Eustathii Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem pertinentes</i> , ed. M. van der Valk, vols. 1–IV, Leiden, 1971–87
Voigt	<i>Sappho et Alcaeus</i> , ed. E.-M. Voigt, Amsterdam, 1971
W	<i>Iambi et Elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum cantati</i> , ed. M. L. West, 2 vols., second edition, Oxford, 1989–92





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The second reason for my choice of topic is that Homer is an extremely influential author, and that classical Greece has been held up as an ideal. In recent years, the Western canon of great literature has been challenged in various ways. Critics have turned their attention to uncanonical texts, and have attempted to read the canon 'against the grain'.<sup>19</sup> Yet it seems to me that these are not the only possible strategies that can be used to challenge dominant ways of thinking. The texts on which I base my discussion belong not only to classical literature but, often, to the most canonical period within classics. Moreover, I do not consciously read these sources 'against the grain': on the contrary, I try very hard to understand what the Greeks wanted to say about Homer, not what they tried to hide or failed to understand. Yet, paradoxically, archaic and classical views about Homer seem to me to challenge some claims about Homer and the Homeric poems which are by now considered canonical.

A third and related reason for my specific focus is that a study grounded in one particular area can, paradoxically, be more illuminating for other fields of enquiry than an attempt to study simultaneously a very broad spectrum of contexts and phenomena. The anthropologist Marilyn Strathern makes a similar observation when discussing the concept of 'transferable skills'. She observes that anthropological fieldworkers who successfully embed themselves in a particular site are more likely, not less, to be able to do so in a different site in the future. At the same time, they would find it difficult to immerse themselves in the life and organisation of a particular community, if they were constantly thinking about how they might do it somewhere else.<sup>20</sup> The archaic and classical representations of Homer discussed in this book constitute a small proportion of what can be said about Homer, let alone about other poets and artists, yet they clearly show how authors can themselves be objects of creative processes.

I should add here that, while in theory it is possible to isolate the archaic and classical periods from Alexandrian and later times as I have suggested, in practice such a neat distinction cannot be

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) or Spivak (1993).

<sup>20</sup> Strathern (1997) 124f.



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as possible. At the same time, it tries to do justice to what the Greeks had to say about Homer, even when their thoughts seem obscure or fragmentary to us. This balance between faithfulness and accessibility is difficult to strike, and I have often opted for an inclusive approach. I quote ancient sources in the original, but also provide translations into English. I offer my own renderings rather than relying on more elegant translations, because I try to capture the features of the original most relevant to the discussion at hand. Throughout the book, I refer to Allen's edition of the *Lives of Homer* because it is the most easily accessible, but quote Wilamowitz's text when a specific argument depends on it.<sup>27</sup> I am aware that the attempt to balance accessibility and rigour sometimes leads to unwieldy, repetitive sentences and to inconsistencies: for example, the use of both English and Latin for titles of works. *Lives* is immediately clear, *Vitae* evokes the long tradition which developed out of the invention of Homer.

<sup>27</sup> Wilamowitz (1916a); Allen is quoted in the list of abbreviations.



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usually careful to point out that this individual has nothing to do with the Homer depicted in the ancient *Lives*. In a recent work entitled *Homer. His Art and his World*, Latacz, for example, devotes a whole section to the biographical tradition, denouncing it as 'a false track'.<sup>10</sup> Like the ancient biographers, he aims to describe Homer's person and life, but, unlike his ancient colleagues, he finds the real Homer. Latacz's competitive stance toward the ancient biographical tradition is evident in statements like: 'The inventors of the legend lacked the means and method to interpret them [= the epics] adequately.'<sup>11</sup> His antagonistic attitude does not allow him to focus on the extent to which his own scholarship is dependent upon the biographical tradition: he has inherited from it not only the name Homer, but also a keen sense of its importance.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, scholars who believe that the Homeric poems were shaped by a long process of recomposition in performance rather than by an individual tend to ignore the biographical tradition altogether. In an address entitled 'Homeric Questions', Nagy, for example, goes as far as urging scholars to avoid expressions in which 'Homer' is used as the name of an individual. Though he agrees that such usage corresponds to 'the spirit of conventional Greek references', he claims that the name Homer should not be 'overly personalized'.<sup>12</sup> Nagy rightly insists on the role of performance and audiences in the establishment of the Homeric poems and argues that the authority of a text can never be explained simply by invoking the existence of an exceptional author: even when geniuses exist, they must be recognised. But one of the shortcomings of his approach to the Homeric Question(s) is that, by ignoring the author Homer, he overlooks a very important aspect of the history of the Homeric poems: at a time which he considers crucial for the formation and establishment of the Homeric texts, we begin to get discussions

<sup>10</sup> Latacz (1996), especially the first two sections of ch. 2, 23–30: 'The Source Situation: Nothing Authentic' and 'The Homer Legend: A False Track'.

<sup>11</sup> Latacz (1996) 30.

<sup>12</sup> Nagy (1992) 28–31 lists ten examples of usage that he finds 'commonly being applied in misleading ways by some contemporary experts in Homeric poetry'. Under 3, 28f., we find 'Homer + [verb]' and other 'overly personalized' expressions. Cf. also Nagy (1996a).



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Phemius, since you know many other deeds of men and gods which enchant mortals and are celebrated by singers, sit next to them and sing one of those . . . (*Odyssey* 1.337–9)

Penelope seems to suggest that there are a number of songs known to the bards and begs Phemius to choose another one from that common repertoire of ἔργ' ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε, 'deeds of men and gods'. Telemachus, however, suggests that Phemius is singing a new song, and that he should be allowed to do so because new songs are more pleasing than the old standards:

μητρὲς ἐμή, τί τ' ἄρα φθονέεις ἐρίηρον ἀοιδὸν  
τέρπειν ὅππῃ οἱ νόος ὄρνυται; οὐ νύ τ' ἀοιδοὶ  
αἴτιοι, ἀλλὰ ποθὶ Ζεὺς αἴτιος, ὅς τε δίδωσιν  
ἀνδράσιν ἀλφειστῆσιν ὅπως ἐθέλῃσιν ἐκάστω.  
τούτῳ δ' οὐ νέμεσις Δαναῶν κακὸν οἶτον ἀεῖδεν·  
τὴν γὰρ ἀοιδὴν μᾶλλον ἐπικλείουσ' ἄνθρωποι,  
ἢ τις ἀκουόντεσσι νεωτάτῃ ἀμφιπέληται.

Mother, why do you resent the faithful singer because he gives us pleasure in the way his mind drives him? Singers are not responsible, perhaps Zeus is, who gives to each mortal who eats bread as he wills. Phemius should not be blamed for singing the terrible fate of the Greeks: people praise above all the newest song that circulates among listeners. (*Odyssey* 1.346–52)

It seems artificial to ask for the identity of the author of the songs Phemius is performing or may perform. On the one hand, we could say that Phemius is obviously the author in that there is no suggestion that anyone else may be. On the other hand, it should be noted that issues of authorship do not naturally arise in the context described in this passage, exactly as they do not often arise when a parent tells a story or a friend cracks a joke. Of course it is possible to ask whether Phemius' story or, indeed, a joke, is old or new, but the emphasis does not tend to be on authorship. The expression ὅππῃ οἱ νόος ὄρνυται, 'the way his mind drives him' is most easily taken to refer to Phemius' decision to sing about the homecoming of the Achaeans rather than another subject, and not as an invitation to sing his own composition rather than someone else's. In this passage songs are distinguished from one another according to their subject matter, not their author.

By contrast, the field of competence of the rhapsode Ion is defined in terms of the poets he includes in his repertoire:



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been no distinction made between bards who performed their own poetry, and rhapsodes who recited other people's.<sup>21</sup> At the other end, we find, for example, Burkert: 'Conditions had changed in a remarkable way by the end of the sixth century. At the time of Xenophanes, apparently the challenge was no longer to "sing the Wooden Horse", or even "The Menis of Achilles", but "to recite a passage of Homer". What had happened is that rhapsodes had replaced singers, *aoidoi*, a momentous change indeed. Creative improvisation had given way to the reproduction of a fixed text, learned by heart and available also in book form.'<sup>22</sup> Burkert's claims, if correct, are momentous indeed, but he does not support them with an analysis of the primary evidence.

A second, and related, area of controversy concerns the reputation of the rhapsodes. Plato and Xenophon certainly make contemptuous remarks about them;<sup>23</sup> and the *Suda* glosses 'rhapsody' as 'foolery' (φλυαρία).<sup>24</sup> But many scholars go much further in their speculations about the rhapsodes' bad name and maintain that the metaphor of 'stitching' contained in the word *rhapsodos* has a derogatory meaning.<sup>25</sup> In fact, it seems that those scholars who believe rhapsodes to be recognisably different from *aoidoi* tend to argue that the term *rhapsodos* implies a negative comparison with genuine poets, who do not 'stitch' songs.<sup>26</sup>

If I reach different conclusions about the activity and reputation of rhapsodes from those of others who have dealt with these problems before, it is because I do not share some of their methodological assumptions. First, I believe that the meaning of the term rhapsode must, in the first place, be sought in the fifth-century texts where it first appears. Some scholars have attempted to explain it by looking at the way in which the verb *rhapto*, 'to

<sup>21</sup> P. Murray (1996) 96.

<sup>22</sup> Burkert (1987) 48.

<sup>23</sup> See the portrayal of Ion in Plato's *Ion*; cf. Xenophon, *Smp.* 3.6: οἷσθ' ἂν τι οὐν ἔθνος, ἔφη, ἡλιθιώτερον ῥαψωδῶν; 'Now, do you know a sillier tribe than the rhapsodes?'.  
<sup>24</sup> See *Suda sub voce* ῥαψωδία; cf. *Etymologicum Magnum* p. 703.32–5 Gaisford.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Else (1957) 33; and Tarditi (1968b) 144.

<sup>26</sup> Ford (1988) 301 characterises the two main views of rhapsodes in modern scholarship in the following way: 'On the one hand, it has been maintained that the title (or slur) "rhapsode" marked the degenerate, memorizing heirs of the truly creative *αοιδοί*. [...] On the other hand, stitching has been interpreted as a figure for poetic creation.'



stitch', is used in the Homeric poems in a metaphorical sense, but we have no way of telling whether it is used there to express a similar kind of metaphor to that contained in the compound 'stitcher of songs'. Else, for example, observes that, in the Homeric poems, *rhapto* is associated with very negative objects, such as 'murder', 'evils', 'death and doom' (φόνον, κακά, θάνατόν τε μόρον τε) and concludes that *rhapsodos* must also have had a negative connotation.<sup>27</sup> It seems to me, however, that given that the term *rhapsodos* first appears in the fifth century, it is dangerous to try and establish its connotation purely on Homeric evidence, even if we grant that Homeric language may be particularly close to the world of epic reciters.

A second and related point concerns the etymology of the word *rhapsodos*. Modern scholars point out that it cannot derive from ῥάβδος (*rhabdos*, 'staff'), the most popular ancient etymology,<sup>28</sup> but must be a compound noun of the type 'τερψιμβροτος' deriving from *rhapto*, 'to stitch', and *aoide* 'song'.<sup>29</sup> It seems to me, however, that both etymologies need to be taken into account: they are attested in antiquity and therefore constitute evidence by which to establish what associations the word *rhapsodos* carried then. Moreover, as we shall see, the sixth- and fifth-century sources focus on the rhapsodes' staffs, not on their supposed 'stitching'; and the staff is an object that distinguishes them from singers, who typically play the lyre.<sup>30</sup> When rhapsodes are depicted on vases, their staff is a prominent element of their

<sup>27</sup> Else (1957) 32: 'a sneering or depreciatory name'. Fränkel (1925) uses the same method of drawing conclusions about the meaning of ῥαψωδός from Homeric usages of ῥάπτειν, but reaches opposite conclusions: at 5 he claims that the word has a positive ring to it. Neither scholar points out that the word is not employed in contexts related to poetry.

<sup>28</sup> See Heraclitus fr. 42 DK; Pindar *I.* 3.55–7 (4.37–9); schol. Pind. *ad N.* 2.1d and *ad I.* 4.63d Drachmann; Schol. Plat. *Ion* 530a Greene; Callimachus fr. 26.5 Pfeiffer; Eustathius *ad II.* vol. 1, p. 10.4–14 van der Valk; Photius *Lexicon sub voce* ῥαψωδοί (second entry); *Suda sub voce* ῥαψωδοί; Dionysius Thrax 5 p. 8 Uhlig.

<sup>29</sup> See Knecht (1946); Else (1957) 28.

<sup>30</sup> For the singers (ᾄδοι) and the lyre (φάρμαγξ) see, for example, *Od.* 8.261, 23.133; *Homeric Hymn* 21.3; for Apollo, patron of singers, and the lyre, see, for example, *Homeric Hymn* 3.182–5; and *The Shield of Heracles* 201–3. At *Theogony* 30 Hesiod claims that the Muses gave him a sceptre. It is possible that there is some connection between this sceptre (σκῆπτρον) and the rhapsodes' staff (ῥάβδος), though it is difficult to establish exactly what kind of connection. The passage does not warrant the conclusion that Hesiod was a rhapsode, *pace* Patzer (1993).

representation: it is not surprising that our early sources link the *rhabdos* to the rhapsode's professional title – *rhapsodos*.<sup>31</sup> While this ancient etymology does not explain the formation of the word, a question to which I shall return, it does inform us about the activities of the rhapsodes in the sixth and fifth centuries.

My third point is that, given that the term *rhapsodos* is etymologically prior to the noun ῥαψωδία (*rhapsodia*, 'rhapsody') one should in the first place focus on the rhapsodes themselves, and try to understand who they were. Else rightly asserts the validity of this strategy when discussing the origin of τραγωδία ('tragedy').<sup>32</sup> The noun *rhapsodia*, which is in any case first attested much later than *rhapsodos*, simply indicates what the rhapsodes did. We cannot hope to define *rhapsodia* and then point out that those who recited 'rhapsodies' were called rhapsodes.<sup>33</sup>

Before turning to the sources where rhapsodes are first mentioned, I should briefly discuss the texts where they are not mentioned at all. The term appears very late, no earlier than Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* and a mid-fifth century inscription. A pun on it can be detected in Heraclitus, fr. 42 DK, which I shall discuss later, but the term cannot be traced further back than that. Also, with the possible exception of [Hesiod] fr. 265 MW, to which I shall return, the verb *rhapto* is never used to describe composition. The absence of rhapsodes from epic did not escape ancient scholars. A scholiast to *Oedipus Tyrannus* 391 complains that Sophocles was guilty of anachronism when he described the Sphinx as a rhapsode, since the monster belonged to the heroic age whereas rhapsodes did not.<sup>34</sup>

On the strength of the late appearance of the term *rhapsodos*, and of the verb *rhapto* in poetic contexts, it is attractive to suppose that these terms indicated a new activity, to be contrasted, perhaps, with that of singers. Thus taken, the metaphor of stitching works

<sup>31</sup> Davison (1958) discusses vase depictions of rhapsodes. For reproductions, see Shapiro (1992) and (1993).

<sup>32</sup> Else (1957) 19: 'There is no word ῥωδία; -ωδία exists only as the second element in compounds like κιθαρωδία, τραγωδία, κωμωδία. Τραγωδία is conceivable and meaningful only as a secondary formation from a previous compound τραγωδός, denoting the activity of a τραγωδός (or a group of τραγωδοί).'

<sup>33</sup> Ford (1988) attempts to do precisely this.

<sup>34</sup> See Schol. Soph. *ad OT* 391 Papageorgius; cf. Bollack (1990) *ad* 391f.



well, especially since a well-established metaphor for composition is that of weaving.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps it implies that singers weave their poetry like a beautiful piece of cloth, whereas rhapsodes sew together, that is perform successively, various pieces of woven song.<sup>36</sup> But these suggestions must remain entirely speculative. In order to find out whether the designation *rhapsodos* contains an implicit differentiation from singers, and whether this differentiation is derogatory for rhapsodes, as has generally been believed, we must turn to the actual uses of the word.

The earliest occurrence of the term 'rhapsode' seems to come from an inscription on a tripod found in Dodona, which has been dated to the middle of the fifth century.<sup>37</sup> It reads:

Τερψικλῆς : τῷ Δι : Ναίῳι : ῥαψωιδὸς : ἀνέθηκε.

Terpsicles, the rhapsode, dedicated this to Zeus Naios. (GDI 5786)

In the earliest occurrence of the word, *rhapsodos* is not a slur or an insult used by critics to refer to Homeric reciters,<sup>38</sup> but a term through which Terpsicles chooses to identify himself. The term refers to his profession, which seems to have brought 'fame' to Terpsicles himself (*kleos*) and 'enjoyment' to others (*terpsis*): his name means 'famed for giving pleasure'. It seems that the rhapsode is as deserving of a 'speaking name' as the Homeric singers Phemius Terpiades and Demodocus, whose names speak of fame and enjoyment.<sup>39</sup> The name suggests that, at least as far as fame and the ability to give delight are concerned, the rhapsode Terpsicles is on a par with the two famous Homeric singers.

However, unlike them, he is not a fictional character who is given a name to suit the narrative. It thus needs to be explained why this rhapsode came to have a name so appropriate to his profession.

<sup>35</sup> Cf., for example, *Il.* 3.212; Pindar, *P.* 1.81–2 and fr. 179 SM; Bacchylides 5.9f. and 19.8f. See also *Il.* 3.125–8, cf. Schol. bT *ad Il.* 3.126–7. Silk (1974), 181 n. 11 claims that the weaving metaphor is not a poetic cliché because 'the evidence is limited and of a suspect kind'. Against this view, however, see D. Steiner (1986) 54; cf. also Nünlist (1998) 110–18.

<sup>36</sup> Kirk (1962) 97f. and 318f. holds a version of this view.

<sup>37</sup> Kirchhoff (1887) 22.

<sup>38</sup> Tarditi (1968b).

<sup>39</sup> On the etymology of these two names, see Kamptz (1982).



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personal family connections, was a sufficient means of identification and protection in his travels.<sup>47</sup>

One last important feature of the inscription is that it is written in the Ionian alphabet and, it seems, in the Ionic dialect.<sup>48</sup> The most plausible explanation for this phenomenon is that Terpsicles comes from Ionia or at least has close connections with it. Kirchhoff reaches precisely this conclusion.<sup>49</sup> While I agree with Kirchhoff that this interpretation is extremely likely, it is also possible that rhapsodes had a close professional link with the Ionic dialect and alphabet no matter where they originally came from.

The usage of the word rhapsode in a roughly contemporary source confirms some of the inferences made so far. The context is very different: in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* the term is used metaphorically to describe the Sphinx; yet this very difference of context and usage may serve to underline some points of contact. At lines 390–2, Oedipus boasts about his own prophetic ability and refuses to give credit to Teiresias:

ἐπεὶ, φέρ' εἰπέ, ποῦ σὺ μάντις εἰ σαφής;  
πῶς οὐχ, ὅθ' ἡ ῥαψωδὸς ἐνθάδ' ἦν κύων,  
ἡὔδας τι τοῖσδ' ἀστοῖσιν ἐκλυτήριον;

Pray, tell me, when are you ever a clear prophet? Did you perhaps say a word of deliverance for these citizens when that rhapsodic bitch was here? (*Oedipus Tyrannus* 390–2)

The Sphinx is described as a rhapsode and a bitch: a striking combination which powerfully expresses her ambiguity. On the one hand, κύων 'bitch' emphasises the alien, animal, even monstrous nature of the Sphinx. On the other, the term *rhapsodos* reminds us that the Sphinx is a cultivated monster who speaks in hexameters,<sup>50</sup> and

<sup>47</sup> Family connections, ξενία, were a means of diminishing the risks of travel; see Herman (1987). Travelling professionals could not necessarily rely on such aristocratic networks. From about 330 BC onwards guilds of actors are well attested; one of their main functions was to secure personal inviolability for actors in their travels. On actors' associations, see Pickard-Cambridge (1988), part 7; and Csapo and Slater (1995), sections IVAi–IVAiil.

<sup>48</sup> In the word ῥαψωδός the sequence α + οι is contracted to ωι.

<sup>49</sup> Kirchhoff (1887) 22.

<sup>50</sup> See Jebb (1893) *ad* 391.



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are thought to have in common.<sup>53</sup> While any conclusions about the rhapsodes' activities must be drawn from a wider selection of evidence, this passage on its own already tells us something about the relation between the rhapsodes and the figure of Homer. The indications given about the rhapsodes' sphere of action are remarkably similar to the picture of Homer we get in the *Certamen*; for in this work Homer travels from place to place, competes in poetic contests and, just like a prophet, is expected to be able to solve riddles.<sup>54</sup>

Apart from these two occurrences of the word *rhapsodos* there are some early references to it in Heraclitus and Pindar. A report about Heraclitus reads:

τόν τε Ὅμηρον ἔφασκεν ἄξιον ἐκ τῶν ἀγώνων ἐκβάλλεσθαι καὶ ῥαπίζεσθαι καὶ Ἀρχίλοχον ὁμοίως.

He said that Homer deserved to be thrown out of the public competitions and to be beaten with the staff, and that Archilochus deserved the same. (Heraclitus, fr. 42 DK)

I agree with Nagy, who writes that 'What is really being said is that rhapsodes (as suggested by the playful use of *rhapizesthai*) should not be allowed to perform Homer and Archilochus.'<sup>55</sup> I wonder, moreover, whether one can discern another pun: the term ἐκβάλλεσθαι (*ekballesthai*), 'to throw out', evokes ἀναβάλλεσθαι (*anaballesthai*) in the technical sense of 'to strike up a song'. Heraclitus' statement could then be paraphrased as 'strike them out, do not let them strike up the song!'<sup>56</sup> Heraclitus' puns on technical terms help him to evoke a specific setting: the public competition in poetic performance (ἀγῶνες). What the rhapsodes perform there is deemed so important that it should be banned. The staff, usually the symbol of the rhapsodes' authority as reciters, should rather be used to beat the unworthy poets whom

<sup>53</sup> Tarditi (1968b) 138 uses this passage to argue for the creativity of rhapsodes, observing that the Sphinx composes her own riddle; yet the passage certainly does not focus on composition, it is rather interested in the delivery of the riddle to the community.

<sup>54</sup> For contests in 'wisdom', σοφία, between seers involving the solution of riddles, see also Hesiod fr. 278 MW.

<sup>55</sup> Nagy (1989) 38.

<sup>56</sup> See LSJ *sub voce* ἀναβάλλω B1.



they and their public honour. The passage clearly links rhapsodes with two particular authors.

Heraclitus' passage may be compared to a statement given by Herodotus:

Κλεισθένης γὰρ Ἀργείοισι πολέμησας τοῦτο μὲν ῥαψωδοὺς ἔπαυσε ἐν Σικυῶνι ἀγωνίζεσθαι τῶν Ὀμηρείων ἐπέων εἵνεκα, ὅτι Ἀργεῖοί τε καὶ Ἄργος τὰ πολλὰ πάντα ὑμνέεται.

When Cleisthenes waged war on the Argives he banned the rhapsodes from competing in Sicyon because the Homeric poems almost constantly celebrated the Argives and Argos. (Herodotus, 5.67.1)

I shall return to this passage again in the course of this study,<sup>57</sup> but for the time being it is important to notice that the rhapsodes are thrown out of the *agones*, that they are linked to the Homeric poems, and that their performances are deemed to be so influential that they are banned.

In *Isthmian* 3.56 (4.38) Pindar mentions the staff, *rhabdos*, in a manner which once again suggests influence and authority:

ἀλλ' Ὀμηρὸς τοι τετίμακεν δι' ἀνθρώπων, ὃς αὐτοῦ  
πᾶσαν ὀρθώσας ἀρετὰν κατὰ ῥάβδον ἔφρασεν  
θεσπεσίων ἐπέων λοιποῖς ἀθύρειν.

But Homer gave him honour among human beings, for he stated and straightened his [Ajax's] excellence in accordance with the staff of divine words, for the pleasure of future generations. (Pindar, *Isthmian* 3.55–7 = 4.37–9)

As so often in Pindar, the imagery is rich, complex and difficult to explicate. The *rhabdos* of divine words seems to be the means by which Homer lifts up and makes straight Ajax's reputation, by giving delight to generations to come. The straightness of the staff seems to be echoed in the verb ὀρθόω, 'straighten', and the staff may hint at those performers who still use it in reciting Homer and give pleasure to the 'future generations'. I doubt whether this passage can be used as evidence that Pindar saw no distinction between Homer and the rhapsodes. On the contrary, it may be significant that the *rhabdos* is mentioned in connection with the transmission of the Homeric poems to future generations. As we shall see, in another passage, *Nemean* 2.1–3, Pindar uses the verb

<sup>57</sup> See p. 221.

*rhapto* to qualify the term *aoidoi* when applied to the Homeridae: they are not ordinary singers but ‘singers of stitched words’, αοιδοὶ ῥαπτῶν ἐπέων.<sup>58</sup>

These pieces of evidence, scarce and tantalising as they are, do in fact help us to answer the questions with which we began. As for the rhapsodes’ reputation, our earliest sources proclaim their authority, not their foolishness. The idea that the term ‘rhapsode’ was originally an insult which then entered common usage should be given up. It is usually based on Plato’s and Xenophon’s contempt; but their attitude would be explained much better as the reaction of intellectuals who objected to the rhapsodes’ alleged lack of depth in combination with their superstar status.<sup>59</sup>

As far as the rhapsodes’ activity is concerned, Heraclitus, implicitly, and Herodotus, explicitly, connect them with public competitions. The passage in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* likewise seems to imply public recitation, as well as the notion of competition. Moreover, I have suggested that behind Terpsicles’ name, and behind the fact that it is accompanied only by the specification *rhapsodos*, may lie some kind of association of travelling rhapsodes, perhaps based on family ties, perhaps on professional links or, most probably, on both. That rhapsodes travelled from festival to festival is in any case known from later sources, such as Plato’s *Ion*.

Our sources also show that the rhapsodes are linked with specific poets, who are often mentioned by name. In Pindar, Heraclitus and Herodotus they are associated with Homer. Heraclitus indicates that they also perform Archilochus.<sup>60</sup> Our Terpsicles inscription testifies to a connection between a rhapsode and the Ionic dialect and alphabet.

These elements speak for a distinction between the rhapsodes and the singers described in epic. Rhapsodes perform in public

<sup>58</sup> See pp. 208–10.

<sup>59</sup> In some circles, ‘Hollywood’ is synonymous with commercial superficiality, but to most people it speaks of prestige and high artistic standards. For the value of prizes won by rhapsodes and other performers at public festivals, see West (1992a) 368.

<sup>60</sup> This picture is remarkably similar to the one we get in Plato’s *Ion*, with which we began. At 531a and 532a Socrates asks Ion whether he also recites the poetry of Hesiod and Archilochus but Ion replies that he specialises exclusively in Homer, because he is the best of poets. While Socrates’ question implies that it can be expected of rhapsodes that they also recite other poets, Ion’s answer shows that Homer can constitute the entire repertoire even of a very famous and acclaimed rhapsode such as he is.



competitions rather than, like Demodocus, at the suggestion of their hosts. Their work is closely connected to the poetry of other (named) individuals. These substantial differences square well with the commonsense assumption that a new term is likely to denote a new concept.

Were we to engage in speculation about the etymology of the term rhapsode, we should focus, I believe, on some feature of the rhapsodes' 'new' profession, not on their alleged 'stupidity' or status as 'degenerate bards'. Some such explanation may run along the lines suggested by Dionysius of Argos and Else after him: the metaphor of stitching may be connected to the continuous recitation of long poems.<sup>61</sup> Else relates it in particular to the famous, but relatively late, evidence for the continuous recitation of Homer 'in the right order' at the Panathenaea.<sup>62</sup> The way Pindar uses the verb 'to stitch' in *Nemean* 2.2 may point in a similar direction. He says that, just as the Homeridae, singers of stitched words, often begin with a hymn to Zeus, so the *laudandus* starts with a victory for Zeus at Nemea, to which he is expected to 'stitch' other victories in the future.<sup>63</sup> Thus, here too, the stitching seems to refer to the joining and assembling of different bits of poetry: first a hymn to Zeus, followed by another song.

The activities of bards and rhapsodes are distinguishable already in the earliest appearances of the word *rhapsodos*. However, there are some passages where rhapsodes and composers (whether *aoidoi* or *poietai*) are treated as being essentially similar. Texts which blur the distinction between composers and rhapsodes are interesting not only in that they need to be explained satisfactorily if my view of rhapsodes is to hold, but also because they contribute substantially to the understanding of the relationship between Homer and the rhapsodes. These passages can be divided into two categories: either they refer to poetic competitions, or they come from Plato.

<sup>61</sup> Schol. Pind. *N.* 2.1; Else (1957) 32f.

<sup>62</sup> Tarditi (1968b) 138 rejects Else's suggestion. However, his claim that the term *rhapsodos* was coined as an insult within Hipparchus' circle of friends and associates (144) is open to the same kind of criticism. Given that the continuous recitation of Homer might after all not have been an exclusively Panathenaic phenomenon, Else's explanation is in fact preferable.

<sup>63</sup> For an interpretation of Pindar *N.* 2.1–2, see pp. 208–10.



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the origin of this fragment, we would perhaps be tempted to see in it an attempt, on the part of the rhapsodes themselves, to represent Homer and Hesiod in their own image. In fact, it has been suggested on independent grounds that these lines were composed in rhapsodic circles.<sup>66</sup> If this is the case, then we should not take this passage as historical evidence that Homer and Hesiod were rhapsodes but rather as an aetiology of the first time poems were recited as by rhapsodes. The aetiology offers us a paradoxical 'first time' which reminds us of stories in which the gods performed the first sacrifice. It would be difficult to understand to whom the gods might sacrifice, just as 'the rhapsodes' Homer and Hesiod cannot but perform their own new songs.<sup>67</sup>

At this point, however, an important clarification needs to be made. If fr. 357 MW was composed within rhapsodic circles as an aetiology of their profession, it follows that rhapsodes were in fact not just reciters, but could and did compose texts like this fragment. Indeed, it seems to me undeniable that rhapsodes composed hexameters, yet I am not here primarily concerned with what they 'really did', but rather with the way in which their activity was conceptualised by themselves and their contemporaries. Fr. 357 MW may actually have been composed by a rhapsode, but it pretends to be the work of Hesiod. In the same scholion that quotes this fragment, we are also told of a certain rhapsode Cynaethus, who is accused of having composed the *Hymn to Apollo* and having ascribed it to Homer: again, the rhapsode does not claim authorship for himself.<sup>68</sup> There follows an important difference between ancient and modern uses of the word rhapsode: while modern editors often classify as 'rhapsodes' the composers of the *Homeric Hymns* and other hexameter texts, such as the lines found in the *Certamen* and the *Lives of Homer*,<sup>69</sup> in the ancient sources such lines are ascribed to Homer or Hesiod and the rhapsodes are depicted as performers only.

<sup>66</sup> See Janko (1982) 113–15.

<sup>67</sup> Gregory Nagy suggested this parallel in conversation.

<sup>68</sup> Schol. Pind. *ad N.* 2.1, quoted at p. 213, where Cynaethus and the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* are discussed at greater length.

<sup>69</sup> For example, see Brillante, Cantilena and Pavese (1981); cf. Förstel (1979). Pavese (1991) claims that the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* was a rhapsode.





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Hesiod's reads:

Ἄσκη μὲν πατρίς πολυλήιος, ἀλλὰ θανόντος  
ὄστέα πληξίππων γῇ Μινυὰς κατέχει  
Ἡσιόδου, τοῦ πλείστον ἐν ἀνθρώποις κλέος ἐστὶν  
ἀνδρῶν κρινομένων ἐν βασάνῳ σοφίης.

Ascra, with many cornfields, is his fatherland, but the land of the Minyans who strike horses covered Hesiod after his death, he has the highest reputation among those who are judged for wisdom in the eyes of men. (*Certamen* 250–3)

While Hesiod's epitaph starts with a reference to Ascra, and then specifies where he is buried, that of Homer begins with a deictic 'here' which of course can apply to any place whatever, depending on the story which accompanies it:

ἐνθάδε τὴν ἱερὴν κεφαλὴν κατὰ γαῖα καλύπτει,  
ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων κοσμήτορα θεῖον Ὅμηρον.

In this place, earth hides the sacred person, divine Homer, who beautified the heroes. (*Certamen* 337f.)

This lack of reference to any specific places or individuals reminds us of the text with which we began: Terpsicles' inscription. There too the name is accompanied only by a reference to the activity of the person commemorated. In the *Certamen*, Homer, rather than Hesiod, is modelled on the rhapsodes: he recites his own poetry (just as they recite his), he travels extensively, he is not tied to a specific place, he has a way of making every city feel special and he is defined by what he does, rather than by his place of origin. He 'beautifies heroes' as a κοσμήτωρ ἡρώων, just as the rhapsode Ion claims to 'beautify' him: ὥς εὖ κεκόσμηκα τὸν Ὅμηρον (Plato, *Ion* 530d6–7).

Rhapsodes, then, are distinguishable from bards and poets, but there are some stories which blur the distinction. One hexameter fragment ([Hesiod] fr. 357 MW) gives an aetiology of the first rhapsodic competition: in it, Homer and Hesiod are projected into the distant past (they are *aoidoi*), but they 'stitch' new songs. Moreover, some stories collected in the *Certamen* model Homer on the rhapsodes. It is plausible to suppose that stories like the ones considered so far ultimately originated from the rhapsodes themselves. For example, they could have done no better than tell their audiences that



Homer too, the great author of the poetry they had just heard, or were about to hear, had been to visit them.<sup>71</sup> If some, or many, of the stories collected in the *Certamen* were invented by rhapsodes, it becomes extremely likely that they did actually compose some hexameters such as, for example, Homer's epitaph or the Hesiodic fr. 357. However, they crucially did not claim authorship for them but rather attributed them to Homer or Hesiod.

Plato's reasons for blurring the distinction between bards, poets and rhapsodes are different from those of the rhapsodes themselves, but seem to rely on rhapsodic stories. However, before looking at passages where Plato does blur the distinction, it is necessary briefly to mention others where he shows himself perfectly able to distinguish rhapsodes from composers. In fact, he fails to do so only in two passages; elsewhere he presents rhapsodes as standing in the same relationship to poets as actors to playwrights: both perform the works of others. For example, when he expands his primitive city in the second book of the *Republic*, he adds:

ποιηταί τε καὶ τούτων ὑπηρέται, ῥαψωδοί, ὑποκριταί, χορευταί . . .

poets and their attendants: rhapsodes, actors, chorus members . . . (*Republic* 373b7)

Many more passages where rhapsodes and actors stand on one side of the divide and poets and playwrights on the other could be quoted.<sup>72</sup> However, since they contribute little new information about rhapsodes, we had better turn directly to the two passages where bards and poets are likened to rhapsodes. One is to be found in Plato's great attack on poetry as *mimesis* in the tenth book of the *Republic*. One of the upshots of the theory that poetry is imitation of the sensible world is that it cannot teach anything about the things it portrays, since it is twice removed from truth. In claiming this, Plato argues against the well-established view that Homer is a great

<sup>71</sup> For the possibility that biographical narratives about Homer preceded epic recitation, see Velardi (1989). In ch. 2 I argue, on the basis of Griffith (1983), that these biographical introductions served to link the Homeric poems and their performers to a particular audience.

<sup>72</sup> For example, *Resp.* 3.395a8; also *Laws* 2.658b7–c1, *pace* Halliwell (1988) *ad* 600d6. Homer is said to compose the poetry rhapsodes perform, exactly as a playwright would be said to compose tragedies. For Homer as the author of rhapsodes' *prooimia*, cf. West (1981) 113 n. 6.



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work of all poets who, for this reason, cannot be considered educators. It should be noted that, just as in the *Certamen*, Plato falls short of saying that Homer is a rhapsode: he only goes as far as saying that he travelled and 'rhapsodised', that is, 'recited' his own poetry.

Just as Plato can find it expedient to blur the distinction between *rhapsodoi* and *poietai*, so too he occasionally fails to distinguish between *rhapsodoi* and *aoidoi*. Throughout the *Ion*, Plato's strategy is to assimilate Homer to rhapsodes, discredit the latter and thereby damage Homer. By suggesting extreme closeness between Ion and Homer, Plato flatters the rhapsode, who is unlikely to object, but actually presents both poet and rhapsode in an extremely unfavourable light. An example of this flattery is to be found at 533b–c, where Socrates points out that an expert in poetry must be able to talk competently about all four branches of *mousike*: *aule-sis*, *kitharisis*, *kitharodia*, *rhapsodia* and about their 'inventors': Olympus, Thamyris, Orpheus and the 'rhapsode' Phemius. This expert, moreover, must surely be competent also when it comes to the rhapsode Ion:

Ἄλλὰ μὲν, ὥς γ' ἐγὼ οἶμαι, οὐδ' ἐν αὐλήσει γε οὐδὲ ἐν κιθαρίσει οὐδὲ ἐν κιθαρωδίᾳ οὐδὲ ἐν ῥαψωδίᾳ οὐδεπώποτ' εἶδες ἄνδρα ὅστις περὶ μὲν Ὀλύμπου δεινός ἐστιν ἐξηγεῖσθαι ἢ περὶ Θαμύρου ἢ περὶ Ὀρφέως ἢ περὶ Φημίου τοῦ Ἰθακησίου ῥαψωδοῦ, περὶ δὲ Ἴωνος τοῦ Ἐφεσίου ἀπορεῖ καὶ οὐκ ἔχει συμβαλέσθαι ἅ τε εὖ ῥαψωδεῖ καὶ ἅ μὴ.

Yet, I think, if you take the art of playing the aulos, or the cithara, or singing to the cithara or the art of rhapsodes, you would never see a man who speaks impressively about Olympus, Thamyris, Orpheus or Phemius, the rhapsode from Ithaca, but is at a loss when it comes to Ion of Ephesus and cannot understand what he performs [*rhapsodei*] well and what he does not. (*Ion*, 533b7–c3)

As P. Murray points out, 'there is more than a little irony in comparing Ion with these great masters of the past'.<sup>74</sup> In order to include Ion in this list, Plato must suggest a closeness between him and the past masters. Thus, Phemius of Ithaca is called a rhapsode and Ion of Ephesus is added to the list just after him as a parallel case. The fact that Phemius is explicitly called a rhapsode not

<sup>74</sup> P. Murray (1996) *ad* 533c1.



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## Poets

I have so far focused on the word rhapsode and suggested that it indicated someone who is presented as performing the works of others. These others, I claimed, are called *poietai*, 'makers', from which the English word 'poet' derives. It is to the term *poietes* that I now turn. As was the case with *rhapsodos* and *rhapto*, *poietes* and *poieo* as referring to poetic activities also make a late appearance. *Poietes* is first attested in Herodotus, while Solon is the first extant author who uses a *poieo* compound to describe the activity of a 'poet' in the modern sense.<sup>78</sup> The relatively late appearance of the term *poietes* has, of course, been observed before, although, as was the case with *rhapsodos*, scholars continue to disagree as to the origin of this term and its meaning.

In 1900, Weil argued that the Greek term *poietes* indicated the maker of a poem as opposed to its performer and even suggested that 'author' constituted a better translation than 'poet'.<sup>79</sup> In more recent works, however, different explanations have been put forward. Svenbro connects the rise of the word *poietes* with the buying and selling of poems.<sup>80</sup> When Pindar and Simonides are paid by patrons for their poems, they become 'producers', *poietai*, and their 'products' are called *poiemata*. A simple objection to this view is that *poieo* and *poietes* are never linked to economic transactions in our early texts. Simonides, the greedy poet *par excellence*, is not also 'The *Poietes*' *par excellence*; as I argue below, that title is in fact reserved for Homer, who was never said to charge for his poems: if anything he was said to give them away as gifts.<sup>81</sup> In a forthcoming book on ancient literary criticism, Ford links the origin of the word *poietes* to the diffusion of written texts in the ancient world.<sup>82</sup> Again, he is open to similar objections to those made to Svenbro: as we shall see, the earliest sources in which *poietai* are mentioned do not link them to papyrus rolls or

<sup>78</sup> Solon, fr. 20 W, see also *Theognidea*, 771.

<sup>79</sup> Weil (1900) 243. I translate: 'In all these locutions, the Greek ποιητής should not be translated *poet* but *author*.'

<sup>80</sup> Svenbro (1976) 193–212.

<sup>81</sup> On Homer as 'The *Poietes*' see below, pp. 48; on Homer giving away his poems as gifts, see pp. 186–93.

<sup>82</sup> A. Ford (forthcoming).



inscribed tablets, but rather contrast them to choruses or rhapsodes who perform their work, or even to spokesmen who deliver in court speeches composed by others. Ford, however, is right in one important respect: the technical language which develops from the verb *poieo* and its derivatives is appropriate to describe and discuss works that are made once and for all and can then either be performed and re-performed or read from a written record: the emphasis is on composition as separate from performance or, indeed, reading.

Given the controversy which surrounds the word *poietes*, it is necessary to turn to the ancient texts. It is in the first place useful to observe that the verb *poieo* is employed to describe the making of artefacts long before it is connected to poetry or other verbal expressions.<sup>83</sup> It seems to me that these earlier uses support my thesis that *poieo* and *poietes* are closely linked to the concept of authorship. In seventh- and especially sixth-century inscriptions on vases, we find that the artefact declares the name of its maker: for example, *Αμασις μ εποίησεν*.<sup>84</sup> It should be noted that the vase itself performs the line: 'the absent author made me'. In poetry, unlike pottery, the maker and the performer can coincide in the figure of the *aoidos*. The verb *poieo* and its cognate *poietes* become relevant when the performer, or the reader, evokes the absent author. This, I submit, is the reason why *poieo* is used for makers of pottery far earlier than it is used for makers of poetry.

The earliest text in which the verb *poieo* is used in connection with what we would call poetry is an elegy in which Solon asks Mimnermus to alter a line he has composed:

(‘ἔξηκονταῖτη μοῖρα κίχοι θανάτου.’)  
 ἀλλ’ εἴ μοι καὶ νῦν ἔτι πείσεαι, ἔξελε τοῦτο –  
 μηδὲ μέγαιρ’, ὅτι σέο λῶιον ἔπεφρασάμην –  
 καὶ μεταποίησον Λιγιστάδῃ, ὧδε δ’ αἶειδε·  
 ‘ὀγδωκονταῖτη μοῖρα κίχοι θανάτου’.

<sup>83</sup> This fact alone should make scholars hesitate before they equate the making of Achilles' shield in *Iliad* 18 to the activities of the bard. This analogy has become common in recent scholarship, see Taplin (1980), Stanley (1993), and Becker (1995).

<sup>84</sup> See R. Cook (1997) 243–5, with further bibliography at 353f.; and Osborne (1998) 88–90.



‘May death catch me when I am sixty.’ Come, if you are going to listen to me this time too, take out that part – do not be offended if I suggest something better than you – change that [*metapoieson*], Ligiastades, and sing this: ‘May death catch me when I am eighty.’ (Solon, fr. 20 W)

Solon distinguishes two different stages in the reworking of Mimnermus’ poem: first, the text should be altered, then the new version should be performed. The verbs used to describe these different phases are of crucial importance for the present argument: *μεταποιέω* (*metapoieo*, ‘to make something different’) refers to composition as separate from performance, which is described with the verb *aeido*: ‘and sing this . . .’.<sup>85</sup> Later texts in which the verb *poieo* or its compounds are used also imply a distinction between composition and performance: we have already seen how in the *Certamen* the verb *poieo* is contrasted to *rhapsodeo*, which denotes the performance of a song after it has been composed.<sup>86</sup> When the performers are not rhapsodes, the verb *poieo* is often contrasted with *aeido*, ‘to sing’. Here is another example:

καὶ γὰρ ἀγείρειν σφι τὰς γυναῖκας, ἐπονομαζούσας τὰ οὐνόματα ἐν τῷ ὕμνῳ, τὸν σφι Ὡλήν ἀνὴρ Λύκιος ἐποίησε, παρὰ δὲ σφέων μαθόντας νησιώτας τε καὶ Ἴωνας ὑμνέειν Ὡπὶν τε καὶ Ἀργὴν ὀνομάζοντάς τε καὶ ἀγείροντας (οὗτος δὲ ὁ Ὡλήν καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους τοὺς παλαιοὺς ὕμνους ἐποίησε ἐκ Λυκίης ἐλθὼν τοὺς ἀειδομένους ἐν Δήλῳ).

... and the women collected offerings for them, and sung their names in the hymn that Olen, a man from Lycia, composed [*epoiese*] for them; the people from the islands and the Ionians learned from them to sing Opis and Arge naming them and collecting offerings for them. (This Olen, who arrived from Lycia, also composed [*epoiese*] the other ancient hymns that are sung [*aeidomenous*] on Delos.) (Herodotus, 4.35.3)

Here too the verb *poieo* is used to describe the composition of hymns that are then performed by others. These others are not rhapsodes, but choruses of Delian women, islanders and mainland Ionians. Accordingly, they do not ‘rhapsodise’, but sing. There are other passages in Herodotus where the verb *poieo* denotes composition as separate and prior to performance.<sup>87</sup> It is therefore

<sup>85</sup> Another early passage in which the verb *ποιέω* is used to describe composition is *Theognidea* 771: here too it refers to composing something different and new.

<sup>86</sup> See *Cert.* 55–7 and 286f. quoted above, p. 35.

<sup>87</sup> See, for example, Hdt. 1.23; 6.21.2.



not surprising that the noun *poietes* is used by Herodotus to describe makers of poems – poems which continue to be known in future generations as products of a particular ‘maker’:

Ἡσίοδον γάρ καὶ Ὅμηρον ἡλικίην τετρακοσίοισι ἔτεσι δοκέω μὲν πρεσβυτέρους γενέσθαι καὶ οὐ πλέοσι. οὗτοι δὲ εἰσι οἱ ποιήσαντες θεογονίην Ἑλλήσι καὶ τοῖσι θεοῖσι τὰς ἐπωνυμίας δόντες καὶ τιμάς τε καὶ τέχνας διελόντες καὶ εἶδεα αὐτῶν σημῆναντες. οἱ δὲ πρότερον ποιηταὶ λεγόμενοι τούτων τῶν ἀνδρῶν γενέσθαι ὕστερον, ἔμοιγε δοκέειν, ἐγένοντο.

I believe that Hesiod and Homer lived 400 years before my time and not more. It is they who made [*poiesantes*] the theogony for the Greeks. They gave epithets to the gods, defined their due honours and spheres of expertise and described their appearance. It seems to me that the poets [*poietai*] who are said to have lived before those men in fact came later. (Herodotus, 2.53.2f.)

This is the earliest passage in which the noun *poietes* is attested, and it is important that what the poets Homer and Hesiod have made, that is, the theogony of the gods, remains the same in Herodotus’ own time as it was in theirs. Whether this is because their poems are performed again and again by rhapsodes or because they are written down or, as is most likely, for both reasons Herodotus does not say, but in any case we are not far removed from the concept of authorship.

If we look at other texts in which the word *poietes* is used, we see that it tends to appear in two related contexts: it is typically used to distinguish authors from performers, and to discuss particular features of poems which were created once and for all, that is, features which do not depend on particular performances. We have already seen that the word *poietes* is used by Herodotus when he deals with either of these themes. Other examples can be given. Most significantly, the expression ποιητῆς λόγων, a *poietes* of speeches, is repeatedly used in order to make a distinction between the author of a speech and the person who delivers it.<sup>88</sup> This choice of words suggests that the distinction between author and performer is perhaps more fundamental to the meaning of the term *poietes* than any link with poetry.

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, Plato *Euthd.* 305b8 and Isocrates 15.192, cf. LSJ *sub voce* ποιητῆς II.2.



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to create the image of the 'first rhapsode' he resorts to Phemius, who is an *aoidos* in the *Odyssey*. Otherwise Homer is simply called 'the Maker'. Throughout Greek literature, if the expression ὁ ποιητής is not accompanied by a proper name, it invariably refers to Homer.<sup>99</sup> The difference is one of perspective: the word *aoidos* belongs to the distant world described in epic poetry, the word *poietes* points towards the relationship between maker and performer as well as to what was made by the poet once and for all, for example, 'the theogony and the epithets for the gods'.<sup>100</sup>

We do not know when the name Homer was first connected to epic poems like the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, or the *Thebaid*. It is possible that a historical *aoidos* was particularly valued and that other *aoidoi* thought it useful to claim that they were reciting his poems: by doing so, they would have begun to make the distinction between makers and performers which is expressed by the words *poietes* and *rhapsodos*. If this were so, then the emergence of Homer would not only be connected to the gradual distinction between composers and performers, but would also speak of the special recognition accorded to a particular historical bard. This is, however, by no means a necessary conclusion. It is also possible to suppose, with Foley, that Homer is the name of a mythical best *aoidos* or *poietes*, whom everyone recognises as pre-eminent but nobody has ever met: there are parallels for a mythical 'best poet' invoked by real-life bards in other oral traditions.<sup>101</sup> I shall return to these possibilities in the next chapter, when discussing the name 'Homer'. For the time being it is important to note that by the time the name Homer first appears in our sources the distinction between author and performer is already in place. Homer emerges when the performer evokes the absent author.

We may well ask, at this point, why the rhapsodes should claim to be performing the work of someone else, even in cases where ancient and modern readers actually suspected them of having composed what they present as the work of Homer or Hesiod. Travelling and professionalism provide an initial answer to this question.

<sup>99</sup> See, for example, Plato *Grg.* 485d5f.; Aristotle *Rh.* 1380b28; Teles p. 25 Hense; Polybius. 12.21.3; Strabo 1.1.10.

<sup>100</sup> Hdt. 2.53, quoted above, p. 44.

<sup>101</sup> See Foley (1999), chapter 2.



Unlike Demodocus, the rhapsodes are not well-known members of a particular community, but travelling professionals.<sup>102</sup> It is therefore important that they rely on a well-known, Panhellenic name, a name they all invoke in order to attract crowds to their performances. It has been argued that travelling doctors similarly use the name of their 'forefather' Asclepius as a passport and guarantee for their profession abroad.<sup>103</sup> The Panhellenic character of Homeric poetry, the fact that it is not linked to a particular place, audience or occasion but remains the same wherever it is performed should, in other words, be linked to the rhapsodes' claim to be performing the work of Homer.

The emergence of the *poietai* Homer can also be connected to the circulation of texts of the Homeric poems. As Barthes points out in the passage with which I started, the written text necessarily separates author from work, and therefore potentially draws attention to the absent author. Yet it must be said that archaic and classical sources singularly fail to focus on written texts of the Homeric poems. In fact, their lack of interest constitutes a severe, if sometimes underestimated, limitation to any modern attempt at establishing when, why and by whom the Homeric poems were written down; let alone what effect that process may have had on the 'invention of Homer'.<sup>104</sup> It is generally assumed, however, that the rhapsodes' claim to be performing the very words of Homer should be linked to the production and circulation of written texts.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>102</sup> There is one passage in the *Odyssey*, 17.382–7, which mentions the possibility that singers may travel. However, on the whole, the singers depicted in the Homeric poems are much more stationary than later reciters of epic. See Dalby (1995) 270: 'All that the *Odyssey* allows (in a single passage of reported speech) is that, as compared to beggars, singers were among people who could be confident of a welcome if they moved. The thrust of this may be compared with that of a parallel remark on craftsmen in the Syriac text of *Ecclesiasticus*, "Even when they live in a foreign place, they do not need to starve."'

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, E. and L. Edelstein (1945) vol. II, 53–64.

<sup>104</sup> Because of the silence of Greek sources, attempts at establishing when, how and by whom the Homeric poems were written down must, I believe, be based on comparative evidence. Various different comparisons can be brought to bear on the problem: South Slavic epic has been a favourite, but the Near Eastern material collected in West (1997) ch. 12 would, I believe, also provide an interesting parallel. Because different comparisons can be suggested and very different models developed, it would be dangerous to argue for a dogmatic view of how the poems must have been written down.

<sup>105</sup> This assumption is shared across a wide spectrum of scholarly approaches. Two examples: T. Allen (1924); and Burkert (1987).

## Conclusion

If we turn to the question with which we started, we may now be in a better position to establish when and, within limits, why an interest in the poet Homer began to develop. It stands to reason that, since the rhapsodes insist that they are performing the poems composed by Homer 'the Maker', audiences begin to be curious about this Homer. It is noteworthy that the rhapsodes are typically said to tell stories about his life and person. For example, the Homeridae, who are presented in our sources as a guild of Homeric rhapsodes based in Chios,<sup>106</sup> tell stories about Homer's life (Plato, *Republic* 599e5f.; Isocrates *Helen* 10.65). In fact, as will become apparent in the course of this book, a lot of the material in the *Certamen* and in the *Lives of Homer* can be read as rhapsodic answers to the questions of their public: where did Homer come from? when did he live? why is he important? did Homer come to our city?

Ion too claims to be able to say many beautiful things about Homer. Yet he also reminds us that rhapsodes did not have a monopoly on the life and poetry of Homer. As we shall see, other groups and individuals defined their activity with respect to Homer and thereby influenced our image of Homer and of the Homeric poems. Stories about Homer naturally emerge from the separation between author and performer, but they are not created only by the rhapsodes.

In conclusion, it is precisely when, according to Barthes, 'a fact is *narrated* [...] intransitively',<sup>107</sup> that the figure of Homer acquires significance and becomes an important element of the reception of the Homeric poems. Depictions of Homer were dictated by the particular circumstances in which a story concerning his life was told, by the needs of a particular audience and of those who told the story: it is for this reason that it constitutes important evidence for the reception of the poems. Moreover, as will become clear in the course of the next chapters, it is precisely this ability of the legend of Homer to be constantly re-invented that makes it lasting and influential.

<sup>106</sup> On the Homeridae, see pp. 208–17.

<sup>107</sup> Barthes (1977) 142.



## HOMER'S NAME AND HIS PLACE OF ORIGIN

and *O* was the conch-shell's invocation, *mer* was  
 both mother and sea in our Antillean patois,  
*os*, a grey bone, and the white surf as it crashes  
 and spreads its sibilant collar on a lace shore.  
 Omeros was the crunch of dry leaves, and the washes  
 that echoed from a cave-mouth when the tide has ebbed.

Derek Walcott, *Omeros* 1.2.3

As we have seen, the Homeric Question was originally formulated, at least in part, as a reaction against the biographical traditions about Homer. Wolf, who is traditionally presented as the founding father of modern Homeric scholarship, declared his project to be entirely different from that of Homer's biographers.<sup>1</sup> His attempt at emancipation was wittily undermined by Goethe, who answered Wolf's *Prolegomena ad Homerum* with his macabre couplet *Der Wolfische Homer*:<sup>2</sup>

Sieben Städte zankten sich drum, ihn geboren zu haben;  
 Nun da der Wolf ihn zerriß, nehme sich jede ihr Stück.

Seven cities squabbled over which one gave birth to him;  
 now that Wolf tore him apart, let each of them get a piece.

With elegant irreverence, Goethe puts his finger on several issues at the heart of the present investigation. Leaving aside the pun on Wolf's name, we may also want to notice the equivocation on the name 'Homer': while both Wolf and the ancient biographical tradition use it, the name clearly has different meanings. This fluctuation

<sup>1</sup> Wolf (1831) 145; cf. p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Goethe (1953) 478, reacting to the *Prolegomena ad Homerum*, for which see Wolf (1985). Other poems which ridiculed Wolf's name and his Homeric studies were published at the time: see Markner and Veltri (1999) 18.

in the meaning of the word Homer, while creating opportunities for humour, also generated, and continues to generate, genuine misunderstandings, some of which I try to dispel in the course of this book. At the same time, and perhaps more interestingly, Goethe also suggests an uncanny parallel between the ancient biographical tradition and the most up-to-date Homeric scholarship: there have always been many different Homers. In my view, the continuity between ancient and modern representations of Homer has been systematically minimised in contemporary scholarship.

### Modern approaches

Modern debates on the meaning of the name 'Homer' can be used as a perfect illustration of this wilful neglect of ancient sources. Generally speaking, explanations for the name Homer mirror with exceptional precision current views about the nature and composition of the Homeric poems. We have seen that while some scholars approach Homeric poetry as a poetic movement in which a vast number of singers took part, and which gradually reached a stage of fixation, others insist on the contribution of one (or two) exceptional bard(s) to the final composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The name 'Homer' has been viewed from both these angles. On the one hand, there is an important tradition – beginning with Welcker and extending to Durante and Nagy – which etymologises the name 'Homer' so as to show that it does not refer to an individual at all, but rather speaks of the composition of the poems as a collective effort. Welcker derives 'Homer' from ὁμοῦ and ἀραρίσκω and translates it as 'compiler' (*Zusammenfüger*); Durante and Nagy likewise derive the name from the root \*ἄρ-; the translation proposed by Nagy is 'he who fits [the song] together'.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, there are scholars who insist that the name cannot be easily etymologised and claim that it is the proper name of a

<sup>3</sup> Welcker (1865–82) vol. 1, 121; Durante (1957); and Nagy (1979) 297–300. West (1999) also argues that Homer is a fictional name deriving from the root \*ἄρ-. Birt (1932) and Deroy (1972) connect the name to the verb ὁμῆσαι, but reach similar conclusions. See, for example, Deroy (1972) 436 who concludes Homer is not an author.



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### The name Homer

Homer's name is famously absent from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Even more drastically, there is no anonymous reference, or *sphragis*, to him in these two poems. The only passages in which the poet's voice emerges directly are the much-discussed cases of apostrophe,<sup>7</sup> where the poet addresses some gods (the Muses and Apollo) and some characters (Patroclus, Menelaus, Melanippus, Achilles and Eumaeus) in the second person; even so, these passages do not reveal the identity of the narrator, but rather establish a privileged relationship between the poet and some gods traditionally associated with poetry, as well as some characters on whom, according to some ancient and modern readers, the poet bestows particular sympathy.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, while the *Odyssey* certainly implicates the poet's voice in the narration,<sup>9</sup> it does not focus on the identity and name of the poet in the same way as it focuses, say, on those of Odysseus. While the narrator's voice in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is a highly self-conscious one,<sup>10</sup> it remains strictly anonymous. The name Homer is not only never mentioned but also never hinted at in the Homeric poems.

Various explanations for this absence have been put forward. Most recently, Stein has argued that the lack of references to the poet in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* speaks for the poems' antiquity and their origins in the oral tradition.<sup>11</sup> In an argument that follows

<sup>7</sup> See Yamagata (1989), who quotes earlier discussions of the phenomenon. Curiously, she excludes the Muses, but not Apollo, from her discussion of apostrophe.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Schol. T *ad Il.* 4.127 and Schol. bT *ad Il.* 16.787; Eustathius vol. 1, p. 716.1–8 and vol. 3, pp. 931.18–932.1 van der Valk. Some modern critics propose similar explanations; see A. Parry (1972) and Block (1982). I do not think that sympathy can account for all instances of apostrophe to human characters. A comprehensive explanation is yet to be found.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Goldhill (1991) ch. 1, who quotes further bibliography at 57 n. 98.

<sup>10</sup> A vast number of works have focused on the self-awareness of the narrator in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. I can only quote a limited sample of various different approaches: Marg (1957), Detienne (1996), and Macleod (1983) on views about poetry expressed in the poems; Hainsworth (1970), Jensen (1980), M. Edwards (1987), and Ford (1992) on self-consciousness and oral technique; Pratt (1993), and E. Bowie (1993) on lies and fiction; de Jong (1987), S. Richardson (1990), and de Jong (1997) for narratological analyses.

<sup>11</sup> Stein (1990).



closely an approach proposed by Snell,<sup>12</sup> Stein claims that at the time in which the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were composed, the subjectivity of the poet had not yet been 'discovered': its discovery, she argues, dates to the literate age of Hesiod and the lyric poets. There are several major flaws with this argument. In the first place, Stein's assumptions about 'oral poetry' are ill-founded: some oral poets are very possessive of their songs and include their name in their poems.<sup>13</sup> But there are two more specific problems with her view. In the first place, several scholars have persuasively argued that many forms of lyric poetry are at least as old as hexameter epic.<sup>14</sup> The metre of Stesichorus' *Thebaid*, for example, suggests that hexameter poetry may have developed from lyric metres.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, it seems clear that different authorial stances are appropriate to different genres; for example, the poetic 'I' is much more prominent in lyric than in heroic epic.<sup>16</sup> It thus seems that we cannot construct a simple model in which the poetic 'I' is discovered at some point after the composition of the Homeric poems, say, by Hesiod and the lyric poets; or even a model in which epic predates lyric.

These objections are serious enough, but there is yet another important detail which Stein does not take into account. As De Martino points out, the view that Homer never refers to himself in his poems only emerges in late antiquity, when his name becomes exclusively associated with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>17</sup> As the discussion later in this chapter shows, in the archaic and classical period Homer is considered to be the author of texts where he is thought to refer to himself, for example the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and the *Margites*. For this reason, we need to ask ourselves why it is that, although anonymity allegedly speaks of primitive

<sup>12</sup> Snell (1953).

<sup>13</sup> Finnegan (1977) devotes 201–6 to the question: 'Are oral poets anonymous?', and summarises her answer at 201: 'no'.

<sup>14</sup> Dover (1964); West (1973); Nagy (1974); A. Bowie (1981). See also Fowler (1987).

<sup>15</sup> See Haslam (1978).

<sup>16</sup> There are distinctions also within epic or lyric. Archilochus, for example, adopts different *personae* in iambus and elegy: his adventures with Lycambes and his daughters, for example, are not mentioned in his elegiac poems. Cf. West (1974) and E. Bowie (1986).

<sup>17</sup> De Martino (1982).



lack of awareness, Homer's oeuvre is only gradually restricted to anonymous works.

A promising starting point to tackle the problems outlined here is suggested by Griffith in an article where, in the course of a discussion of the autobiographical references in the Hesiodic poems, he proposes an explanation for the absence of Homer from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>18</sup> His main contention is that 'where there is an ἐγώ, we generally find a σὺ'.<sup>19</sup> In other words, he sees the introduction of the poetic 'I' as strictly bound with the presence of a 'you' addressed by the poet: autobiographical references thus become a means of specifying the poet's relationship to a particular audience or addressee.<sup>20</sup> As far as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are concerned, his position is clear: 'The reason Homer does not mention his own name or introduce his personality into the narrative is simply that his audience and the occasion for his song are never specified. It is not that he lacks self-awareness. On the contrary, he is a highly self-conscious artist.'<sup>21</sup> Griffith does not dwell on this point, but his careful readings of the Hesiodic poems, the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and Theognis' *Sphragis* suggest that, at least in those poems, the poet's persona is tailored to the audience(s) to whom the poems are addressed. As far as Homer is concerned, his suggestion needs to be pursued a little further. While he is certainly right to point out that the audience of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and the occasion for their performance are never specified, it remains to be seen whether this is likely to be the reason why the poet's name and biography are absent from the poems.

If we look at the earliest sources in which the name Homer does appear, we see that the poet is often described in relation to his audience. In fr. 42, Heraclitus argues that Homer should be thrown out of the *agones*, thus clearly placing the poet in a performative context.<sup>22</sup> In [Hesiod], fr. 357, we see Homer together with the poetic 'I', identified as Hesiod's, singing hymns in Delos.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Griffith (1983).      <sup>19</sup> Griffith (1983) 42.

<sup>20</sup> Durante (1957) 94 also explains the anonymity of epic as a generic feature.

<sup>21</sup> Griffith (1983) 46.      <sup>22</sup> Quoted at p. 29.      <sup>23</sup> Quoted at p. 33.



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earliest extant sources in which the name Homer appears, also use Homer in order to define their more exclusive and superior position.

In the extant fragments of Xenophanes, Homer is never linked to a specific audience or place, and this is what makes it possible for Xenophanes to present himself as shaking the beliefs of all the Greeks. At the same time, this conception of Homer may also protect Xenophanes from charges of impiety: he is not attacking any gods of local cult, but Homer's Panhellenic ones, which belong at the same time to everyone and no one in particular. Xenophanes can thus present himself simultaneously as pious in his ritual behaviour (see fr. 1 DK) and extremely critical of Homer's anthropomorphic and immoral gods.<sup>30</sup> Xenophanes' presentation of himself as the critic of the universal Homer, however, can all too easily be turned against him. Thus in Plutarch's *Sayings of Kings and Commanders* 175c, 'Hiero' presents Xenophanes' influence as extremely circumscribed in comparison to Homer's:

πρὸς δὲ Ξενοφάνην τὸν Κολοφώνιον εἰπόντα μόλις οἰκέτας δύο τρέφειν· ἄλλ' Ὅμηρος· εἶπεν, ὃν σὺ διασύρεις, πλείονας ἢ μυρίους τρέφει τεθνηκώς.

But when Xenophanes of Colophon said he could hardly feed two slaves, he [Hiero] said to him: 'You hardly feed two house slaves, whereas Homer, whom you mock, nourishes thousands after his death.' (Xenophanes A 11 DK)

The wordplay seems to be on the meaning of 'to nourish' (τρέφειν), which is used in a literal sense by Xenophanes, whereas in the case of Homer it indicates nourishment of the spirit.

Heraclitus' attitude to Homer is in many ways similar to that of Xenophanes. He too depicts him as a universal authority. In fr. 56 DK, he calls Homer the 'wisest of the Greeks' and proceeds to tell the anecdote of the lice in order to show that even this most wise poet could not solve the most obvious of riddles:

ἐξηπάτηνται, φησίν, οἱ ἄνθρωποι πρὸς τὴν γνῶσιν τῶν φανερῶν παραπλησίως Ὅμηρῳ, ὃς ἐγένετο τῶν Ἑλλήνων σοφώτερος πάντων.

<sup>30</sup> Liz Irwin suggested to me the possibility that Xenophanes' attitude towards the local gods of cult may be very different from his treatment of Homeric religion.





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when we explore the connection between the name 'Homer' and the texts attributed to him.

### Homer's name and his place of origin

While the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Simonides and Pindar yield a consistent picture of Homer as a universal authority equidistant from all possible audiences, another group of texts attempts to establish particular connections between Homer and certain places or groups of people. In many ways, these texts are less straightforward than those considered so far. To begin with, while they never mention Homer by name, they are not as silent about the poet's identity as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are. They use periphrases, hints and riddles which may or may not be read as references to Homer. It is in fact impossible to be absolutely confident that one is correctly identifying all the texts that are alluding to Homer in riddles and hints. What I propose to do here, therefore, is to look at three texts which seem to allude to Homer and connect him with a particular place or audience. I begin with the least controversial of these controversial texts, the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, and proceed to discuss the *Margites*, and the *Homeric Hymn to Artemis* 9. These texts often present rather intricate problems; my own treatment is, accordingly, detailed; however, at pp. 77–9 I offer some more general considerations.

The address by the speaking voice to the chorus of girls in the *Hymn to Apollo* has been the object of much controversy both in antiquity and in modern times. Throughout the centuries, many have felt sure that the blind man described in the hymn is Homer, but the text falls short of mentioning his name:

ἀλλ' ἄγεθ' ἱλήκοι μὲν Ἀπόλλων Ἀρτέμιδι ξύν,  
χαίρετε δ' ὑμεῖς πᾶσαι ἐμείο δὲ καὶ μετόπισθε  
μνήσασθ', ὅππότε κέν τις ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων  
ἐνθάδ' ἀνείρηται ξείνος ταλαπείριος ἐλθών·  
'ὦ κοῦραι, τίς δ' ὑμῖν ἀνὴρ ἥδιστος ἀοιδῶν  
ἐνθάδε πωλεῖται, καὶ τέφ' τέρπεσθε μάλιστα;  
ὑμεῖς δ' εὖ μάλα πᾶσαι ὑποκρίνασθ' εὐφήμεως·  
'τυφλὸς ἀνὴρ, οἴκει δὲ Χίῳ ἐνὶ παιπαλοέσση,  
τοῦ πᾶσαι μετόπισθεν ἀριστεύουσιν ἀοιδαί.'

Now come, let Apollo together with Artemis be propitious; and may all you girls fare well and remember me also in future; whenever one of the human beings who live on earth comes here as a guest, after much suffering, and asks: 'Maidens, of those who come here, who, in your judgement, is the sweetest singer, which one did you find most pleasing?', answer all together, well and propitiously: 'A blind man, he lives in rocky Chios, and all his poems will be the best forever.' (*Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, 165–73)<sup>31</sup>

The description of the best poet at lines 172f. tallies remarkably well with traditional representations of Homer. Simonides, for example, calls the author of *Iliad* 6.146 a 'Chian man' (Χῖος ἀνὴρ) at 19.1 W; and Stesichorus, it seems, referred to Homer's blindness.<sup>32</sup> Line 173 also suggests Homer: we are told that all the poems of the singer in question will be the best forever. As Burkert rightly points out, line 173 is 'the clearest expression in epic diction of the notion of a classic [...] This is meant to be Homer.'<sup>33</sup>

That lines 172f. can be read as a reference to Homer is in fact confirmed by various ancient sources.<sup>34</sup> The earliest and most important one is Thucydides. At 3.104, he uses the hymn as evidence for an ancient Panionian festival, and tells us that the Athenians revived this festival in 426 BC. He appropriately quotes lines 146–50 of the hymn, where we are told that the Ionians, together with their children and wives, went to the festival and that there was a boxing competition, as well as dancing and song. These lines would be enough to prove Thucydides' point that there was such a festival; but the historian does not stop here: he also wants to prove that it was Homer who performed the hymn at the Panionian festival. The Athenians, he claims, revived a festival at which Homer himself had performed:

τὸν γὰρ Δηλιακὸν χορὸν τῶν γυναικῶν ὑμνήσας ἐτελεύτα τοῦ ἐπαίνου ἐς τάδε τὰ ἔπη, ἐν οἷς καὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπεμνήσθη...

Having celebrated the chorus of Delian women he concluded his praise with these lines, in which he also mentioned himself... (Thucydides 3.104.5)

<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of the text of line 171, see pp. 65.

<sup>32</sup> See pp. 147–50. <sup>33</sup> Burkert (1987) 55.

<sup>34</sup> Scholia to the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 172; Aelius Aristides 34.35; *Cert.* 315–21. Theocritus calls Homer a 'Chian bard' at 7.47 and 22.218; cf. Schol. Theocr. ad 22.218. There seem to be interesting links between Simonides' view of Homer as the 'Chian man', fr. 19.1–2 W, and Thucydides' discussion of Homer at 3.104, see pp. 222–4.



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name at the end of line 171: 'If someone asks who the best singer is, answer . . . "Ella Fitzgerald"': however, a name is precisely what we do not get. Wilamowitz's expectation of a name was in fact so strong that it inspired his explanation of the textual problem: originally, he argued, the end of line 171 contained a name ("Ομηρος, we may add, fits the metre) but the name was then suppressed, leading to different alternatives.<sup>44</sup>

To summarise: the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* refers to the best singer of all time and links him to two particular places, Chios and Delos, and to a group of privileged addressees, the chorus of Delian girls. The poem, in other words, specifies its audience and context of performance; and comes close to revealing the identity of its first person, or someone closely associated with the first person, in the form of the riddle. If we choose to solve the riddle as Thucydides did, Homer is no longer the anonymous poet *par excellence*, but boastfully refers to himself. Yet, this conclusion was eventually rejected by others. As we have seen in chapter 1, the scholia to *Nemean* 2.1 claim that a rhapsode called Cynaethus actually composed the hymn and then tried to pass it off as the work of Homer by inserting that ever controversial riddle of lines 172f. It seems that the harder a poem tries to be Homeric the less likely it is to be universally accepted as such.

It is possible that the opening of the *Margites*, a comic poem about the most foolish of men, works in a similar way to the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 172f.: here too we have a poem that was sometimes attributed to Homer, and a riddling reference to an unnamed singer within it. Unfortunately, the state of our evidence concerning this poem is far from satisfactory, but some general points can, I think, be made. The poem opens with the description of a divine poet:<sup>45</sup>

ἦλθέ τις εἰς Κολοφῶνα γέρων καὶ θεῖος ἀοιδός,  
Μουσάων θεράπων καὶ ἔκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος,  
φίλαις ἔχων ἐν χερσὶν εὐφρογγον λύρην.

<sup>44</sup> Wilamowitz (1916b) 368, 453.

<sup>45</sup> Fr. 1 W = Pap. Anon. in Fackelmann 6, discussed by Kramer (1979), and Atilius Fortunatianus, *Gramm. Lat.* 6.286.2 = fr. Berol., *ib.* 633.27. This fragment is quoted in order to show that Homer was the first iambic poet. Editors tend to mark fr. 1 as the beginning of the poem.



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