

# Homeric epic between feasting and fasting

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# I

EGBERT J. BAKKER

## HOMERIC EPIC BETWEEN FEASTING AND FASTING

Homer provides *la leçon par l'exemple*. The posthumous fame that epic poetry confers on heroic achievement is inseparable from the fame of the poetry's own achievement as the foundational texts of the Western literary tradition, a fame that is renewed across generation after generation of new readers, from antiquity to the present day. In such a conception, Homer easily becomes a prototypical, ideal, manifestation of epic as a transcendental genre, a foundational norm to which other instantiations of the genre aspire or conform to a greater or lesser degree. The difference between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is seen in this perspective as a matter of the poet's personal progress (or aging), with the *Odyssey* invariably representing a later, more developed world view — or as simply two different instantiations of the genre of epic, one epic being taken as 'heroic' and the other as 'romantic', or some such characterization.

Such an epic conception of the epic genre may be in line with Homer's own future orientation and with the self-evident central place the Homeric poems have always occupied in the Greek educational curriculum and in the Western canon, but it leaves important aspects of the poetry unexplored. Epic is not only as the beginning of literature a diachronic cultural phenomenon; it is also, synchronically, a cross-cultural phenomenon, the domain of anthropologists and ethnographers rather

than humanists and literary critics.<sup>1</sup> Students of epic in the comparative dimension repeatedly stress epic's multifarious nature.<sup>2</sup> No single epic can be found that represents all the genre's core features and functions. Especially when the dimension of performance is added, Homer loses much of its uniqueness and canonical primacy, but many opportunities are created to elucidate the poetry from viewpoints that are unknown to the classical paradigm.

The argument that follows will start with one such a viewpoint, the relation between speech and narrative. What is for the grammarian a distinction between speech and *quoted* speech (*oratio recta*, whose source is not the speaker of the moment but another speaker at another time) and for the narratologist a distinction between narrator and character (with characteristic differences in knowledge and "focalization" between the two<sup>3</sup>) may acquire a new significance when the dimension of performance is introduced. Already Plato's terminology, involving the action nouns *μίμησις* and *διήγησις*,<sup>4</sup> suggests performance by bringing theatrical phenomena such as playing (characters') *roles* to the fore. The cross-cultural perspective adds to this observation that those roles may be traditional as genres of speech that can have an existence independent of the epic tradition. Epic can appropriate those minor genres,<sup>5</sup> so becoming a matrix genre, a stage on which alternative speech genres are performed: boasts, insults, promises, supplications, laments, commemorations, and narratives.

<sup>1</sup> See A. FORD, "Epic as Genre", in *A New Companion to Homer*, ed. by I. MORRIS and B. POWELL (Leiden 1997), 396, and B. GRAZIOSI, "The Definition of Epic", Paper presented at a conference *Homerizontes*, Center for Hellenic Studies, June 2005.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., J.M. FOLEY, "Epic as Genre", in *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, ed. by R. FOWLER (Cambridge 2004), 171-187.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., I.J.F. DE JONG, *Narrators and Focalizers: The Presentation of the Story in the Iliad* (Amsterdam 1987), 149-194.

<sup>4</sup> *Rep.* 3, 393 c 5-9.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., J.M. FOLEY, *art.cit.* (n.2), 172 ("omnibus genre").

Homeric epic calls such subordinate genres ἔπος, as opposed to ἀοιδή, the term used for epic, the matrix genre. In later times, however, and outside epic, ἔπος comes to designate epic itself, perhaps first in Pindar and frequently in Herodotus.<sup>6</sup> It is not entirely clear how this sense for ἔπος developed, but it is striking that epic as a whole comes to be typified by the generic term for the variety of speech acts that are performed by the epic characters.<sup>7</sup> The semantic development of ἔπος is a reflex of the nature of the relation between the matrix genre and the embedded genres: neither is likely to remain unaffected in a process that can be seen as a *dialogue* over time, a reciprocal shaping. Homer goes perhaps farther than some other attested epic traditions: it imposes its own metrical conditions on the speech genres it appropriates and in turn borrows their poetics.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Nem.* 2, 2 ῥαπτῶν ἐπέων ... ἀοιδοί. See also the usage in Herodotus, e.g., 2, 116, 3; 4, 29. On ἔπος, see also H. KOLLER, "Epos", in *Glotta* 50 (1972), 16-24.

<sup>7</sup> The other major term for "spoken utterance" in Homer, μῦθος, had of course a semantic development that prevented it being used to refer to "epic" as such. For the use of μῦθος and ἔπος in Homer, see R.P. MARTIN, *The Language of Heroes. Speech and Performance in the Iliad* (Ithaca and London 1989), 1-42. MARTIN redefines (p.12) μῦθος in Homer as "a speech-act indicating authority, performed at length, usually in public, with a focus on full attention to every detail", whereas ἔπος is glossed as "an utterance, ideally short, accompanying a physical act, and focusing on message, as perceived by the addressee, rather than on performance as enacted by the speaker". We may add that a μῦθος in Homer typically does not expect a reply, which sets it up as anti-dialogic counterpart of λόγος in the later distinction.

<sup>8</sup> This idea of a dialogue between genres is indebted to the work of M. BAKHTIN, e.g., *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by C. EMERSON and M. HOLQUIST (Austin 1981), 3-4; *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*, ed. by C. EMERSON and M. HOLQUIST (Austin 1986), 60-102. Ironically, Bakhtin sees in epic a fundamentally un-dialogic genre, seeing dialogue at work mostly in the novel and in its "precursors" (such as the Socratic dialogue). Another difference between Bakhtin's work and the argument presented here is that I envisage dialogism in an epic tradition as essentially diachronic, not synchronic. As for the interaction between the discourse of the Homeric narrator and that of the characters, in *Pointing at the Past: From Formula to Performance in Homeric Poetics* (Washington-Cambridge 2005), 99-102, 107, 170 I argue that the strategies for "vividness" that are available to the Homeric narrator may involve the use of deictic markers used in the speech of characters in its dynamic and interactive settings.



Nor does this dialogue stop with 'minor' genres; the Homeric poems *themselves*, I will argue, are engaged in a dialogue with each other. Rather than being finished manifestations of a transcendental epic genre, the two epics shape each other as they feed into and digest each other. And the idea of feeding and digesting is appropriate for my purposes, because, as I will argue, much of the multiple dialogue between ἔπος and ἀοιδή as well as between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is concerned with food.

### *The Iliad: Heroic Speech, Heroic Feasts*

It seems promising, then, to start looking for 'epic' in what is for epic ἔπος. What do Homeric characters do with words that might typify the matrix speech act that holds them? After all, the epic hero is expected to leave his words to posterity no less than his deeds, as old Phoenix reminds Achilles (μύθων τε ῥητῆρ' ἔμμεναι πρηκτῆρά τε ἔργων, *Il.* 9, 443). Can we differentiate the two epics on the basis of what their heroes say? Let us start with some well-known observations on the 'heroic code' in the *Iliad* as it is presented by the heroes themselves.

In the *Iliad* heroes attest in their ἔπη to the interconnection of past, present, and future in what we may call a commemorative society. Hector, when he faces death at the hands of Achilles, is acutely aware of the obligation to die gloriously after performing a "big deed", so that there is something for "men in the future to learn about":

μὴ μὰν ἀσπουδί γε καὶ ἀκλειῶς ἀπολοίμην  
ἀλλὰ μέγα ῥέξας τι καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι  
(*Il.* 22, 304-305)

Let me not perish without some great effort or *kleos*;

No, <I'll die> after doing some great deed, for men that will be to learn about.

He who lives in a commemorative society, a society that is open to the past, will always be open to the future, confident that his own achievements will be remembered and commemorated in

turn: ἔπος anticipates future αἰοιδή. What Hector anticipates is to be part of the ongoing κλέα ἀνδρῶν, the kind of singing that Achilles does at *Il.* 9, 189 (ἄειδε δ' ἄρα κλέα ἀνδρῶν) or the kind of *exemplum* that Phoenix presents at *Il.* 9, 524-605. A hero's very identity is bound up with the κλέα ἀνδρῶν, as grammatically expressed in the patronymic epithets. A good example is the speech of Glaukos, whose self-presentation to Diomedes crucially involves the κλέα ἀνδρῶν of his ancestors:

Ἴππόλοχος δέ μ' ἔτικτε, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ φημι γενέσθαι·  
 πέμπε δέ μ' ἐς Τροίην, καὶ μοι μάλα πόλλ' ἐπέτελλεν,  
 αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων,  
 μηδὲ γένος πατέρων αἰσχυνέμεν, οἳ μὲγ' ἀριστοὶ  
 ἐν τ' Ἐφύρῃ ἐγένοντο καὶ ἐν Λυκίῃ εὐρείῃ.  
 ταύτης τοι γενεῆς τε καὶ αἵματος εὐχομαι εἶναι.  
 (*Il.* 6, 206-211)

Hippolokhos fathered me and I claim to be born from him.  
 He sent me to Troy, and enjoined me in many ways  
 always to excel and to be more prominent than others,  
 nor to put the race of my fathers to shame, who were greatly the best  
 in Ephyre as well as in broad Lycia.  
 Of that lineage and from that blood I claim to have sprung.

*Noblesse oblige* is what counts in the transfer of κλέος across the generations.

*Noblesse oblige* is also what counts between the hero and his entourage. Between the remembered past and the anticipated future, when the present will be remembered, there is also the present itself and the compensation it might give for running the risk of death, just as κλέος is compensation for death itself. In the middle of the poem (12, 310-328) the same Glaukos is famously exhorted to battle by his lord Sarpedon with a brief reflection on their life back in Lycia:<sup>9</sup> they enjoy the best places at the feast, the best meats, and godlike honor. But they are expected to fight among Lycia's foremost fighters to earn *kleos*.

<sup>9</sup> On this passage, see P. PUCCI, *The Song of the Sirens: Essays on Homer* (Lanham and New York 1998), 49-68; see also J. GRIFFIN, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford 1980), 14.

This obligation, Sarpedon goes on, is intimately bound up with the human condition: if they were impervious to old age and death, there would be no reason to join battle and fight. Indeed, we may add, the constant proximity of death (νῦν δ' ἔμπηγας γὰρ κῆρες ἐφ' ἑσπέρῃσιν θανάτοιο | μυρίαί, 12, 326-327) is what makes Sarpedon's fighting present meaningful, and gives it a future.

The central importance of food in Sarpedon's speech is prepared in the lion simile that immediately precedes:

βῆ ῥ' ἵμεν ὥς τε λέων ὀρεσίτροφος, ὅς τ' ἐπιδευῆς  
 δηρὸν ἔη κρειῶν, κέλεται δέ ἐ θυμὸς ἀγῆνωρ  
 μήλων πειρήσοντα καὶ ἐς πυκινὸν δόμον ἐλθεῖν·  
 εἴ περ γὰρ χ' εὖρησι παρ' αὐτόφι βώτορας ἄνδρας  
 σὺν κυσὶ καὶ δούρεσσι φυλάσσοντας περὶ μῆλα,  
 οὐ ῥά τ' ἀπείρητος μέμονε σταθμοῖο δῖεσθαι,  
 ἀλλ' ὅ γ' ἄρ' ἦ ἥρπαξε μετάλμενος, ἥ ἐ καὶ αὐτὸς  
 ἔβλητ' ἐν πρώτοισι θοῆς ἀπὸ χειρὸς ἄκοντι·  
 ὥς ῥά τ' ἀντίθεον Σαρπηδόνα θυμὸς ἀνῆκε  
 τεῖχος ἐπαῖξαι διὰ τε ῥήξασθαι ἐπάλξεις.  
αὐτίκα δὲ Γλαῦκον προσέφη, παῖδ' Ἴππολόχοιο·  
 (Il. 12, 299-309)

The close link between Sarpedon and the lion is expressed by αὐτίκα in 309.<sup>10</sup> The kingly animal's heroic craving for meat is the urge of its θυμός (κέλεται δέ ἐ θυμὸς ἀγῆνωρ, 300); it makes the lion risk his life at the hands of the shepherds who guard their flock: the javelin from a swift hand might kill it "among the foremost fighters" (ἐν πρώτοισι, 306). A human hero dying in this way would certainly be assured undying κλέος, and we may accordingly explore the links between κλέος and food.

The symbolic value of food and its connections with τιμή and κλέος is a recurrent theme in the *Iliad* and its warrior society. Two memorable scenes involve no one other than Odysseus, whose relation to food is richly complex and informs important aspects of Homeric poetics, as we will see. In the first scene (4, 343-348), Agamemnon rebukes Odysseus for standing first in line when it comes to the δαίς, the heroic banquet, while lag-

<sup>10</sup> See PUCCI, *op. cit.* (n.9), 51.



ging behind when the actual fighting starts.<sup>11</sup> The δαίς is one of the prime occasions in heroic life, second only to the distribution of booty, in which τιμή, honor, recognized value, is enacted in the proportional share that one receives. The dispensation of meat reflects and underscores relative differences in τιμή in the community.<sup>12</sup> The scene helps create a less than heroic persona for Odysseus, which, as I shall argue later, is put to good use by the *Odyssey* as it realizes its hero's νόστος.

The second scene, from Book 19 of the *Iliad*, opposes two radical departures from the heroic feast and its symbolic value. Achilles' murderous rage makes him stop wanting to eat altogether: his is a lust for blood rather than a craving for meat; Odysseus, in response, stresses the advantages of food over fasting, but he is not so much interested in heroic feasting, which satisfies most of all the θυμός, as in the biological necessity of feeding. Odysseus argues that no heroic achievement can be achieved until the γαστήρ is given its due share.<sup>13</sup> As we will see, this stance of Odysseus will prove central to the *Odyssey's* strategies in realizing its hero's return.

### *The Odyssey: Poetry and Food*

Turning now to the *Odyssey*, we notice, and not for the first time, that the perspective on κλέος here is quite different from that of the *Iliad*. We usually attribute this, not unreasonably, to the *Odyssey* being a post-war epic, for whose characters the

<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Agamemnon exhorts the Achaeans by reminding them of the boast made over "many meats" (κρέα πολλὰ, *Il.* 8, 231) that now turn out to be empty. See also *Il.* 8, 161-166 (Hector to Diomedes).

<sup>12</sup> On the δαίς, see S. SAÏD, "Les crimes des prétendants, la maison d'Ulysse et les festins de l'*Odyssee*", in *Études de littérature ancienne*, ed. by S. SAÏD, F. DESBORDES, J. BOUFFARTIGUE, and A. MOREAU (Paris 1979), 9-49, arguing (pp. 19-21) that the δαίς not only is parallel to other systems of distribution (such as booty), but also "proportionate" and allowing for parts of honor.

<sup>13</sup> *Il.* 19, 154-237. On this scene, see the fundamental discussion of P. PUCCI, *Odysseus Polutropos: Intertextual Readings in the Odyssey and the Iliad* (Ithaca and London 1987), 165-172.



heroic exploits of the Trojan War are already the past, a matter of κλέα ἀνδρῶν. This creates ample opportunities, used to the full by the *Odyssey* and widely noted by modern scholars, for self-reflexive poetics and epic's exploration of its own transmission and reception, indeed its very truth. Yet at the same time these modern features are matched by features that seem far less advanced than the *Iliad's* heroic warfare: tales about encounters with witches, ogres, and monsters that are commonly categorized under labels such as 'folktale', 'Märchen', etc. Can these conflicting features be reconciled? How do they relate to the *Iliad*? Is it even safe to say that the two Homeric epics belong to one and the same genre?

The *Odyssey's* temporal orientation is strikingly different from that of the *Iliad*; Odyssean characters occupy a position that is a blend of the perspective of the Iliadic heroes themselves and the "late-born men" (ὀψίγονοι, ἐσσόμενοι) that Hector thinks will be the audience of his exploits in the future. This is nowhere clearer than in the case of Odysseus himself. Iliadic heroes such as Hector and even Achilles himself have an identity that consists in the encounter of past and future temporalities; both draw, as enacted through their patronymics, on the past κλέος of their line and both have to locate their own κλέος in the future. Odysseus, on the other hand, is the self-made man, the hero who cannot fall back to the same degree on his lineage;<sup>14</sup> in fact, when he does, the results are disastrous. The κλέα ἀνδρῶν do not seem to work for Odysseus in the *Odyssey*, an epic that tends to emphasize the non-Iliadic qualities of the world in which Odysseus is forced to travel (though not without re-integrating its hero at the end, as we will see). The hero's achieved κλέος allows him to speak about it in the present tense (καί μευ κλέος οὐρανὸν ἔκει, *Od.* 9, 20) where Iliadic heroes have to use the future.<sup>15</sup> But this κλέος has two sides; it may already have

<sup>14</sup> S. BENARDETE, *Achilles and Hector: The Homeric Hero*, ed. by R. BURGER (South Bend, Indiana 2005), 30-31.

<sup>15</sup> See Ch. SEGAL, *Singers, Heroes, and Gods in the Odyssey* (Ithaca and London 1994), 86-87; BAKKER, *op.cit.* (n.8), 111. Note that when κλέος is presented

been attained during the hero's life, but it cannot but signify his death to those who are left behind on Ithaka. In Penelope's γόοι for her vanished husband, the latter's κλέος comes to symbolize, in a striking reversal of Iliadic temporality, his absence in the present rather than his presence in the future:<sup>16</sup> this heroic, epic fame is not compensation for death; it is, for Penelope, a painful symbol for death itself.

The κλέος that the *Odyssey* confers is of course, in another reversal of Iliadic orientations, the accomplishment of νόστος. Whereas from the point of view of the *Iliad's* heroics, νόστος is poetic death, the elimination of any possibility of κλέος and of that poem's *telos*, the *Odyssey* places the achievement of κλέος, and so the poem's *telos*, squarely in the completion of the hero's νόστος. The hero's return is the necessary condition for his fame in the future, since no one but Odysseus himself can tell the tale and save his adventures for posterity. In fact, the telling of the story is tantamount to the achievement of κλέος and the hero cannot accomplish his νόστος but by becoming a singer. This is what Alkinoos, king of the Phaeacians acknowledges when Odysseus is in the process of uttering epic's longest and in more than one way most fantastic έπος:

σοι δ' έπι μὲν μορφή έπέων, ένι δὲ φρένες έσθλαί,  
μῦθον δ' ώς ότ' αἰδοῖς έπισταμένως κατέλεξας  
(*Od.* 11, 367-368)

Upon you is comeliness of words, and in you is a noble mind.  
The μῦθος, as if you are an αἰδοῖς, you have told with great skill.

Odysseus' έπος like no other speech in Homer blurs the distinction between speech and song, between hero and poet, and so turns έπος (or μῦθος) into αἰδή.

Odysseus' narrative *tour de force* is well prepared and well integrated in the chain of events. In terms of subject matter, in

as extending into the future, the achievement worthy of commemoration has always already been realized. In fact, the realization may be the poem itself, as in the case of Penelope at *Od.* 24, 196 τῷ οἱ κλέος οὔποτ' ὀλεῖται.

<sup>16</sup> τοῦ κλέος εὐρὺ καθ' Ἑλλάδα καὶ μέσον Ἀργός, *Od.* 1, 344; 4, 726.

requesting Demodokos to sing of the Wooden Horse and the fall of Troy, Odysseus creates a basis from which he can start his own story by relay with a seamless chronological fit. But integration applies also to the context in which the story is told, which takes us back to the theme of food. Both Demodokos and Odysseus perform in the context of the Phaeacian δαίς, which just as the feasts of the *Iliad* is what the banquet should be: a proportionate division of meat and honor. But the *Odyssey* adds a crucial element, because here poetry and poets are included in the distribution. First, poetry is, as Alkinoos puts it, “wedded to the banquet”:

ἥδη μὲν δαιτὸς κεκορήμεθα θυμὸν ἔτσης  
 φόρμιγγός θ', ἣ δαιτὶ συνήορός ἐστι θαλείῃ  
 (*Od.* 8, 98-99)

We have now satisfied the desire of our θυμός for the well-balanced banquet, and for the lyre, which is wedded to the rich banquet.

The bond between poetry and food is prominent and clear throughout the poem.<sup>17</sup> What is new at the Phaeacians' banquet is that Odysseus, the hero-turned-into-poet, turns the poet Demodokos into a hero, allowing him to partake of the heroic and timocratic distribution of meat by offering him a choice piece:

“κῆρυξ, τῇ δὴ, τοῦτο πόρε κρέας, ὄφρα φάγησι,  
 Δημοδόκῳ, καί μιν προσπτύξομαι, ἀχνύμενός περ.  
 πᾶσι γὰρ ἀνθρώποισι ἐπιχθονίοισιν αἰδοῖ  
 τιμῆς ἔμμοροι εἰσι καὶ αἰδοῦς, οὔνεκ' ἄρα σφεας  
 οἶμας Μοῦσ' ἐδίδαξε, φίλησε δὲ φῦλον αἰιδῶν.”  
 ὥς ἄρ' ἔφη, κῆρυξ δὲ φέρων ἐν χερσὶν ἔθηκεν  
 ἥρω Δημοδόκῳ· ὃ δ' ἐδέξατο, χαῖρε δὲ θυμῷ.  
 (*Od.* 8, 477-483)

“Herald, there! Give <him> this piece of meat, so that he eats, to Demodokos, and I will salute him, grieved though I am. For among all humans who dwell on earth the singers are entitled to honor and respect, since them

<sup>17</sup> E.g., *Od.* 8, 539; 9, 5-11; 13, 24-28; 17, 258-263; 17, 605-606; 21, 430.



the Muse has taught the paths of song, and she loves the race of singers". Thus he spole and the herald took it and put it in his hands, to Demodokos the Hero; and he, he received it and rejoiced in his spirit.

The ἀοιδός, endowed with τιμή, whose songs carry κλέος themselves (*Od.* 8, 74), becomes a hero when his status is confirmed in the δαίς and he receives his proportionate share of meat.

The interdependence of poet and hero through meat at the δαίς has a number of important consequences for the poetics of the *Odyssey*. First, what counts in the *Iliad* as compensation for heroic action or as its symbolic equivalent becomes in the *Odyssey* the thing itself: singing the song is tantamount to accomplishing the deed, with the difference between μῦθοι/ἔπεα and ἔργα — in the *Iliad* two separate departments of heroic achievement — disappearing. This is nowhere clearer than in the climactic ending of the hero's νόστος, the δαίς of death of the Suitors in Odysseus' μέγαρον, when the poet's lyre turns into a deadly weapon:

ὥς ὅτ' ἀνὴρ φόρμιγγος ἐπιστάμενος καὶ ἀοιδῆς  
 ῥηϊδίως ἐτάνυσσε νέῳ περὶ κόλλοπι χορδὴν,  
 ἄψας ἀμφοτέρωθεν εὖστρεφές ἔντερον οἶός,  
 ὥς ἄρ' ἄτερ σπουδῆς τάνυσεν μέγα τόξον Ὀδυσσεύς.  
 δεξιτερῇ δ' ἄρα χειρὶ λαβὼν πειρήσατο νευρῆς·  
 ἢ δ' ὑπὸ καλὸν ἄεισε, χελιδόνι εἰκέλη αὐδὴν.  
 (*Od.* 21, 406-411)

Just as when a man who is expert in the lyre and in song  
 easily fastens a string on the new peg,  
 fastening on either side the well-twisted sheep gut:  
 so then, without effort, did Odysseus string the great bow  
 and taking it with his right hand he tested the string,  
 and it sung a beautiful tune, similar to the song of the swallow.

The lethal force of poetry, here mediated through the voice of the primary narrator and the simile, becomes explicit in the grim humor of the hero-poet's ἔπος a little later:

νῦν δ' ὦρη καὶ δόρπον Ἀχαιοῖσιν τετυκέσθαι  
 ἐν φάει, αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα καὶ ἄλλως ἐψιάσθαι  
 μολπῇ καὶ φόρμιγγι· τὰ γάρ τ' ἀναθήματα δαιτός.  
 (*Odyssey* 21, 428-430)



Now it's the moment to prepare the Achaeans a meal  
in the light; and thereafter to amuse ourselves in other ways,  
with song and the lyre; for those are the delights of the banquet.

In addition to preparing the interdependence of poet and hero, word and deed, the proportionately balanced meal in Alkinoos' μέγαρον and its harmonious wedding to ἀοιδή/ἔπος also acts as counterpoint to the feasts of the Suitors, where the δαίς is corrupted, to the point at which the very term becomes inappropriate, since no distribution takes place, no proportional division, no exchange or compensation, and no sacrifice.<sup>18</sup> The meats at this non-δαίς become "blood-defiled"<sup>19</sup> in what is perhaps the most extreme characterization of the Suitors' continuous and excessive feasting. The Suitors' meat consumption, as I think the poem makes clear, is in itself a transgression, a violation.

The *Odyssey*, when one looks at it in this way, suddenly becomes full of ravenously hungry bellies and meals that go terribly wrong. The feast is not only the setting for stories, song, music, and τιμή, but can also provide a setting for strife among the table guests, as in Demodokos' first song that tells of the νεῖκος of Achilles and Odysseus which occurred θεῶν ἐν δαιτὶ θαλείῃ (8, 76). Meals in the *Odyssey* are often in and of themselves problematic, inappropriate, dangerous, even deadly. Odysseus' companions are surprised by the returning Kikones while eating an undue and inappropriate meal;<sup>20</sup> Agamemnon was murdered while dining, butchered like the beef on which he was feasting,<sup>21</sup> his companions slaughtered "like white-tusked boars" for the feast of a wealthy man:<sup>22</sup> their corpses were strewn all around the tables laden with food and the floor of the dining hall was seething all over with their blood.<sup>23</sup> These

<sup>18</sup> On the Suitors' crimes and transgressions, see SAÏD, *art.cit.* (n.12), 23-32.

<sup>19</sup> αἰμοφόρυκτα, *Od.* 20, 348.

<sup>20</sup> *Od.* 9, 45-51.

<sup>21</sup> *Od.* 4, 534-535; 11, 411-412.

<sup>22</sup> *Od.* 11, 412-415.

<sup>23</sup> *Od.* 11, 419-420. Note that the phrase δάπεδον δ' ἅπαν αἵματι θύε (420) is

images vividly anticipate the carnage that will take place at Ithaka when Odysseus will reverse the roles of hunter and hunted, butcher and butchered. Agamemnon's νόστος was wrecked in food.

An even more striking link with the Suitors' feasting and demise is created by Odysseus' companions eating the Cattle of the Sun, the only adventure from the travels beyond that is singled out for prominent inclusion in the poem's proem. Even though they are numbered and immortal (12, 129-131), the oxen of Helios are not for the Companions food in the sense of distribution of honor, as in the δαίς, but mere biological sustenance; they satisfy less the cravings of the θυμός than those of the γαστήρ.<sup>24</sup> And yet, indispensable as they are, they are untouchable. Helios took away the day of their νόστος for their meat consumption that is characterized as ἀτασθαλία (1, 7), just as are the depredations of the Suitors (22, 416). Both the Companions and the Suitors ate beyond what was their share and met with self-inflicted doom. In the *Odyssey*, νόστος can only be achieved through abstinence and fasting.

We see, then, that in the world depicted in the *Odyssey*, food and the meal are all but the self-evident system of distribution that in the *Iliad* sustains the heroic code. Is the *Odyssey* merely reacting to the *Iliad* by problematizing its conception of the social importance of feasting, just as it reverses the war poem's vision on νόστος and κλέος? Or has the stance on food of the νόστος poem a different motivation? In order to arrive at an answer, let us look more closely at the poem's ἔπεα, in particular the νόστος-turned-into-speech, which is the hero's report on his voyage. Not counting Odysseus' Cretan tales, the *Odyssey* offers us two such tales: Odysseus' own report in Books 9-12, the *Apologue*, and Menelaos' report in Book 4 (351-586).

picked up in another description of a νόστος ending in a bloodbath (22, 309, cf. 24, 185), stressing the structural similarity between the two scenes. See also n. 70 below.

<sup>24</sup> *Od.* 12, 332 ἔτειρε δὲ γαστέρα λιμός. Cf. *Od.* 4, 369 in an entirely comparable νόστος-story.

*The Shaman's Tale*

The *Apologue* has been variously interpreted. The narratologist sees in it an instance of a typically Homeric narrative strategy, the telling by a character of events that took place before the poem's constructed plot.<sup>25</sup> But Odysseus' story is surely very different from, say, Nestor's story of his youthful exploits or Phoenix's Meleager story. Those are *exempla* addressed to Achilles, and part of the κλέα ἀνδρῶν, tested and confirmed in accepted tradition of which the community's elders are the repository;<sup>26</sup> the narrator is certainly not its exclusive source. Odysseus' and Menelaos' stories, on the other hand, are personal reports about adventures in a world beyond the reach of the audience, unconfirmed and unverifiable, meant to explain the narrator's being here — stories about hardships endured precisely in order to "come home". Others take the personal, the unconfirmed and unverifiable, as a typically Odyssean study in narrative authority, an exploration of the uncertain borderline area between truth and falsehood in a self-reflexive poetics.<sup>27</sup>

Such self-reflexive explorations do indeed take place, but that does not mean that Odysseus' first-person narrative is not in itself a traditional thing to do with words. Returning to the suggestion made in the beginning about the dialogue between ἔπος and ἀοιδή, I propose that Odysseus' tale may be a traditional type of ἔπος that the Homeric tradition has appropriated and used for its own epic purposes. I am reaching back here to an older suggestion by K. Meuli, who observed that Odysseus' story, the first-person report on a *Jenseitsreise*, is typologically the *shaman's tale* of his journey in the world beyond,<sup>28</sup> a jour-

<sup>25</sup> See I.J.F. DE JONG, *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey* (Cambridge 2001), 221.

<sup>26</sup> See the way in which Phoenix introduces his tale at *Il.* 9, 524-527 (ἐπεύθομεθα κλέα ἀνδρῶν ... μέμνημαι τόδε ἔργον ἐγὼ πάλαι, οὐ τι νέον γε).

<sup>27</sup> E.g., S. GOLDHILL, *The Poet's Voice: Essays on Poetics and Greek Literature* (Cambridge 1991), 54-56.

<sup>28</sup> K. MEULI, "Scythica", in *Hermes* 70 (1935), 168 = *Gesammelte Schriften* II (Basel/Stuttgart 1975), 869-870. Also A. THORNTON, *People and Themes in*



ney that involves encounters with monsters, demons, masters of animals, not to mention suffering, ingenuity, heavenly consorts, and fasting. It is not completed until it is turned into utterance, the obligatory tale that signifies the shaman's return to humanity and so seals his 'nostos'.<sup>29</sup>

Shamanism is a phenomenon of confusing and disconcerting diversity; its many aspects include among others (though not necessarily simultaneously in any one given culture) healing, magic, divination, and securing success in the hunt. The common denominator of these various functions can best be summed up as mediation with the supernatural, the world beyond, to which the shaman — his spirit leaving the body — must travel in order to carry out some mission: conduct a soul to the world beyond, bring one back (as an act of healing), or find out the supernatural cause of a famine or disaster for the community and remedy it.<sup>30</sup> Prerequisite for his legitimacy in this function is in many cases his union with a supernatural consort,<sup>31</sup> such as the daughter of the spirit-giver of game, an alliance that makes hunting partake of the system of exchange around which marriage revolves.

Shamanism has been described for many cultures the world over, but its core area is generally located in Siberia and Central Asia. Most discussions of shamanism in the Greek world assume a northerly (Thracian or Pontic) connection.<sup>32</sup> For the *Odyssey*

*Homer's Odyssey* (Dunedin 1970), 16-37; A.T. HATTO, *Shamanism and Epic Poetry in Northern Asia* (London 1970, *School of Oriental and African Studies*), 2. W. BURKERT, *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions* (Cambridge, MA and London 1996), 68.

<sup>29</sup> R. HAMAYON, *La chasse à l'âme. Esquisse d'une théorie du chamanisme sibérien* (Paris 1990), 527.

<sup>30</sup> M. ÉLIADÉ, *Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase* (Paris 1951), 21-22; HATTO, *op.cit.* (n.28), 1-3. The notion of ecstatic shamanism is sometimes criticized as too narrow in that spirits from the world beyond may also come to the shaman and possess him, e.g., Å. HULTKRANTZ, "Introductory Remarks on the Study of Shamanism", in *Shaman* 1 (1993), 3-14.

<sup>31</sup> ÉLIADÉ, *op.cit.* (n.30), 79-80; HAMAYON, *op.cit.* (n.29), 425-539.

<sup>32</sup> E. ROHDE, *Psyche. Seelenkult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen* (Leipzig 1897), 151; K. MEULI, *art.cit.* (n.28); E.R. DODDS, *The Greeks and the Irrational*



in particular it is of interest that Pontic geography has recently been reasserted as a plausible area for Odysseus' voyage on the basis of the poem's drawing on an earlier *Argonautica*.<sup>33</sup>

Shamanism has been frequently cited as an important source of epic, with sometimes a separate, shamanistic type of epic being singled out<sup>34</sup> or parallelisms being noted between the shaman and the hero.<sup>35</sup> To apply this to the *Odyssey* might seem plausible, since so many features of the *Apologue* do indeed have a shamanistic appearance: the hero's mysterious sleeping;<sup>36</sup> his union with Circe the daughter of the Sun, master of animals; his journey to the Underworld; his union with Calypso, who resides at the navel of the sea, and daughter of Atlas who holds the pillars that separate heaven from earth;<sup>37</sup> the hero's alliance with Athena, presented as a goddess who is prone to take on birds' shapes;<sup>38</sup> his closeness in role and function to Apollo, archer god with boreal connections;<sup>39</sup> and last but not least for

(Berkely and Los Angeles 1951), 135-142. A.N. ATHANASSAKIS, "Shamanism and Amber in Greece: The Northern Connection", in *Shamanhood, Symbolism, and Epic*, ed. by J. PENTIKÄINEN (Budapest 2001) stresses the possibly Nordic connections of Menelaos' adventure with Proteus (*Od.* 4, 351-572).

<sup>33</sup> M.L. WEST, "Odyssey and Argonautica", in *CQ* 55 (2005), 39-64.

<sup>34</sup> MEULI, *art.cit.* (n.28), 164 ff.; HATTO, *op.cit.* (n.28); C.M. BOWRA, *Heroic Poetry* (New York 1972), 29-30, 70-78; D.A. MILLER, *The Epic Hero* (Baltimore and London 2000), 32-33.

<sup>35</sup> MILLER, *op.cit.* (n. 34), 298-304.

<sup>36</sup> *Od.* 12, 338; 13, 79-80.

<sup>37</sup> *Od.* 1, 50; 53-54. Calypso seems in this respect a multiform of her father insofar as "navel" can be seen as a multiform of the "Pillar of the World", see E.J. BAKKER, "The Greek Gilgamesh, or the Immortality of Return", in *EPANOS. Proceedings of the 9<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on the Odyssey* (Ithaki 2001), 346. On the World Pillar, see ÉLIADÉ, *op.cit.* (n. 30), 214-215, Å. HULTZKRANZ, "A New Look at the World Pillar in Arctic and Sub-Arctic Religions", in *Shamanism and Northern Ecology*, ed. by J. PENTIKÄINEN (Berlin and New York 1996), 31-49.

<sup>38</sup> On the relation between shamans and birds, see HAMAYON, *op.cit.* (n. 29), 493-494, 552. Note that Circe may have avian (falconese) features downplayed by our text, cf. M.L. WEST, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford 1997), 408. On birds in general in the *Odyssey*, see P. FRIEDRICH, "An Avian and Aphrodisian Reading of Homer's *Odyssey*", in *American Anthropologist* 99 (1997), 306-320.

<sup>39</sup> E.g., MEULI, *art.cit.* (n.28), 160-163 = 861-864; DODDS, *op.cit.* (n.32), 141; THORNTON, *op.cit.* (n.28), 24-25.

our discussion of the importance of food, feasting, and fasting in Homer, there is the importance of the hunt and the hero's purveyance of meat for his companions, most notably on "Goat Island" off the coast of the land of the Cyclopes and on Circe's island, where he kills a giant stag; finally, outside the confines of the *Apologue*, the remarkable expression ἦν ... ψυχὴν from the poem's Proem springs to mind with its unique agentive conception of "one's soul".<sup>40</sup>

Still, such shamanistic leanings of the Odysseus' tale are hard to test without some evidence of how the shaman's *tale*, shamanism as *discursive practice*, relates to epic. Returning to Meuli's first-person narrative as criterion, can we assume that Odysseus' tale is a shaman's story that has been incorporated wholesale into our Homeric *Odyssey* and put in Odysseus' mouth? Has the shaman's ἔπος, a speech genre whose performance, as travelers and missionaries attest, can be spectacular,<sup>41</sup> been imported into the matrix genre of epic? Such an import is unlikely, if only because the performing 'shaman' in question is a character with an independently confirmed status as a Trojan War hero. And abrupt, overnight borrowing is unlikely to happen in evolving oral traditions; much more likely is the co-existence over time of two genres, the bard's tale and the shaman's tale, as the 'dialogue' of genres that I mentioned in the beginning. What we need, then, is comparative evidence of the shaman's tale and the bard's epic as co-existing discursive practices.

A suggestive case of such co-existence can be found in the Buryat cultures of Southern Central Siberia, around Lake Baikal, as interpreted by the French anthropologist Roberte Hamayon, in particular the Ekhirit-Bugalat west of the Lake. The Buryat have an epic tradition whose ritual performance is strictly confined to the season when the constellation of the Pleiades rises at sunset, that is, from October to May, the winter and hunt-

<sup>40</sup> On this expression in the proem, though not in connection with 'shamanism', see PUCCI, *op.cit.* (n.9), 14-16.

<sup>41</sup> R. HUTTON, *Shamans: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination* (London and New York 2001), 85-87.

ing season.<sup>42</sup> Buryat epic suggestively has as function to prepare, and propitiate, the hunt. As such it achieves in the physical world what the shaman's journey accomplishes in the supernatural world of the spirits. Hero and shaman are linked in the hunt. The parallelism between them is further expressed in the metaphorical link between the hero's Quest for marriage and the shaman's marriage with the daughter of the spirit of the wood, giver of game.<sup>43</sup> The former, the epic marriage, is an image of the condition to be fulfilled for the shaman to acquire his power, whereas the latter, the shamanic marriage, is in its turn the necessary condition for the spirit of the wood to give some of his game, reindeer, to the hunter as prey. Marriage and the hunt, therefore, are thematically connected in this tradition.

At the level of enunciation, the similarities between the shaman and the bard are equally clear, in that to perform epic is called to 'shamanize' it, whereas, conversely, the shaman's tale borrows from epic its rhythms, melodies, and patterns of versification.<sup>44</sup> In this evolving 'dialogue' between the two parallel and complementary discursive practices, and with the hunt diminishing in importance, epic wins out over the shamanic speech genre, so that the hero takes over some of the shaman's features.<sup>45</sup> The result is an epic in which song-action comes to be linked with shamanic practice.

### *Quest and Marriage*

No direct contact between the Greek world and any ancestor of Buryat epic and shamanic practice can of course be estab-

<sup>42</sup> HAMAYON, *op.cit.* (n.29), 167-168, 180. Without pressing the coincidence, we may note that the evening rising of the Pleiades is the time of Odysseus' departure from Calypso (*Od.* 5, 272, Πληϊάδας ἑσορῶντι καὶ ὁψὲ δύνοντα Βοώτην); see N. AUSTIN, *Archery at the Dark of the Moon: Poetic Problems in Homer's Odyssey* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1975), 240-243.

<sup>43</sup> HAMAYON, *op.cit.* (n.29), 276-277.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 169-170.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 590-591; R. HAMAYON, "The Dynamics of the Epic Genre in Buryat culture. A Grave for Shamanism, a Ground for Messianism", in *Epic Adventures: Heroic Narrative in the Oral Performance Traditions of Four Continents*, ed. by J. JANSEN and H. MAIER (Münster and Hamburg 2003), 3-65.



lished.<sup>46</sup> But the interdependence between shaman and bard is suggestive, and we may wonder, speculating about the prehistory of the *Odyssey*, whether Odysseus' poem is not an example of such a 'shamanized' epic. What is of most interest here are not so much the shamanistic elements in the *Apologue* in themselves as the way in which Odysseus' first-person narrative and the matrix story feed into each other. Odysseus' supernatural consorts Circe and Calypso, the former providing paradisiacal feasting on "unlimited meats" and the latter nothing less than immortality, are turned from the successful completion of the shaman's mission into obstacles to the hero's quest. The tale of supernatural consorts is integrated within and subject to the tale of marriage to the mortal consort; but conversely Penelope takes on important features of Odysseus' divine sexual partners.<sup>47</sup> It is only through the dialogue of her tale with the *Apologue* that she becomes a Mistress of Animals whose wooing brings death to her unfortunate suitors. In that dialogue the Suitors come to occupy the slot reserved for Odysseus' companions in the *Apologue*. Both eat meat that is not only forbidden but also numbered, counted: the Cattle of Helios number three-hundred-fifty and the boors in Eumaios' enclosure, the Suitors' favorite food, three-hundred-sixty.<sup>48</sup>

Such similarities inevitably put Odysseus himself in the role of the various Masters of Animals he encountered earlier. There are (subdued) solar features in the hero's remark that the Suit-

<sup>46</sup> But note that the one-eyed Arimaspoi and the "gold guarding griffons" of the poem of Aristeas of Proconnesus — another first-person narrative whose status (shaman's tale, epic quest, or geographic exploration?) is disputed — have been equated with the Altai and the Mongols. Cf. HDT. 4, 13; 25-27; J.D.P. BOLTON, *Aristeas of Proconnesos* (Oxford 1962), 78-80; H. FRÄNKEL, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums* (München 1962), 277-279.

<sup>47</sup> See M.N. NAGLER, "Dread Goddess Revisited", in *Reading the Odyssey*, ed. by S.L. SCHEIN (Princeton 1996), 141-161. In particular we may note the paradigmatic link between the living trunk on which Odysseus' bed has been built and the *axis mundi* (n. 37).

<sup>48</sup> *Od.* 12, 129-130; 14, 20. Note also that in answer to the paradisiacal κρέα ἄσπετα which Odysseus and the Companions enjoy in the world beyond (9, 162, 557; 10, 184, 468; 12, 30) we have Eumaios' remark (14, 96) that Odysseus' estate used to be ἄσπετος before the Suitors' depredations started.



ors' 'meal' is to take place ἐν φάει,<sup>49</sup> and in the simile depicting the Suitors' corpses as big fish lying in the sand, killed by Shining Helios.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps the most striking reversal is Odysseus in the role of the Cyclops as returning master of the house, since in the *Apologue* he was in the position of the Suitors, in entering a house uninvited and helping himself to the food supplies. Odysseus' μέγαρον, hermetically closed, comes to resemble the Cave of the Cyclops, but since the one who guards the threshold (22, 2) has more μῆτις than those trapped within and more than him who guarded the cave's exit, no one will come out alive. There is a complementary reversal, aligning not Odysseus but the Suitors with Polyphemos, which is underlined by the following repetition:

τὸ δὲ νήπιος οὐκ ἐνόησεν *Od.* 9, 442

τὸ δὲ νήπιοι οὐκ ἐνόησαν *Od.* 22, 32

The former captor and those presently captured, Cyclops and Suitors, are similar in suffering from a fundamental lack of understanding of the situation. They stand both in contrast, respectively with the present captor and those formerly captured.

### *Epics in Dialogue*

But there are other significant repetitions in the *Mnêstêrophonia*. The significance of Odysseus' *nostos* is not exhausted with the interplay of the shamanic quest and the marriage-return story: a further dialogue is underway. The *Odyssey* tradition as a whole, I argue, interacts with the heroic tradition of the Trojan War and in particular its most memorable episode, the Wrath of Achilles as treated in the *Iliad* tradition. This new dialogue involves the two epics not as poems, fixed and finished, but as evolving speech genres in their own right. Such a dia-

<sup>49</sup> *Od.* 21, 429. See also 18, 343-344 with N. AUSTIN, *op.cit.* (n.42), 282-283 n.16.

<sup>50</sup> *Od.* 22, 384-389.

logue seems to me more fruitful as paradigm for 'transhomer'ic research than to assume, either that the *Odyssey* contains elements of *mythical* epic that as such predate the largely *historical* epic frame of the *Iliad*,<sup>51</sup> or is a 'later' composition that shows a 'post-epic' awareness.

In the new dialogue Odysseus' shamanic quest is incorporated not so much into the marriage tale of *nostos* proper as into the heroic tale of the Trojan War and its main epic tradition the *Iliad*. This means that Odysseus not only departs from and returns to his physical home at Ithaka; he also disappears from the heroic world of the κλέα ἀνδρῶν, the world of the Trojan War and the *Iliad*, in order to re-appear and be reintegrated at the end. The hero's wanderings in the world beyond are not only supernatural but also self-reflexive (or metapoetic), since the world in which he is forced to travel is defined with respect to epic through a denial or reversal of typically heroic values and functions, *kleos* in particular. The Wanderings, at this level, are a de-heroization followed by a re-heroization in which Odysseus comes to play yet another role, that of Achilles. The process, as we shall see, is charted not only through a number of salient verbal repetitions, but also through the aforementioned themes of feasting, feeding, and fasting.

The poem starts with presenting Odysseus' greatest claim to fame as no more than a starting point: the Sack of Troy only leads to wandering (*Od.* 1, 2). The hero's first adventure after leaving Troy, the sack of the Kikonian city of Ismaros and the ensuing battle, is mundane heroic routine, hardly worthy of *kleos*, and apparently meant merely to deepen the contrast with the episodes that are to follow.<sup>52</sup> After Odysseus' ships get caught in a supernatural storm, λαίλαπι θεσπεσίῃ (*Od.* 9, 68),

<sup>51</sup> For "historical" vs. "mythical" epic, see P. ZUMTHOR, *Introduction à la poésie orale* (Paris 1983), 110-111, for whom "mythical" comes to supplant BOWRA's (n.34) notion of "chamanistic epic".

<sup>52</sup> Note that the episode's most important event, Odysseus sparing the life of Maron the priest of Apollo, is not told until the wine Odysseus received in return becomes relevant for the story (*Od.* 9, 196-211).

no epic prerequisite or practice will further the hero's interests, and it soon transpires that those interests at this point are not 'epic' at all in any traditional sense. This is the moment when the aforementioned reversal of Iliadic values begins to take place: *nostos* turns from being an antiheroic suggestion into epic's primary goal, and *kleos* turns from poetic immortality into a liability.

Proportionate heroic δαῖτες are attempted before and after the Cyclops episode; the first time there is feasting on the "unlimited meats" of the wild goats, the second time on the sheep stolen from the Cyclops' cave.<sup>53</sup> On both occasions Odysseus gets a share that the *Iliad's* Sarpedon would have envied, but the heroic portion does not get Odysseus very far and merely anticipates the scenes in which the crew is feasting and the hero fasting.

The Cyclops story, in many ways an important learning experience for Odysseus, shows that in this new world epic forms of exchange and etiquette are at best useless, and potentially much worse. The Cyclops simply ignores Odysseus' Iliadic self-introduction as "troops of Agamemnon whose κλέος under the sky is now greatest"<sup>54</sup> and when Odysseus finally reveals himself as "Odysseus the Sacker of Cities, son of Laertes and having his home in Ithaka",<sup>55</sup> unleashing the Cyclops' prayer which will be specified by Teiresias' prediction, the results are disastrous for Odysseus' epic νόστος, but highly beneficial for the *story* of his νόστος as the object of a prolonged Quest.<sup>56</sup> The *Iliad's* failure is the *Odyssey's* success.

The hero's remoteness with respect to the reference-point of heroic epic is strikingly expressed by song of the Sirens.<sup>57</sup> The deadly singers take on the identity of the Iliadic Muses, in claim-

<sup>53</sup> *Od.* 9, 158-165, 548-557.

<sup>54</sup> *Od.* 9, 263-265.

<sup>55</sup> *Od.* 9, 504-505.

<sup>56</sup> See E.J. BAKKER, "Polyphemos", in *Colby Classical Quarterly* 37 (2002), 135-150.

<sup>57</sup> PUCCI, *op.cit.* (n.9), 1-9.



ing, using the language of the Muses,<sup>58</sup> to have omniscient knowledge of the world's richest source of κλέος, the battlefield of the Trojan War, and they address Odysseus in language that evokes the hero's Iliadic identity, most notably his intellectual superiority over Achilles.<sup>59</sup> However, as Pucci, Segal, and others have observed, to listen to the song of these anti-Muses means the very undoing of epos' victory over death in the form of κλέος.<sup>60</sup> Incorporation in the κλέα ἀνδρῶν as transmitted by heroic poetry, specifically the *Iliad*, is not within reach or even in the interest of someone who has drifted away so far from epic's deictic center. In order to enjoy the benefits of heroism in a traditional epic way, Odysseus has to have had a chance to *tell* his story. But this will not happen until he has survived the time on the island of Calypso, the immortal goddess whose very name signifies death in Iliadic parlance.<sup>61</sup>

But once Odysseus has set foot on Scheria, the island of the Phaeacians and the place where he starts securing his νόστος by telling it, signs of an epic identity being regained begin to accumulate. A process of return has started, a return not only to Ithaka and the hero's οἶκος, but also a 'transgeneric' return back to epic, Odysseus' heroic home. The hero appears before Nausicaa as a needy lion driven by the urge of his belly (κέλεται δέ ἐ γαστήρ, *Od.* 6, 133) in a simile that evokes and contrasts with the heroic and valiant lion that Sarpedon is compared to, the lion that is driven by the θυμός (κέλεται δέ ἐ θυμός ἀγήνωρ, *Il.* 12, 300).<sup>62</sup> The contrast sets up an 'unheroic' identity for Odysseus that is distinctly Iliadic as part of the meta-epic process of homecoming that the *Odyssey* achieves. The process really gets

<sup>58</sup> *Od.* 12, 189, 191 ἴδμεν ... πάνθ' ὅσ' ἐνὶ Τροίῃ εὐρείῃ; *Il.* 2, 485 πάρεστέ τε ἴστέ τε πάντα.

<sup>59</sup> *Od.* 12, 188 πλείονα εἰδώς; *Il.* 19, 219 πλείονα οἶδα. See PUCCI, *op.cit.* (n.9), 3; on the Achilles-Odysseus scene in *Iliad* 19, see below.

<sup>60</sup> SEGAL, *op.cit.* (n. 15), 102-103.

<sup>61</sup> Black night envelops the Iliadic hero at the time of his death (τὸν δὲ σκότος ὅσσε κάλυψε, *Il.* 4, 503, etc.).

<sup>62</sup> PUCCI, *op.cit.* (n. 13), 158-159.

underway when Odysseus, the fasting hero, starts talking about his γαστήρ and its needs, and so becomes not so much a feasting as a feeding hero. This happens first at the court of Alkinoos:

ἀλλ' ἐμὲ μὲν δορπῆσαι ἐάσατε κηδόμενον περ·  
οὐ γάρ τι στυγερῇ ἐπὶ γαστέρι κύντερον ἄλλο  
ἔπλετο, ἢ τ' ἐκέλευσεν ἔο μνήσασθαι ἀνάγκη  
καὶ μάλα τειρόμενον καὶ ἐνὶ φρεσὶ πένθος ἔχοντα,  
ὥς καὶ ἐγὼ πένθος μὲν ἔχω φρεσὶν, ἢ δὲ μάλ' αἰεὶ  
ἐσθιέμεναι κέλεται καὶ πινέμεν, ἐκ δέ με πάντων  
ληθάνει ὅσ' ἔπαθον, καὶ ἐνιπλησθῆναι ἀνώγει. (*Od.* 7, 215-221)

But now let me have my meal, afflicted though I am;  
there is nothing more shameless than the γαστήρ,  
which by force urges us to remember it,  
no matter how many troubles he has, how much pain is in his heart.  
Just so I too have pain in my heart, but she, the γαστήρ, always  
Urges me on to eat and drink and forget my troubles, and demands to be  
filled.

This remarkable passage has been much criticized for its less than heroic indulging in the belly. But its central feature is *memory* and its notional opposite forgetting. The γαστήρ, I suggest, signifies Odysseus' previous self as hero of the *Iliad*. We may even wonder whether there is not a more specific self-reflexive element here: remember *oneself* as part of regaining an identity that was lost.<sup>63</sup> After all, the affinity between Odysseus and the γαστήρ is so strong, and growing, that he finally actually turns into one, in a remarkable simile in which he is compared to a γαστήρ, a "paunch filled with fat and blood" that is writhing as it is cooked on the grill (*Od.* 20, 25-28).<sup>64</sup>

Odysseus utters a second ἔπος focusing on his γαστήρ after he has set foot on Ithaka:

<sup>63</sup> On memory (μνήσασθαι) in epic as an actual realization in the present of the thing remembered, see E.J. BAKKER, "Remembering the God's Arrival", in *Arethusa* 35 (2002), 67-73.

<sup>64</sup> Further γαστήρ-related details include the Iris-episode (*Od.* 18, 53-54 ἀλλὰ με γαστήρ / ὀτρύνει κακοεργός, see again PUCCI, *op.cit.* [n. 13], 161-164), which will earn the beggar a "paunch...full of blood and fat" (γαστέρα...ἐμπλείην κνίσης τε καὶ αἵματος, *Od.* 18, 118-119, cf. 20, 25-28).

γαστέρα δ' οὐ πως ἔστιν ἀποκρύψαι μεμαυῖαν,  
οὐλομένην, ἣ πολλὰ κᾶκ' ἀνθρώποισι δίδωσι  
(*Od.* 17, 286-287)

As for the γαστήρ, there is no way to hide it when it is excited,  
accursed thing, which gives humans so many woes.

These words not only evoke the Proem of the *Iliad* (μῆνιν . . . οὐλομένην, ἣ), substituting Achilles' μῆνις for Odysseus' γαστήρ; they also revive the Iliadic scene in which these two clash as mutually exclusive concepts: fasting versus feeding. When Achilles returns to the fighting, his μῆνις turning from wrath into unrelenting lust for revenge, Odysseus urges him to take food beforehand, opposing to Achilles' denial of the heroic code and disdain for the needs of the body a practically-minded emphasis on the belly which is similar in wording to Odysseus' words on Ithaka:<sup>65</sup>

γαστέρι δ' οὐ πως ἔστι νέκυν πενθῆσαι Ἀχαιούς  
(*Il.* 19, 225)

With <denying> the belly, there is no way for the Achaeans to mourn a corpse.

In emphasizing the belly and its needs, Odysseus not only evokes the epic world from which he departed and to which he is now returning; he also evokes his own role in it.<sup>66</sup>

But when the climax to the νόστος has arrived, a remarkable further development takes place. The hero's reaching the epi-

<sup>65</sup> On this whole scene with extensive discussion of the issues involved in Odysseus' and the *Odyssey's* preoccupation with the γαστήρ, as opposed to Achilles and the *Iliad*, see PUCCHI, *op.cit.* (n. 13), 157-187. See also J. SVENBRO, *La parole et le marbre. Aux origines de la poétique grecque* (Lund 1976), 50-59; O. LEVANDIOUK, "Aithôn, Aithon, and Odysseus", in *HSCPh* 100 (2000), 25-51 points out semantic links with the γαστήρ theme and Odysseus' pseudonym Aithon (*Od.* 19, 183). On the belly as a source of poetic inspiration, see J. KATZ and K. VOLK, "Mere Bellies? A New Look at *Theogony* 26-8", in *JHS* 120 (2000), 122-129.

<sup>66</sup> On Odysseus in the *Iliad*, see J.S. CLAY, "A Ram among the Sheep. Some Notes on Odysseus in the *Iliad*", in *Euphrosyne. Studies in Ancient Epic and its Legacy in Honor of Dimitris N. Maronitis*, ed. by J.N. KAZAZIS and A. RENGAKOS (Stuttgart 1999), 364-365; C.O. PACHE, "War Games. Odysseus at Troy", in *HSCPh* 100 (2000), 15-23.



center of the domestic world he is about to reconquer, his marriage and his control over his estate and its resources, is matched by a final move in his metapoetic return to the epic center from which he has departed: he begins to take on features of Achilles, that epic's central hero.

It starts again with ἔπος. When Odysseus has won the bow contest, killed Antinoos with his first arrow, and revealed himself as Odysseus, Eurymachos tries to make a deal: he pledges that everything that has been eaten in Odysseus' μέγαρον will be repaid, each Suitor bringing in a restitution worth twenty oxen, and on top of that bronze and gold. Here is the ἔπος that Odysseus makes in answer:<sup>67</sup>

Εὐρύμαχ', οὐδ' εἴ μοι πατρώϊα πάντ' ἀποδοῖτε,  
ὅσσα τε νῦν ὑμῶν ἐστὶ καὶ εἴ ποθεν ἄλλ' ἐπιθεῖτε,  
 οὐδέ κεν ὥς ἔτι χειρὰς ἐμὰς λήξαιμι φόνοιο  
 πρὶν πᾶσαν μνηστῆρας ὑπερβασίην ἀποτίσαι.  
 (Od. 22, 61-64)

Eurymakhos, not if you suitors gave me all your ancestral wealth in return, all that is now yours and even if you somehow added more wealth to it, not even so would I stop my hands from the slaughter, not until the suitors have paid for all their transgression.

The response is distinctly Achillean in its uncompromising refusal even to make a settlement that would have yielded him great profit. Indeed it performs Achilles' own words — ironically addressed to no one other than Odysseus himself — in his response to the highly lucrative terms on which Agamemnon offers to settle their dispute:

οὐδ' εἴ μοι δεκάκις τε καὶ εἰκοσάκις τόσα δοίη  
ὅσσα τέ οἱ νῦν ἔστι, καὶ εἴ ποθεν ἄλλα γένοιτο  
 (Il. 9, 379-380)

<sup>67</sup> See S. SCHEIN, "Homeric Textuality: Two Examples", in *Euphrosyne: Studies in Ancient Epic and its Legacy in Honor of Dimitris N. Maronitis*, ed. by J.N. KAZAZIS and A. RENGAKOS (Stuttgart 1999), 352-354. Schein points out that this response is uncharacteristic of Odysseus as a subject continuously in search of κέρδεα.

Not if he gave me tenfold, twentifold as much,  
all that is now his, and even if more wealth would somehow come to him.

The γαστήρ and its needy, gain-seeking impulses gives way to the implacable, destructive forces of heroic wrath. Odysseus has returned in more than one sense, and he is more at home in the heroic world than before his departure from it.

The change is apparent in the bloody events that follow. The μνηστηροφονία starts as a hunt, Odysseus killing his victims one by one, as befits an epic in which the hero's quest for marriage, the shaman's return, and the hunt are linked with strong thematic ties, not to mention the complementarity of the lyre and the bow and the unity of word and deed, song and action. The shooting at a distance also befits the father of 'far-fighter' Telemachos,<sup>68</sup> who performs his νόστος on the day sacred to Apollo the Far-Shooter whose role he adopts.<sup>69</sup> But the hunter will inevitably run out of arrows and his human game will be armed with the weapons Melanthios supplies them with: the far-fight will turn into a combat at close quarters, the clash of the πρόμαχοι, and the language of Iliadic battle narrative will take over. The context will be created for Odysseus to become Achilles in a network of textual relations that seals the hero's return, physically and metaphysically, poetically and metapoetically.

The basis is Achilles wreaking havoc in the river Xanthos, at the height of his murderous rage:

τύπτε δ' ἐπιστροφάδην· τῶν δὲ στόνος ὄρνυτ' ἀεικῆς  
ἄορι θεινομένων, ἐρυθαίνετο δ' αἵματι ὕδωρ  
(*Il.* 21, 20-21)

He struck them left and right; and their groan rose, terrible  
as they were smitten with the sword, and the water turned red with their  
blood.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Odysseus' self-presentation at *Il.* 4, 354 with the ironical play on Τηλέμαχος and πρόμαχος. See PUCCL, *op.cit.* (n. 9), 54-55.

<sup>69</sup> For the Holiday, see *Od.* 20, 155-156, 276-279; 21, 258-259.

These lines are taken up by the *Odyssey* in a way that at the same time evokes the νόστος of Agamemnon:<sup>70</sup>

τύπτον ἐπιστροφάδην· τῶν δὲ στόνος ὄρνυτ' ἀεικῆς  
κράτων τυπτομένων, δάπεδον δ' ἅπαν αἵματι θῦε  
(*Od.* 22, 308-309)

The lines also provide a shared context for a memorable entreaty made to the rampaging hero,<sup>71</sup> in which the metrical and prosodic equivalence of Achilles' and Odysseus' names (an important grammatical tool in the epic dialogue under study here) is exploited to the full:

γουνούμαι σ', Ὀδυσεῦ, σὺ δέ μ' αἶδεο καί μ' ἐλέησον (*Od.* 22, 312)  
γουνούμαι σ', Ἀχιλεῦ, σὺ δέ μ' αἶδεο καί μ' ἐλέησον (*Il.* 21,74)

I supplicate you, Odysseus/Achilles, and you show decency and have pity on me.

Achilles' suppliant is Lycaon, son of Priam; Odysseus' is Leodes. Both men are unarmed and both are killed in a similar way. Odysseus includes just as Achilles the harmless and the innocent in his murderous revenge.

The final step in the νόστος-turned-heroization is reached when Odysseus turns for the last time into a lion:

εὔρεν ἔπειτ' Ὀδυσῆα μετὰ κταμένοισι νέκυσιν,  
αἵματι καὶ λύθρῳ πεπαλαγμένον ὥς τε λέοντα,  
ὅς ῥά τε βεβρωκὼς βοὸς ἔρχεται ἀγρὰύλοιο·  
πᾶν δ' ἄρα οἱ στήθος τε παρήϊά τ' ἀμφοτέρωθεν  
αἵματόεντα πέλει, δεινὸς δ' εἰς ὧπα ἰδέσθαι·  
ὥς Ὀδυσεὺς πεπάλακτο πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὑπερθεῖν  
(*Od.* 22, 401-406)

Thereupon she found Odysseus among the dead corpses, spattered and defiled with blood and gore, as a lion who has feasted on a bull from the field and walks away from the slaughter.

All his breast and his cheeks on either side

<sup>70</sup> *Od.* 22, 308-309; see note 23 above. Cf. *Od.* 24, 184-185.

<sup>71</sup> Pucci, *op.cit.* (n. 13), 134-138.



are covered with blood; he is fearsome to look in the face:

Thus Odysseus was splattered and defiled, his legs and his arms above.

This lion is neither needy nor hungry. He returns from a killing spree, without his life being at stake and lust for blood has eclipsed all his need for food. Odysseus not only matches Achilles in his final revenge; he surpasses him in having Apollo on his side rather than as divine antagonist who will eventually be his doom. The poem is getting ready for the final σύγκρισις between the two heroes and their poems as mediated through Agamemnon's ghost.<sup>72</sup>

But the dialogue is not completed without the *Iliad*, in its turn, listening to the *Odyssey*; just as the dialogue between ἔπος and ἀοιδή, shamanic quest and tale of marriage and return, the two epics shape each other. The Achilles poem may be a model for the song of Odysseus' *nostos*, but it allows itself to be shaped in return. The Odysseus who opposes Achilles with the advice to eat before the fighting is no less an import from the *Odyssey* tradition than it is a reference for it.<sup>73</sup> And just as Odysseus takes on Achillean features at the end of the poem, the Iliadic Achilles takes on Odyssean features at the end of *his* poem. His νῦν δὲ μνησώμεθα χάρμης from the exchange with Odysseus (*Il.* 19, 148, an epic phrase echoed by Eurymachos at *Od.* 22, 73) turns into a νῦν δὲ μνησώμεθα δόρπου (*Il.* 24, 601) when he exhorts Priam to eat and puts an end to his own fasting.

The numerous Odyssean allusions to the *Iliad*, then, are not so much a matter of parody or intertextuality as an integral part of the poetics of the *Odyssey*. The hero's journey, modeled, as I argued, on the shaman-hero's adventure that blends supernatural travel with marriage and the hunt, combines two epic genres into one epic model of great complexity. The hero's νόστος involves a departure from, and a return into, his home, which is not only his home on Ithaka, but also the *Iliad*. Epic has sus-

<sup>72</sup> *Od.* 24, 36, 192.

<sup>73</sup> Note that the *Iliad* also presents Odysseus with his fundamental Odyssean epithet πολύτλας (8, 97, etc.)

pended its normal workings by allowing its hero to travel beyond the reach of *kleos* and heroic song; it does so, as I argued, by importing a shaman-oriented travel report that interacts vigorously with the matrix story. At both levels, fasting is required in a departure from normal heroic practice. At the epic-shamanic level, the hero has to forsake food in order to secure his return to the physical world of mortals; at the heroic level, he has to overcome the limitations of γαστήρ in order to compete with the *Iliad's* fasting, bloodthirsty protagonist.

The evolution of these two diverging and converging traditions has taken place in a continuous dialogue between epic and ἔπος as well as between Achilles' epic and Odysseus'. The orchestration of these multiple dialogues and the various levels of mutual shaping that they entail is in the hands of Homer, the Joiner, who fused ἔπος with epic, poet with hero, κλέος with food, and Odysseus with Achilles — an altogether heroic act whose *kleos* in the future constitutes the Western epic tradition.

## DISCUSSION

*P. Chuvin:* This lecture about “the symbolic value of food and its connections with τιμή and κλέος” was delightful indeed. I should like to comment on two points. My first remark bears on the simile between the bow and the lyre, the second on the use of so-called shamanistic concepts.

1) The simile between the bow and the lyre at the “δαίς of death” of the Suitors. It seems to me not that “the poet’s lyre is turned into a deadly weapon” but rather, conversely, that, as Odysseus the expert archer is compared to an expert singer, a deadly weapon (the bow) is compared to the singing lyre, then the song of the lyre to the song of the swallow. Thus the human song and music are taking on another significance. Here we might ask ourselves what a swallow means for a Greek. It foretells, on the one hand, the return of spring; on the other hand, the swallow is a bird without a tongue (in fact, it has a very short, triangular-shaped tongue), which does not sing but screams (this being explained by the gruesome tale of Procne and Philomele). So don’t you think that the sound of the bow, as well as the song of the poet, is at the same time quite merry and telling of death? That will be made quite explicit at 21, 411, as you said rightly.

2) The shamanistic features of Odysseus’ return. Is the shamanistic reference necessary? It would remind you of the fine article by Charles Segal (one of his best, in my opinion), “The Phaeacians and the Symbolism of Odysseus’ Return”, where Segal gives a coherent overview of Odysseus’ return without calling for such far references. What might be the shamanistic references of Odysseus’ travels? Proper to the shaman is the *Himmelfahrt* (to go there and back) from which he brings some practical information. Generally, the shaman travels at goose-



back. But Odysseus' trip is, at most, a *Jenseitsfahrt*; never does he climb to the sky. Even in his travels to the land of the Dead he does not really enter their realm, but stays at the extreme limit, on the edge of the sacrificial trench. If we were to look for external patterns for this travel, we should better turn to Mesopotamian epics. As for other typically shamanistic features, I think we are looking for them in vain (e.g., horse sacrifice, non-blood spilling killing of game or of a respected enemy, preservation and careful burying of the skeleton). Or by 'shamanistic', should we understand merely 'hunting culture'?

3) Two marginal observations: there are seals in the Mediterranean, and stags, even huge ones, in Mediterranean forests.

*E.J. Bakker:* Thank you for the observation about the bow and its singing. It adds to the significance of the simile. As for shamanism, I agree with you that for a literary interpretation of Odysseus' νόστος the parallels I've adduced are not in themselves necessary and may even seem farfetched. But my purpose was not only to interpret, but also to reflect on Homer as freed from the generic label 'epic' that we apply looking back to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* from the future. Such reflection may involve the 'prehistory' of the Homeric tradition, and in connection with that the introduction of concepts, such as shamanism, of which the singers themselves were probably not aware. As to shamanism itself as an ethnographic reality, I've said that the phenomenon is extremely fluid and diverse and certainly also prone to turn into whatever the researcher wants it to be. The features you mention cannot, I think, be generalized as criterial features of 'shamanism', to the effect that when we don't find them in a given epic the case for shamanism is thereby lost. I think shamanism as discursive act, as tale, speech act, or performance, is more important than any ethnographic reality we might want to bring to bear on the interpretation of the *Odyssey*. I talked about the specific culture described by Roberte Hamayon because it offers a combination of features (solo-performance, epic tale, marriage, hunting) that I think are relevant

for the *Odyssey*; it represents the only case that I know in which the often used notion of "shamanistic epic" or "the origin of epic in shamanism" is grounded in real, observable, discursive action: shamans' tales and bards' epic performances.

*M. Fusillo*: I'd have a question about the relationship between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. You seem to refuse the current interpretation in terms of parody, intertextuality, or post-epic awareness (so to say, the postmodern interpretation). On the other hand, you are not inclined to accept a mythological and folkloric reading of the second Homeric poem, although your shamanistic interpretation of the *Odyssey* could sometimes give the opposite impression. Could you say some more about your very stimulating concept of a dialogue?

*E.J. Bakker*: I do not at all want to exclude parody and intertextuality from the poetics of the *Odyssey* altogether. The kind of 'dialogue' I talk about depends on intertextuality in the sense of one discourse showing awareness of another. The idea on the interrelationship of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* that I proposed is based on the observation that the links between Odysseus and Achilles seem to cluster towards the end of the poem; the passages that seem to be amenable to intertextuality are therefore not randomly distributed over the poem and this suggested to me that that might also color/specify the parody and intertextuality involved. I do not intend to resist mythological or folkloric readings either. What I tried to do is provide a plausible scenario for the way in which an epic of a different type from the 'heroic' *Iliad* can have evolved out of two or more earlier discourse types. 'Dialogue' seems an appropriate metaphor for such an evolution, especially when there are no written texts and a solidifying textual tradition: not only the genres of discourse but also discourses themselves (when they are meant to be repeated and re-performed) are fluid and so susceptible to be changed in the conversation with their 'dialogue partner'.

A. Rengakos: Wann hat sich die 'Kreuzung' der beiden epischen Gattungen (historisch gesprochen) ereignet? War es der Verfasser unserer *Odyssee*, der zum ersten Mal diese Kreuzung vornahm? Wie verhält sich diese Theorie zur motivgeschichtlichen Forschung (Neoanalyse)?

E.J. Bakker: In this paper I am interested in phenomena that are to be distinguished from the kind of borrowing of motifs of a given epic by the poet of another epic, the phenomenon that the Neoanalyst is interested in. As far as the origin of the type of epic represented by the *Odyssey* is concerned, my argument pertains, as I said, to the 'prehistory' of the Greek epic tradition. Below the 'surface' of our poems we can make progress only through more or less speculative comparisons. When one goes back to a time before one can speak of a 'Homeric tradition' or even of 'precursors' of our extant *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, it is unlikely that such concepts of 'work' or 'poet' are meaningful or useful. So my argument is not 'neo-analytic' in the sense of a poet borrowing material from other poems dealing with the same saga. The argument is a bit similar to what I once proposed for the relation between Homer and *Gilgamesh*: not so much a deliberate borrowing from the final product of one tradition by a specific poet who is responsible for the finally recorded version of his own tradition, but a maybe centuries long process of co-existence, whereby two traditions, let's say an Odysseus tradition and a Gilgamesh tradition, talk to each other and shape each other. The case for 'shamanism' in connection with the Homeric *Odyssey* has not often been made, presumably because the main proponents of the idea of shamanism reaching the Greek world from the North (such as Meuli or Dodds) seem to assume that that happened too late (6<sup>th</sup> cent. BC) to affect Homer. I'm less concerned with such precise historical chronology and would allow, even at that relatively late moment, for enough 'fluidity' in the Homeric tradition to absorb new influences. The concern of food and meat eating is certainly not something exotic, remote in space and time. Let's not forget that we have



in Empedokles' poem a 'late' and powerful statement on soul-travel, reincarnation, and the problems involved in eating meat.

*G. Danek:* Die *Apologoi* des Odysseus unterscheiden sich, narratologisch gesehen, von der Erzählung des Menelaos in *Od.* 4: Menelaos erzählt seine Erlebnisse bis zu dem Punkt seiner Ankunft zu Hause; sein Bericht betrifft daher seinen νόστος. Odysseus hingegen hat den Teil seiner Abenteuer vom Schiffbruch bis zur Ankunft in Scheria schon in Buch 7 erzählt. Seine *Apologoi* in 9-12 enthalten also *nicht* seinen νόστος, sondern umfassen eine abgeschlossene Periode der Vergangenheit, genau so wie sonst im mythologischen Exemplum. So wie in den mythologischen Exempla greift Odysseus hier auch auf Stoffe zurück, die traditionell sein κλέος bilden und dem externen (nicht dem internen!) Publikum gut bekannt sind. Ich glaube daher, dass es nicht ganz richtig ist, wenn man sagt, dass Odysseus sein κλέος durch seine eigene Erzählung von seinem νόστος produziert.

*E.J. Bakker:* I think that over and above the function of "performing one's νόστος" that I mentioned, both Menelaos' and Odysseus' narrative serves a specific communicative purpose in its narrative context. Menelaos' telling about his own νόστος takes place strictly speaking not for its own sake but in service of providing information to Telemachus about Odysseus' νόστος; and Odysseus tells about his adventures as an extension of his self-presentation and self-identification to the Phaeacians. Of course the subject matter of the *Apologoi* is for the *Odyssey's* external audience (that is internal to the *Odyssey tradition*) a source of *kleos*, but I would resist equating Odysseus' story without further ado with such narratives as Nestor's report on his youthful exploits (not to speak of Phoenix's Meleager story, which of course is not even a first-person story). At the level of the *Odyssey's* plot, Odysseus' story is not yet traditional, and Odysseus himself is its only source, but I agree that the difference between individual/unconfirmed and traditional/confirmed

is gradual. In any case it seems to me that the narratological characterization in terms of 'flashback or analepsis' is insufficient in both cases.

*Chr. Tsagalis:* Is there a possibility that the *Odyssey* (even through false etymologizing) aims at suggesting a link between ἀτασθαλίαι (*Od.* 1.7; 22.416) and eating beyond one's share in the θάλη? The word ἀτασθαλίαι is also used at *Il.* 22.104 (νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ ὥλεσσα λαὸν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ἐμῇσιν) by Hector, in his long internal monologue, his address to his own θυμός. Hector refers to his "wrongdoings", to his excessive and arrogant attack against the Achaean camp. Excessiveness is, once more, the common denominator, but with no reference to food. Hector's ἀτασθαλίαι led to the death of numerous Trojan soldiers and—by extension—to the dire necessity of a final confrontation between Hector and Achilles, i.e., to Hector's own death. In the *Odyssey*, on the other hand, the ἀτασθαλίαι refer to the comrades and the Suitors, not to Odysseus. The *Odyssey* directs the ἀτασθαλίαι from the main hero to the comrades and the Suitors; for those who accept all the basic tenets of oral theory, this Iliadic-Odyssean interplay may also be working the other way. The *Iliad* is employing a 'marked' term (ἀτασθαλίαι) with an Odyssean coloring to draw the line between itself and a rival epic tradition. In this way, the *Iliad* highlights martial arrogance, whereas the *Odyssey* underscores the negative consequences of excessive food. But this antithesis can be pursued even further. While in the *Iliad* the penalty is self-referentially directed to the doer (Hector himself), in the *Odyssey* it refers to the comrades and the Suitors, not to Odysseus. In fact, the *Odyssey* capitalizes on erasing most notions of responsibility on the part of Odysseus.

*E. Bakker:* The etymology is most intriguing and continuing along the same lines, one could also think of ἄτη! I like the idea of Hector's ἀτασθαλίη being parallel to that of the Suitors, the more since Hector's monologue and subsequent death occurs,

just as the Suitors' demise, at the end of the epic. Still, there is an important difference, which has to do with the common characterization of the *Iliad*, as opposed to the *Odyssey*, as a tragic poem. No one in the *Odyssey*, neither the companions nor the Suitors, comes to recognize, verbally, their ἀτασθαλίη as does Hector in *Iliad* 22. It may be that the common use of ἀτασθαλίη is meant to highlight this difference; it may also be that the difference is there regardless of the common feature. As regards the responsibility of Odysseus, it can be, and has been, said that Odysseus learns his lesson as the story progresses, whereas the Companions don't. The Cyclops adventure is of course the most obvious example of Odysseus' mistakes and it is precisely in connection with this adventure that Odysseus is accused by Eurylochos on Circe's island, of ἀτασθαλίη (*Od.* 10.437, τούτου γὰρ καὶ κείνοι ἀτασθαλίησιν ὄλοντο).

*M. Fantuzzi:* Classical parodic poetry in hexameters has adopted food and the sympotic behaviour of parasites as its main topic. Archaic and classical elegy (which for the ancients was just another form of ἔπος) have sometimes theorized about what lawful and correct behaviour in the symposium consists of (Euenus), and Solon or Theognis often use the imagery connected to the symposium or the etiquette of apportionment of food (δαίς εἶση, for instance, as a metaphor of the well governed city). It is usually maintained that the parodic obsession with food depends on the trend of parodic poetry to reverse the sublimity of the Homeric heroes and ideals and opt for humble subjects though using the same meter and the same diction, and that the obsession of elegy with sympotic imagery and rules depends on the fact that the symposium is the usual place of performance of elegiac poetry. But in light of the 'dialogue' which, as appears from your talk, Odysseus entertains with Achilles' heroic-sublime ideology of the negation of the biological need for food, would it be possible to believe that in different ways both elegiac and parodic poetry were 'furthering'/developing a couple of combined topics—food and the



etiquette of apportionment and consumption of food—which they already found in the Homeric, ‘post-Iliadic’ ideology of Odysseus?

*E.J. Bakker:* I think you address a very important topic. I find it entirely conceivable that the ancient tradition of basing parody of Homer and epic on food would go back to something already present in epic. We can think of the interest in food in itself in the *Odyssey* that I have discussed as a basis for this; we can also think of a tradition of parody already in pre-Hellenistic or even archaic times existing side by side with the ‘high’ version of epic. In this connection we can think of the buffoon side (or version) of heroes such as Heracles or Odysseus, precisely the ‘shamanic’ kind of hero that does not fight other heroes but monsters and retrieves animals from caves etc.

*A. Sens:* It seems to me that there are several important considerations for thinking about the prominence of culinary themes in parody. First, the popularity of gastronomic (mis)-behavior as a topic of epic parody must be connected to the popularity of the theme in Middle Comedy. But, insofar as we can tell, it’s clear that Matro, at least, was attracted to certain passages of Homer, and the fact that he draws very heavily on the Polyphemos episode of *Od.* 9 must reflect the thematic suitability of the episode to his own poem. In this sense, it does seem that Matro was picking up a basic theme—the question of proper dining—that he found in Homer.

I think it would be interesting to follow up on the question of the role of fasting in the *Iliad* as well as the *Odyssey*. After all, as much as Odysseus’ abstinence from food, both in his *Apology* and in the Ithakan narrative, is essential to his νόστος and so his κλέος, so too is Achilles’ abstinence from food an important aspect of his withdrawal in the *Iliad*. Do you see this as part of a larger ‘epic’ narrative substructure, withdrawal and return of the hero?

*E.J. Bakker:* The notion of 'withdrawal and return' is of course an important pattern that is common to both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Again there is a common feature that at the same time reveals important contrasts that may or may not be meant to be in themselves a contrast with the common feature. Achilles' abstinence from food is different from Odysseus' in that it is not a necessary condition for his 'return'; it rather typifies the state *from which* he has to return. Achilles' notional νόστος is confirmed by his renewed acceptance of food. We could say therefore that there is a reversal in the causality (fasting in order to return in the case of Odysseus vs. fasting as a notional 'departure' in the case of Achilles). But in any case fasting is an important feature of both heroes' 'withdrawal'.

