

# NEW TRENDS IN HOMERIC SCHOLARSHIP

## HOMER'S NAME, UNDERWORLD AND LYRIC VOICE

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RIASSUNTO: L'articolo presenta un saggio di alcune fra le tendenze che più hanno rinnovato gli studi omerici negli ultimi anni e che più possono interessare anche i non specialisti. Nel quadro del rinnovato interesse per la "storicità" dei poemi, favorita da nuove scoperte archeologiche e da una migliore conoscenza degli stretti rapporti fra epica greca e tradizioni vicino-orientali, Andrea Debiasi propone una convincente interpretazione del nome di Omero, che indica in lui il "performer-agonista" per eccellenza e ne proietta la biografia fantastica sullo sfondo delle guerre che segnarono l'Eubea in età arcaica. Quello che in Omero è chiaramente fuori dalla carta geografica e dal tempo storico è invece oggetto dello studio di George Gazis, dedicato all'Ade: un mondo invisibile agli stessi dèi, sottratto al tempo allo spazio e quindi luogo di incubazione per la consapevole invenzione, anche poetica – negli studi recenti, il ritorno della "storia" è andato di pari passo con la tendenza opposta ma perfettamente compatibile di ritrovare nei poemi una giustapposizione continua e sistematica fra *realia* e rappresentazioni simboliche. Infine, Cecilia Nobili mostra che l'epica omerica presuppone l'esistenza di generi poetici, come l'elegia, che sono attestati solo in epiche più tarde: dire che la lirica nasce da un confronto oppositivo con l'epica si rivela quindi non più vero del suo contrario, e la svolta "soggettiva" spesso attribuita all'epica ellenistica e poi romana ha in realtà un saldo ancoraggio nello stesso Omero.

PAROLE CHIAVE: Achille, Ade, elegia, Esiodo, Eubea, Odisseo, Omero, simposio

ABSTRACT: This paper hosts three case-studies that are meant to be representative of paradigm-shifting trends in Homeric Studies and to cater to specialists and non-specialists alike. Boosted by new archaeological findings and by an increased awareness of Homer's Near-Eastern entanglements, the "historicity" of the poems has regained centre stage. Against this backdrop, Andrea Debiasi develops a persuasive interpretation of Homer's name, whose meaning points to the performative-agonistic dimension of Homeric poetry in the context of the clashes that characterized Euboia in the archaic age. By contrast, George Gazis focuses on the one aspect of the Homeric world that cannot possibly be mapped onto space and history, namely Hades. The underworld is unfathomable even for the gods, which accounts for its potential as a trigger of poetic invention. No less than Debiasi's, this approach resonates with recent scholarship: a return to "history" is often complemented by an opposite, but fully compatible, "symbolic" trend, which has unraveled the systematic juxtaposition, in Homer's world, between "history" and symbolic constructs. Finally, Cecilia Nobili shows that Homeric epics builds on pre-existing poetic genres such as elegy, although the earliest extant examples of the latter date to a later time. The claim that lyric poetry emerges through a confrontation with epics, then, is no less plausible than its opposite. One more important consequence of Nobili's approach is that the "subjective" turn scholars have long recognized in Hellenistic and Roman epics is in fact firmly grounded in Homer himself.

KEY-WORDS: Achilles, elegy, Euboea, Hades, Hesiod, Homer, Odysseus, symposium

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1. INTRODUCTION (*Andrea Capra*)

It gives me a great pleasure to contribute a few introductory thoughts to the inaugural issue of «AOQU». My perspective is that of a Hellenist with an interest in the reception of Homer, though the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are not among my primary research areas. Needless to say, any Hellenist (and perhaps any classicist or, to put it grandly, anyone interested in the “Western tradition”) must, to some extent, “know their Homer”. My aim, here, is to touch on a few major innovations in the field of Homeric scholarship and, more importantly, to introduce three case-studies by three brilliant and imaginative scholars, with a view to showcasing the vibrant vitality of Homeric studies and the importance of new research for related fields as well as, indeed, for the long-term history of the epic genre.

Homeric studies are as thriving as ever, but it is not the kind of “incremental” knowledge, as it emerges on an almost daily basis, that can catch the attention of non-Homerists. Rather, it is paradigm-shifting work that is bound to have an impact beyond Homeric scholarship and reposition research in related fields. My curiosity and relatively mature age mean that the range of my own interests – lyric poetry, Plato, Attic comedy, the Greek novel as well as, more generally, Greek civilization and its reception – is broad enough to be affected in multiple ways by a number of new perspectives that have emerged in the last few decades in the field of Homeric studies.

Some of the exciting 20<sup>th</sup> century new perspectives on Homer were of course already available when I was learning Greek and Greek literature as a high-school student. Yet the classes and handbooks I remember – and I know this was (and in many ways still is) a common experience – were very much focused on the tortuous ramifications of the Homeric question. Combined with an intimidating emphasis on Homer's primacy and unshakably canonic status, as well as with an inability to engage with the most recent and exciting developments of Homeric scholarship, this approach

often backfired, resulting in a depressing effect on students and prospective scholars. While Milman Parry and the discovery of Homer's oral(istic?) composition techniques were (and are) duly mentioned at the end of a painstaking survey of the Homeric question, students were (and are) often left in the dark about their consequences for our understanding of the epic tradition as well as about other equally important discoveries. As a result, recent and valuable scholarship still has a rather limited impact on the perception and consumption of Homeric poetry, both in terms of general readership and, perhaps more alarmingly, among classical scholars. As Johannes Haubold nicely puts it:<sup>1</sup>

Harold Bloom could declare in *A Map of Misreading*: «Everyone who now reads and writes in the West [...] is still a son or daughter of Homer». Yet, an imaginary genealogy of Western literature, with “father Homer” at its head, is not the only possible way of approaching Greek epic. In fact, the twentieth century saw two major developments in the study of the genre that challenge us to look beyond the view summarized in the quotation by Bloom. First, Milman Parry and his student Albert Lord laid the foundations for the study of Greek epic as one tradition of oral poetry among other comparable traditions the world over. Secondly, the recovery of hitherto unknown texts from the Bronze and early Iron Age – chiefly the Mycenaean tablets, the Hittite archives of Bogazkoy/Bogazkale in modern Turkey, the literature of Ugarit in modern Syria, and a vast range of Akkadian and Sumerian texts from the third to first millennium BCE allowed scholars to form a better understanding of the roots and literary context of early Greek epic.

We now know that there is «an east face of Helicon», to quote the title of a famous book.<sup>2</sup> Homeric epics is not to be conceived of as a sort of “big bang”; rather, it is in

<sup>1</sup> HAUBOLD 2009: 442-443

<sup>2</sup> WEST 1997.

constant dialogue with near-eastern traditions, something that, potentially, affects the very idea of Greek civilization. New archaeological findings at Troy and a more focused study of the Hittite archives mentioned by Haubold are now shifting the pendulum, despite furious debates, back to the idea that something like the war of Troy did in fact happen and ended up shaping the Homeric poems. Recently found linear B tablets provide an astonishing confirmation of the “historicity” of the so-called catalogue of ships, thus proving that the *Iliad* preserved the memory of a number of toponyms from the Bronze age that were lost to Greeks of post-Mycenaean ages.<sup>3</sup> Homer summons the Muses to guarantee the truth of his geographic and military survey, and we now know that the Muses, in a sense, told him the truth, so that he was able to “remember” names and events dating to many centuries before, despite a four-century loss of writing in the so called Dark Age (ca. 12<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century BCE).

In a sense, then, recent developments in Homeric studies have resulted in a more “objective” and precise picture, one that looks back to distant times (the Mycenaean world and Troy as part of the Hittite empire) and places (epic traditions from far-away places that share with Homer’s an astonishing number of details as well as, perhaps more interestingly, a world-view of sorts). However, historical objectivity is emerging with reference not only to the Bronze age, but also to later events. The *Odyssey*, too, is firmly placed within a network of historical realities, but in this case they mostly point to the archaic (8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century BCE) age rather than to the Mycenaean world. Solid evidence for a Mycenaean “palace” in Ithaca has yet to be found, while there is no doubt that Homer’s Ithaca and many of Odysseus’ stories reflect the world of commerce and colonization that emerged in archaic Greece from the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, when the Dark Age came to an end and the Greeks adapted the Phoenician alphabet, rediscovered writing and engaged in the exploration and colonization of far-away lands. As Irad Malkin has shown, Greek “captains” would set sail towards the “far west” with

<sup>3</sup> LATA CZ 2004 provides a brilliant, if fiercely criticized by detractors, overview accessible to non-specialists.

Homer and Odysseus in mind, something that explains two important facts: first, the earliest evidence of a familiarity with the poems is found in the western colonies – one thinks of the “cup of Nestor” from Pithekoussa, contemporary Ischia; second, Odysseus’ fantastic adventures were soon mapped onto western geography, so that by the 5<sup>th</sup> century, for example, it became customary to identify Sicily as the land of Cyclopes.<sup>4</sup>

While the “historicity” of the *Iliad* is by and large retrospective, that of the *Odyssey* is in many ways forward-looking. From this point of view, a major discovery is what seems to be a pan-Hellenic hero-cult for Odysseus hosted in a sea-cave along Ithaca’s western coast. According to a fascinating and persuasive reconstruction, sailors identified it as the cave of the nymphs where Odysseus hides his treasures as he sets foot on his island after twenty years as well as the place from where he set sail for his last trip. The “captains” identified with Odysseus, seen as a proto-colonial figure, and would stop there to propitiate him. Yet the identification of Odysseus’ travels with western lands has no firm basis in the *Odyssey* itself, quite the contrary. Odysseus’ travels are firmly rooted in real geography until he tries, unsuccessfully, to round cape Malea, on the south-eastern tip of Peloponnese. In both reality and literature, this wind-swept spot worked as a sort of magic threshold: like Alice’s door, it ends up catapulting sailors onto far-away and fantastic lands. From this point onwards, Odysseus’ adventures are organized according to a symbolic and symmetric rationale, whereby episodes of seduction alternate with episodes of anthropophagic aggression, in a sort of nightmarish repetition that constantly resumes because Odysseus or his companions break a taboo and are, so to say, sent back to square one, like helpless pawns in someone else’s game of goose.<sup>5</sup> Seduction and anthropophagy represent the gravest violation of sacred hospitality, which prescribes to feed (not to eat!) the guest and allow (not to seduce and detain forever!) them to leave when they wish. It is important to note that these

<sup>4</sup> MALKIN 1998.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. e.g. MOST 1989.

symbolic adventures are not guaranteed by the truth-speaking Muse: rather, they are known as the “apologues”, i.e. the stories Odysseus himself tells the Phaeacians in a successful attempt at emulating their Muse-inspired bard. Narratology – another relative newcomer in Homeric studies that has gained traction thanks to the seminal work of Irene de Jong – has shown that Odysseus’ stories are different, in a number of subtle details, from Homer’s normal and “objective” narratives. Thus, the *Odyssey* paves the way to a *subjective* and fantastic mode.<sup>6</sup>

The above remarks are of course extremely selective and partial. Yet two tendencies, which are arguably very important for contemporary Homeric studies, have emerged: a degree of “historicity”, either retrospective or forward-looking, and an antinomy between objective and subjective modes. It is now the time for me to leave the floor to three specialists who have much to say about these matters. Andrea Debiasi, who works at the crossroads between history and literature, will do the honours with his fascinating and compelling contribution devoted to the name of Homer and its *historical* background.

## 2. HOMER'S NAME (*Andrea Debiasi*)

### 2.1. *Preliminary remarks*

It has been now ten years since I had the opportunity to expose my reflections on the name of Homer, the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, and its historical frame-work at the 4<sup>th</sup> Trends in Classics International Conference *Homer in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Orality*,

<sup>6</sup>DE JONG 2002.

*Neonalysis, Interpretation*, held in Thessaloniki on May 28-30 2010.<sup>7</sup> These topics have accompanied me for a long time<sup>8</sup> and still fascinate me. Far from being “crystallized” they prove to be “fluid” (just like the early Greek epic poetry)<sup>9</sup> and able to stimulate new discussions, reappraisals and debates where archaic Greek literature, philology, history and historiography interact productively. In 2018 Gregory Nagy, one of the leading specialists in Homeric poetry (and more), who had already acknowledged my argumentation,<sup>10</sup> published a short but effective reassessment of my theses.<sup>11</sup> Also in 2018 took place the multi-voiced discussion on the Lelantine War, to which I was glad to contribute.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, in the same year, the excellent commented edition of the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi* by Paola Bassino was published.<sup>13</sup>

All this proves how fresh, lively and topical the interest around the above network of themes is. With this in mind, and considering the new literature on these

<sup>7</sup> DEBIASI 2012 (*Homer ἀγωνιστής in Chalcis*), in the Proceedings, whose title appears modified (*Homeric Contexts: Neonalysis and the Interpretation of Oral Poetry*). Further lectures on these themes were given at the Bryn Mawr College in 2012 (*Homer vs. Hesiod: The Contest Tradition in its Historical Framework*, 30 March 2012) and at the University of Milan in 2016 (*Omero ed Esiodo: la gara poetica e il background storico*, 18 April 2016). On both occasions I benefited from valuable thoughts, suggestions, and feedback from colleagues and participants, which now allows me to fine-tune this subject further.

<sup>8</sup> The very first approach dates back to a 2001 essay in Italian (DEBIASI 2001), published in a journal devoted to the Western Greeks (especially from an historical and archaeological perspective). In that contribution, as in DEBIASI 2012, my arguments were supplemented by further speculations on Theagenes of Rhegium, a 6<sup>th</sup> century author who in my opinion was one of the possible sources of inspiration for Alcidas' *Mouseion* and ultimately for the Homer-Hesiod contest tradition. This proposal is now dismissed by BIONDI 2015: 107-108, because of the lack of clear evidence; see, however, SPRAWSKI 2008: 117; ELMER 2013: 219 and 279, n. 50.

<sup>9</sup> For the metaphorical use of the terms “crystallization” and “fluidity” in relation to the early Greek epic poetry (especially Homer and Hesiod), cf. NAGY 1990a: 42, 47, 51-52, 61, 78-79; NAGY 1996b: 109.

<sup>10</sup> NAGY 2015a: 60-61; NAGY 2015b: §§ 2-4; cf. NAGY 2010: 254-264, esp. 255-256.

<sup>11</sup> NAGY 2018.

<sup>12</sup> BERSHADSKY - DEBIASI - FRAME - NAGY 2018.

<sup>13</sup> BASSINO 2018. On the biographical traditions on Homer (including the *Certamen*) the recent book by GROSSARDT 2016 is also worthy of mention.



topics, I am truly pleased to offer a revised and updated version of my viewpoint on them. I am convinced that the time is ripe and the newborn journal «AOQU. *Achilles Orlando Quixote Ulysses*», focused on epic poetry, fits very well with such a treatment starting from the name of Homer.

## 2.2. On the name of Homer

Just as with every other aspect concerning Homer and his work, the name of the poet has been the subject of much interest and study both in antiquity and in modern times. While the ancients were interested in demonstrating the intrinsic truth (ἔτυμον) expressed by a name, which was considered indicative of a specific condition of the poet's life<sup>14</sup> the effort current among scholars today is to find in the term Ὅμηρος / Ὀμηρος an objective and extrinsic connection with the rhapsodic practices of the Greek world during the archaic age.<sup>15</sup>

From this perspective, a re-examination of the name 'Homer' and its connotations may suggest novel points of view and implications that can illuminate historical and traditional aspects that remain obscure.

The explanations proposed in ancient times about the name 'Homer' are many and diverse.<sup>16</sup> Rejecting the more speculative and ungrounded,<sup>17</sup> it is possible to extract

<sup>14</sup> In antiquity the proper name had a strong semantic value and it was connected to the person itself: SALVADORE 1987. For the care in the use of the language and of the ultimate meaning of the words by poets, scholars and biographers see ARRIGHETTI 1987.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., NAGY 1999: 296-300; WEST 2011: 408-436. GRAZIOSI 2002: 52-54 is sceptical.

<sup>16</sup> DE MARTINO 1984: 181-182; cf. ALLEN 1924 comparative table opposite to p. 32; GRAZIOSI 2002: 79-82.

<sup>17</sup> Cf., e.g., Heliod. *Acthiop.* III 14: Homer should be related to μηρός = 'thigh', since «on both his thighs from birth there grew a great deal of hair».

two main interpretations. According to these interpretations, Ὀμηρος was an epithet given to the poet suggesting either his being taken hostage or the loss of his sight during his travels.

Anecdotal aspects aside, such explanations do not bear up under scrutiny. ‘Hostage’ with its ominous undertone is an absolutely improbable name:<sup>18</sup> it would also imply an undocumented linguistic development according to which Ὀμηρος should relate to the neutral plural ὄμηρα.<sup>19</sup> Equally suspect is the passage ὄμηρος ‘blind’ > Ὀμηρος, as there exists no proof of ὄμηρος conveying such a meaning.<sup>20</sup> Rather, it is far more likely that the actual role of blind people in rhapsodic contexts<sup>21</sup> and the association of blindness with inspiration and wisdom<sup>22</sup> produced the opposite linguistic passage Ὀμηρος > ὄμηρος ‘blind’.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See WEST 1999: 367 and 375, where the theory of Seleuc. fr. 76 Müller (= Harpocr. s.v. Ὀμηρίδαι), according to which the name of the Homerids directly derives from ὄμηρα ‘hostages’, is also refuted. Among modern scholars some have embraced the ancient etymon: see, e.g., SCHWARTZ 1940; cf. also the conservative approach of HILLER 1887.

<sup>19</sup> As regards to the lexeme ὄμηρο- ‘pledge’, ‘surety’, ‘hostage’, ὄμηρα (collective) is surely the “basic form”, whereas ὄμηροι and ὄμηρος (three occurrences in Euripides) are the result of successive evolutions. For details see DURANTE 1976: 185-204, esp. 190-191.

<sup>20</sup> The only case where ὄμηρος ‘blind’ occurs without any reference to Homer is in Lycophr. 422, where the (par)etymologic connection is anyway implicit, in tune to the erudite and obscure use of the poet of the *Alexandra*.

<sup>21</sup> See BOWRA 1952: 420-422.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the survey of GRAZIOSI 2002: 125-163.

<sup>23</sup> The seer Tiresias (*Od.* X 492-493; XII 267) and the bards Demodokos (*Od.* VIII 64) and Thamyris (*Il.* II 599) are represented as blinds in the Homeric poems. Similarly according to the tradition Stesichorus is blind, although temporarily. It is possible that the Homeric segments contributed to the diffusion of the equivalence Ὀμηρος = ‘Blind’: DEROY 1972: 431. The link poetry/blindness, such that the blind is the poet par excellence, and its application to Homer are likely the base of the proud statement of the author of the *Hymn to Apollo*, who declares himself «the blind man» (l. 172) «who dwells in rocky Chios», where τυφλὸς ἀνήρ = Homer/Homerid: see BIRT 1932; cf. also DE MARTINO 1982: 94-99; GRAZIOSI 2002: 138-150.

Having highlighted the unlikeness of the old etymologies, most scholars have suggested that in ὄμηρος / Ὀμηρος we recognize the clear derivation of the roots ὀμ- (cf. ὀμοῦ)<sup>24</sup> + ἄρ- (cf. ἀραρίσκω),<sup>25</sup> a combination present in many words both in Greek and in Sanskrit (Vedic). Semantically, these roots share the meanings of 'meeting' (in a peaceful sense but sometimes also hostile: 'fight') and of '(re)union'.<sup>26</sup> Marcello Durante has explained how such meanings are consistent with the figure and the role of Homer.<sup>27</sup> Durante takes into account the place-name of the venue of the meetings of the Achaean Federation Ὀμάριον / Ἰμάριον and the corresponding epiclesis Ὀμάριος / Ἰμάριος given to the gods protecting the area (Zeus with the *paredroi* Athena and Aphrodite).<sup>28</sup> Noticing the formal and substantial affinity between the epithets Ὀμάριος and Ὀμαγύριος ('god of the ὀμήγυρις / πανήγυρις' or 'god of the assembly'),<sup>29</sup> he justifiably draws attention to the ancient term \*ὄμαῖρος or \*ὄμαῖρις for

<sup>24</sup> Or ἄμ- (cf. ἄμα), with vocalic alternation. It is properly a prefix.

<sup>25</sup> Such analysis, particularly developed by WELCKER 1865: 120 and CURTIUS 1855 is the most linear and consistent, and it has been periodically revisited and polished: see BIRT 1932; DURANTE 1976: 194-203. The variant ὀμ- + ἔρ- (cf. ἔρχομαι) by SZEMERÉNYI 1954: esp. 263-266 is satisfying for the meaning but less for the form. The theory of DEROY 1972: 438-439, who considers ὄμηρος composed by ὀ- (phonetic variant of ἄ- copulative) + μηρός based on a doubtful parallelism with the Mycenaean *u-me-ta* (Pylos Tablet Ea 259) effectively is not different nor more persuasive than that by Heliodorus (see above, n. 17).

<sup>26</sup> See the Greek series ὀμηρέω, ὀμήρης, ὀμηρα (from which ὀμηροί: see above, n. 19), ὀμαρτέω, and the corresponding Vedic terms in DURANTE 1976: 195, especially *samará-* 'meeting', 'reunion', 'contest' and *samaryá-* 'poetic contest'.

<sup>27</sup> DURANTE 1976: 185-204. Cf. THESLEFF 1985 and, in a very recent book on the genesis of the Homeric poems, LUCARINI 2019: 395.

<sup>28</sup> Strabo VIII 7: 3 C 385 and VIII 7: 5 C 387; Polyb. V 93: 10. Another Ὀμάριον, explicitly modelled on that of the metropolis, was founded by the Achaean colonies Crotona, Sybaris and Caulonia in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC: Polyb. II 39: 6. For a detailed discussion of these and other sources, both literary and epigraphic, see AYMARD 1935; AYMARD 1938: 277-302, who connects Ὀμάριον, Ὀμάριος to ὀμηρέω (ὀμ- + ἄρ-).

<sup>29</sup> The sacred area was dedicated to Zeus Ὀμαγύριος. This was destroyed and rebuilt after the earthquake of 373 BC, and the Achaeans still used it to meet in Roman Age: see Paus. VII 24: 2 who explains the *epiclesis* by remembering that Agamemnon summoned here the Achaean chiefs before sailing to attack Troy.

‘reunion, *panegyris*’ and defines the name ‘Homer’ as ‘the one attending the *panegyris*’, i.e. ‘the agonistic poet’.<sup>30</sup>

A similar meaning seems also to be denoted by the name of the mythical poet Θάμυρις, from which we may derive the ancient Aeolic terms θάμυρις meaning ‘reunion’ and θαμυρίζειν meaning ‘to re-unite’.<sup>31</sup>

Such an interpretation, which takes into account common and well documented practices in the Archaic Age, ultimately recognizes ‘Homer’ as a “telling name” and as connected to the technical and professional sphere of epic poetry –<sup>32</sup> a tradition whose essence cannot be separated from the rhapsodic contests and the celebrations inherent in it.<sup>33</sup>

### 2.3. *A revealing inscription (IG XII 9, 56: 135): Homer in Euboea*

In view of such an interpretation, considered by scholars to be the most convincing,<sup>34</sup> the epigraphic evidence of a lead tablet mostly neglected by Homeric studies acquires

<sup>30</sup> This is basically the same conclusion drawn, independently, by POCOCCO 1967: esp. 103.

<sup>31</sup> Hesych. s.v. θάμυρις· πανήγυρις, σύνοδος, ἢ πυκνότης τινῶν, s.v. θαμυρίζει· ἀθροίζει, συνάγει.

<sup>32</sup> In *Od.* XXII 330-331 the bard of Ithaca is Phemios, ‘the Speaker’, son of Terpios, ‘the Rejoicer’ relative to which the historical names of the citharede Terpander and of the rhapsode Terpsicles have a similar function. Similarly, Stesichorus means ‘he who sets up the chrous’: see CÀSSOLA 1975: xxxiv; DAVIES - FINGLASS 2014: 15 and 30-31. The interpretation of the name of Hesiod as ‘he who emits the voice’ is very likely and attractive: NAGY 1999: 296-297; NAGY 2009: 287-288; for some ancient interpretations of the name Ἡσίοδος cf. VECCHIATO [forthcoming].

<sup>33</sup> For the rhapsodic contests as pivot of the birth and development of the Homeric epic, see: PAGLIARO 1953: 3-62, esp. 52-62; BROCCIA 1967; CÀSSOLA 1975: xiv-xvi.

<sup>34</sup> CÀSSOLA 1975: xxxiii; WEST 1999: 376. See also the theory of NAGY 1999: 296-300; NAGY 2009: 288; NAGY 2010: 255-256, who interprets ὄμηρος as ‘he who fits [the song] together’. I do believe that the two explanations, moving from the same roots ὄμ- + ἄρ-, do not necessarily contradict each other. This assertion of mine is now accepted by NAGY 2015a: 60-61, n. 8; NAGY 2015b: § 4, n. 10.

exceptional relevance. This tablet, datable to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, comes from Styra in Euboea (*IG XII 9, 56: 135*) and contains the complete person's name *Ἡομερίος (= Ὀμήριος)*.<sup>35</sup>

If it is true, as noted by Durante, that such a name is homonymous with *Ζεὺς Ὀμάριος*, and therefore has a theophoric meaning,<sup>36</sup> it is also true that such a name cannot be separated from its association with *Ὀμαρος / Ion. Ὀμηρος*<sup>37</sup> because, as noted above, the two terms are mutually connected. *Ὀμάριος / Ὀμήριος* is nothing more than the adjectival derivation of *Ὀμαρος / Ὀμηρος*.<sup>38</sup>

From this perspective, the inscription from Styra represents the oldest documented case of "Homeric" anthroponymy. Furthermore, it is close to the time when the name 'Homer' begins to be widely associated with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*,<sup>39</sup> and it dates before other sporadic epigraphic mentions of individuals called Homer.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> This inscription belongs to a sizeable and consistent group of tablets, found in Styra close to a square structure, likely an altar, that name only anthroponyms: for a very similar case, see CORDANO 1992. A new edition of the lead tablets from Styra with paleographic, linguistic, and onomastic commentaries is a desideratum and is indeed under preparation (DELL'ORO [forthcoming]): cf. DELL'ORO 2018.

<sup>36</sup> DURANTE 1976: 189.

<sup>37</sup> See *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 498: 2, where an Aetolian *hieromnemon* in Delphi (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) is called *Ὀμαρος*, a name that according to DURANTE 1976: 189 «può ben essere una *Rückbildung* del nome precedente [*Ὀμάριος / Ὀμήριος*], qual è ad esempio Πανάτωλος rispetto a Παναιτώλιος».

<sup>38</sup> See WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF 1884: 378: no anthroponym *Ὀμηρος* can be independent of the name of the poet.

<sup>39</sup> The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are explicitly credited to Homer starting from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. The only antecedent reference to the poet is, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, in Callin. fr. 6 West (= Paus. IX 9: 5), where Homer is mentioned as the author of the *Thebais*: see BURKERT 1987; WEST 1999: 376-382.

<sup>40</sup> Such evidences, of Hellenistic and Imperial Age, are gathered in ALLEN 1907: 142 (no mention of *IG XII 9, 56: 135*); see also WEST 1999: 366. For evidence before the Christian Era, see below, n. 49. According to DELL'ORO 2018, I propose to derive the name *Ὀμήριος* in *IG XII 9, 56: 135* «directly from the proper name *Hómēros*», whereas she prefers to derive it «from an appellative noun, such as *\*bómēros/bómāros* 'he who fits (the song) together' (NAGY 1999: 296-300; NAGY 2009: 288) or *\*bómēris* 'panēguris, assembly' (DURANTE 1976: 189), as *Hómēros* is not attested as a proper name before the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE (apart from the immortal Greek poet, of course)». However, from what has been argued (above, 2.2), it is quite clear

This epigraph is remarkable both for its chronology and for its peculiar geographic origin, which has a special relation to the name marked on it. As just explained, the deepest meaning of the name Homer (Ὅμηριος / Ion. Ὅμηριος or Ὅμαρος / Ion. Ὅμηρος) is ‘agonistic poet’. It is rather telling that the tradition recognizes an “agonistic” Homer in Euboea, the locale of a famous poetic contest between Homer and Hesiod.<sup>41</sup>

Thus etymological investigation, epigraphic evidence, and traditional data coincide and represent an extremely consistent triad whereby Euboea plays a very significant role. Scholars have traditionally identified a remarkable Euboean influence working linguistically and culturally on the Greek epic, and in particular on the Homeric epic tradition.<sup>42</sup> It is an influence manifest both “within”<sup>43</sup> and “outside” the

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that my proposal is much more subtle and multifaceted, and in fact fits with Dell’Oro’s hypothesis. Moreover, her subsequent inferences basically reflect my explanation: «Nevertheless, the proper name *Homéríos* could have been easily connected by ancient people to the name *Hómēros*, whose figure and name emerged during the Archaic age. From this perspective, *Homéríos* can be called a forerunner in the diffusion of the proper name *Hómēros* attested only from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE onwards».

<sup>41</sup> In this respect, the tradition is unambiguous and well rooted. A collection of some of the sources referring to the Euboean contest between Homer and Hesiod is in ALLEN 1912: 218-223. An isolated citation about an Homer-Hesiod contest in Delos is in Philoch. fr. 212 Müller (= sch. Pind. *Nem.* II 1) = Hes. fr. 357 Merkelbach-West = fr. 297 Most. The “Hesiodic” fragment, definitely spurious, offers an alternative version to the Homeric contest par excellence, the one in Euboea as explicitly assumed in the expression (v. 1) τότε πρώτον. Such an invention is closely related to the hymn, Delian and Pythian at the same time, *To Apollo* (III), edited in its final draft by the Homeric Cynaethus of Chios in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC (see again sch. Pind. *Nem.* II 1), likely for the Delian-Pythian games proclaimed in 523 or 522 by Polycrates, the ruler of Samos: see BURKERT 1979; JANKO 1982: 112-114, 258-261; DE MARTINO 1982: 28, n. 29, 52-55; ALONI 1989. For a recent and detailed discussion on Hes. fr. 357 Merkelbach-West = fr. 297 Most, see BASSINO 2018: 7-10.

<sup>42</sup> Among the most significant contributions are: WATHELET 1981; WEST 2011: 35-73, esp. 166-172 (fundamental); POWELL 1991: esp. 231-233; RUIJGH 1995: 47-48. A well balanced survey has been recently proposed by CASSIO 1998, according to which the Euboean contribution should be mostly ascribed to the 9<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, a crucial time in the final codification of the poems.

<sup>43</sup> Cf., e.g., the speech of Alcinous to Odysseus in *Od.* VII 317-324, where Euboea is explicitly named, a very rare case of citation of an Aegean island in the *Odyssey*, and the only case of such a citation in a maritime

*Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>44</sup>

The inscription at Styra, one of the sites of the Abantes quoted in *Il.* II 539,<sup>45</sup> provokes the question of whether or not what has been called the “making” of Homer<sup>46</sup> or the “invention” of Homer<sup>47</sup> should be traced back mainly to Euboea.<sup>48</sup>

Further elements supporting this hypothesis may also be obtained from other, more recent epigraphs bearing the name Homer. In fact, the name appears in Larisa (in three distinct epigraphs) and in Tanagra with the significant form Ὅμηρος (emphasis on the Ionic vocalism, instead of the expected Ὅμαρος).<sup>49</sup> These localities are in Thessaly and in Boeotia respectively, regions which were, in the protogeometric and in

context: WEST 1988: 172; cf. DOUGHERTY 2001: 143-157. Examples of Euboean “segments” (for content and / or language) in the *Iliad* can be *Il.* I 396-406: CERRI 2012; *Il.* XI 638-640: WEST 2011.

<sup>44</sup> The western locations of the Odyssean episodes are significant: CIACERI 1901: esp. 227-228; WILAMOWITZ - MOELLENDORFF 1916: 497-505, esp. 503-505. For further developments, see PHILLIPS 1953: 61; and the recent monographs of MALKIN 1998; LANE FOX 2008 (cf. NAGY 2011); BRACCESI 2010.

<sup>45</sup> About the Abantes and the Abantic traditions, mythical representation of the most ancient Euboean social structures, cf. MELE 1975; FOURGOUS 1987; WALKER 2004: 43-46.

<sup>46</sup> BURKERT 1987.

<sup>47</sup> WEST 1999.

<sup>48</sup> This should not be confused with the “making” / “invention” of the Homeric poems, since at most it affects the last phase of their development. Both BURKERT 1987 and WEST 1999, as most of those believing that Ὅμηρος and Ὅμηρίδαι are professional names (whereas Ὅμηρος presupposes Ὅμηρίδαι, and not the opposite), rule out that a poet named Homer had ever existed. Nevertheless, as noted by CASSOLA 1975: xxxiii-xxxiv, «se anche il nome di persona Omero non esisteva prima dell'appellativo Omeridi (il che è discusso), esso è certamente esistito dopo, cioè da quando Omeridi fu interpretato come un vero patronimico [...] A questo punto nulla vietava che un Omeride si chiamasse Omero»; similarly GRAZIOSI 2002: 53; cf. Tzetz. *Vita Hesiodi* p. 49 ll. 22-23 Wilamowitz = p. 223 ll. 38-39 Allen. Accordingly, the tradition of the Euboean contest would take an historical soundness, if the competition is assumed to be between *an* Homer (= Homeric) and Hesiod: see below, 2.4.

<sup>49</sup> Larisa: *SGDI* 2138 (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC); *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 1059 I 3, II 29 (1<sup>st</sup> century BC); Tanagra: *IG* VII 1558. Besides such Ὅμηροι, the Ὅμήριος in *IG* XII 9, 56: 135, and the Ὅμαρος in *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 498: 2 (see above, n. 37), only another Ὅμαρος from Crete (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) is documented in the pre-Christian Era: *ICI* 108, 1: 3.

the geometric ages, representative of a material<sup>50</sup> and cultural<sup>51</sup> *continuum* with the archaic Euboea (the traditional ‘Abantis’) as well as with the Cyclades. This cultural *continuum* may also be seen, during the archaic age, in the development of the Greek epic.<sup>52</sup>

In view of this, the rather obscure Thessalian location of the place-name Ὀμάριον can be relevant.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the unfolding in Thessaly and in Pieria of the poetic activity of Thamyris,<sup>54</sup> a poet whose linguistic development parallels that of Homer’s, is remarkable.<sup>55</sup>

The established tradition which places the birth of Homer in Chios is consistent with this perspective.<sup>56</sup> According to ancient sources, the island was a culturally mixed colony<sup>57</sup> in which the «Abantes coming from Euboea» played a

<sup>50</sup> DESBOROUGH 1972: 185-220; COLDSTREAM 1968: 337, 345-346, 354-355; 1977: 191-220. This *koine*, to which Phocis, Opuntian Locris, Macedonia (especially Pieria), and Chalcidice do not appear unrelated, can be recognized not only from the pottery, but also from the jewelry, from the funeral practices, and from the architecture: see LEMOS 1998 and LEMOS 2002: esp. 202-217.

<sup>51</sup> MELE 1979: 22-39. For a possible ancient Euboean domination on Thessaly and Boeotia (particularly in the district of Tanagra), see GEYER 1924: 375 and 377; MELE 1975: 16-17; WALKER 2004: 46-57.

<sup>52</sup> See CASSIO 1998, who points out the important Euboean contribution to the archaic Greek epic within a larger cultural pressure of central Greece, consistent with the material *koine*.

<sup>53</sup> Only evidence Theop. *FGrHist* 115 F 137 = Steph. Byz. s.v. Ὀμάριον. The cultural link Zeus / Athena recalls the almost identical one documented within the Achaean Ὀμάριον: cf. AYMAR 1935: 468, n. 1.

<sup>54</sup> This area is the same of the Hesiodic Muses, at the same time Heliconian (*Tb.* 1-2; 7; *Op.* 658), Olympian (*Tb.* 25; 36-37; 51-52; 75; 114), and Pierian (*Tb.* 53; *Op.* 1): VOX 1980. About Thamyris see FORD 1992: 93-101; WILSON 2009.

<sup>55</sup> DURANTE 1976. See above, 2.2.

<sup>56</sup> Among the numerous traditions that want Homer to be born in either of the Greek towns in Asia Minor, only those relative to Smyrna and Chios appear to be really old. However Chios, home of the most important Homeric guild, progressively obscured Smyrna: see LASSERRE 1976: esp. 130; cf. also CASSOLA 1975: xxxv-xxxvi.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Strabo XIV 1: 3 C 633; cf. ALLEN 1924: 104-106, who, noting that also the language in Chios was in fact mixed (Ionic and Aeolic), thinks Homer spoke a Chian language rather than a *Kunstsprache*.



prominent role.<sup>58</sup> There are numerous *in situ* signs of joint Thessalian-Boeotian contributions.<sup>59</sup> That groups of Pelasgians, which in the *Iliad* are introduced as the «residents of the fertile Larisa»,<sup>60</sup> came from Thessaly to found Chios<sup>61</sup> is remarkable in view of the origins of the rare epigraphs with the name Ὀμηρος. Similarly, the mythical and cultural relations between Chios, Euboea, and Tanagra are significant.<sup>62</sup>

Based on this data, one might reasonably deduce that the name Ὀμηρος has “Abantic” origins that are immersed in a complex historic-cultural context<sup>63</sup> – a context which, embracing geographic areas contiguous to Euboea (specifically Thessaly and Boeotia),<sup>64</sup> affected the historical development and identity of Euboea itself. Of particular significance to us here is the fact that Euboea is the indisputable site of the epochal poetic contest between Hesiod, the Boeotian, and Homer, the ‘agonistic poet’.

<sup>58</sup> Paus. VII 4: 9. Pausanias, who for this information explicitly depends on Ion of Chios (*FGrHist* 392 F 1 = Paus. VII 4: 8-9), recalls also the domination on the island of Amphiclos, from Histiaea in Euboea, and of his descendants. For the historical values of such traditions, see SAKELLARIOU 1958: 186-189, 283-288; for recent archaeological evidence, see HOOD 1986 who, after pointing out the strong correspondence between the artefacts found in Emporio (Chios) and the Euboean ones (especially in Lefkandi), states: «The Abantes ... have a good claim to have been the founders and inhabitants of the Late Helladic IIIC settlement at Emporio». In general Herod. I 146 considers the Euboean Abantes an important component within the composite group of populations that in antiquity settled in Ionic Asia.

<sup>59</sup> SAKELLARIOU 1958: 186-209 and 283-290.

<sup>60</sup> *Il.* II 840-841; cf. Strabo IX 5: 13 C 435.

<sup>61</sup> Strabo XIII 3: 3 C 621.

<sup>62</sup> SAKELLARIOU 1958: 189-192, especially in relation to Orion.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. BREGLIA PULCI DORIA 1984: 73, who traces back to the “Abantic” phase the epiclesis Ὀμαρία (identical to that of the Zeus of the Achaean Federation) and Αημνία, which in the Euboean inscription *IG* XII 9, 1172 refer (by supplement) to Demeter.

<sup>64</sup> The initial aspiration (*spiritus asper*) seems to originate in continental Greece, a non-pislotic area: BONFANTE 1968; DURANTE 1976: 190, n. 9.

2.4. *The Contest of Homer and Hesiod and the Lelantine War: Eretria vs. Chalcis – Homer vs. Hesiod*

The tradition of the poetic contest between Homer and Hesiod finds its strongest expression in the so-called *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*,<sup>65</sup> a work which in its current form is traced to a compiler about the time of Hadrian.<sup>66</sup> As was first surmised by Friedrich Nietzsche and later confirmed by the publication of a papyrus fragment (*PMich* 2754), the compiler of the *Certamen* drew mainly from an encyclopedic work entitled *Mouseion* (Μουσεῖον), written by Alcidas, a sophist and rhetorician who was a pupil of Gorgias. A section of this work was entitled *On Homer* (Περὶ Ὁμήρου).<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Just as in the latest edition of the *Certamen* (BASSINO 2018: 83-113), the numbering of WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF 1929: 34-45 (and WEST 2003: 318-353) is used here in quoting the paragraphs of the text; the numbering of ALLEN 1912: 225-238, is used for quoting the lines. Further recent studies on the *Certamen* may be found in GRAZIOSI 2002: 168-180; BEECROFT 2010: 61-105; KIVILO 2000 and KIVILO 2010: 7-61; KONING 2010: 239-268; GROSSARDT 2016: 27-126; cf. LULLI 2016b: 209-212; BASSINO 2017.

<sup>66</sup> In *Certamen* 3: 32-33 the recent death of the Emperor Hadrian is implied. An attempt to give a name to the anonymous compiler has been made by GALLAVOTTI 1929: 57-59, who prudentially credits the work to Castricius of Nicaea.

<sup>67</sup> NIETZSCHE 1870/1873 bases his brilliant hypothesis on *Certamen* 14: 240, where ὅς φησιν Ἀλκιδάμας ἐν Μουσεῖῳ, ‘as Alcidas says in his *Mouseion*’, is explicitly stated, and on Stob. IV 52: 22, where the two verses in *Certamen* 7: 78-79 appear with the annotation ἐκ τοῦ Ἀλκιδάμαντος Μουσείου, ‘from Alcidas’ *Mouseion*. These verses are also legible in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC papyrus *PPetr* I 25 (*editio princeps*: MAHAFFY 1891, 70; now catalogued as *PLitLond* 191), almost exactly coinciding with *Certamen* 6: 68 – 8: 101. The theory of Nietzsche was later confirmed by the publication of another papyrus of the 2<sup>nd</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, *PMich* 2754 (*editio princeps*: WINTER 1925): it contains the conclusion of the *Contest* (ll. 1-14 ~ *Certamen* 18: 327-338), followed by some final remarks (ll. 15-23) and by the *subscriptio* Ἀλκι]δάμαντος περὶ Ὁμήρου, ‘Alcidas, *On Homer*’ (ll. 24-25). For the dependence of the *Certamen* on the work of Alcidas, a point rarely disputed nowadays (cf. HELDMANN 1982: 14), see the detailed treatise in AVEZZÙ 1982: esp. 84-90, and O’SULLIVAN 1992: 63-105. For a thorough recent survey on the textual tradition of the *Certamen*, see BASSINO 2018: 47-82.

It has been also shown that Alcidas, far from having invented the contest between the two poets, must have used significantly older material,<sup>68</sup> previously codified and circulated,<sup>69</sup> and rather organized known elements of the contest using his own stylistic and philosophic theories.<sup>70</sup>

The theme of the contest stems from the poetry of Hesiod who, in a famous passage of his *Works and Days* (vv. 650-659),<sup>71</sup> recalls his only sea crossing. Having boarded in Aulis, the site where the Achaeans gathered to move to Troy, he sailed to Euboea. While at Chalcis he successfully competed in the funeral games instituted by the sons of Amphidamas<sup>72</sup> and won a handled tripod which was later consecrated to the Heliconian Muses.

Subsequent authors utilised this autobiographical segment, whose authenticity is well established,<sup>73</sup> to legitimize Homer's role as Hesiod's rival in the contest at Chalcis.

<sup>68</sup> See among others VOGT 1959: 219-221; HESS 1960; KIVILO 2000; KIVILO 2010: 20-24; NAGY 2009: 299. In some cases the *Certamen* seems rooted in the hearth of the Archaic Age, presenting traits consistent with the environment and the ideals of the Hesiodic poetry: remarkable are the similarities with the Hesiodic *Melampodia* (contest between the seers Chalcas and Mopsos: fr. 278 Merkelbach-West = fr. 214 Most). For some Vedic correspondences see DUNKEL 1979: it is noteworthy that the Vedic term to indicate the poetic contest, *samaryá-*, is composed by the same roots of the Greek Ὀμηρος (see above, n. 26).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Theogn. 425 and 427 with the verses in *Certamen* 7: 78-79. The parody of the contest in Aristoph. *Pax* 1282-1283, which reproduces the two verses of the *Certamen* 9: 107-108 is also significant: see DI BENEDETTO 1969.

<sup>70</sup> RICHARDSON 1981. In general, it makes sense to speak of a *Ur-certamen* as opposed to the *Certamen* written in the time of Hadrian. Nevertheless, it is hard to discriminate the exact contribution of Alcidas (an attempt in HELDMANN 1982). In any case, crediting of the *Ur-certamen* to the author of the *Little Iliad* Lesches of Lesbos (8<sup>th</sup> century BC), as affirmed by ALLEN 1924: 20-27, and more recently by O'SULLIVAN 1992: 81 and 96, n. 188; KIVILO 2000: 5; KIVILO 2010: 23-24; KONING 2010: 259-262, is very unsure; cf. WEST 1967: 438-439; ERBSE 1996: 313-314; DEBIASI 2004: 130, n. 46; BASSINO 2013; BASSINO 2018: 13-20.

<sup>71</sup> For a detailed discussion of *Op.* 650-659 and its Euboean implications see DEBIASI 2008: 25-34.

<sup>72</sup> About funeral contests, typical of Archaic Greece see MALTEN 1925; ROLLER 1981.

<sup>73</sup> Plut. fr. 84 Sandbach (= sch. Hes. *Op.* 654-656) condemns such verses as interpolated, since 'they do not contain anything good'. Such opinion, as well as the subjective criterion of the χρηστόν, is rejected by most

Such correlation, although certainly borne of an over-interpretation of the poetic text,<sup>74</sup> nonetheless exhibits a higher degree of plausibility than is usually acknowledged. The coexistence of Homer and Hesiod, could be admissible from the viewpoint of epic diction which, in the Hesiodic poems, presents a rather limited amount of innovation in comparison with the Homeric poems.<sup>75</sup>

Furthermore, beginning in the High Archaic Age, Euboea was one of the most prosperous Greek regions. With its thriving maritime trade whose influence spread in all directions, even to the most remote places, it was particularly amenable to the importation of distinctive cultural elements from abroad.<sup>76</sup> Thus, it is quite likely that the illustrious poets of the time,<sup>77</sup> among whom we find Homer,<sup>78</sup> journeyed from

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modern scholars. Likely, in expressing his judgement, Plutarch was not able to dissociate the Hesiodic verses from the tradition of the contest with Homer, thus extending, with a dangerous process, the accusation of falsity from the tradition, believed mendacious (cf. Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* V 2: 6 p. 674f), to the verses on which this was based: see ARRIGHETTI 1998: 441; HUNTER 2014: 186-187 (with further explanations); BASSINO 2018: 11-13. Thus, the passage of the *Works and Days* must have produced the tripod with the “Hesiodic” epigram at the Helicon *Mouseion* (where it was later seen by Paus. IX 31: 3), rather than the opposite: MAZON 1912: 352, n. 1.

<sup>74</sup> ARRIGHETTI 1987: 167-170; cf. LEFKOWITZ 1981 who emphasize that biographical stories about poets are often derived from their work; GRAZIOSI 2002 claim that they often testify to interesting ancient readings of the poems.

<sup>75</sup> See the statistical studies of EDWARDS 1971 and JANKO 1982: esp. 188-200 and 221-225, from which the sequence *Iliad-Odyssey-Theogony-Works and Days* is inferred for Homer and Hesiod (fundamentally traced back to the same linguistic and dialectal tradition), where the largest hypothesized gap, between the *Odyssey* and the *Theogony*, appears to be fifty years at most. The debate on the chronology of Homer and Hesiod stirred the ancient authors (Hes. T 3-16 Most; cf. GRAZIOSI 2002: 101-110), who aimed to demonstrate the antecedence of either poet (although many maintained their contemporaneity), nor it ceases to afflict the contemporary scholars: see the *status quaestionis* in the survey by ROSEN 1997, according to whom the statistical criteria actually appear to be more balanced and less subjective.

<sup>76</sup> DEBIASI 2008: 25-37 and *passim*. See also the contributions in BATS - D'AGOSTINO 1998.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Plut. *Sept. Sap. Conv.* 10 p. 153f = Hes. T 38 Most.

<sup>78</sup> Without addressing the issue concerning the *Certamen*, both POWELL 1993 and RUIJGH 1995: 47-48, 91-92 admit the presence of Homer in Euboea, especially based on linguistic data and on considerations about the development and diffusion of the Greek alphabet.

different locations to convene in Euboea for the funeral games honouring a great person.<sup>79</sup>

The soundness of the tradition itself is evident even after adopting a less restrictive approach, as I am going to suggest: that the contest with Hesiod, rather than with *the* Homer, is meant to have been with *a* Homer, i.e. a Homerid, or an agonistic poet who was the recipient of a heroic epic legacy, and more specifically, an Iliadic one.

The corresponding Hesiodic segment is also amenable to such an interpretation. Here we find the poetically focused and effective juxtaposition of the long and perilous sea voyage of the Achaeans toward Troy (representing the Iliadic type of heroic poetry) and the short but rewarding crossing to Chalcis of Hesiod.<sup>80</sup> Both

<sup>79</sup> The closeness between the funeral rites described in the Homeric poems and the characteristics of the Euboean aristocratic burials is remarkable: cf. in particular the so-called *Heroon* of Lefkandi (10<sup>th</sup> century BC), about which, among others, see BLOME 1984, and ANTONACCIO 1995, as well as the *Heroon* of Eretria (8<sup>th</sup> century BC), about which see BÉRARD 1970. For a sound discussion: CRIELAARD 2002: 243-263.

<sup>80</sup> The juxtaposition *Op.* 651-653 («where once the Achaeans») / *Op.* 654-657 («there I myself»), with the implications on the poetics, has been remarked by NAGY 1990a: 36-82, esp. 77-78: «There is a built-in antithesis here with the long sea voyage undertaken by the Achaeans when they sailed to Troy... Moreover, the strong Homeric emphasis on navigation as a key to the Achaeans' survival [for example, *Il.* XVI 80-82] is in a sharp contrast with the strong Hesiodic emphasis on the poet's personal inexperience in navigation – especially in view of Hesiod's additional emphasis on Aulis as the starting point for not only his short sea voyage but also for the long one undertaken by the Achaeans. Perhaps, then, this passage reveals an intended differentiation of Hesiodic from Homeric poetry». See especially ROSEN 1990; cf. GRAZIOSI 2002: 169-170; DEBIASI 2008: 32-33.

Hesiod and the heroes celebrated by Homer sailed from the strategic station of Aulis,<sup>81</sup> opposite Euboea.<sup>82</sup>

From this perspective, a variant reading in sch. *Op.* 657 can acquire a certain value. Where in place of the traditional

ὔμῳ νικήσαντα φέρειν τρίποδ' ὠτώεντα  
'winning in song (I declare that I) carried off an handled tripod'

one reads

ὔμῳ νικήσαντ' ἐν Χαλκίδι θεῖον Ὅμηρον,  
'defeating god-like Homer in song at Chalcis',

we observe the proud and explicit assertion by Hesiod of a victory over Homer in the Chalcis contest. It is the expression of a rivalry between two different poetic types, rather than between two different bards.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>81</sup> *Il.* II 303-304: ~ *Op.* 651-653. The epic tradition places in Aulis the sacrifice of Iphigenia (or Iphimede) by Agamemnon (as in the *Cypria*: cf. the summary of Procl. *Chrest.* pp. 82-83 ll. 135-143 Severyns). According to Paus. I 43: 1 in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 23b Merkelbach-West = fr. 20a Most) Artemis made Iphigenia immortal and transformed her in Hecate, a figure that in *Tb.* 435-438 assists those competing in contests; cf. DEBIASI 2015: 23-45. The link established by Paus. VII 24: 2 between Ὀμαγύριον = Ὀμάριον and the Iliadic (and therefore Homeric) events of the gathering (cf. *Il.* II 304; *Op.* 652) of the Achaean army against Troy is also revealing: see above, n. 29.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. WEST 1988: 168, according to whom the same role of Aulis within the Trojan saga should fundamentally be traced back to a Euboean matrix.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. the engaging notes of NAGY 1990a: 78: «There is no proof for the conventional explanation that this variant verse is a mere interpolation (with the supposedly interpolated verse matching a verse found in an epigram ascribed to Hesiod in *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* p. 233. 213-214 Allen). Also, to argue that this verse may be part of a genuine variant passage is not to say that the surviving version about the tripod is therefore not genuine. In archaic Greek poetry, reported variants may at any time reflect not some false textual

In the *Certamen*, even in the late version handed down to us, we recognize a broadly Euboean perspective. The tight competition between the two poets and the corresponding verdict in favour of Hesiod is the key episode and comes to occupy the central section of the narrative (§§ 5-13). Here, after briefly mentioning Aulis and Boeotia,<sup>84</sup> Euboea prevails as the dominant setting: Amphidamas, in whose memory his son Ganyktor institutes the games, is named βασιλεὺς Εὐβοίας,<sup>85</sup> ‘king of Euboea’.<sup>86</sup> Chalcis is the site of the contest<sup>87</sup> and Chalcidians, as well as Panedes, brother of the deceased king, who decides Hesiod's triumph, are the dignitaries serving as judges.<sup>88</sup>

This Euboean perspective is not restricted to the “agonistic” episode alone but extends to the final section of the *Certamen* as well, where the peculiar events leading to the death of the two poets are described.<sup>89</sup> These events are not independent or isolated from the poetic contest but rather they represent its outcome and natural completion.

In particular, the death of Hesiod occurs after, and as a consequence of, his sensational success.<sup>90</sup> Having gone to Delphi to consult the oracle and to dedicate the

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alteration but, rather, a genuine traditional alternative that has been gradually ousted in the course of the poem's crystallization into a fixed text»; recently, see NAGY 2009: 304. Cf. BASSINO 2018: 5-7.

<sup>84</sup> *Certamen* 5: 54-55: the transmitted text, maintained by Allen (and defended by ERBSE 1996 and GRAZIOSI 2002: 171 with n. 162), is ἀγωνίσασθαι ὁμόσε ἐν Αὐλίδι τῆς Βοιωτίας, ‘to compete with each other at Aulis in Boeotia’, which implies a previous, unlikely contest of the two poets in Aulis. The reference to Aulis can hardly be separated from the Hesiodic ἐξ Αὐλίδος, ‘from Aulis’ in *Op.* 651, thus the simplest correction in my opinion is ὁμόσε ἐξ Αὐλίδος τῆς Βοιωτίας, ‘with each other coming from Aulis in Boeotia’ of GALLAVOTTI 1929: 40, n. 2, rather than ὁμόσε γενομένου ἐν Αὐλίδι τῆς Βοιωτίας, ‘with each other after meeting up at Aulis in Boeotia’, proposed by Busse (and preferred by West and Bassino), or ὁμόσε ἐν Χαλκίδι τῆς Εὐβοίας, ‘with each other at Chalcis in Euboea’, proposed by Nietzsche.

<sup>85</sup> For such meaning of βασιλεὺς see below, n. 106.

<sup>86</sup> *Certamen* 6: 63-66.

<sup>87</sup> Ivi: 66-68.

<sup>88</sup> Ivi: 68-70; cf. *PPetr* I 25: 2-4, with the restoration by AVEZZÙ 1982: 38.

<sup>89</sup> VOGT 1959: 194-205.

<sup>90</sup> In the *Certamen* the death of Hesiod is firstly reported according to the version of Alcidas (13: 215 – 14: 240), who is explicitly quoted (14: 240: see above, n. 67), and then according to the “kinder” version of

first fruits of his victory to the god,<sup>91</sup> the poet receives the misleading prophecy predicting his death close to the Nemean Zeus's grove.<sup>92</sup> Thus, the poet, although cautious to avoid Nemea in the Peloponnese, was caught by his fate in Oinoe in Locris, another location known as the Temple of the Nemean Zeus. There, while as a guest of Amphiphanes and Ganyktor,<sup>93</sup> he is accused of having had relations with their sister and is subsequently killed, his body thrown 'in the sea between Euboea and Locris'.<sup>94</sup>

Although Thucydides locates Ozolian Locris as the site of Hesiod's death,<sup>95</sup> the *Certamen*, as well as the *Life of Hesiod* attributed to Tzetzes,<sup>96</sup> locates Hesiod's demise in Opuntian Locris,<sup>97</sup> a region not only facing Euboea, but also deeply connected to it by material and cultural ties reaching back into the Archaic Age.<sup>98</sup> The reference to τὸ μεταξὺ τῆς Εὐβοίας καὶ τῆς Λοκρίδος πέλαγος, 'the sea between Euboea and Locris', does not leave room for misinterpretation. Nor does it appear susceptible to amendments (like Ἀχαιίας, 'Achaea', in place of Εὐβοίας, 'Euboea') which would

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Eratosthenes (14: 240-247), whose name is also quoted (14: 240). About the complex tradition on the death of Hesiod, see FRIEDEL 1878-1879; on Hesiod's burial at Orchomeos, DEBIASI 2015: 241-276.

<sup>91</sup> The consequentiality link is apparent in *Certamen* 13: 215-217. διέπλευσεν, 'sailed across', in the text implies the passage of the Euripos.

<sup>92</sup> Ivi: 217-223.

<sup>93</sup> Ivi 14: 224-229.

<sup>94</sup> Ivi: 229-232.

<sup>95</sup> Thuc. III 95-96.

<sup>96</sup> Tzetz. *Vita Hesiodi* p. 50 ll. 22-29 Wilamowitz = Hes. T 2 p. 160 Most. More properly we are facing a Humanistic-Age summary of the *Prolegomena ad Hesiodum* by Tzetzes: COLONNA 1953. Cf. also the details of the murder of Hesiod in the new papyrus fragment *PGreekPapyrol. Soc. inv. M2* (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC) edited by MANDILARAS 1992: the text has striking affinity with the *Vita* of Tzetzes.

<sup>97</sup> BUSSE 1909.

<sup>98</sup> LEMOS 1998 and LEMOS 2002: 204-205.



subvert its meaning<sup>99</sup> and imply further misleading textual alterations: for instance the transmitted Οἰνόην, 'Oinoe' (l. 226) in Οἰνεῶνα, 'Oineon'.<sup>100</sup>

Moreover, the surprising onomastics of Hesiod's killers, *Amphiphanes* and *Ganyktor*, point to Euboea, the site of the controversial contest. *Ganyktor* in particular is a homonym of *Amphidamas*' son who instituted the games to honour his father.<sup>101</sup>

Having affirmed the Euboean spirit pervading the *Certamen* at the textual level, now we may attempt to place the contest in a precise historical background, specifically that of the epochal war between Chalcis and Eretria, the two main cities of Euboea, for control of the fertile plain traversed by the Lelantos river.<sup>102</sup>

Evidence provided by the Boeotian Plutarch, who is particularly knowledgeable about the events of the so-called Lelantine War,<sup>103</sup> permits us to make such a correlation. Plutarch recalls in two different passages that *Amphidamas*, in whose

<sup>99</sup> The correction Ἀχαΐας is due to Westermann, but numerous other attempts have been done to force the text (cf., e.g., Βοιωτίας, Βολίνας, Εὐπαλίας, Μολυκρίας). *PGreek Papyrol. Soc.* inv. M2 is decisive: MANDILARAS 1992: 61; BASSINO 2018: 171-172.

<sup>100</sup> Westermann based on Thuc. III 95: 3, where Oineon in Ozolian Locris is cited. Based on stylistic arguments, BUSSE 1909: 109 hypothesizes an original εἰς δὲ Οἰνόην τῆς Λοκρίδος <τῆς καταντικρὸς Εὐβοίας>, 'to Oinoe in Locris, opposite Euboea', by Alcidas in place of the single εἰς δὲ Οἰνόην τῆς Λοκρίδος, 'to Oinoe in Locris', in *Certamen* 14: 226.

<sup>101</sup> In the version of Eratosthenes (*Certamen* 14: 240-242) *Ganyktor* does not appear as a slayer, but rather as the father of *Ktimenos* and *Antiphos*, the killers of Hesiod: see FRIEDEL 1878-1879.

<sup>102</sup> My argumentation, concerning the earliest (archaic) stage of the tradition of the Homer-Hesiod contest, is now accepted, among others, by NAGY 2018 as well as by BASSINO 2018: 16, n. 41, in the benchmark commented edition of the *Certamen*: «In order to argue for an early date for the origins of the date of the contest between Homer and Hesiod, we do not necessarily need a connection with Lesches or any other specific name [cf. above, n. 70]. Another, more convincing attempt to trace the earliest developments of the legend in archaic times is DEBIASI 2012, according to whom the story originated in connection with the Lelantine war».

<sup>103</sup> Plutarch (*Amat.* 17 p. 760c-761b) provides the information on the decisive help to the Chalcidians given, in the climax of the war, by the Thessalian cavalry led by Cleomachos.

funeral games Homer and Hesiod are competing, was a man used to war (ἀνὴρ πολεμικός) and who died in a naval clash between the Chalcidians and the Eretrians during their lengthy war.<sup>104</sup>

This image is also consistent with the one we find in Hesiod's *Works and Days* where the heroic epithets δαίφρων, 'valorous' (v. 654) and μεγαλήτωρ, 'great-hearted' (v. 656), used in reference to the deceased, indicate his warlike nature.<sup>105</sup> Such epithets suit an individual regarded as an eminent member of a society of warriors which exhibits the characteristics of the archaic aristocracy of Chalcis – a society which for a long time was engaged in the conflict with the Eretrians.<sup>106</sup>

Despite its significant size and its deep impression on various components of the Greek world, the sources give little and not always clear information about the Lelantine War. Although the evidence related to the chronology of the war has always been a point of contention, there is nowadays a tendency to broadly locate the vast and undoubtedly long conflict between the last quarter of the 8<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Plut. *Sept. Sap. Conv.* 10 p. 153f; fr. 84 Sandbach (= sch. Hes. *Op.* 654-656). The naval clash of the two cities with strong maritime traditions is likely (cf. BERSHADSKY - DEBIASI - FRAME - NAGY 2018: § 9B [Frame]), thus it is not necessary to correct the transmitted ναυμαχοῦντα, 'fighting by sea', with μονομαχοῦντα, 'fighting in single combat', as proposed by HERMANN 1832: 91-92; cf. the numerous representations of naval battles on geometric vases: KIRK 1949; AHLBERG 1971: esp. 25-38.

<sup>105</sup> WEST 1978: 320-321: «Amphidamas' epithet [δαίφρωνος in 654] taken as 'warlike' rather than 'clever', implies that he has proved himself in battle, as does μεγαλήτορος in 656». μεγαλήτορος referred to Amphidamas is a preferable variant than the *facilior* μεγαλήτορες referred to his sons.

<sup>106</sup> In *Certamen* 6: 64 Amphidamas is designated βασιλεὺς Εὐβοίας, 'king of Euboea', and βασιλεύς is later used to designate his brother Panedes (*Certamen* 12: 177 and 13: 207). Such designation, which can be influenced by the late writing of the *Certamen*, is actually fitting with the Euboean aristocracy of the Archaic Age: see DREWS 1983: 9 and 94-95; CARLIER 1984: 429; CARLIER 2003. In this regard, two pieces of information by Plutarch are extremely interesting: in *Narrat. Amat.* 3 p. 774c Chalcodon, a figure that can be traced back to the Abantic Euboea and particularly to Calchis, is defined βασιλεὺς τῶν Εὐβοέων: MELE 1981: 25-33; similarly, in *Parall. Gr. et Rom.* 7 p. 307c βασιλεὺς τῶν Εὐβοέων is used for Pyrechmes, a figure linked to the horse-keeping (*hippotrophia*) characterizing the archaic Euboean aristocracy (cf. SIMON - VERDAN 2014; TALAMO 1981: 38-39).

century BC.<sup>107</sup> Consequently, the possibility of a synchronicity between Hesiod and the Lelantine War, as implied by Plutarch in his comments about Amphidamas, is reasonable.<sup>108</sup>

Given the circumstances in which Amphidamas lost his life, it is very likely that the games held in his honour at Chalcis assumed a political and ideological significance. This political / ideological value was further substantiated by the poetic contest, since Hesiod's triumph must be interpreted as the triumph of Chalcis itself.<sup>109</sup>

From this perspective, the tradition concerning the contest between Homer and Hesiod, regardless of its correspondence to a real or to a fictional event, would have

<sup>107</sup> See PARKER 1997: 59-93, esp. 91-93, with re-examination of previous bibliography; cf. WALKER 2004: 156-171; FRAME 2018: § 8.

<sup>108</sup> See TEDESCHI 1975, who also refutes the hypothesis that the Hesiodic Amphidamas differs from the Amphidamas that died during the war; PARKER 1997: 88-91; cf. BERSHADSKY - DEBIASI - FRAME - NAGY 2018: § 9B [Frame]. About the Hesiodic chronology, coinciding with that of the Lelantine War, but inferable also based on other evidence, cf. WEST 1966: 40-48; EDWARDS 1971: 7-9, 199-206; JANKO 1982: 94-98, 228-231; RICCIARDELLI 2018: xxii; cf. also above, n. 75.

<sup>109</sup> Moreover, the place of the victory is emphasized in the Hesiodic self-celebration in *Op.* 656-657. It is noteworthy that whatsoever citation of Eretria is missing in the Hesiodic corpus, whereas Calchis occurs twice with the epithet *καλλιγύναιξ*, 'with its beautiful women' (final clausula *Χαλκίδα καλλιγύναικα*): fr. 64, 2 and 277 Merkelbach-West = fr. 65, 2 and 213 Most. The presence in the Hesiodic corpus of the myth of the Capture of Oechalia, according to which Heracles destroyed the city of Oechalia and killed its king Eurytos who, in spite of an agreement, denied him his daughter Iole, is also significant. TALAMO 1975 demonstrates that a reading in epic perspective of the Lelantine War victory of Calchis (linked to Heracles), whose point of view is taken, over Eretria (in whose territory was a location named Oechalia) can be recognized in this legend; cf., more recently BREGLIA PULCI DORIA 2013: 50 and FRAME 2018: §§ 7-9, 21, 23. Especially meaningful, in my opinion, is fr. 26, 31-33 Merkelbach-West = fr. 23, 31-33 Most (*Ehoie* of the daughters of Porthaon and Laothoe) where, after the presentation of Eurytos' sons, one may read: *τὸς δὲ μέθ' ὀπλοτάτην (sc. Εὐρυτος) τέκετο ξανθὴν Ἴόλειαν, / τ[ῆς ἔ]νεκ' Οἴχ[αλ.]ίη[ν] εὐτείχεα ἐξάλαπαξεν / Ἀμφι]τρωνιάδης*, 'After these, last of all he begot blonde Iole, for whose sake Amphitryon's son sacked well-walled Oechalia'. If the myth's exegesis is correct, this represents a precious datum revealing that Hesiod is attentive and supportive, not only biographically but also poetically, to the events of the Euboean cities, first of all Calchis, involved in the conflict: see DEBIASI 2008: 30-34. Significantly, in his travels (*Il.* II 596) Tamyris also reached Oechalia, residence of Eurytos; cf. above, 2.2.-2.3.

assumed an important role in the ideological and propagandistic system that developed around the conflict and its outcome – a conflict which, after numerous ups and downs, was favourable to Chalcis.

Indeed, it is not difficult to surmise the type of relation likely established between the poetic contest and the war of Chalcis and Eretria. The latter takes the form of the strife between two cities supported by their respective allies, a case very similar to and mirroring the oral fight between the two famous poets.<sup>110</sup> Thus the image of the conflict between Eretria and Chalcis surfaces behind the image of the contest between Homer and Hesiod. This acquires further strength if one considers the agonistic traits that scholars have shown to be evidence for the Lelantine War.<sup>111</sup>

Thus one may hypothesize that the two fighting parties, Chalcidian and Eretrian, both involved in the last and most significant formative stage of epic poetry, had developed and used the tradition of the poetic contest according to two different perspectives. On the one hand, Chalcis had its natural champion in Hesiod and celebrated his triumph, achieved within its own boundaries, as hypostasis of its own final success in the war. Conversely, Eretria could boast of its poetic *alter ego* as nothing

<sup>110</sup> The exchange between the verbal and military fields, with the consequent lexical contiguity, is well documented in the Indo-European area, as illustrated by DUNKEL 1979 with examples from the archaic Greek epic and lyric as well from Rig Veda; cf. HUIZINGA 1955: ch. 5 (*Play and War*) and ch. 7 (*Play and Poetry*); COLLINS 2004.

<sup>111</sup> BRELICH 1961: 9-21; BERSHADSKY 2018a-d (to be read in the context of the stimulating exchange in BERSHADSKY - DEBIASI - FRAME - NAGY 2018: §§ 9 [Frame] and 10 [Bershadsky]). The war, despite its extension, maintained some agonistic and “chivalric” traits that can be traced back to former periodic clashes linked to the initiation rites of young men. A significant element is the agreement stipulated between Chalcis and Eretria on banning the use of long-range weapons in the war, as evidenced by a stele in the temple of Artemis *Amarynthia* (Strabo X 1: 12 C 448), a divinity periodically celebrated with pyrrhic dancing contests: BREGLIA PULCI DORIA 1975. Also significant is the peculiar haircut (κουρά) of the Curetes (= Abantes) who fought for the Lelantine Plain «letting their hair grow long behind» (Archem. *FGrHist* 424 F 9 = 10.3.6 C465), which reminds ancient contest-initiation rites: MELE 1975.

less than Homer, whose defeat at Chalcis, one might argue, was undeserved, just as was that of Eretria following the Lelantine War.<sup>112</sup>

The existence of these two different perspectives, one more favourable to Hesiod, the other to Homer, may be verified in the sources.<sup>113</sup> Even in the *Certamen* we recognize a certain tension between the two opposite currents. Nevertheless, there remains the strong impression that the treatise is friendly toward Homer and hostile toward Hesiod. In general the basis of this disposition is associated with Alcidas, the author from whose work the *Certamen* draws.<sup>114</sup> However, as it is typically acknowledged that Alcidas purposefully re-used already existing themes, one may assume that a more ancient formulation is the root of his pro-Homer and anti-Hesiod attitude.<sup>115</sup>

The specific passages in which we recognize a departure from Hesiod in favour of Homer suggest that this attitude should be sought in the Euboean, and specifically Eretrian, sphere.

<sup>112</sup> It is noteworthy that the 5<sup>th</sup> century lead tablets from Styra, to which *IG XII 9, 56: 135* (Ὀμήριος) belongs, present fundamentally Eretrian epigraphic traits: CREUTZBURG 1931: 455; cf. WALKER 2004: 56 and 71, n. 258. Furthermore, Styra itself appears to gravitate in the Eretrian orbit not just in Hellenistic Age but already starting from the Classical Age: KNOEPFLER 1971: 242-243; WALKER 2004: 24-25, n. 65, 248, 266, n. 91. Very engaging appears the interpretation by ANTONELLI 2000: 30-37, relative to the Homeric passage, *Od.* VI 2-6, which is considered influenced by Eretrian traditions developed after the Lelantine War: the Phaeacians (in *Od.* VII 56-63 descendants of the Giants) vexed and ousted from their own country by the Cyclops would represent on a mythological level the Eretrians defeated at home by the Calchidians and forced to find their fortunes somewhere else, particularly in Corcyra.

<sup>113</sup> Compared to the *Certamen*, Themist. 30.348d-349a seems definitely kinder to Hesiod; Plut. *Sept. Sap. Conv.* 10 pp. 153f-154a = Hes. T 38 Most, and Tzetz. *Vita Hesiodi* pp. 48-49 ll. 26-11 Wilamowitz = pp. 222-223 ll. 6-27 Allen also appear more impartial: O'SULLIVAN 1992: 96 and n. 188.

<sup>114</sup> See O'SULLIVAN 1992: 66-79, according to whom the contest in the work of Alcidas would reflect the divide of two different rhetorical styles: the "grand" style, represented by Homer, and the "thin" one, represented by Hesiod, with Alcidas supporting the former.

<sup>115</sup> Cf., e.g., GRAZIOSI 2002: 168-180, according to whom many passages of the *Certamen* respond to 5<sup>th</sup> century Athenian concerns; NAGY 2009: 302 and 310 points to the age of the Peisistratids (6<sup>th</sup> century).

The bewildering victory of Hesiod over Homer is presented as a totally unexpected and anomalous event. The victory is the consequence of the verdict of King Panedes, the most authoritative among the Chalcidians, who, at the end of the contest, with a coup de théâtre, crowns Hesiod by «declaring that it was right that he who encouraged people toward agriculture and peace win rather than one who dwelt on war and slaughter».<sup>116</sup>

This sentence, far from being that which is expected, is presented in contrast with the actual development of the contest. It is Homer who achieves the greater success, much to the irritation and envy of Hesiod.<sup>117</sup> In particular, the verdict is diametrically opposed to the judgement of the Greeks (i.e., non-Chalcidians) who, in admiration of Homer and moved by his discourse, unanimously request his victory.<sup>118</sup> But his victory is prevented by the bizarre verdict of king Panedes,<sup>119</sup> *primus inter pares* in an assembly of judges composed of eminent Chalcidians.<sup>120</sup> It is here we are presented with an anti-Chalcidian attitude consistent with the resentment developed by Eretria following its defeat in the conflict with Chalcis.

<sup>116</sup> *Certamen* 13: 207-210. This opinion later merged in the memorable saying by Cleomenes I, according to whom «Homer was the poet of the Spartans and Hesiod of the Helots; for Homer had given the necessary directions for fighting and Hesiod for farming» (Plut. *Lac. Apophth.* p. 223a = Hes. T 155 Most; cf. Aelian. *Var. Hist.* XIII 19). It may have developed in different contexts. Nevertheless, we can observe, without forcing the interpretation, that the condemnation of war (epitomized by Homer) and the praise of agriculture (epitomized by Hesiod) in hindsight fits well the winners of a war whose prize was, among others, the control of the fertile Lelantine Plain. The very denomination of Amphidamas as ‘king of Euboea’ seems to imply an hegemony of Calchis in the island, as it happened after the conflict: cf. the case of Chalcodon ‘king of Euboea’ (see above, n. 106), indication of an older Chalcidian hegemony, about which see MELE 1981: 28.

<sup>117</sup> *Certamen* 8: 94 ~ *PPetr* I 25: 35; Ivi 10: 149.

<sup>118</sup> Ivi 12: 176-177; cf. 8: 90-92 = *PPetr* I 25: 30-31.

<sup>119</sup> See the negative opinion of the decision of Panedes in Lucian. *Vera Hist.* II 22 and Philostr. *Her.* 18: 2; cf. Apostol. 14: 11. See among moderns scholars VOGT 1959: 199, 201, who depicts it as arbitrary and capricious (*contra* WEST 1967: 443; GRAZIOSI 2002: 173).

<sup>120</sup> *Certamen* 6: 68-70.

Moreover, we can recognize two different versions, one accredited to Alcidas and the other to Eratosthenes. In either version, we find slightly variant narrations of Hesiod's death.<sup>121</sup> In Alcidas, Amphiphanes and Ganyktor kill Hesiod and throw his body «in the sea between Euboea and Locris». In Eratosthenes, it is the sons of Ganyktor who are responsible for the death of Hesiod. Ultimately, these two versions meet in the *Certamen*, where they come to represent the two opposing traditions found in Eretria and Chalcis. The tradition from Alcidas' pages recounts the shameful relation between Hesiod and the sister of his hosts. In this version the poet's dreary end is vengeance for his unfair victory. This is undoubtedly Eretrian in conception. Alternatively, the tradition advanced by Eratosthenes, in which the seducer is not the poet (who is killed by mistake) but rather his travel companion Demodes, we find a reparative version that, by aiming to rehabilitate the champion of Chalcis, appears attributable to Chalcis itself, and possibly not only to the favour granted to Hesiod in the Hellenistic age. The two explanations are not conflicting, as exemplified by the case of Euphorion of Calchis, Hellenistic author of a short poem titled *Hesiod*,<sup>122</sup> tangible evidence that the Chalcidians established a special relation with the poet of Ascrea who became their banner.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, the writing of Euphorion matches the contemporary work of Eratosthenes dealing with the death of Hesiod, most likely also titled *Hesiod*.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>121</sup> See above, n. 90.

<sup>122</sup> Euphor. fr. 22-22b Powell.

<sup>123</sup> See, in relation to Euphorion, DEBIASI 2010b; DEBIASI 2015: 114-118.

<sup>124</sup> In *Certamen* 14: 241, after Ἐρατοσθένης δὲ φησιν 'Eratosthenes says', the correction by both Götting and Bergk ἐν Ἡσιόδῳ, 'in his *Hesiod*', in place of the corrupted ἐν ἐνηπόδῳ is almost certain and accepted by most of the scholars and editors (including Nietzsche, Rzach, Wilamowitz, Evelyn-White, West): with reference to the *Certamen*, see POWELL 1925: 63 and MERKELBACH 1963: 519-526. See, however, BASSINO 2018: 104 and 174, who does not take a position on the issue and in absence of clear evidence prefers not to emend the corrupted text (printed between cruces).

2.5. *The Pseudo-Herodotean Life of Homer and the Lelantine War: Eretria and its allies vs. Chalcis and its allies – “Team Homer” vs. “Team Hesiod”*

The association of Homer with Eretria originated in antithesis to the link between Hesiod and Chalcis as part of the contention between the two cities, and may have also been somewhat influential on other biographic works about Homer.<sup>125</sup>

The Pseudo-Herodotean *Life of Homer*, the most articulated and pro-Homeric of the biographies dedicated to the poet, provides remarkable evidence of this Eretria-Homer association. This biography is a sort of note-book in which the many places visited by Homer during his itinerant activity are meticulously and even humbly recorded. Typically, the poet enjoys a warm reception in each of the cities he visits. This is a clear projection of the local interest in linking the prestigious image of the venerable poet to the background of the cities themselves. Nevertheless there are some cases where the relation between Homer and the guest *poleis* appears to be of dislike rather than of reciprocal esteem and *philia*. Such sequences, indeed singular in the treatise, involve the centres of Cyme, Erythrae, and Samos.

According to the *Life*, Homer suffered in Cyme a first humiliation when, in spite of a performance worthy of his fame, the council and one of the kings did not grant him sustenance at public expense.<sup>126</sup> So, the poet left «cursing the Cymaeans that no poet of note should be born in the place to glorify the Cymaeans».<sup>127</sup>

Such an episode, otherwise elusive, can be fully explained in light of Homer's invective: the insinuation that an excellent poet would never be born in Cyme is nothing more than a malicious litotes referring to an untalented poet originating from

<sup>125</sup> Recently, see NAGY 2004.

<sup>126</sup> *Vita Herod.* 13-14.

<sup>127</sup> Ivi 15.



this place. Such a poet is none other than Homer's traditional *antagonist*, Hesiod,<sup>128</sup> who in the *Works and Days* recalls his father's journey. He «left Aeolian Cyme in a black boat [...] he settled near Helicon in a wretched village, Ascra, evil in winter, distressful in summer, not ever fine».<sup>129</sup>

Other than in Cyme, Homer suffers insult in Erythrae and in Samos, guilty of not having respected the sacred oaths of the *xenia*. In Erythrae, the poet travelling to Chios requests to ride aboard the boat of some local fisherman sailing to the island. They, after initially refusing him, are ultimately persuaded by tumultuous winds invoked by the outraged poet in the name of Zeus of Guests to take Homer onboard.<sup>130</sup> Similarly in Samos, where he landed returning from Chios during the festival of Apatouria, Homer is rudely rebuked by the priestess who is otherwise busy with the sacrifices to Kourotrophos. His reply is an epigram of unusual violence.<sup>131</sup>

The two episodes of Erythrae and Samos are not easily deciphered. However, given their similarity to the episode in Cyme, one may postulate a common origin. While the negative characterization of Cyme corresponds to the anti-Hesiodic perspective of the *Certamen*, the episodes at Erythrae and Samos can be related to the anti-Chalcidic spirit inspired by such a perspective.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>128</sup> So LASSERRE 1976: 129, who moves beyond the hypothesis of WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF 1916: 423-425, according to which the Homeric invective is meant to challenge the claim of Cyme that Homer was born there.

<sup>129</sup> *Op.* 636-640. The overtly negative depiction of Ascra originates in contrast with Cyme and manifests more the feelings of Hesiod's father rather than his own; see HAMILTON 1989: 68. The close connection, due to the father, between Hesiod and Cyme often induced the ancient writers to consider Hesiod himself a Cymaeon: Hesych. *Vita Hesiodi* p. 51 Wilamowitz (from *Suda*: Hes. T 1 Most); cf. also DEBIASI 2008: 58-61.

<sup>130</sup> *Vita Herod.* 19.

<sup>131</sup> Ivi 29-30. In spite of the rebuke by the priestess, Homer remained in Samos for one winter; however his stay in the island was quite miserable as he had to support himself by begging (§ 33).

<sup>132</sup> Cyme itself, disfavoured due to its links to Hesiod, established questionable connections with Calchis, if this is the same Cyme that, according to Strabo V 4: 4 C 243, joined Calchis in funding Cyme on the Bay of

The two Asiatic centres took part to the events connected to the war of almost panhellenic size between Chalcis and Eretria.<sup>133</sup> The involvement of Samos is explicitly asserted by Herodotus, from whom we infer the existence of an Eastern front at which Samos, ally to Chalcis, and Miletus, ally to Eretria, met in battle.<sup>134</sup> Similarly, the battle between Erythrae and the allied Chios and Miletus<sup>135</sup> has been linked to the Chalcis-Eretria conflict: Erythrae and Samos, according to the documented ties between Chalcis and Erythrae,<sup>136</sup> would have supported Chalcis against the pro-Eretrian cities of Chios and Miletus.<sup>137</sup>

The narrative positions of the events in Erythrae and in Samos respectively before and after the stay of Homer in Chios appear to be intentionally placed in opposition.<sup>138</sup> Chios otherwise is the city where the poet founded a school and married a woman who gave him two daughters.<sup>139</sup>

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Naples giving it the same name: see MELE 1979: 28-39 and, with reference to the Lelantine War, BURN 1929: 15 and n. 11.

<sup>133</sup> Thuc. I 15: 3.

<sup>134</sup> Herod. V 99; see PARKER 1997: 120-127; cf. FRAME 2018: § 4; BERSHADSKY 2018c: § 3; BERSHADSKY - DEBIASI - FRAME - NAGY 2018: § 7B [Frame].

<sup>135</sup> Herod. I 18: 3.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Paus. VII 5: 12, as well as the local inscription *SGDI* 5690, about which, see ENGELMANN - MERKELBACH 1972: 141-143. Very likely Calchis was one of the metropolis of Erythrae: see SAKELLARIOU 1958: 213 and 221.

<sup>137</sup> FORREST 1957: 161; a close study is in PARKER 1997: 128-133; cf. FRAME 2009: 535, n. 48 and 581, n. 145.

<sup>138</sup> The stops in Erythrae and in Samos are explicitly connected to the one in Chios. In fact Homer intended to go to Chios when he asked a passage to the fishermen of Erythrae (*Vita Herod.* 18-19), and from Chios itself he reached Samos (*Vita Herod.* 29).

<sup>139</sup> *Vita Herod.* 25. On Chios native-land of Homer, as the presence of Homerids in the island would indicate, cf. *Certamen* 2: 13-15, and the collection of sources in DE MARTINO 1984: 166 (see also the introductory note of RUSSO 1984, where Homer is framed in a perspective both Chian-Milesian and Euboean); on the "Abantic" Chios and its implications, see above, 2.3.

Thus, in the Pseudo-Herodotean *Life* we find a precise mechanism, by which Homer maintains relations of esteem and harmony with those cities favourable to Eretria.<sup>140</sup> On the other hand the poet's relations with the cities siding with Chalcis are characterized by distrust and aversion.

Against the background I have outlined here, I find extremely effective the formula coined by Gregory Nagy according to whom «the Lelantine War can even be viewed as a stylized conflict between “team Homer” and “team Hesiod”». <sup>141</sup>

Thus, the association of Homer to Eretria and Hesiod to Chalcis is an extremely active and fruitful one. It has shown itself capable of leaving enduring signs not only in the traditions about the contest itself, from which the whole propagandistic complex blossomed, but also in other biographical sections in the composite *corpus* of the *Lives of Homer*.

<sup>140</sup> According to *Vita Herod.* 28 Argos was highly praised by Homer, as confirmed also by Herod. V 67: 1, according to whom the anti-Argive Cleisthenes banned the Homeric hymns from the contests in Sycion. *Certamen* 17: 304-314 recalls a direct link between Argos and Chios based on Homer: the Argives, grateful, erected a statue to Homer and established a daily, monthly, and yearly sacrifice in his honor, as well as one to be sent to Chios every fifth year. If the hypothesis proposed by BRADEEN 1947 is embraced, according to which Argos entered the Lelantine War on the side of Eretria, then the positive link Homer/Argos could fit the framework outlined above.

<sup>141</sup> NAGY 2018; further clarifications in BERSHADSKY - DEBIASI - FRAME - NAGY 2018: § 13A [Nagy]: «Besides “team Hesiod and team Homer”, there are sub-teams, as it were, of “team Homer” [...] the Kreophyleioi of Samos and the Homeridai of Chios. The Kreophyleioi are more Hesiod-friendly, while the Homeridai are allergic to Hesiod», and § 14C [Debiasi]: «“Team Homer” vs. “Team Hesiod” seems to be a long-running match, starting in Archaic Greece but still lively in the Hellenistic age (I dare say that both Eratosthenes and Euphorion, authors of a work titled *Hesiod*, are young members of the venerable “Hesiodic club”»). Cf. above, nn. 122-124.

### 3. FIRST INTERLUDE (*Andrea Capra*)

The case of Euboea is extremely interesting for at least two reasons. On the one hand, Euboea had been an important centre of sub-Mycenean culture, which means that traditions and memories from a distant past were stronger than elsewhere; on the other hand, the relative prosperity and naval prowess of the Euboeans allowed them to play a crucial role in the colonization of distant lands, where they brought – as is the case with Pithecousa – their “Homeric” culture. At a much more specific and analytic level, Andrea shows how Euboea preserved the “real” meaning of Homer’s name, while at the same time projecting its local history into foundational stories and texts such as the contest between Homer and Hesiod and the most important among the Lives of Homer. Now, a contest between different kinds of singers-narrators is what we found in the *Odyssey* already, with Odysseus’ “subjective” narrative superseding Demodocus’ Muse-inspired song. Moreover, the very centre of Odysseus’ tale, namely his journey to the Underworld, features a famous confrontation between Odysseus and Achilles, with the latter repudiating his “Iliadic” values based on honour and disregard for death in favour of a quintessentially “Odyssean” attachment to life. From this point of view, one can say that the *Odyssey* – to be understood as a long-lasting tradition of poetry rather than as the work composed at any given time – challenges the Iliadic tradition. As Andrea reminded us, according to Greg Nagy there existed a pervasive and persistent clash between a “team Hesiod” and a “team Homer”, but the latter can in fact be seen as split between a “team *Iliad*” and a “team *Odyssey*”, embodying very different worldviews. In the epic tradition, Hades is the place where, traditionally, different poetic traditions are contrasted and where alternative voices and stories emerge. The reason why this is possible is the irreducible “otherness” of Homeric Hades and its later counterparts. This “otherness” is the focus of the contribution authored by George

Gazis, easily the greatest and most imaginative expert of Homeric underworld. Over to you, George!

#### 4. HOMER'S HADES (*George A. Gazis*)

##### 4.1. *Introduction*

The Homeric Underworld has intrigued and fascinated audiences and readers since antiquity, as much as it has caused controversy and division of opinions regarding the nature of the land of the dead and the afterlife beliefs that could be hiding behind it. Already in Hellenistic times, Aristarchus boldly athetized a large part of *Odyssey* XI as “un-Homeric”, precisely on the basis that the beliefs depicted in it did not coincide with what is found elsewhere in Homer. This view was championed further in the dark years of Analysis in Homeric studies, with eminent scholars, Rohde and Page among them, arguing vehemently against the unity of the text on the grounds of perceived inconsistencies regarding the state of man after death.<sup>142</sup> Neo-analysis and oral theory proposed a solution to these issues by offering an interpretation based on a diachronic development of the text, which resulted in the incorporation of different, and often

<sup>142</sup> Scholars have often resulted in ostracising large passages, or even whole Books, in an attempt to harmonise beliefs regarding the Underworld and the afterlife in the Homeric epics, see notoriously RHODE 1925: 3-54, PAGE 1955: 21-47; for a discussion and a survey of the bibliography see GAZIS 2018: 80-83. Both *Odyssey* XI and XXIV were suspected as interpolations already in antiquity, see ΣH.T. *ad Od.* XI 568. See also ΣH.M.Q. *ad Od.* XXIII 292 for the *athetisis* of the last 33 lines of Book XXIII by Aristophanes and Aristarchus and ΣM.V. *ad Od.* XXIV 1 for the *athetisis* of Book XXIV by the latter. *Odyssey* XI is now considered an integral part of the *Odyssey* by the majority of scholars; for a summary of the debate surrounding Book XI see GAZIS 2018: 79-84 with further bibliography. In the case of Book XXIV the jury is still out although a Unitarian approach appears to be favoured, see WHITEHEAD 1984 and HEUBECK 1992 *ad Od.* XXIII 297 and *Od.* XXIV 1 with bibliography.

contradictory, strands of beliefs in one unified, yet blurry, depiction of Hades. Sourvinou-Inwood for instance, put forth the opinion that the Homeric Hades can serve as an excellent example of the integration of different funerary practices from the Mycenaean times up to the Archaic era, when the epics are generally agreed to have been crystallised, at least in content if not form. According to Sourvinou-Inwood, the bleak and murky Underworld inhabited by ghosts with clear marks of their way of death, and in some cases still engaging in the activities they practised in life, as in the opening and final part of *Odyssey* XI, appears to reflect the mid-late Mycenaean custom of interring deceased members of the noble classes into *tholos* tombs. This argument finds further support in the very name used for the Underworld throughout the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as the “house of Hades” which is frequently described as having a roof and strong gates, while Hades himself is often given the epithet “keeper of the gates” (Ἄϊδαο πυλάρταο, *Il.* VIII 367).<sup>143</sup> The fact that the Mycenaean *tholoi* are built to resemble a house of sorts, in which we have evidence of ritual “ancestral” feasting taking place after the interment of the departed family or clan member, could help explain these descriptions of Hades in the Homeric text. At the same time, and side by side to these descriptions, there is the overarching understanding of the dead as powerless, fleeting shadows (*amenena karena*), a state to which they arrive as a consequence of the funeral pyre, as Anticleia explains to Odysseus when the latter fails three times in his attempt to embrace her *eidolon* in *Odyssey* XI.<sup>144</sup> In fact, Homeric heroes know no other way of burial than cremation – a practice which appears to take hold of Greece at least during the Proto-Geometric era and continues steadily in the Archaic era, thus making the contrast between the earlier interment practice possibly reflected in the descriptions discussed above even sharper, if not entirely incompatible. Sourvinou-Inwood’s

<sup>143</sup> Cf. *Il.* XIII 415.

<sup>144</sup> *Od.* XI 216-221.

suggestion, although impossible to prove, proves significant for our approach to Homer as a whole and to Hades and the afterlife beliefs in the epics in particular.

The reader who has attempted to engage with the concept of Hades in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* before, will be well-informed on the vast amount of scholarly effort that has been devoted to clarifying or even understanding the conflicting afterlife beliefs and descriptions of the Underworld that we find in the epics. The outcome of these attempts often invites the reader to resignation: there is simply no way to create a unified image of Hades with the information Homer shares with us. At the same time, the conflation of different motifs, customs and strands of beliefs, so evident in other issues related to the epics,<sup>145</sup> instead of putting our curiosity to rest, it appears to be inflaming it further. And with good reason, since Homer's Underworld descriptions made sense at least to their earlier audiences, save perhaps the pedantic directors at the Library of Alexandria in Hellenistic times and onwards, therefore some cohesion, which we are not able to detect, should have been identified in order for no serious objections to be raised. This cohesion, however, should not be sought in the particular, and often conflicting details, but rather in the overarching themes that frame the concept of Hades in Homer. The main starting point is already given to us in the name of the Underworld, or rather in the popular pareymology connected with it throughout antiquity: *A-ides*, the un-seen.<sup>146</sup> This is the main characteristic of both the god and his realm – for instance despite the fact that Hades is ever present in the *Iliad*, through the death of countless warriors, we never actually see the god in action, we can only perceive him through the effect he has in the heroic sphere. Heroes fall in battle and stay motionless, their death often accompanied by the imagery of night falling over their

<sup>145</sup> E.g. the use of iron in a Bronze Age society, or the social structures employed in similes, which are far removed from anything we find in the narrative, see further MORRIS 1997; OSBORNE 2004.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. GRAZIOSI - HAUBOLD 2010: 157-158. Despite his physical absence from the narrative Hades receives many epithets in Homer, see further GAZIS 2018: 36-40.

eyes signifying their figurative disappearance from the world of the living,<sup>147</sup> which will soon follow in literal terms through their cremation and consequent physical obliteration from the gaze of their comrades but also the poet and the audience. This is the power of Hades, but the god himself remains out of view throughout the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; we only see briefly his agent, Thanatos, accompanied by his brother Sleep, in an extraordinary appearance when they transfer the body of Sarpedon to Lycia for burial,<sup>148</sup> and in an equally unusual event that verges on the limits of cosmic transgression, we hear Hades himself shouting in terror when Poseidon's earthquakes threaten to shutter the roof of his abode and reveal to gods and men the horrors of his realm.<sup>149</sup> It is important to note here that Hades' fear is based precisely on the possibility of his realm being *seen* by those who do not yet belong to it. Therefore, we can agree that the main element that holds the concept of Hades together in the Homeric epics is precisely its inaccessibility, its remoteness from both the human and the divine sphere that guarantees its isolation and with it the cosmic order that comes from the absolute separation of the living from the dead. In Homer no-one is supposed to see or hear Hades or his abode, unless one is to be part of it, and yet as we shall see later on, our privileged state as the audience of divine Homer does allow us to transcend even this most impassable cosmic boundary.

<sup>147</sup> For example, *Il.* XX 393. See also SCHEIN 1982: 74.

<sup>148</sup> *Il.* XVI 454-455.

<sup>149</sup> *Il.* XX 61-65.



## 4.2. Hades: impossible topographies and blurry geographies<sup>150</sup>

### 4.2.1 The *Iliad*

This brings us to, perhaps, the most problematic of issues associated with the land of the dead: its placement and topography. To begin with, Hades is commonly understood in the *Iliad* to be located below the earth, while the souls of the fallen heroes are said to go *down* to the house of Hades upon their departure from the body, even though how they do that can vary.<sup>151</sup> The nature of the underworld abode they will inhabit appears to resemble a large structure (δόμος, house),<sup>152</sup> with broad gates (εὐρυπυλές, *Il.* XXIII 74),<sup>153</sup> which as we have seen are held fast by Hades (Ἀΐδαο πυλάρταο, *Il.* VIII 367),<sup>154</sup> while the role of the “roof” is played by the surface of the earth.

Further to it Hades is also associated with the notorious river Styx,<sup>155</sup> the only one of the traditional Underworld rivers to be named in the *Iliad*. Despite its several

<sup>150</sup> Much of this section is indebted to my article GAZIS 2020.

<sup>151</sup> Souls can fly to Hades e.g. XVI 856-857, or can disappear like mist into the ground as in *Il.* XXIII 100-101; for further examples of souls going down to Hades see *Il.* III 322; VI 284; VII 131; VII 330; XI 263; XIV 457; XX 61; XX 294; XXII 425. For the placement of Hades under the earth see further VERMEULE 1979: 33-34, SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1995: 56-59, CLARKE 1999: 78-80.

<sup>152</sup> For example, δόμον Ἀΐδος in *Il.* III 322; δῶμ' Ἀΐδαο *Il.* XV 251; etc.

<sup>153</sup> See also *Il.* V 646; IX 312; XXIII 71.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. *Il.* XIII 415.

<sup>155</sup> Styx is mentioned 4 times in the *Iliad* (*Il.* II 755; VIII 369; XIV 271; XV 37) and twice in the *Odyssey*, in V 185 and X 514, the latter in Circe's description of Hades' surroundings for which see next section. The Greeks of the Archaic and Classical period had certain traditions regarding the placement of Styx and the other rivers of Hades on the map of Greece, for which see OGDEN 2001. That these were based on earlier traditional beliefs can be seen in a comment contained in the “Catalogue of Ships” in Book II where the poet informs us that the river Titaesus at Dodona is a branch of the Styx (Στυγὸς ὕδατός ἐστιν ἀπορρώξ, *Il.* II 755). POCOCK 1962, is an example of a scholarly attempt to pinpoint the exact location of Styx, which

mentions, Styx only appears once in the immediate context of Hades when in Book 8 Athena recalls the time she helped Heracles during his *katabasis* in search for Cerberus (Στυγὸς ὕδατος αἰπὰ ῥέεθρα, *Il.* VIII 369). The comment however does little to clarify the river's location in relation to the Underworld: is it part of the land of the dead or does it stand as the physical boundary between Hades and the land of the living?<sup>156</sup> If it is the latter, can we suppose that it runs through its gates or that it surrounds it? Even when the information comes from first-hand experience the picture does not become clearer: in *Iliad* XXIII Patroclus' shade visits Achilles and requests burial because it cannot enter Hades proper, since it is being obstructed by the *eidola* of the dead on the other side of the river (*Il.* XXIII 71-74). Patroclus instead has to wander around the 'house of Hades with the broad gates' (εὐρυπυλὲς Ἄϊδος δῶ, *Il.* XXIII 74), but what stands as a boundary and ultimately the border between the land of the living and the dead is the river, and not any gates. In other words, crossing the river (*Il.* XXIII 73) is equivalent with 'getting through the gates of Hades' (πύλας Ἀΐδαο περήσω, *Il.* XXIII 71), thus implying that either the gates lie beyond the river or that the river *is* the gates, as the integrated souls on the other side seem to hint at.<sup>157</sup> If we accept this interpretation however, the image of Hades as a structure with gates has to be abandoned – a contradiction that can lead to serious difficulties for a literal interpretation of the text.

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in Pocock's opinion is a lake and not a river. In Hesiod, Styx is considered to be the most prominent of rivers, *Th.* 361.

<sup>156</sup> SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1995: 61 argues that Styx stands as a boundary between the world of the living and the dead, following a general pattern of traditional topography according to which a physical barrier is needed to separate the two realms.

<sup>157</sup> The scholiast, as it is often the case with technicalities or inconsistencies, takes issue with this ambiguity and suggests that by 'gates of Hades' the poet means the river Acheron, without however providing any explanation as to why it is so, cf. ΣΤ *ad Il.* XXIII 71b: πύλας Ἄϊδου τὸν Ἀχέροντα· ἐκεῖ γὰρ εἰσιν αἱ τῶν κολαζομένων ψυχῶν, οὓς τοὺς περὶ Τιτυὸν εἶδεν Ὀδυσσεύς.

The only thing we can be certain of is that the realm of the dead is a dark and confined place, traditionally thought to be located under the earth, but practically inaccessible to anyone who is not part of it. No contact with the Underworld means in essence that the worlds of the living and the dead are fundamentally divided but in a way that has not only a spatial, but also a cosmic significance. Having the capacity to die and disappear from the heroic world makes one's actions heroically relevant and guarantees that their memory will be perpetuated through the genre of epic poetry. However, for this principle to be valid, it is necessary for the finality of death to be absolute, so that once a hero enters Hades any possibility of return is excluded.

#### 4.2.2 The *Odyssey*

In contrast with the *Iliad*, where Hades remains mostly in the background, the *Odyssey* brings us face to face with the land of the dead. Odysseus' *katabasis* in Book XI, and a smaller but equally important visit to the realm of the dead through Hermes' transfer of the suitors' souls there (*Od.* XXIV 1-14), offer the audience a rare but invaluable glimpse into Hades. Perhaps unsurprisingly, however, these episodes raise more questions than they answer, since they both challenge what appears to be a well-established Underworld tradition in Homer, the fact that Hades is under the earth and the souls descend there unescorted upon dying. To begin with, in the *Odyssey* Hades is again a δόμος that lies below the ground, furnished with gates,<sup>158</sup> and ruled by the god of the same name and his wife Persephone.<sup>159</sup> However, when Odysseus is asked to visit

<sup>158</sup> For Hades' *domos* in the *Odyssey* see IV 834; IX 524; X 175; X 491; X 512; X 564; XI 69; XI 150; XII 21; XIV 208; XV 350; XX 208; XXIII 252; XXIII 322; XXIV 204; XXIV 264. For its gates XIV 156 and for its placement under the earth X 174-175; X 560; XI 65; XI 164; XI 475; XII 383; XXIII 252.

<sup>159</sup> Hades and Persephone feature together four times in the *Odyssey* in what appears to be a formulaic expression, see *Od.* X 534 = XI 47: ἰφθίμω τ' Ἄϊδη καὶ ἐπαινῆ Περσεφονείῃ; *Od.* X 491 = X 564: εἰς Ἄϊδαο

Hades in *Od.* XI he is surprised to find that the Underworld can be reached by sailing West. Although the hero insists on the impossibility of sailing to Hades (*Od.* X 502), clinging on its traditional placement under the earth, Circe offers him a surprisingly clear itinerary: first he must cross the stream of the Ocean, then he must find a shore on which the meadow of Persephone lies where he should beach his ship.<sup>160</sup> This meadow stands on the edge of the Ocean (*Od.* X 511), and from there Odysseus needs to walk in order to reach the realm of the dead (*Od.* X 512). Once the hero reaches the rock where the rivers Pyriphlegethon and Cocytus meet and pour their combined stream into Acheron (*Od.* X 513-515),<sup>161</sup> he has to stop and perform the necromantic ritual to summon the shades.<sup>162</sup>

When Odysseus undertakes the risky journey in Book 11 he provides us with an equally detailed account, but instead of landmarks he focuses on the supernatural nature of the trip: the boat sails for a whole day effortlessly due to the wind sent by Circe, while the crew is sitting idle (*Od.* XI 6-11). When the sun finally sets, an important transition occurs since from this point onwards Odysseus enters a world of

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δόμους καὶ ἐπαινῆς Περσεφονείης. Persephone accompanies Hades, only twice in the *Iliad* (*Il.* IX 457: Ζεὺς τε καταχθόνιος καὶ ἐπαινὴ Περσεφόνη; *Il.* IX 569: Ἄϊδην καὶ ἐπαινὴν Περσεφόνηϊαν). For the metonymy of Hades as “Zeus under the earth” see HAINSWORTH 1993 *ad Il.* IX 457.

<sup>160</sup> The willows ‘which shed their fruit’ (ἰτέαι ὠλεσίκαρποι, *Od.* X 510), create a strong contrast between the capacity of giving birth and the impossibility of fertility in the realm of the dead: an indication that the place Circe describes lies securely within the sphere of Hades’ influence. The scholiast remarks that the dead should be familiar with the concept of infertility, cf. ΣΒ.Ω. and ΣΗ.Τ.Υ. On the motif see further HEUBECK 1989: *ad X* 510.

<sup>161</sup> The Underworld rivers have a lasting presence in the post-Homeric imagery of Hades. Acheron appears in Alcaeus fr. 38a L-P, Sappho fr. 95 L-P and Simonides *Ep.* 7.25.5, as well as in Pindar *Nem.* 4.85, *Pyth.* 11.21, fr.143 and *Paeon* fr. 52. The river is also mentioned by Bacchylides in fr. 7.18. In Athenian drama Acheron appears for the first time in Aeschylus’ *Seven* 854-860, while Cocytus appears twice in *Seven* 690 and *Ag.* 1558. Acheron and Cocytus appear frequently in Sophocles and Euripides while Pyriphlegethon appears again in Plato, *Phaedo* 112b. For a discussion see EDMONDS 2004: 208.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. *Od.* X 516-534; the ritual consists of digging a pit, pouring libations of milk, honey, wine and water in it and finally sacrificing a ram and a black ewe over the pit so that the blood will run in it.

constant darkness.<sup>163</sup> Homer's insistence on the absence of the sun, to which he dedicates 4 lines (*Od.* XI 15-18), highlights further the cosmic change of scenery: even Helios, the one god who ought to 'see and hear everything', cannot penetrate the darkness that surrounds the proximities of Hades.<sup>164</sup>

Commencing with the ritual, Odysseus stands next to a rock where the two rivers meet and faces towards them, while on the other side Erebus, a common metonymy for Hades, awaits.<sup>165</sup> We should note here the placement of a river as the final boundary before Hades, as well as the absence of gates or any other structural characteristics: Odysseus appears to be facing just deep and gloomy darkness with no distinguishing features whatsoever. The description becomes more confusing once the ritual is completed and the shades appear by rising from below Erebus (*Od.* XI 36-37:

<sup>163</sup> The familiar formula that signals the coming of the night (*Od.* XI 12: δύσετό τ' ἡέλιος σκιάωντό τε πᾶσαι ἄγυιαι) is used also in *Od.* II 388; III 487; III 497; XV 185; XV 296; XV 471. The coming of the darkness in *Od.* XI however stands for more than just the end of the day since it creates a spatial/cosmic understanding based on the opposition of light and darkness.

<sup>164</sup> ὃς πάντ' ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούει; This formulaic line appears once in the *Iliad* (III 277, uttered by Agamemnon), and twice in the *Odyssey* (XI 109 / XII 323, by Teiresias and Odysseus respectively). Helios' omnipresence in the Homeric universe is evident also in the incident of Ares and Aphrodite's adultery, when the god can see the lovers clearly even if inside the walls of Hephaestus' Olympian abode, see further GAZIS 2018: 87-88.

<sup>165</sup> Heubeck takes Erebus as referring to the Underworld in general, commenting that Odysseus has to turn the heads of the victims "towards Hades", see HEUBECK 1989: ad XI 527-529. *LSJ* on the other hand translates Erebus as "a place of nether darkness, forming a passage from Earth to Hades", thus as a transitional space between the world of the living and the realm of the dead, cf. *LSJ* s.v. It is difficult, however, to support this meaning in Homer where the distinction, if one existed, between Hades and Erebus, appears to collapse. For instance, Althaea calls the Erinyes "from Erebus" (*Il.* IX 571-573: Ἐρέβεσφιν) while elsewhere in Homer the Erinyes are said to dwell under the earth (*Il.* XIX 259: ὑπὸ γαῖαν) and walk in darkness (*Il.* IX 571 = XIX 87: ἠεροφοῖτις Ἐρινύς), indicating Hades as their abode. Furthermore, Heracles is said to have dragged "the dog of Hades from Erebus" (*Il.* VIII 368: ἐξ Ἐρέβους), whereas the souls of Sarpedon's companions are said to go to Erebus upon dying (*Il.* XVI 327: βήτην εἰς Ἐρεβος), as do also the souls of the suitors (*Od.* XX 256: ἰεμένων Ἐρεβόσδε ὑπὸ ζόφον). It is clear that if there is any distinction between

ἀγέροντο / ψυχὰὶ ὑπὲξ Ἑρέβους). From this point onwards the hero's narrative ignores any technical details regarding Hades and focuses entirely on the visual galore of the *eidola* he meets.

Odysseus' contact with Hades then does not allow us to draw any clear picture of its nature or topography; what is more, we cannot be certain as to whether the hero actually *is* in the Underworld. During his narration Odysseus consistently claims that the shades come to him *from* Hades and return back into it, suggesting that he most likely stands close to its entrance.<sup>166</sup> This view, however, becomes problematic once Odysseus starts providing visual descriptions of the interior of Hades, something impossible without entering the Underworld proper. For instance, the hero relates how Achilles' shade departs at the end of their meeting by strolling through the “asphodel meadow” (*Od.* XI 539), a place firmly located within Hades and which appears again a few lines later in the description of Orion still hunting in it the game he used to hunt when alive.<sup>167</sup> Odysseus further is able to see Minos sitting as a judge among the dead, and most notably the three cosmic sinners, Tityus, Tantalus and Sisyphus who are punished eternally within the confines of Hades (*Od.* XI 575-600). And yet, at the end of this first-hand description of the Underworld's interior, Odysseus reminds us that he

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Hades and Erebus in Homer, it certainly is of little consequence and is not reflected in the use of the names in the text. For the different uses of the word in Archaic Epic see *Lfgre* s.v.

<sup>166</sup> GAZIS 2018: 80.

<sup>167</sup> XI 573: κατ' ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα. In the case of Achilles, the scholiast offers several interpretations regarding the meadow, but concludes that it should be the one of Persephone, in an attempt to reconcile Odysseus' placement with the spectacle he describes, see ΣΗ.Ω. *ad Od.* XI 539. In the case of Orion, this view is difficult to sustain and this perhaps explains why the scholiast remains silent. The placement of the asphodel meadow within Hades is confirmed in the second Nekyia, where Hermes leads the souls of the suitors in it, where “the souls, shades of those who have died, reside”, *Od.* XXIV 13-14. See further REECE 2007.

has been standing next to the pit the whole time as instructed by Circe.<sup>168</sup> Clearly, space and structure lose much of their significance during the hero's *katabasis*.

After his final meeting with Heracles is concluded, the hero breaks free from the Underworld, alarmed by the prospect of Persephone sending the head of Gorgo after him (*Od.* XI 634-635). Odysseus leaves Hades as mysteriously as he had entered it; again, there is no transition, no crossing of boundaries, the hero simply appears at the shore and joins his companions (*Od.* XI 636-637). With his account concluded Odysseus returns to the world of the living, leaving us with more questions, a blurry image of Hades and no clear definition of its nature.

The brief description of Hermes's journey to Hades in the last Book of the *Odyssey* (XXIV 1-14) further confirms that image, by adding to the multiformity that accompanies the land of the dead. On his way there, the god passes by several mythical landmarks, such as the White/Leukadian Rock (*Od.* XXIV 10: *Λευκάδα πέτρην*), or the gates of Helios and the land of Dreams (*Od.* XXIV 11), while ignoring others which are prominent in Book XI, like the land of the Cimmerians or the meadow of Persephone.<sup>169</sup> Even though some elements remain stable, since Hades is still to be found beyond the streams of the Ocean (XXIV 11: *πὰρ δ' ἴσαν Ὠκεανοῦ τε ῥοάς*) and Hermes arrives at the same asphodel meadow we know from Book XI (XXIV 13 - XI 539 and 573: *κατ' ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα*), it is difficult to reconcile his itinerary with that of Odysseus. Once again orderly spatial organisation collapses when we are

<sup>168</sup> *Od.* XI 628: *αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν αὐτοῦ μένον ἔμπεδον*. This statement comes right after Odysseus has described the three sinners who, as the nature of their tortures also suggests, could not have been situated in the outskirts of Hades but rather in its interior; for the three sinners see SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1986. If Odysseus is indeed standing at the entrance of Hades then the absence of Cerberus becomes problematic, in particular since Cerberus is mentioned twice in Homer as "the dog", in *Il.* VIII 368 and most importantly by Heracles' shade in *Od.* XI 623. Its absence from Odysseus' narrative highlights further the fluidity with which the Homeric tradition treats Hades.

<sup>169</sup> For discussion see HEUBECK 1992: 360.

confronted with the Underworld, affecting not only its nature, but also the ways in which it can be reached.

It soon becomes clear that such an endeavour cannot prove fruitful in the case of Hades, where the orderly spatial organisation with which Homer so often presents us collapses and transforms the Underworld from a broadly defined structure into, literally and figuratively, a murky darkness, as slippery and evasive as the shadows it contains. The resulting multiformity needs not be a sign of careless composition or interpolation; on the contrary it shows an awareness of the necessities and constraints of the epic narrative. We saw in the previous section that in the *Iliad* Hades needs to remain separated from the world of the living, if the concepts of heroism and *kleos* are to hold any value. In the *Odyssey*, the need for this separation takes the form of a cosmic anxiety, clearly demonstrated in Helios' threat to Zeus that if Odysseus' companions are not punished for the slaughter of his cattle, he will descend into Hades and shine for the dead (*Od.* XII 383). The power of the threat lies in the collapse of the boundaries of the epic cosmos which threatens a return to primordial chaos. Zeus' reply that Helios' place is to shine for men and gods on life-giving earth (*Od.* XII 386: ἐπὶ ζείδωρον ἄρουραν), followed by his most direct interference in the narrative,<sup>170</sup> highlights the importance of the absolute separation of Hades for the epic universe in general and the *Odyssey* in particular.

Hades then remains not only distant and separated from the realm of gods and mortals but also impossible to define in a singular way. Upon dying everyone is

<sup>170</sup> HEUBECK 1989: 140, argues that Zeus' action is in accordance with his plan for Odysseus to reach home alone, thus the whole incident with the cattle and the subsequent punishment should be seen as the fulfilment of Zeus' will. Heubeck's interpretation may as well be correct but it still does not explain why Zeus decides to act personally and instantaneously by sending his bolt to sink Odysseus' ship, when in every other instance he acts through intermediaries. In this sense, his reaction seems rushed and extreme, highlighting the severity of Helios' threat. For a review of the bibliography and an analysis of the Helios' episode as integral to the plot of the *Odyssey* see SEGAL 1992.



transferred there, however, how the Underworld can be reached varies greatly:<sup>171</sup> souls fly there or disappear into the earth, Odysseus reaches it by travelling West beyond the Ocean, while Hermes takes a different route that passes by familiar mythical landmarks. Yet, every time we are about to approach the realm of the dead the image suddenly becomes blurry: the souls disappear from view or turn into smoke, Persephone's meadow transforms into thick, gloomy darkness, and Hermes crosses the stream of the Ocean in a flash only to reappear within the asphodel meadow.<sup>172</sup> Despite its prominence within the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Hades proves elusive in visual as well as spatial terms – remaining a remote depository of tradition and a silent guardian of cosmic order.

#### 5. SECOND INTERLUDE (*Andrea Capra*)

As a follow up to George's contribution, it is perhaps important to briefly remind the reader of what he *did not say* on this specific occasion. As it happens, he has much more in store. In his book *Homer and the poetics of Hades* George further develops his argument by showing how Hades is the place of subjective narratives<sup>173</sup>. To take two extremes, both heroic Achilles and unheroic Elpenor, when they meet Odysseus in Hades, offer different takes of their own stories and characters, which are clearly at odds with what we know from the main narrative. This means that Hades is a place for *subjective* narration, and from that point of view it opens up what we might be tempted to call, with Greg Nagy, “the lyric possession of an epic past” – one of Nagy's major

<sup>171</sup> In the Homeric epics death is the lot of all mortals, regardless of divine origin. The only exception is Menelaus, who according to Proteus' prophecy will be transferred to the Elysian fields (*Od.* IV 561-569).

<sup>172</sup> *Od.* XXIV 11-14.

<sup>173</sup> GAZIS 2018.

contributions is in fact the demonstration that epic poetry grew out of much older lyric metres as found in extant lyric poetry<sup>174</sup>. But in addition to Nagy's fascinating approach, according to which Pindar and lyric poetry are no less traditional than epics, the question arises: to what extent are subjective and lyric voices part of the very fabric of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*? One often hears how, for example, Apollonius' and Virgil's epics cross-fertilize the "objective" voice of epic poetry with the "subjective" voice of tragedy and lyric. Yet Homer's poetry, long before the Hellenistic and Roman age, features specific settings allowing for a "subjective" and "lyric" mode to emerge. One is Hades, and from that point of view I just refer the reader to George's book and ongoing projects. Yet there is (even) more to it. In archaic Greece, lyric poetry is integral to the institution of symposium and vice-versa. A thought-provoking approach is to examine Homer's proto-symposia in search of a proto-lyric voice. This is the subject of the insightful contribution by Cecilia Nobili, who has been developing, along with other scholars from the university of Milan, a new approach to the relationship between epic and lyric poetry, one that makes the most of recent papyri which have vastly improved our knowledge of archaic lyric poetry. Over to you, Cecilia!

## 6. EPIC VS LYRIC? NEW APPROACHES TO AN OLD PROBLEM (*Cecilia Nobili*)

### 6.1. *Literary genres: diachronic vs synchronic interpretation*

The following statement expressed by Bruno Snell in 1948 clearly exemplifies the old-style interpretation of the relationship between epic and lyric poetry:

<sup>174</sup> NAGY 1990a.

When we come to the lyric, however, we are in a position to judge in historical terms, and to ask ourselves how it differs from the older art, the epic, and what new spirit is manifested in it. Perhaps the most striking difference between the two genres, as regards the men behind the works, is the emergence of the poets as individuals. As compared with the grave problem of identity which the name of Homer continues to pose, the lyricists announce their own names; they speak about themselves and become recognizable as personalities.<sup>175</sup>

According to such a view, epic was regarded as a traditional genre, focused on mythic and heroic tales, in opposition to monodic lyric poetry,<sup>176</sup> which seemed to react to epic, by expressing personal feelings and autobiographical experiences in a new way. Although the Romantic interpretation of lyric poets has now generally been surpassed and no modern scholar would interpret the archaic Greek poets in the same light as nineteenth-century poets, epic and lyric are still in some cases perceived as opposite genres, and, in a diachronic view, lyric is often interpreted as an evolution of epic.

However, it is now generally assumed that the Homeric poems underwent a long process of composition, from the Mycenaean forms of epic poetry to the so-called "Pisistratean redaction" that, in 6<sup>th</sup> century Athens, fixed the texts of the poems in a

<sup>175</sup> SNELL 1948: 43. See also JÄGER 1934; TREU 1955; FRÄNKEL 1962.

<sup>176</sup> The category and term "lyric" is itself ambiguous and, from certain point of views, outdated. The debate on the existence of "literary genres" in the archaic and Classical age is still open, but after HARVEY 1955, ROSSI 1971 and CALAME 1974 (and CALAME 1998), it is now commonly acknowledged that they depended to a high degree on the cataloguing work of Alexandrian scholars. For a recent overview of the problem and related bibliography, see n. 197 below, along with CAREY 2009 and FOSTER - KURKE - WEISS 2019. In the present paper I will employ the term "lyric" to refer to monodic odes, including iambics and elegies, and hence to poets such as Sappho, Alcaeus, Archilochus, Mimnermus and Anacreon. The grouping together of these authors (now generally accepted by most scholars, see BUDELMANN 2009: 2-4) is motivated by the common context of performance of their songs (the symposium or similar private gatherings), and by the status of the poets – amateur aristocrats who composed odes for free and their own pleasure. I will thus exclude from my discourse choral poets such as Pindar or Bacchylides who, as professional poets paid by patrons for their work, embody a different ideological perspective.

form comparable to the one transmitted to us. This means that until the mid-sixth century BCE (but the process may have lasted until the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE), the text of the Homeric poems was still fluid and subject to changes dictated by the singers' initiative, the performance setting and the audience's expectations.<sup>177</sup> Since the archaic lyric poets we know are normally dated to between the mid-seventh and the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, it is immediately evident that epic (in its early, fluid form) and lyric co-existed for a very long time. For this reason, a synchronic reading of the two poetic forms can better bring out the peculiarities of each and underline their reciprocal influences.

It is indisputable that several differences existed in terms of content, performance context, and audiences. As Bruno Gentili notes:

Epos, elegia, giambo e lirica, pur nelle differenze formali e tecniche del metro e della *performance*, furono in realtà sin dalle origini fenomeni coevi e interdipendenti. Gli elementi che distinsero l'*epos* omerico dalla lirica furono, oltre l'omioritmia dell'esametro, il contenuto esclusivamente mitico e, dal punto di vista tecnico della *performance*, la diversa maniera del canto, che consisteva in una recitazione di tipo salmodico senza l'accompagnamento strumentale, riservato soltanto al breve *prooimion* esametrico.<sup>178</sup>

We may add that lyric songs were mainly intended to be performed before a select audience at the symposium, whereas epic poems were meant for a wider performance before heterogeneous and Panhellenic audiences at public festivals. But, as we shall see, even as regards the performance context, overlaps and shifts between the two genres are to be found.

<sup>177</sup> See the evolutionary model proposed by NAGY 1992: 29-112; NAGY 1996: chap. 5-7; NAGY 2003: 1-19. See also ALONI 1998: 11-63.

<sup>178</sup> GENTILI 1972: 70.

## 6.2. *New papyrus findings: epic into lyric*

As far as content is concerned, much has changed in the past few years.

The traditional interpretation of lyric poems as a reflection of the poet's individuality is in many cases due to the selection of texts made first by Athenian Classical symposia, then by Alexandrian scholars and, finally, by the Medieval tradition, which also tended to prefer odes focused on personal feelings or experiences. This led to the loss of a huge part of the poets' work as members of a wider community who were involved in its religious and social life.<sup>179</sup> Nonetheless, over the past few decades, papyrus findings have shed new light on the lyric genre, revealing new texts with a mythical content which make our knowledge of the poets' activity wider and more precise.

For example, in 1992 Peter Parsons published an Oxyrhynchus papyrus containing fragments from a long elegy composed by Simonides to commemorate the fallen in the battle of Plataea in 479 BC, which radically changed our perception of the elegiac genre.<sup>180</sup> This poem presents a proemial section dedicated to Achilles that also contains a brief mythical narration of his death and funeral, which is used to introduce a comparison between the Greek heroes fallen in the Trojan war and the Greek soldiers who died fighting against the Persians. Such a mythical-historical elegy was immediately acknowledged to be rather different from the short sympotic elegies previously known

<sup>179</sup> See e.g. BARTOL 2019: 143: "It is indeed surprising, however, that the earliest views that we have about elegy as a poetic category definitely privilege the sympotic short poems composed in elegiac couplets, and that the classical authors do not devote any space to the issue of longer narrative pieces publicly performed at festivals. [...] The dominant way of thinking about archaic elegy in the classical epoch was that which treated it as a parenetic or paideutic statement situated in a sympotic setting". Similar considerations may also concern other lyric poets, such as Sappho. On the transmission and reception of lyric odes see, most recently, CURRIE - RUTHERFORD 2019.

<sup>180</sup> P. Oxy. 3965 = Sim. fr. 10-18 W<sup>2</sup>. See PARSONS 1992, and, for a general overview and new edition of the fragments, the articles in BOEDEKER - SIDER 2001.

to us, and confirmed the hypothesis advanced a few years earlier by Ewen Bowie concerning the existence of a kind of elegiac poems with a longer extension and intended for public performances at festivals or ceremonies.<sup>181</sup> The existence of a public form of elegy, performed on occasions comparable to epic recitals, may shed new light on the interferences between the two genres as regards the performance setting.<sup>182</sup>

A similar reaction arose in 2005, when Dirk Obbink published an Oxyrhynchus papyrus with the text of a 25-verse elegy by Archilochus recounting the mythical episode of the fight between the Achaeans on their way to Troy and the king of Mysia, Telephus.<sup>183</sup> Although the papyrus is mutilated, we may argue that such a mythical narration served as an *exemplum* for a contemporary military event.<sup>184</sup> In any case, the content and the language of the poem are in all respects Homeric and seem to confirm the judgement expressed by the treatise *On the Sublime* (13.3) about Archilochus being ὀμηρικώτατος.<sup>185</sup>

The poetic device of the mythical *exemplum* is also employed by Sappho in her extant odes, nonetheless, in 2004 Gronewald and Daniel published a Köln papyrus containing 12 lines of an ode that was previously known in a much more fragmentary way. This poem is mythological in content and narrates the myth of Tithonus and Eos as a paradigm for the evils of the old age.<sup>186</sup>

<sup>181</sup> BOWIE 1986.

<sup>182</sup> See LULLI 2015 and LULLI 2016a.

<sup>183</sup> P. Oxy. 4708 = Arch. fr. 17a Swift; OBBINK 2005 and OBBINK 2006.

<sup>184</sup> See ALONI - IANNUCCI 2007: 205-237; NOBILI 2009; LULLI 2011: 102-104; SWIFT 2014 and SWIFT 2019: 228-233. On the contrary, BOWIE 2016: 19-25 thinks that the self-contained mythical section had no connection with a contemporary military event.

<sup>185</sup> See Plato, *Ion* 531a-532a, who compares Archilochus to Homer and Hesiod as exponents of rhapsodic poetry. See also BARKER - CHRISTENSEN 2006; NOBILI 2009; SWIFT 2012; LULLI 2016b: 196-199.

<sup>186</sup> See GRONEWALD - DANIEL 2004a and GRONEWALD - DANIEL 2004b. For detailed discussions of this poem, see GREENE - SKINNER 2009.

Once again, a new and exceptional papyrus discovery preserves a mythical narration that shows to what extent lyric and epic poets shared the same poetic background. This should come as no surprise insofar as all poets from the 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century BC, as well as their audiences, shared a common epic background, which included (a fluid version of) the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as well as the so-called Cyclic poems and Homeric hymns).

Two more recent papyrus findings deal with the Homeric tradition – if only from a different perspective from those previously mentioned. As neither has a mythical content, they do not adapt the epic heritage to a new performance context (as Simonides' Plataea elegy or Archilochus' *Telephus* do). Nonetheless, the apparently personal and autobiographical content they exhibit, actually seems to conceal a deeper relationship with the epic tradition.

The first text is the notorious Cologne Epode by Archilochus (fr. 196a W), which was published in 1974 and immediately referred to as “Last Tango in Paros” for its obscene topic:<sup>187</sup> a youth ? speaking in the first person (the poet?)<sup>188</sup> reports a dialogue with a girl, where they discuss the prospect of having sex or not; the girl refuses, the boy rhetorically dismisses her objection, and finally forces her to have sex – with a very explicit mention of the act. Although some critics have blamed Archilochus for this apparently autobiographical rape of Neobules' young sister (in accordance with the anecdotic tradition),<sup>189</sup> a more balanced interpretation now reads the passage against

<sup>187</sup> GREEN 1975.

<sup>188</sup> The problem of the lyric “I” has been long debated and general consensus now exists among scholars, who for the most part agree that it is unlikely to refer exclusively to the individuality of the poet. Rather, it may also refer to the group the poet belongs to (e.g. Sappho's companions, the *thiasos*, or Archilochus comrades in arms). NAGY 1994-1995: 20 distinguishes between “autobiographical I” and “fictional I”, which he calls “reenacting I” or “generic I”, “provided we are allowed to understand genre as a formal device to recapture the authoritative occasion”.

<sup>189</sup> See *AP* VII 69-71, 351-352; MERKELBACH - WEST 1974: 133; GENTILI 1984: 233-256. *Contra* LEFKOWITZ 1976; ALONI 1981.

the backdrop of the *Dios Apate*, the sexual encounter between Zeus and Hera recounted in *Iliad* XIV and also presupposed by the analogous scene of the union of Aphrodite and Anchises in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*.<sup>190</sup>

A similar case may be provided by the newest Sappho papyrus, published in 2014 and containing the so-called *Brothers' poem*.<sup>191</sup> The new ode seems to refer to a well-known anecdote that finds an echo in other poems ascribed to the poetess (fr. 5 and 15 V.): while travelling to Egypt to sell wine, Sappho's brother Charaxos fell in love with the courtesan Rhodopis (or Doricha) and spent a fortune on her, delaying his return to Lesbos and stirring Sappho's anger and indignation.<sup>192</sup> In the new ode, Sappho (far from being angry or disappointed) wishes his brother a safe return, hoping that either his homecoming or the coming of age of her younger brother Larichos will bring an end to the situation of uncertainty caused by the absence of the male head of the family. In the light of anecdotes preserved by later sources, it is most tempting to read this ode (and the two other odes connected with the same topic) autobiographically. However, it must be noted that the whole situation seems to follow an epic, and particularly Odyssean, blueprint: a man (Odysseus/Charaxos) travels away from home for a very long time (and has erotic encounters on his journey), while a woman (Penelope/Sappho) waits for him at home in anxiety; in the meantime, a younger male member of the family (Telemachus/Larichos) gains an awareness of his

<sup>190</sup> SWIFT 2015, SWIFT 2016: 262-269 and SWIFT 2019: 364-368. For the Homeric language of the ode see CAMPBELL 1976; ALONI 1981: 77-131; NICOLSI 2005; SWIFT 2019: 368-384.

<sup>191</sup> Sapph. fr. 10 Neri. NERI 2017: 291- 294. See BURRIS - FISH - OBBINK 2014; OBBINK 2014a, and, for a general overview, the contributions in BIERL - LARDINOIS 2016.

<sup>192</sup> See also Hdt. II 135; Athen. XIII 596b-c; Strab. XVII 33; Posidipp. 122 A.-B.; Ovid. *Her.* XV 63-70, 117-120; Sud. *ai* 334 *s.v.* Αἴσωπος, ι 4 *s.v.* Ἰάδμων, ρ 221 *s.v.* Ῥοδόπιδος ἀνάθημα. For a discussion of these sources see BIFFI 1997; LIDOV 2002; KIVILO 2010, 175-177. On this "iambic Sappho" see ALONI 1997: LXVI-LXXV; and MARTIN 2016.



position and steps forth to provisionally claim a leading role.<sup>193</sup> If one adds that the *topos* of the merchant who spends his fortunes on greedy courtesans is a widespread one in Greek and Mediterranean culture, we can interpret Sappho's poem as an adaptation of an epic motif to the socio-cultural reality of 6<sup>th</sup> century Lesbos, where wine trading represented an important source of enrichment and the danger posed by the greed of prostitutes was well known (as Alcaeus too confirms).<sup>194</sup> As Lardinois has also noted, Sappho's song, far from reflecting an individual experience, acquires communal value as the voice of «any sister confronted with irresponsible older brothers or promising younger ones».<sup>195</sup>

Therefore, we can conclude by saying that the epic heritage represents such a strong background for the poets of the archaic age that throughout their literary output, even when dealing with some apparently personal themes, they cannot avoid engaging with the tradition. This is even more understandable if we consider that in the archaic age the boundaries between the literary genres «are not fixed but elastic, porous, negotiable and provisional. Literary genres are best seen not as fixed categories but as tendencies».<sup>196</sup>

The differences between epic and lyric concern the occasion of the performance rather than the content.<sup>197</sup> As Nagy puts it, «the occasion is the genre»,<sup>198</sup>

<sup>193</sup> This parallel had first been suggested by OBBINK 2014b and OBBINK 2016: 212, and only partially developed by SIRONI 2015; KURKE 2016; STEHLE 2016 and MUELLER 2016.

<sup>194</sup> See NOBILI 2016.

<sup>195</sup> LARDINOIS 2016: 187. See also NAGY 2016 and STEHLE 2016.

<sup>196</sup> CAREY 2009: 22.

<sup>197</sup> The field of "performance" studies was inaugurated by Gentili (GENTILI 1984) and then followed by a long series of scholars such as CALAME 1974 (and CALAME 1998), MARTIN 1989, NAGY 1990 (and NAGY 1994-1995, NAGY 1996, NAGY 2019). See n. 175 above and FOSTER - KURKE - WEISS 2019 for a summary of this trend of studies; see BUDELMANN - PHILLIPS 2018 for possible criticisms.

<sup>198</sup> NAGY 1990a: 362.

and «the very notion of genre serves as compensation for the lost occasion».<sup>199</sup> But performance overlaps may not be restricted only to the “physical” contexts and occasion: we may find “performances within performances”, leading to a redefinition and reshuffling of generic *topoi* and conventions. Epic and lyric can occasionally share the same performance context, but even epic can adopt lyric themes when the context requires it. While the former is a relatively straightforward and increasingly well-known fact, the reverse phenomenon is much more in need of scholarly attention.

### 6.3. Performance within performance: Homeric symposia and the singing of lyric songs

The all-encompassing character of the Homeric poems allowed them to incorporate other poetic forms:<sup>200</sup> the description of Achilles’ shield in *Iliad* XVIII mentions the singing of the *linos* (561-572) and of the *hymenaios* (490-496), two types of songs performed in agrarian contexts and at weddings, whereas elsewhere the *paian* (in honour of Apollo) and *threnoi* or *gooi* (funeral songs) are also mentioned.<sup>201</sup> This attests to the existence of several forms of lyric odes that predate any extant remnant of lyric poetry, as one would expect given the long process of composition of the poems.<sup>202</sup>

Once again, this is obvious enough. However, there is much more to “Homer’s lyric”, especially in connection with sympotic situations as depicted in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

<sup>199</sup> NAGY 1990b: 9.

<sup>200</sup> On the concept of “tribal encyclopedia” applied to the Homeric poems see HAVELOCK 1963: 61-86.

<sup>201</sup> *Il.* I 472-474, XXII 391-392 for the *paean*; *Il.* XVIII 50-51, 314-316, XXIV 720-722 for the *threnos*. The contents of the lyric songs are not quoted: on possible reasons for these omissions see PALMISCIANO 2007 and PALMISCIANO 2009.

<sup>202</sup> See DIEHL 1940, whose title *Fuerunt ante Homerum poetae*, derives from Cic. *Brut.* 71; DALBY 1998.

The existence of the symposium in Homer is matter of dispute, since the aristocratic banquets that are frequently depicted both in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are partly at variance with their later counterparts, one difference being the symposiasts' seated (rather than reclined) position and the simultaneous consumption of sacrificial meat and wine as opposed to archaic and classical symposia, with their typical of a banquet followed by, and clearly distinguished from, the symposium proper, for which only wine and nibbles were allowed.<sup>203</sup> However, scholars agree that the presence of a centrally placed crater and of a cupbearer closely parallel the Classical symposium, whose characteristic *ethos* clearly informs Homeric banquets as well.<sup>204</sup> Wine and good conversation are integral to both Homer's and later symposia, and song is viewed as the best form of entertainment: as is well known, the *aoidoi*'s performances at the Phaeacians' court and in Odysseus' palace mirror, however obliquely, the performance of *epos* at an early stage.

More to my point, Homer describes elsewhere symposia that can be seen as pointing to lyric performances.<sup>205</sup> The first worth considering, not least because of its importance for Homeric scholarship,<sup>206</sup> is the solitary symposium of Achilles and Patroclus in *Iliad* IX.<sup>207</sup> In his anger, Achilles refuses to fight and spends his time in his tent in the sole company of his best friend. Without their champions, the Achaeans experience losses and defeats and send three ambassadors, Odysseus, Ajax and Phoenix to his tent with a view to persuading him to resume fighting. The scene which meets the

<sup>203</sup> VON DER MÜHLL 1983: 5-7; BIELOHLAWEK 1983: 99.

<sup>204</sup> VETTA 1983; COLESANTI 1999; MUSTI 2001. For a discussion of their positions and a partly different interpretation of Homeric banquets, see WEKOWSKI 2002 and WEKOWSKI 2014: 191-248.

<sup>205</sup> See also ZANETTO 2004; NOBILI 2006a and NOBILI 2009.

<sup>206</sup> See n. 213 below.

<sup>207</sup> On solitary heroic symposia see BOARDMAN 1990: 124.

ambassadors' eyes is a typically sympotic one,<sup>208</sup> although the only attendants are Achilles and Patroclus. Achilles is singing *klea andron*, heroic deeds, to the lyre, a subject that could fit both epic and lyric poems.<sup>209</sup> Patroclus is waiting for Achilles to finish,<sup>210</sup> in order to take up the lyre and perform his own song in relay, as is typical of sympotic practice. Achilles invites the ambassadors to take part in the symposium, and Patroclus offers more wine.<sup>211</sup>

The ensuing conversation is strewn with un-Homeric themes and expressions, which reflect Achilles' frustration with the war and the atmosphere that reigns in the Achaean camp under Agamemnon's command.<sup>212</sup> He readily admits that he no longer has any interest in glory and military success, which, by destiny, are conditional on his own death. He goes as far as to claim that his greatest ambition at the moment is to live a long and safe life in his hometown with his father. Achilles then attacks Agamemnon for his rapacious and unjust attitude. He concludes by rejecting the Agamemnon's splendid gift, on the ground that wealth cannot match a safe, long life.

<sup>208</sup> As noted by VETTA 1992: 181-183. At l. 224 Odysseus proposes a toast for Achilles in a typical sympotic manner.

<sup>209</sup> *Il.* IX 185-195. NAGY 2013: 87-88, who notes that the lyre Achilles is playing once belonged to Eetion, Andromache's father, who was killed by Achilles, and to whom she devotes a dirge in *Il.* VI 407-432.

<sup>210</sup> This is the meaning implied in this context by δέγμενος (see *LSJ* s.v. δέχομαι II 3). The act recalls the typical "sympotic chain": at symposia guests normally sang their songs in an amoebaeon way, passing the lyre from one hand to another, and resuming the song where the previous guest had interrupted it. See VETTA 1984. Nonetheless, this practice is also typical of rhapsodic recitations: at Panhellenic festivals rhapsodes used to sing in sequence, taking turns (see NAGY 1996: 71-73 for a direct parallel with *Il.* IX, and SBARDELLA 2012: 5-51).

<sup>211</sup> Achilles orders Patroclus to bring a crater bigger than the one already present and to serve purer (ζωρότερον) wine: this choice puzzled the ancient commentators (see schol. *Il.* IX 203a-b).

<sup>212</sup> *Il.* IX 308-429. For a complete survey of the elegiac themes embedded in Achilles' discourse see ZANETTO 2004: 42-43 and NOBILI 2009: 236-241.

The anomaly of Achilles' language and his clear rejection of the heroic code he is almost synonym with has often confused scholars.<sup>213</sup> Nonetheless, the sympotic context of the scene offers the best explanation for Achilles' mood and language, which are informed by the sort of "lyrical" *ethos* often found in monodic poetry, particularly elegy.

Elegy is akin to epic because of the shared metre and dialect.<sup>214</sup> The great many themes it explores include primarily meditations on the brevity of life, the balance between life and glory, and disappointment at the injustice which wise people are often subjected to. Among its many themes, elegy may also include meditation on death or the loss of a loved one, and funerary consolation. The existence of a form of threnodic elegy that might explain the connection of the term *elegeia* with *elegos* (lament) has been debated for a long time,<sup>215</sup> but possible confirmation of its existence has now come from the above-mentioned elegy of Simonides' for the fallen at Plataea. This presents a mythical comparison between Achilles and the Greek soldiers who died in the battle as a form of consolation for their grieving relatives.<sup>216</sup> However, the symposium always represented an occasion for meditation on the events afflicting one's community, including sorrowful losses – like the death of Archilochus' brother-in-law Pericles, who died in a shipwreck and whose body could not receive the required honours.<sup>217</sup>

Homer presents two other symposium scenes with a focus on mourning.<sup>218</sup> The first scene occurs in *Iliad* XXIV, where Priamus enters Achilles' tent in order to

<sup>213</sup> REEVE 1973: 193-195; MARTIN 1989: 160-171.

<sup>214</sup> ALONI 2009: 185-187; ALONI - IANNUCCI 2007: 92-100. See also LULLI 2016a.

<sup>215</sup> See BOWIE 1986: 13-35; BARTOL 1993: 25-28 and BARTOL 2019.

<sup>216</sup> ALONI 1998: 189-218 and ALONI 2001; ALONI - IANNUCCI 2007: 14-16, 203-204.

<sup>217</sup> Arch. fr. 13 W (+ fr. 9-11 W). PALMISCIANO 1998: 195-201 (and PALMISCIANO 2017: 137-144) does not consider Archilochus' fr. 13 a *threnos*, but nonetheless argues that it may have been performed at the first symposium organized by the community after its mourning period. See also Anacr. fr- 191, 193 Gentili and Theogn. 527-528, 891-894, 1069-1070 (with PALMISCIANO 2017: 153-159).

<sup>218</sup> See MARINO 1999: 15-39; NOBILI 2006.

demand the restitution of Hector's body. Achilles welcomes him with the highest honours and invites him for dinner. The two heroes, both suffering for the recent losses of Hector and Patroclus, find consolation in conversation and in the memory of their beloved ones. The themes evoked in this passage are those typical of threnodic poetry (both elegiac and melic), and include the exhortation to cease mourning and to resume ordinary activities.<sup>219</sup> Another mournful symposium takes place in Menelaus' palace in *Odyssey* IV: Menelaus and Telemachus cry at the thought of the heroes who have died (or are believed to have died, as in Odysseus' case), either at Troy or on their return voyage; nonetheless, their meeting is also an occasion for them to evoke their deeds and to find consolation in remembrance, as threnodic poetry requires.<sup>220</sup>

All these scenes are characterized by a sympotic setting and in all cases the performer introduces themes typical of lyric poetry.

At times, the Homeric hero may thus become a poetic counterpart to the epic performer himself, the *oidos* or *rhapsode*: he may become a singer of *klea andron*, like Achilles in *Iliad* IX, or like Phemius and Demodocus; but he may also become a lyric performer, if the occasion requires it. Among his many skills, the Homeric hero has the ability to shift from one genre to the other, adapting his performance to suit the occasion and the audience's expectations. He may also assume the aggressive and sarcastic tone of the iambic poet: when Achilles deplores Agamemnon's decision to take possession of his slave Briseis, he does not refrain from vulgar slander in the vein of Hipponax (*Il.* I 223-232). As Gregory Nagy has noted, the best of the Achaeans thus becomes, at times, a counterpart to the worst of the Achaeans,<sup>221</sup> the ugly Thersites, whose horrifying description may be assimilated to that of a beggar poet, once again in

<sup>219</sup> *Il.* XXIV 46-49, 518-551. See PALMISCIANO 2017: 28-31.

<sup>220</sup> *Od.* IV 97-107, 235-239.

<sup>221</sup> Significantly, in the *Cypria* (see Procl. *Chrest.* 105.9-10) Achilles, not Odysseus, restores order after Thersites' discourse and prevents the soldiers from fleeing.

ways that foreshadow Hipponax' iambic poetry. Homer himself states that Thersites was accustomed to the dynamics of blame, since he often used to mock princes (*Il.* II 214-216), and his words raised laughter among the Achaeans, as we would expect from an iambic or comic figure.<sup>222</sup> Intriguingly, Rosen adds that a tradition centred around the *Aethiopsis* associates Thersites with iambic mockeries at symposia:<sup>223</sup> once again, the poetry of blame is connected to its most specific setting.

Symposium, as is well known, represents the favourite setting for the reperformance of literary genres and their adaptations to new realities; Homeric symposia are no exception and represent the first experiments of convergence and reshuffle of parallel poetic traditions.

#### 7. CODA, WITH AN AUSPICIOUS "VIATICUM" (*Andrea Capra*)

The three contributions presented here exemplify new trends in Homeric scholarship that can potentially shift our interpretative paradigms and thus have a long-lasting impact on reception studies, both ancient, modern and contemporary<sup>224</sup>. What we

<sup>222</sup> NAGY 1979: 259-264; BARKER 2009: 53-61. Another counterpart to iambic poets is the beggar Iros (*Od.* XVIII 1-116).

<sup>223</sup> See ROSEN 2003: according to the *Aethiopsis*, Thersites mocked Achilles for his love for Penthesilea and, in revenge, Achilles killed him. The mocking scene may have taken place during a symposium, as an Apulian krater from the Boston Museum of Fine Art seems to confirm.

<sup>224</sup> Let me here provide an example based on Plato, my own main research field, though I could say the same for other areas such as the Greek novel and, most obviously, lyric poetry. Plato attacks Homer for what he perceives to be his lack of "contents": in the *Republic*, we hear that there is no Homeric life in the vein of, say, a Pythagorean way of life, and the very wandering nature of Homeric poetry testifies to its detachment from the interests of any given community, thus making it useless at best. Plato's Socrates speaks about Homer but clearly refers to the wandering rhapsodes who would perform the poems. Not only does he consider them as wandering agonists; what is more, he engages in his own strenuous *agon* against Homer, as his clear from what he refers to as the "ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy". At the same time,

offered here is of course a partial perspective, whose cultural entanglements are specific to areas of scholarship I happen to know more directly: both Andrea Debiasi and I are former fellows of the Harvard Center for Hellenic Studies, where we engaged with

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as recent studies have shown, Plato's *Republic* appropriates a number of Hesiodic themes in a way that may be construed as anti-Homeric, thus recreating the antagonism between what Andrea, with Greg Nagy, calls "team Homer" and "team Hesiod". It is easy to see how Andrea's interpretation of Homer's name and anti-Hesiodic role perfectly fits the world of Plato, who is intent in building his own team – in fact, in the *Ti-maeus-Critias* he presents his Atlantis story as vastly superior to both Hesiod and Homer. Plato's antagonism with Homer results in ambitious attempt, at the end of *Republic*, of refashioning Homer's Hades. Of all possible Homeric themes, Plato chooses Hades as the one more in need of reform. The introductory words of the myth of Er, the eschatological myth that concludes the *Republic*, are of the greatest interest: "I won't tell you one of Alcinous' (*Alkinou*) apologues, but a strong man's one (*alkimou andros*, 614a). "Alcinous' apologue(s)" was the traditional "title" of books IX-XII of the *Odyssey*, and the paronomasia *Alkinou / alkimou* marks a self-conscious opposition between Homer's and Plato's own myth. Thus, Plato's myth has been plausibly interpreted as a revised version of Homer's underworld, whose main shortcoming is that it induces fear and cowardice in war. By contrast, Plato's reshaped underworld is specifically designed to inspire courage and confidence in the face of death, provided one has led a pious and just life. And, indeed, Plato describes Hades as an unexpectedly *visible* world, to the extent that its whereabouts, as Socrates claims, could be reflected by a mirror, as part of Plato's notorious "mirror-argument" designed to deflate poetic mimesis. Plato's Hades, too, features alternative stories, but these are not retrospective retellings of the characters' now lost life, but forward-looking choices designed to secure a better life when the soul, most un-Homerically, is reborn. Thus, Plato seems to target precisely the exceptional character shown by George's innovative approach to Homeric Hades. By the 5<sup>th</sup> century, a consensus had emerged about the excellence of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, something that gradually gave the two poems an aura of "authenticity" as opposed to a number of other "unauthentic", allegedly pseudo-Homeric works. A further and far-reaching consequence of this approach was that the *Odyssey*, however "authentic", was generally deemed inferior to the *Iliad*, an idea that was closely connected with a positive evaluation of Achilles, seen as the quintessential hero, straightforward and uncompromising, as opposed to dodgy and devious Odysseus. In his *Hippias Minor*, Plato has the eponymous sophist claim that the *Iliad* surpasses the *Odyssey* insofar and inasmuch as Achilles is superior to Odysseus. Socrates challenges this view by claiming, among other things, that Achilles is not the straightforward and uncompromising figure Hippias has depicted. Part of his argument is backed by Homeric quotations, designed to provide counterexamples. Intriguingly, Socrates draws extensively from *Iliad* 9, namely from the "symposium" scene discussed by Cecilia. Socrates brings to light "another side" of Achilles, and Cecilia's argument eventually allows one to make sense of this state of affairs: Socrates' Achilles is in fact the "elegiac" Achilles who, for good reasons, takes centre stage in specific "lyric" circumstances within the *Iliad*, thus bridging the alleged gap between epic and lyric poetry.



Nagy's approach to the oral tradition informing all verbal art in archaic Greece; George and I are currently colleagues in Durham, which has been for many years a world-leading centre for Homeric studies, with a focus on the "invention of Homer" in archaic and classical Greece (Barbara Graziosi) and on the dialogue of epic poetry with near-eastern traditions and the linguistic and poetic legacy of the Bronze Age (Johannes Haubold and George himself); Cecilia is a former colleague of mine, and in the context of a group of scholars working on "lyric Homer" at Milan University she was the one who most systematically and fruitfully explored the subject. I hope that this triptych, combining "Milanese" and international perspectives, can work as a good "viaticum" for the inaugural issue of this Milan journal. These days, the word "viaticum" mainly evokes mortal danger and (pre-)funerary rites, which in turn could ominously resonate with the wide-spread idea that scholars have left no stone unturned in their work on the father of "Western tradition", the study of antiquity being doomed to death anyway. As we have mentioned, however, epic Helicon has a recently discovered "east face" that defies any Eurocentric complacency and self-congratulatory construction of a self-contained Western canon. More generally, many of our most deeply rooted assumptions about Homer are in need of revision. Accordingly, what I have in mind is in fact the other meaning of the word, even more clearly connected with the notion of "via", namely that of "route". "Viaticum" is the supply of provisions travelers need for a long journey. I hope we have provided some food for thought ahead of this journal's intellectual journey, one that, despite its predominant focus on much later epic traditions, will no doubt feature both Odyssean *curiositas* and Achillean glory.

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