

Demodokos' Song of Ares and Aphrodite
in Homer's *Odyssey* (8.266-366): an Epyllion? –
Agonistic Performativity and Cultural Metapoetics

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Introduction: epos and epyllion

It is well known that the epyllion is a modern construct, or at least the term,¹ which was probably coined by Karl David Ilgen (1763-1834) in 1796 when he tried to characterize the Homeric Hymn to Hermes.² Furthermore, for evolutionists like Gregory Nagy, we even have to question the universalized concept of 'the epic' as a fundamental and generic category.³ According to him, there is no such thing as 'the epic' or 'Homer,' but at any given moment in time we have a diachronically different picture of the genre and Homer. Therefore, we must speak of "ages of Homeric reception" as he is manifested in time and space, as Nagy put it in his *Sather Lectures*.⁴ Homer and his monumental epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, only gradually emerged in a long historical process, reaching from a dark Mycenaean past, over the period of transition of the ninth and eighth centuries to the sixth and fifth centuries BC, and even from then we have to reckon with a further development until the age of Aristarchos. It is attested that Hipparchos regulated the *agón* of the Panathenaia: in the competition, the two monumental poems of Panhellenic status now had to be performed at full length in alternation, with one rhapsode following the other in a kind of relay (ἐξ ὑπολήψεως ἐφεξῆς, (Plat. *Hipp.* 228b). In addition, this agonistic regulation had an impact on the evolution of the text. Now, the oral tradition could be transformed to a continuous and whole narration that was then, in the age of writing, transmitted as text in form of a script. Thus, our 'Homer' is a snapshot of a historical moment as well as a reprojected biographical construct, and the

¹ Cf. Allen (1940).

² Tilg in this volume, esp. pp. 1-9, *contra* Most (1982) who argued that 'epyllion' was coined by Friedrich August Wolf (1759-1824) between 1817 and 1824 in order to polemicize against Hellenistic short epic poems, originally targeted at Ps.-Hesiodic *Aspis*. For the prehistory and embeddedness of the concept in 18th century literary aesthetics, see Masciadri in this volume.

³ Cf. Nagy (1999); (2005), esp. 71, 77-78; (2008/09); (2009/10). Against universalistic generalities regarding the genre 'epic,' see Martin (2005b) (on the questionable differentiation between long and short epics, *ibid.* 10-11).

⁴ Cf. Nagy (2008/09) 2 (P§6); (2009/10) Intro.§1.

Homeric epic evolves toward a monumental text of pedagogical purpose for all of Hellas under specific historical circumstances.⁵ The long narration extends over twenty-four books and forms a continuous narration; by means of ongoing retardations, the elaborate plot is built on much shorter songs that are stitched together on the principle of variation and combination.⁶

With the fundamental cultural change in Hellenistic times, both the monumental size and the august, heroic content that functioned to create a Panhellenic cohesion met resistance. Therefore, the new Hellenistic *poeta doctus* started to compose epic miniatures full of artistry. However, he recurred to small and short epic forms that were the origin of monumental epic and that never stopped to circulate aside Homer.⁷ Only in the canonization of complex, Panhellenic plot structures were the smaller, mostly epichoric epic songs dropped in the transmission process and went lost. In addition, lofty forms were already parodied before Hellenistic times. Thus, the light style of narration characteristic of short epics that were subsumed under the term ‘epyllion’ in the nineteenth century always existed and was never abandoned. I assume, along with other critics, that ‘epyllion,’ a term formerly used by Aristophanes in order to attack Euripides’ poorly composed verses (Ar. *Ra.* 942), was transferred to the entire genre of epic as a diminutive term. It seems to be an analogous coinage to ‘eidyllion,’ which designates only the poor copy of a big form or image and brings together vignettes of diverse generic modes.⁸

Scholars still disagree on when the alleged genre of epyllion developed, on its characteristics in form and content, and on which texts have to be subsumed under this label. On these terms, it makes the most sense, as the editors of this volume suggest, to start an inquiry on possible intertextual and generic references between those texts that have been associated with the epyllion. Furthermore, if we depart from the Hellenistic perspective, it is perfectly legitimate to search for earlier models and pretexts that Hellenistic authors might

⁵ Cf. Nagy (1996a); (1996b); (2002); (2003); (2008/09); (2009/10); Bierl (2010).

⁶ Cf. Bierl (2010).

⁷ Similarly Petrovic in this volume, pp. 1-7, esp. 6.

⁸ See Wilamowitz (1924) vol. 1, 117 n. 2: “Weil εἰδύλλιον so lange mit dem modernen Idyll (oder der Idylle, wie man barbarisch sagte) verwechselt ward, haben sich die Philologen ein ἐπύλλιον erfunden, von dem im Altertum niemand etwas weiss; das Wort bedeutet auch niemals ein kleines Epos. Mit dem hätte auch ein Grieche nie etwas anfangen können, sintemal das was die Modernen Einzellied nennen zu allen Zeiten vorgeherrscht hatte.”

have used and built upon to establish their compositions in contrast and reaction to the traditional monumental and heroic epic.

The consensus on the construct of the genre ‘epyllion’ can be summarized as following: it is a shorter text in hexameters of about 100 to 1500 lines. Its main feature is the subversion of the lofty from a “back-door”-perspective.⁹ In most cases, small and obscure content of humorous character is represented in a tendency where irony and deconstruction of the myth prevail. Thus, the scenery is often located in bourgeois households, and sexual affairs play a major role. Then, marginal and peripheral views are central, and the heroic is still present as a foil. In addition, women play a special role in many so-called epyllia. Furthermore, these small epic texts often represent digressions, inserts, and ekphraseis. Finally, the pace of narration tends to progress rather rapidly toward the end, and dramatic aspects frequently overlap with the epic.¹⁰

Demodokos’ song as a Hellenistic epyllion?

The generic features of the epyllion somehow suit Demodokos’ second performance at the Phaeacian court, the song about Ares und Aphrodite (*Od.* 8.266-366). Therefore, it is not surprising that this song has often been read as a digression or *Einzellied* detached from the context of the *Odyssey*, and that it has been regarded, together with the two other songs of Demodokos in the same Book 8 and some Homeric Hymns (especially the Hymn to Hermes [3] and Aphrodite [5]), as a possible model or origin of the alleged genre of epyllion.¹¹ In this vein, it is also reasonable and legitimate how Manuel Baumbach deals with Demodokos’ song about Ares and Aphrodite. According to him, it is a ‘proto-epyllion’ to which the Hymn to Aphrodite refers with a strong textual marker. Thus, it could be seen as the origin of a textual family and a generic space of memory.¹² However, such an opinion is only possible from the later Hellenistic perspective. There we can easily imagine that an educated poet of an epyllion refers to canonical and programmatic texts as models in order to reach his poetical goals. However, we have to consider if such a view on this Homeric song is not anachronistic, and if

⁹ Cf. Merriam (2001) 1 (“The Back Door of Epic”), 3. On the subversion, see esp. Gutzwiller (1981) 5.

¹⁰ Cf. Allen (1940) 12-23; see the good survey by Merriam (2001) 1-24; Fantuzzi (1998a); Kost (2005) 294-295. See also Baumbach (pp. 9-10) and Bär (pp. 18-21) in this volume.

¹¹ Cf. Fantuzzi/Hunter (2004) 193; Vessey (1970) 40. See also Petrovic (esp. p. 21), Hunter (esp. pp. 9-29) and Luz (esp. p. 18) in this volume.

¹² See Baumbach in this volume.

we do not miss its primary sense when we read it under such premises. After all, the entire question boils down to the basic hermeneutical differentiation between a primary and secondary recipient.

First, we have to find explanations for why it was possible to associate this particular song with the epyllion, and determine which features could make it a potential precursor in retrospect. In a kind of circular reasoning, the generic characteristics of the epyllion can be found in this passage as well. Thus, the following qualities might confirm the assumption that it could be regarded as a sort of epyllion:

1) By distancing strategies, the song is set apart, and thus it seems to be a self-contained digression and a short, single song of only 100 lines. 2) The mythic story plays in a domestic and bourgeois setting, and is narrated from a subversive point of view and in a light and playful way. 3) The focus is on sex, adultery, and punishment. Therefore, the perspective seems to be opposed to a heroic program. 4) The episode is rather unknown and far-fetched, whereas the normal myth of the gods remains in the background. 5) The narration continuously refers back to itself and has traits of a *mise-en-abyme*;¹³ and it reflects the entire epic in a metapoetic way. 6) The speed of narration progresses rather quickly, here underlined by the repeated formula βῆ δ' ἴμεναι and other references to motion. 7) Just as in an epyllion, the narration is vivid and dramatized by direct speeches. 8) By internal focalization, by embedding and framing, the narrative seems to be sophisticated and modern; moreover, by apparently suspending the moral judgment for a long time through figures like Hermes and Apollo, the ambiguous effect is increased. 9) The setting of the anecdote takes place in the archaic past and in the beyond, and it conveys an aetiological and cosmic dimension. 10) Hephaistos acts like a self-conscious artist. By freezing and creating close-ups, the visual quality of the scene is enhanced and has almost the effect of an ekphrasis. 11) The ending of the story is circular and loops backwards to its beginning.

On the basis of these features, in particular its burlesque and disruptive ethics, Demodokos' song of Ares and Aphrodite in the eighth Book of the *Odyssey* seems, from a Hellenistic perspective, to be an interpolation, a later addition by a poet already imbued with a new spirit.¹⁴ Accordingly, the practice of Alexandrian philology that arose at the same time

¹³ On the *mise-en-abyme* in the songs of Demodokos, see Steiner (2003), esp. 26; Heubeck/West/Hainsworth (1988) 363.

¹⁴ References in Burkert (1960) 132 n. 2.

athetized the song (Schol. Ar. *Pax* 778). Modern analytic philology follows this view,¹⁵ or attributes this song to a later or to the last arranger.¹⁶ Other critics regard the moral that the emerging individuality reinforced in a serene manner as central.¹⁷ Wilamowitz assumes a hypothetically derived Homeric Hymn to Hephaistos, which deals with the binding of mother Hera and the return to Mount Olympus by Dionysus. This hymn would then serve as a model for this *autoschediasma* in the *Odyssey*.¹⁸ After all, it is no surprise that the song about Ares and Aphrodite was regarded as a digression until circa 1970.¹⁹

Reading the text from a later Hellenistic perspective is certainly legitimate. By doing so, we might elucidate certain narrative traits much better in retrospect. Furthermore, we can construct intertextual relations to other texts, particularly to epyllion-like texts that refer to this Homeric key passage. However, such a literary view is anachronistic and does not do justice to the Homeric text. Therefore, it is important to understand the allegedly epyllion-like song in its own historic context, and to comprehend its poetic function in the narrative web of the monumental Homeric epic.

Most of all, I will argue that the concept of epyllion is developed purely from the Hellenistic point of view and in reaction to the canonized Homeric epic in its monumental size. However, if we apply an evolutionary view we must acknowledge that Homeric epic has its origins in smaller epic song. Bedazzled by Homer, it seems as if the epyllion were just a response to Homer and as if no other shorter song traditions ever existed. Yet, I would like to point out that from the very beginning of the oral past and contemporaneously with the Homeric epic, which gradually evolved from shorter songs, and with the so-called Hellenistic epyllia, shorter epic forms have always coexisted side by side with the one monumental Homer. Thus, lower, more popular, and smaller epic songs flourished next to the high and elevated Panhellenic Homeric poems of twenty-four books. In other words, whereas Homeric epic is the *marked*, special case, which in a particular, historical situation and over a long process reaches monumental status, short epics and songs in hexameter represent the

¹⁵ References in Burkert (1960) 132 n. 3.

¹⁶ References in Burkert (1960) 132 n. 4. Schadewaldt (1958) 330 assigns the frame to B, but the song itself to A without clearly showing how the then independent song must have purely served the purpose of amusement.

¹⁷ Cf. Hölscher (1988) 271: “Was unter Göttern ein Götterspaß ist, ist unter Menschen blutiger Ernst.”

¹⁸ Wilamowitz (1895), esp. 223-225 (= [1937] 12-14).

¹⁹ Cf. Gaisser (1969) 32-34.

unmarked case; they are not derived from Homer, have always been performed, and serve as the usual ‘epic’ entertainment.

Historical prerequisites

Upon closer historical inspection it can be seen that the burlesque story is not proof of a new and younger spirit of the time, but rather is rooted in very old traditions. The grotesque and comic narration about gods can already be found in Hittite texts that, as is well known, had a strong influence on the Homeric tradition.²⁰ Furthermore, the distorting treatment of the divine realm had its occasionality, its *Sitz im Leben*, in archaic situations of festivity. At least notionally, this is a very old phenomenon, and it can be elucidated by the characterization of the *aoidós* and his performance. If we understand the song as a play on the norm by applying patterns of ethical progress and regard it thus as an *epyllion in nuce*, we run the risk of neither reading it in its original aesthetical context nor understanding it in the horizon of the expectations of its primary recipient of the seventh or sixth century BC.

As I have noted above, in the time of Hipparchos the Homeric tradition underwent regulations and was cleansed of strands that went against a uniform and monumental story. Moreover, Homer was equated with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which were performed in a relay pattern by alternating rhapsodes in their totality. This development had previously begun between the ninth and seventh centuries BC in Panionic performances on a large scale located on the coast of Asia Minor, which means that epic gradually evolved from small, locally based song performances at aristocratic courts to monumental forms. This Panhellenic tradition was then attributed to a *πρῶτος εὔρετής* ‘Homer,’ a name coined from *ὁμῶς* and *ἄραρίσκω* (“to fit together”), and joined to a very long and complex song that aims at instilling new Greek values.²¹ This performance practice replaced the former method in which, after a hymnic *prooímion*, one jumped from episode to episode in a large mythic tradition. Again and again one started anew, and the hymn, in a way, served as a connector which, after the evocation of a god and the appeal to *μεταβαίνειν*, gave way to an epic

²⁰ Cf. Burkert (1960) 133 with n. 5 and Burkert (1982).

²¹ Cf. Nagy (1996a); (1996b); (2002); (2003); (2008/09); (2009/10); Bierl (2010). Above all, I would like to preclude a potential misunderstanding: I am decidedly of the opinion that the song does not portray a later addition or interpolation after the Peisistratid regulations. Rather, the song already belonged to the Homeric text from a much earlier stage and, after the establishment of the regulation and monumentalization, reflects these developments in the use of still older precursors.

narration of a section of the entire tradition. In such a way, the epic cycle was obviously still staged. Yet this performance tradition was abandoned after the Panathenaic regulation that originated in Ionian circles and came via Chios to Athens. Accordingly, the other stories of the *Kyklos*, which narrates the events that chronologically lie before or after the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (*Kypria*, *Aithiopsis*, *Ilioupersis*, *Little Iliad*, *Nostoi*, *Telegonia*), were no longer attributed to Homer but to new authors like Arktinos of Miletus und Lesches of Lesbos. In the case of the *Homeric Hymns*, which during the time of Thucydides were attributed to Homer in an Athenocentric manner – as demonstrated by the fact that Thucydides regards the singing ‘I’ in the Hymn to Apollo (3) as Homer (3.104.2-6) – this separation from Homer occurred even later. Before that, the Hesiodic and Orphic traditions had already been detached from the Homeric.²²

In the following discussion, I suggest that Demodokos’ song about Ares and Aphrodite has to be understood as a necessary and old part in the large web of a gradually evolving *Odyssey* which developed from a shorter song belonging to the subgenre of a return poem (*nóstos*) – Uvo Hölscher calls such a hypothetical *Urform* ‘the simple story.’²³ Therefore, it is not a digression, but it has a poetic function that Richard Hunter, who focuses on the modes of an integrated narration where a version of a story can be compressed and extended according to the intention of the author, tries to circumscribe with a hymnic song on Aphrodite as well.²⁴

The song of Demodokos as ideal pre-stage and *hymnos* as web: metapoetic reflections

In the last two decades it became evident that the *Iliad* and, even more so, the *Odyssey* tend to self-referentially reflect on their own poetic tradition.²⁵ I contend that our song integrates earlier stages of the Homeric epic after its regulation and that it helps shape the plot in a metanarrative way. In the same way as Penelope’s famous *mechánema* of weaving

²² Cf. Nagy (1996b); (2002); (2003); esp. (2008/09), esp. Ch. 2; on Demodokos *ibid.* 313-353 (2§§274-350) and (2009/10) 1§§188-241.

²³ Cf. Hölscher (1988), esp. 25-34, 162-169.

²⁴ Cf. Hunter in this volume.

²⁵ Cf. Segal (1994) 85-183; de Jong (2001) 6, 191-192; Dougherty (2001); Bierl (2004) 105, 110-111; Clayton (2004); de Jong (2006); Bierl (2010).

symbolizes the process of textualization,²⁶ so the artful web of invisible chains produced and installed by the master blacksmiths contains metapoetic implications.²⁷

At this essential stage of the plot, we are at the last location of the wanderings, from where Odysseus returns after a chain of death experiences with a magical ship back home into the real world, and one pauses for a moment in order to mark the crisis of this transition. During his adventures the hero has been reduced to a nobody. In Scheria he is offered the chance to regain his former identity;²⁸ the island of the Phaeacians is described as a utopian nowhere-land of a distant past where *eutopía* threatens to change into a *dystopía*. Therefore, the new hosts are portrayed in a quite ambivalent way. At the same time, the negative traits of the Phaeacians are carefully covered by a noble, epic atmosphere. However, in the original form of the simple fairy-tale-like story, their ambivalence will have been strongly felt. After all, Scheria, as a land of Hades, is a partially inverted otherworld that simultaneously refers to Greek aristocratic views. It offers the ideal occasion to integrate the primordial and the subversive. As I noted, the divine burlesque is very old and can be found also in Near Eastern cultures that had such a strong influence on Homer.²⁹ Furthermore, it has been seen for a long time that the three songs of Demodokos represent pre-stages of the monumental epic performed in the regulated, recitative form.³⁰ The Phaeacian singer represents the *aidós* of oral poetry who composes and performs short songs accompanied by a mute chorus of dancers. He embodies the singer as a lyric *kitharodós* whose model is Apollo himself.³¹ In his compositions during performance, Demodokos sings about condensed narrative contents in notionally ‘lyric’ strophes like Stesichoros. Demodokos thus embeds the lyric prehistory of the hexameter into the *Odyssey*. This verse can be derived from the pherecratean with internal

²⁶ Cf. Clayton (2004); Bierl (2004) 111; (2010) 6 n. 22.

²⁷ Briefly suggested by Clayton (2004) 52.

²⁸ Cf. Mattes (1958).

²⁹ Cf. Burkert (1992) 88-100.

³⁰ Cf. Gentili in Gentili/Giannini (1977) 7-37 and Gentili (⁴2006) 31-34. On the singers in Homeric epic in general, cf. references in de Jong (2001) 191 n. 2. On the idealization of the portrayal, e.g. Segal (1994) 116. Lyre players have already been attested for Thebes in Linear B, Th Av 106, 7: *ru-ra-ta-e* “both lyre players” (dual); cf. Aravantinos (1999) 61, 63 n. 97. I reject the thesis that Demodokos is a “Hofsänger” (‘court singer’) who reflects the poet of the *Odyssey* (as Latacz [⁴2003] 40-46, esp. 40; similarly Schuol [2006], esp. 141). *Contra* now also Krummen (2008), esp. 12, 34, on Demodokos, *ibid.* 18-23.

³¹ Cf. Calame (1977) vol. 1, 104 n. 126 (= [1997] 50 n. 126) with bibliography; on Apollo as *choregós* and *kitharodós*, Bierl (2001) 171-173 (Engl. [2009a] 146-148).

expansion of three dactyls (with the Aeolic basis normalized to a spondee or dactyl)³² – that is, a glyconeian rhythm, and it might also have originated from a hypothetical *Urvers* of the περίοδος δωδεκάσημος.³³ The ‘lyric’ dimension is underlined by the mute chorus which accompanies the monodic singer. At the same time, Demodokos functions as its virtual *choregós*. It is my contention that the chorus and its movements are self-referentially deployed to highlight pivotal developments of the plot and metapoetic messages.³⁴

Gregory Nagy has recently shown that the three songs of Demodokos are an ongoing *hymnos* on a festive occasion, a δαίς (*Od.* 8.76) with sacrifices.³⁵ According to Nagy, *hymnos* is etymologically associated with ὑφαίνω (“to weave”).³⁶ A singer of hymns thus works on the big web of ‘texts.’ Therefore, a hymn does not mean only ‘cult song in praise of gods’ eventually followed by a narrative portion, but also song in its totality. In addition, it is important that such hymns do not disappear but are still composed parallel to epic in its highly developed and stylized form after the Panathenaic regulation.³⁷ In a *prooímion*, a god who inspires the singer is addressed.

In such hymns, one pays attention to the “thread” (οἴμη *Od.* 8.74) and then, with the help of the transitional form of μεταβáινειν, one comes to tell a story. Nagy contends that the first and the third song of Demodokos represent a pre-stage of the regulated hexameter. In these songs, the story of Troy is told from the very beginning, the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles (song 1), to its end, the capture of the city (song 3). This is done not in a continuous form but in single sections, each with a new beginning (cf. ἀψ ἄρχοιτο *Od.* 8.90), by jumping from one portion to the next. This manner of narration corresponds to that of the

³² Cf. Nagy (1974) 49-102; and the expansion in Nagy (1990) 459-464.

³³ Cf. Gentili in Gentili/Giannini (1977) 29-37. On other theories and critical voices, see Maslov (2009) 7 with n. 11 and 13.

³⁴ From the perspective of a historical semantics and poetics, Maslov (2009) links *aidós* primarily with “member of the chorus” or “professional (solo) performer” (1), or “(choral) performer” (21). Demodokos’ solo-performance as *phórmnix*-player with the accompaniment of a mute chorus is, as pointed out, a return to pre-epic practices of *hymnos* and encompasses both primary meanings of *aidós*. In other words, Demodokos’ emphasis on chorality in his words mirrors the actual performance in its framing.

³⁵ Nagy (2009/10) 1 §§188-223.

³⁶ Nagy (2008/09) 229 with n. 81 (2§91 with n. 81) and Ch. 4, esp. 546-572 (4§§181-246); see also Nagy (2009/10) 2 §§385-456; (1996a) 64-65. On the connection between pattern-weaving and poetry, cf. Bierl (2001) 230 with n. 345, with dance *ibid.* 158 n. 137; 236 n. 362 (Engl. [2009a] 201 with n. 345, 133 n. 137, 207 n. 362).

³⁷ See Petrovic in this volume. For the song of Ares and Aphrodite as hymn, see also Hunter in this volume.

Kyklos. Song 2, on the contrary, is embedded as a further recessed pre-stage. Here we have a hymn as pure *prooimion* without the *pars epica* after the transitional formula, as represented in the later Homeric Hymns.³⁸ In the epic perspective, however, the three hymns are not integrated in direct speech but are indirectly related by the narrator with an inset and dramatized speech of figures.³⁹ The very old, burlesque story of the gods is thus set in different frames and *en abyme*.

The subversive perspective, whose importance has been emphasized for the epyllion,⁴⁰ and the precursory function of Demodokos' second song can be explained through the inversion of the world and the return to primordial times in the *Odyssey*.⁴¹ The Phaeacian festivity is the ideal context of a divine burlesque, which is even put in a frame to underline its more remote level. The song's position which marks this distance marks its self-referential significance for the entire poem. At the same time, it becomes clear why Demodokos' performance about Ares and Aphrodite, in retrospect, can be understood as a model for an epyllion, which tends to deal with metapoetic themes. Thus, placed into the center, the strange burlesque represents something of higher importance. However, it does not imply that we have to interpret the song allegorically, as did the early scholarship, in order to remove the scandalous contents.⁴²

³⁸ On this subject, see Nagy (2008/09) 313-342 (2§§274-331); (2009/10) 1§§210-241.

³⁹ With this arrangement, the Homeric narrator imperceptibly merges with Demodokos and his report, in turn, merges with his figures. The hymnic structure becomes clear through key words: in the first song, the invocation of the Muses is performed in narration; in the second, the *invocatio* is missing, that means the *hymnos* is acephalic; however, the hymnic structure is conveyed in narration through the word ἀνεβάλλετο (8.266) (on *anabolé* as a parallel concept to *prooimion* cf. Nagy [1990] 354) as well as through the word ἀμφί with genitive (8.267); cf. Nagy (2009/10) 1§208. In the third song, the encouragement to μεταβαίνειν (8.492) is acted out in dialogue; the singer begins from Zeus, a periphrasis of the call for inspiration. Although the three songs are recounted indirectly, each time a formula "This sang the singer!" stands at the end, which elsewhere is shown in direct speech. The missing invocation of the Muses, in which Hunter (in this volume) places so much value, is conditioned *inter alia* through the form of a report.

⁴⁰ Cf. Gutzwiller (1981) 5.

⁴¹ On the role of the women in the "counter-heroic society" of Phaeacia, who are also relevant in the epyllion, see Merriam (2001) 12-13.

⁴² On the moralistic critique, see Xenophanes fr. 11 and Platon *Rep.* 390c6-7. On ancient ways to save the text, see Heubeck/West/Hainsworth (1988) 363. Heraclitus *Quaest. Hom.* 39; 69 = Schol. ad *Od.* 8.346 and Athen. 12.511b-c interpreted the passage in an allegorical way.

For understanding the poem, I suggest that the themes of *agón* and performance, in particular chorality, are fundamental. They clearly refer back to an old song culture, and do not reflect modern Hellenistic times or poetics.

The context: an ongoing *agón* between Demodokos and Odysseus or the self-referential embedding of athletics, footrace, and dancing

As Nagy argues, the second song of Demodokos is part of an ongoing *agón* between Odysseus and his potentially dangerous hosts.⁴³ Within the surrounding competition of a *hymnos*, aside from choral dance and song, athletic disciplines can be staged, too. In the Delian Hymn to Apollo for example, boxing is mentioned (*Hymn. Hom.* 3.149). This fact is also reflected in the eighth Book of the *Odyssey*.⁴⁴ The *agón* between the Phaeacians and Odysseus extends *de facto* from 8.46 until 13.23. Since Odysseus reacts in the first song (8.73-82), where he is confronted with himself and his own κλέος ἄφθιτον,⁴⁵ with tears instead of happiness and pleasure, Alkinoos tries to guide the *agón* to the realm of athletics, of boxing, wrestling, jumping and racing (*Od.* 8.100-103). At first, Odysseus does not want to compete. Only a severe insult from Euryalos makes him change his mind, and he wins in throwing the discus. Then, he challenges the young enemy to compete with him also with the fists, hands and feet (*Od.* 8.205-214). Deeply offended, he even vows to compete with him in archery. The *agón* is in danger of breaking out in pure violence and revenge.⁴⁶ Thus Odysseus announces that he will shrink back only from a foot-race because his wandering has enfeebled him too much (*Od.* 8.230-233) – his limbs are too weak and dissolved (τῶ μοι φίλα γυῖα λέλυνται *Od.* 8.233).

At this point, Alkinoos tries to relieve the tension and to settle the argument. Before he praised the Phaeacians' fame in wrestling. Now he changes directions and draws back from this field, where they had to suffer a defeat from Odysseus. Therefore he says they would not seek fame in wrestling but in racing – the contest his son Klytoneos just won (8.121-123) – and especially in all cultural refinements and comforts that might impress Odysseus (*Od.* 8.246-253):

⁴³ On the *agón* between Demodokos and Odysseus, see Nagy (2009/10) 1§§232-241; on the dangerous Phaeacians, see Rose (1969b). Cf. also Schmidt (1998) 202.

⁴⁴ Krummen (2008) 20 also references the competitive program of the Pythian Games in Delphi.

⁴⁵ Cf. Steiner (2003) 25-26.

⁴⁶ Only Schmidt (1998) 200-201 views this crisis as similarly dramatic.

οὐ γὰρ πυγμαῖοι εἰμὲν ἀμόμονες οὐδὲ παλαισταί,
ἀλλὰ ποσὶ κραιπνῶς θέομεν καὶ νηυσὶν ἄριστοι,
αἰεὶ δ' ἡμῖν δαίς τε φίλη κίθαρὶς τε χοροὶ τε
εἵματά τ' ἐξημοιβὰ λοετρά τε θερμὰ καὶ εὐναί.
ἀλλ' ἄγε, Φαιήκων βητάρμονες ὅσσοι ἄριστοι,
παίσατε, ὡς χ' ὁ ξεῖνος ἐνίσπη οἴσι φίλοισιν,
οἴκαδε νοστήσας, ὅσσον περιγινόμεθ' ἄλλων
ναυτιλίῃ καὶ ποσὶ καὶ ὀρχηστῷ καὶ ἀοιδῇ.

For we are not faultless boxers or wrestlers, but in the foot race we run swiftly, and we are the best seamen; and ever to us is the banquet dear, and the lyre, and the dance, and changes of raiment, and warm baths, and the couch. But come now, all ye that are the best dancers of the Phaeacians, make sport, that the stranger may tell his friends on reaching home how far we surpass others in seamanship and in fleetness of foot, and in the dance and in song. (translation: Murray [1919])

Besides the ship that Odysseus needs for his passage to Ithaca, now arts, performance and running are highlighted as the domain of Phaeacians, and *choreía* is the key to understanding the second song of Demodokos that follows. Racing and χοροὶ are often connected in an agonistic context. Swiftmess of the feet, a quality Odysseus obviously lacks, is also fundamental for the χορός. While the *phórmnix* of the singer is fetched from the palace, the arena, bearing the same name as the dance itself (ἀγών, χορός cf. *Od.* 8.259-260), is smoothed by *aisymnetáí* (258), that is, a sort of judge whose designation normally is used for judicial professionals of a court settlement.⁴⁷ Not only does the scene bridge time,⁴⁸ but the performance context is also brought into focus in this way by key words. The dancers are

⁴⁷ As adjudicator and διαλλακτής, Solon, for example, is also an *aisymnetés* (from αἴσα and μιμησκω); later in the work of Aristotle, *aisymnetés* is the designation for a magistrate who, as an elected tyrant, must try to create balance. Elsewhere such “Wieder-ins-Lot-Bringer” (‘rectifiers’) are also called καταρτιστῆρες or εὐθυντῆρες (cf. Meier [1980] 102 n. 26 and index s.v. “Wieder-ins-Lot-Bringer”). Smoothing out the dance floor (8.260) is the concrete counterpart to settling the dispute.

⁴⁸ Cf. Mattes (1958) 97: “[E]s entsteht dadurch eine Zwangspause, die mit dem Glätten des Tanzplatzes notdürftig ausgefüllt wird – von den Phäaken, nicht vom Dichter [...]”

young men, who form a chorus as *πρωθῆβαι* (263) or *ephebes*, and experience education in *choreía*.⁴⁹ Odysseus, on the other hand, is older and reduced to the role of spectator who admires the radiance of the youths' fast feet (265). Demodokos' second song is again embedded in a performative framework (256-265; 367-384) in which the activity of *choreía* is stressed. At the end, Odysseus pays respect to his host for the performative accomplishment: Alkinoos boasted of it, and this boast was not in vain. Odysseus is deeply impressed (382-384). The presentation of a *hymnos* attains the necessary *τέρψις* and *χάρις* that express reciprocity between singer and public.⁵⁰ By showing an adequate aesthetic reaction, Odysseus is received as a guest, and he obtains the warm baths and the delicate garments that the Phaeacians enjoy so much. Through this friendly reception he regains his sex appeal, a fact that Nausikaa will later reconfirm (457-462). After the third song (499-520), Odysseus reacts with open lamentation; now he has completely regained his identity and is opening himself up.

In the lines that follow, Odysseus competes with the Phaeacians in their realm of singing. His *Apologoi* in Books 9 to 12 represent an aesthetic performance which corresponds to the monumental Homeric tradition that developed in the ninth/eighth centuries BC, and came to its final stage in Athens with the reforms of Hipparchos.⁵¹ After the performance of the third song, he is ready to reveal his identity: "I am Odysseus, son of Laertes!" (9.19). Then he presents his story of adventures "like a singer" (*ὡς ὅτ' ἀοιδός*, 11.368). He acts comparably to a singer only because his performance takes place in the recitation of the formalized hexameter.

The second song of Demodokos as metapoetic reflection of an *agón* between an older and newer form of epic – fettering, *choreía* and mobility

Finally, we come to the second song of Demodokos. Here I suggest that Demodokos refers back to the quarrel with Euryalos and to the ill will which developed out of *ὑβρις* and *ἀτιμία* immediately before our song. And it metapoetically refers to and anticipates the ongoing *agón* between the singer Demodokos and Odysseus. Projected onto the mythic burlesque of the gods, it deals with two opposing concepts of narrative poetry. The old form is represented by

⁴⁹ On this subject, see Bierl (2001), esp. 12, 34 and index (Engl. [2009a] 2, 22 and index).

⁵⁰ Cf. Bierl (2001) 140-150 (Engl. [2009a] 116-125).

⁵¹ Cf. Nagy (2009/10) 1§§232-241.

the Phaeacians in general, who symbolize love and romances (εὐνοί), luxury, festivity, music, mobility, χοροί, and swiftness of movement of the feet (8.246-249); these features are personified by Ares and Aphrodite. The newer one is the actual Homeric tradition after the regulation of the Panathenaia, embodied by the old and rather slow Odysseus, in the story itself, by the lame and ugly Hephaistos.

Furthermore, our song reflects the conflict between two cultural worlds, an older and unregulated one, in terms of anthropology and poetology, and a later, regulated one. In the song, one key motif is enchaining (δεῖν). The fluid form of hymn, which is normally associated with ῥεῖν, ῥόος, and ῥέα and which by functioning as a ‘connector’ establishes the easily flowing link between diverse themes and scenes, is tied up by the more rigid form of a monumental performance in the style of recitation which corresponds to the mode of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as well as of the *Apologoi* of Odysseus.⁵² This long, embedded narration in the first person generates an inner epic reflecting the outer frame in the third person.

In addition, the poetological discourse in Demodokos’ second song is overlaid with anthropological, cultural and judicial layers. Moreover, the concept of fettered gods is blended into the story.⁵³ Ares as well as Aphrodite suffer such a binding in the cultic and mythic context.⁵⁴ Both usually form a couple, whereas the marriage between Aphrodite and Hephaistos is only rarely documented. From the union of Aphrodite with Ares, Harmonia is born, the personification of balance and reconciliation, which should be achieved here also. The fettering of gods and their statues and their release express the alternation between normality and exception. The dangerous gods are enchained in order to ‘bind’ or to avert them, while during festivals of exception they are released.⁵⁵ The *utopia* of Hades very often

⁵² For the fluid form, see Nagy (2008/09) 191 (2§13). On the *hymnos* as “connector,” see Nagy (2008/09) 312 (2§270).

⁵³ Cf. Meuli (1975); also Merkelbach (1971).

⁵⁴ Cf. Burkert (1960) 134 n. 9; on Aphrodite, see Burkert (1985) 152-156, on Ares, 169-170. In *Il.* 5.385-391, it is recounted how Ares is bound in a bronze jar by Ephialtes and Otos, until he is finally freed by Hermes after thirteen months. Incidentally, Hermes himself occasionally adopts the function of binding dangerous gods. In the free, mythic portrayal, he could thus play as meaningful a role here. I also thank A. Petrovic for sending the text of his lecture “Images in Chains: the Case of Ares” (2007).

⁵⁵ On Kronos and Saturnus in myth and cult of the Kronia/Saturnalia in the context of festivals of exception, cf. Versnel (1993) 89-227, esp. 105, 114, 131, 142, 153-154.

represents the period before civilization in a subversive manner. Accordingly, the idea of an uninhibited love is at least entertained in such a scenario (cf. εὐνοαί *Od.* 8.249).⁵⁶

Freedom is symbolized by the lightness of the feet in the dance of the youths. When the clandestine intercourse with the god of war is announced to Hephaistos, the lame cripple, in due course he invents a ruse; he fabricates invisible chains, which are attached to the bed as a trap. Odysseus also unnoticeably transforms epic poetry into its new and fixed shape later on. Sexual instinct makes the lovers go into the trap after the god of forgery has feigned his absence. Now Hephaistos particularly wants to achieve public testimony, and the emerging judicial practice of μοιχεία is interwoven into this discourse.⁵⁷ The clandestine couple is caught *in flagranti* and will be bound naked. In this web of artificial threads, they are exposed in a kind of fixed tableau. Their free mobility is ‘frozen’ into a close-up, and they cannot move or raise their limbs, a symbol which also refers to *choreía* and sexuality (298). The cuckold is angry (304), a trait that very well describes Odysseus, the ‘angry man’ *par excellence*.⁵⁸ With Hephaistos’ cry for help, he announces that the chains put an end to adultery, and he calls for recompense demanding the dowry back (318-319). Through this action divorce would definitely follow, another judicial procedure. Furthermore, fettering implies force which triggers further counter violence. In the regulation of μοιχεία, the cuckold can kill his rival who has been caught *in flagranti* on the spot.

For Hephaistos, the circumstances are ἀγέλαστα, since he has nothing to laugh about (307). All of the manuscripts and Aristarchus have γελαστά, while only one old variant has ἀγέλαστα. In oral performance and in *scriptio continua*, no difference can be seen between ἔργ’ ἀγέλαστα und ἔργα γελαστά (ΕΡΓΑΓΕΛΑΣΤΑ), another way to convey the ambivalence.⁵⁹ What is bitter for him offers an occasion for laughter to the public, as will be seen later in the analysis. It is a playful laughter, which sometimes targets consequences and can be used to reprehend and to punish.⁶⁰ At the same time, Hephaistos runs the risk of being laughed at himself. The θεοὶ ῥεῖα ζῶοντες (*Od.* 4.805 *inter alia*), who have come to serve as

⁵⁶ In the aristocratic, epic version, which elevates everything onto the level of the sublime, this trait is largely retracted into romanticism and adoration. Sexual propriety is prevalent in the Phaeacian world, too, which Nausikaa especially embodies. The inversion of this theme is exhibited in the form of adultery.

⁵⁷ Cf. Alden (1997).

⁵⁸ Cf. Bierl (2004), esp. 106-107, 110 with n. 25-26, 115, 120-121.

⁵⁹ Cf. de Jong (2001) 208.

⁶⁰ Cf. Halliwell (1991), esp. 282, 286-287.

the general public, burst into the famous Homeric laughter (*Od.* 8.326) – a feature of the primordial and easy-going world when even laughter has not yet been regulated. Moreover, they formulate a kind of bourgeois morality whence the song has evolved according to Uvo Hölscher:⁶¹ “Evil deeds do not lead to any good!” and “The slow gets hold of the fast!” (329). In these gnomic sentences, we again recognize the key themes that could be read as proof of a new and anti-aristocratic attitude.⁶² The swift man is disabled, the slow one catches up with the fast and defeats him in an *agón*, and the *choreía*, which constitutes the fluid form of hymn, has to yield to a regulated poetics.

The specifically burlesque scene, the frivolous dialogue between Apollo and Hermes (334-342), is set in a new frame. Hermes, as the phallic trickster god who disrupts and transcends all boundaries, but who as *epitérmios* also watches over boundaries, and as *kátochos* can bind evil-doers by keeping them beneath the earth via magical spells, fits well here.⁶³ When he is asked whether he would not love to lie, even in chains, with golden Aphrodite in bed (335-337), his answer is more than affirmative: even if three times as many or innumerable chains were to hold him, and all of the gods and goddesses were to watch them who now stay away out of shame, he would love to do so (338-342). The result is roaring laughter (343). This means laughter with the exceptional god, a “playful laughter,”⁶⁴ which does not do any harm. Only Poseidon, Odysseus’ enemy, tries to achieve Ares’ release by promising a sum in compensation (344-348). Hephaistos, however, responds that such bails are futile. He wonders how to “bind” him (the terminus is transferred to the judicial formula), as soon as Ares escaped the fetters (350-353). Poseidon answers that he would guarantee with his person (355-356). In this story we can see how an archaic, judicial system is replaced by a more developed, modern one. Bails can also ‘bind’ or oblige others. As an old father god, Poseidon vouches for a settlement, together with Zeus who stands above all. In this way, the anger too will be bound, that is, a settlement will be achieved by payments.

Then the couple is released (8.359-360) – the danger for both is over. Ares and Aphrodite, the embodiment of Phaeacian life-style, are set free again, the chains are removed from their feet, and the couple goes off in different directions; while Ares goes to Thrace

⁶¹ Cf. Hölscher (1988) 271; cf. also Muth (1992) 19.

⁶² Cf. also Schmidt (1998), who reads the song as “Ausdruck [einer] ‘Theologie im Umbruch’” (217).

⁶³ Schmidt (1998) 210-211 does not view this scene with the second laughter as distinct from the first laughter – here, too, he assumes aggressive mockery of Ares.

⁶⁴ Cf. Halliwell (1991) 282.

(361), Aphrodite departs to her temple on Paphos. In a long and typical scene, we see how she is bathed, annointed, dressed and prepared for new adventures of love (362-366).⁶⁵

Demodokos seems to believe that he might still stick to the archaic order with such a solution as put forward by Poseidon.⁶⁶ And in the concrete situation, the story mirrors Alkinoos' endeavors to reach a settlement.⁶⁷ Odysseus will then defeat Demodokos in his regulated long song. By his recitative mode he fascinates the Phaeacians. The burlesque story seems to refer back to an old fairy-tale, in which the wife of a blacksmith cheats on her partner with a sexton. The cuckold glues them together while saying a magical spell. Then he chases them through the streets.⁶⁸ Moreover, δέϊν is a *terminus technicus* of magic and spells to harm other people. Instead of "fixing them down to the Underworld," as it happens on curse tablets, Hephaistos and the blacksmith of the fairy-tale bind them in concrete terms and deactivate them by doing so. In addition, blacksmiths are often associated with gnomes, dactyls, and *telchīnes* who are called *gōetes* and *mágoi* in numerous instances.⁶⁹ Hephaistos as

⁶⁵ These are the values of the easy-living Phaeacians (8.249). The warm baths and clothes are then granted to Odysseus immediately after the reconciliation (8.438-456). The reference (8.363-366) to the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite (58-63) should be evaluated less as marked intertextuality (as Baumbach does in this volume), rather as a typical and ever recurring scene in the formulaic language of Homer, with which the oral singer describes Aphrodite's homecoming and new, erotic preparations. On the cluster of references, cf. also Böhme (1970) 440 n. 2 (in relation to *Iliad* 14).

⁶⁶ As in a hymn, the song subtly follows a cyclical logic. Ares and Aphrodite feel no shame whatsoever, nor are they condemned. Both continue acting in accordance with their characters. Some elements suggest that Aphrodite in her radiance is hymnically glorified in the titillating scene. **See also Hunter in this volume, esp. pp. 9-20.**

⁶⁷ Cf. also Schmidt (1998) 211-212.

⁶⁸ Cf. Petersmann (1980) 52.

⁶⁹ In a fragment from the anonymous *Phoronis* (7th/6th cent. BC, fr. 2 Bernabé), the Idaean Dactyls, the inventors of iron and Hephaistos' art of metalworking, are identified as γόητες (translation: Bierl): ἔνθα γόητες / Ἰδαῖοι Φρύγες ἄνδρες ὀρέστεροι οἰκί' ἔναιον, / Κέλμις Δαμναμενεύς τε μέγας καὶ ὑπέρβιος Ἕρκμων, / εὐπάλαμοι θεράποντες ὀρείης Ἀδρηστείης, / οἱ πρῶτοι τέχνης πολυμήτιος Ἡφαίστοιο / εὔρον ἐν οὐρείησι νάπαις ἰόντα σίδηρον / ἐς πῦρ τ' ἤνεγκαν καὶ ἀριπρεπὲς ἔργον ἔτευξαν. "There the Idaean sorcerers, the mountain men of Phrygia, had their housing: Heater, the great Hammerer and the giant Anvil, the skillful servants of Mount Adrasteia, who were the first to find dark iron in the mountainous valleys with the arts of crafty Hephaistos, and threw it into the fire and forged well-finished armor from it." Cf. also Pherekydes FGGrHist 3 F 47 = Schol. Ap. Rhod. *Argon*. I 1129: Δάκτυλοι Ἰδαῖοι] ἔξ καὶ πέντε φασὶ τούτους εἶναι, δεξιούς μὲν τοὺς ἄρσενας, ἀριστερούς δὲ τὰς θηλείας. Φερεκύδης δὲ τοὺς μὲν δεξιούς εἴκοσι λέγει, τοὺς δὲ εὐωνύμους τριάκοντα δύο. γόητες δὲ ἦσαν καὶ φαρμακεῖς· καὶ δημιουργοὶ σιδήρου λέγονται εἶναι πρῶτοι καὶ

master blacksmith is one of these. In magical spells found on curse tablets, the victims are bound to Hades, and direct violence is mediated; in our song, we find a sort of aetiology of such a judicial mediation of violence in the presence of *aisymnetaí*.

The hymn triggers happiness in Odysseus, and this is Demodokos' goal (367-369). After the song, a detailed description of the chorus of ephebes who accompany the song follows. The scene was probably acted out in a mute way. Out of Alkinoos' three sons, Klytoneos has already won the foot race (*Od.* 8.123). Now the father calls for Halios and Laodamas to dance a solo, since nobody would wish to compete with them (370-371). They are the chorus leaders, the stars, while the group of young dancers stands around them to admire them. Somehow they are analogous to the two prima donnas Hagesichora and Agido in Alcman's great Louvre-Partheneion (fr. 1 Davies = 3 Calame).⁷⁰ And we might wonder whether Halios has something to do with Helios, who serves as a spy and plaintiff. The sun and moon, which symbolize radiance (7.84-85), play an important role among the Phaeacians.

Both choral leaders take the ball in alternation and throw it up into the air. One leans backwards and tosses it way up, and the other catches it with ease still floating, before he reaches the ground (372-376). This scene is full of choral self-references. The ball as σφαῖρα symbolizes the φιλότης that has been the focus of the inner tale, and the tossing to the clouds and the floating express the playful freedom of bodily movements.⁷¹ The alternation of throwing and catching the ball could accompany the act of μεταβαίνειν, which is a feature of

μεταλλεῖς γενέσθαι. ὠνομάσθησαν δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς μητρὸς Ἰδῆς, ἀριστεροὶ μὲν, ὡς φησι Φερεκύδης, οἱ γόητες αὐτῶν, οἱ δὲ ἀναλύοντες δεξιοί. “The Idaean Dactyls: it is said that there are six and five, the right ones male, the left ones female. Pherekydes says that the right ones are twenty in number, and the left thirty-two. They were *góetes* and magicians. It is said that they are the first blacksmiths and that they became mountain people. They were named after the mother of Ida; the left ones, as Pherekydes says, are the sorcerers among them, the right ones are the releasers.” Cf. Bierl (2009b) 30-31; Wilamowitz (1895) 241-243 (= [1937] 31-33); on the use of καταδεῖν on curse tablets, cf. Graf (1996) 110-111, on love binding-magic, 127, 161. Thus Hephaistos tellingly goes as the ‘injuring party’ to Lemnos to the Sintians (8.294), who are labeled as *góetes* and are connected to this archaic world of Hephaistos' magic. The name of the Sintians, who as evil γόητες inflict injures, comes – according to Eratosthenes (Schol. BT ad *Il.* 1.594) – from σίνειν.

⁷⁰ Cf. Bierl (2001) 45-54 (Engl. [2009a] 31-38); (2007). On the cosmic dimension of the Partheneion, now Ferrari (2008).

⁷¹ On the ball game in choral dance, cf. references in Schuol (2006) 148 n. 22. Likewise, two acrobatic solo-dancers appear in a similar choral configuration on a cosmic dimension in the Iliadic shield description (*Il.* 18.593-606).

the old hymnic poetics. One leaps from one action to the next and interweaves the whole into a performance. Finally, both dance on the ground and exchange in a reciprocal manner, while the chorus groups around the dancing floor and rhythmically claps to its movements (377-380).

By watching the uninhibited and graceful movements of the young men, the aged Odysseus regains some of his former radiance and youth. Nausikaa, the young girl in the χορός where she experiences her transition to an adult woman, had helped him already to regain his sexual charisma. The χορός is indeed the domain *par excellence* of the Phaeacians. Thus, Nausikaa and her brothers are constantly associated with this occupation. In the end, the alluded marriage between Nausikaa and Odysseus does not take place, since the young girl would not really suit the non-dancer Odysseus.⁷² As I have stressed before, the vivid, citharodic performance draws on the accompanying chorus full of expression. Therefore, *choreía* and choral self-references are particularly significant for understanding Demodokos' second song.

In Odysseus' performance as singer of his own adventures in the diachronically later form, movement is frozen, bound, and formalized. On the contrary, Demodokos, as the ideal model of Homer or the Homeric tradition, thus belongs to a remote past. Only Phemios at Odysseus' home in Ithaka is a similar *aidós*, who plays the *phórmix* to his song and leads an accompanying chorus (*Od.* 23.133-134; cf. 1.150-155).⁷³ However, his songs are comparable only to the historical stage of the first and third songs of Demodokos.⁷⁴

⁷² Cf. the remark by Olga Davidson, cited in Nagy (2009/10) 1§216 n. 123.

⁷³ Cf. also *Od.* 1.325-327 and 22.344-353.

⁷⁴ On Phemios, Demodokos, and Odysseus, cf. now also Krummen (2008) from a narratological and 'poetological' perspective; the singer scenes would serve the whole narrative for the purpose of broadening the perspective, systematizing, and ranking other narrative strands in the tradition. According to her opinion, Demodokos' songs on Troy function as a "Proimion der Apologoi des Odysseus" (22). On the second song, cf. *ead.* 20-21. Cf. her concise conclusion (21): "Insofern die Verführung der Aphrodite durch Ares auf diejenige der Helena durch Paris verweist, die den troianischen Krieg ausgelöst hat, kann das zweite Demodokoslied auch als Fortsetzung des ersten betrachtet werden und hat somit auch eine poetologische Funktion." Besides such a poetic, narrative, and technical function, I stress here a metapoetic function at the same time. Though for what reason, according to Radke (2007), esp. 43 n. 137 and 66, such a "metareflexive Bezugnahme" to the preceding tradition should not be legitimate escapes me, unless one follows a seemingly closed, Aristotelian construct, as she adopts from her teacher Arbogast Schmitt.

The song as visual node of the monumental web of the *Odyssey*

At the same time, the story, which is framed three times, forms a node of all the threads that look backward and forward in the plot; by means of the invisible chains forged by the artisan *par excellence*, the web is woven or knitted together in a kind of visual *tableau* which reflects the total monumental network on the exemplary level of the Olympian gods.

At the decisive point in the action, these chains tie up the threads of the epic to a close-up and hold on the action; thus, this frozen picture of both enfeathered lovers metapoetically refers to and encompasses the entire *Odyssey*. *Hymnos* means “woven texture” and our “performance as text.” In a *mise-en-abyme*, the plot comes to a standstill and moves forward in dynamic processes after the release of the couple.

It is well known that Homeric epic connects single scenes into a complex web. Nonetheless, the single passages knitted together in a historical process remain visible by certain breaches and inconsistencies. Moreover, one proceeds along the thread of action from scene to scene according to a visual and associative poetics.⁷⁵ In the form of a diachronic reprojection into the poetic past, such a frozen picture is represented as an immobile artifact that is released again into action immediately.

Recent research has shown clearly that the song about Ares and Aphrodite has numerous associations to the plot at various levels.⁷⁶ There are intra- and extra-discursive references to Odysseus. In the direct pragmatic context, the resentment and the quarrel with Euryalos are put on a different level to be acted out and settled.⁷⁷ Laughter resolves the tension and creates reconciliation. The story also foreshadows the themes of compensation and hospitality that are so relevant for the adventure stories as well.⁷⁸

Odysseus accepts the Phaeacian superiority in the realm of the old *χοροί* (382-384). In return for his compliments he receives compensation from Euryalos in the form of a precious sword (396-415), clothes, and warm baths (387-392; 424-456). These gifts are characteristic of the aesthetic people of the beyond, and they grant him sex appeal. Nausikaa says farewell to him for the last time (457-468), while her tender love as well as a potential marriage with

⁷⁵ Bierl (2004).

⁷⁶ Rose (1969a) lists 17 motifs. Thereafter Braswell (1982); Newton (1987); Brown (1989); Olson (1989); Pötscher (1990); Zeitlin (1995) 128-136; Alden (1997); Schmidt (1998); de Jong (2001) 206-208; Lentini (2006) 76-77.

⁷⁷ Braswell (1982) and Schmidt (1998).

⁷⁸ Most (1989); Renger (2006) 200-277; Bierl (2008).

her have been thematized before. Odysseus is an underdog, an almost lame and stiff person who is in need of mobility. At the very end, he reaches his goal of receiving passage to Ithaka. His previous anger is compensated and sublimated, then eventually played out. At the same time, the stranger will soon bind his hosts in the realm of the hospitality. Furthermore, the song anticipates the themes of sex and suitors; most of all, it brings into focus the key motifs of marriage and marital fidelity. According to Froma Zeitlin, the conjugal bed is the decisive symbol in the *Odyssey*.⁷⁹ In a poetics of “traditional referentiality,” this σῆμα plays a central role in the narrative.⁸⁰ Penelope, still faithful to her husband, will act in front of the suitors to some extent like Aphrodite when she tries to elicit gifts from them (18.158-301, esp. 18.189-196 and 18.209-213).

Most of all, the judicial crisis of the confused situation at home is introduced momentarily. Penelope might become unfaithful or could remarry, since the time limit Odysseus had set when he left her has been exceeded. In addition, the themes of the bed and conjugal chastity foreshadow the central recognition scene, the τέλος of the whole narration.

In a simile the suitors, just as the two lovers Ares and Aphrodite, are caught in a net like fish (22.383-389). Moreover, the song deals with a suit, a case of litigation, with self-administered justice as well as with violence and its mediation. In addition, the song focuses upon the central motif of potential infidelity, which is also reflected in the foil of Klytaimnestra and Helena during the *Odyssey*. Furthermore, the theme of a contest between a slow and a swift god refers back to the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles narrated in Demodokos’ first song. This altercation is reflected in Odysseus’ disgruntlement with Euryalos. Moreover, the net of threads recalls a wedding veil or the fabric that Penelope weaves for Laertes, and the invisible web “pours” out (cf. χεῖν 8.278, 282) and spreads around the bed, like the fog or the night. As I pointed out, this song deals with the birth of civilization and moralization as well.

The hymn about Ares and Aphrodite represents a further step into the past compared to the beginning and end of the Trojan myth, and imports Odysseus’ story and his actual status in an indirect way. Such a fabric is constituted by innumerable threads which lead in all different directions. Moreover, it is well known that in a mythical example the references are rarely unequivocal. Accordingly, our close-up exhibits ambiguous roles and attitudes.

⁷⁹ Zeitlin (1995) 128-136.

⁸⁰ Foley (1999).

Odysseus himself pursues double standards concerning marriage and fidelity. Over a long period of time he has acted like Ares (cf. 8.518) in the realm of war, particularly as a swift-footed hero, as well as *in sexualibus*.

The hymn suggests that Odysseus should not only be paralleled with Hephaistos, but that he stands between Ares and Hephaistos, between βία and τέχνη, honesty and guile, between an old and new code of ethics, between aristocratic values and seeking profit. After his mental and physical recreation, he aligns himself more with Ares when he slaughters the suitors in an Iliadic passage in the twenty-second Book.

Binding will be a further key motif that Odysseus will use in the regulated form of epic report of his adventures as well. To some extent, our song of Ares and Aphrodite integrates Orphic and pre-Homeric traditions that refer to cosmic love and cyclicity.⁸¹ Moreover, the couple of Ares and Aphrodite is not only deactivated by the fetters; also, their love finds its concrete expression in the absolute union of a sphere. Empedocles, who has been associated with Orphic concepts,⁸² will introduce *Philótes* and *Neĩkos* as the principles of cosmic developments. *Neĩkos* dissolves the union of love, symbolized in the ball or *sphaira*,⁸³ until we return to the maximum of *Philótes* and Love after one turn. In the same way, the loosening of the fetters dissolves the total union of a cosmic bond and helps love to begin again on the basis of quarrel. Finally, the story of our song has also aetiological traits.⁸⁴

Conclusions

It is time to abandon the modern construct of the epyllion. Thus, it is certainly more fruitful to speak of short and long, comic-subversive and lofty-heroic epic songs. Shorter and subversive songs do not automatically come into existence at a later stage. Such reasoning is heavily dependent on nineteenth-century concepts of a progress of thought and ethics, as canonized in books like Bruno Snell's *Die Entdeckung des Geistes* (⁴1975). According to such thinking, the playfully subversive parodies and criticizes the serious and heroic, and only the new mindset of the recently detected individual can develop a modern attitude and ethics which are opposed to the aristocratic and collective spirit of the past. On the contrary, the burlesque and

⁸¹ Cf. Nagy (2009/10) 1§208.

⁸² Riedweg (1995), and others.

⁸³ Cf. Emp., esp. fr. 27-30 DK.

⁸⁴ Cf. τὰ πρῶτ' ἐμίγησαν *Od.* 8.268; *contra* de Jong (2001) 206: "The story is told *ab ovo* (cf. τὰ πρῶτα) and chronologically."

comic view has always existed along with the short poem. It is even more probable that the short epic poem stands at the origin of the longer forms. In an evolutionary model, we can now understand how shorter songs were integrated into poems of monumental size. The song about Ares and Aphrodite has certainly been incorporated for a long time into the Homeric tradition, since it is perfectly fitted into the larger context and has its own metapoetic function. In addition, as we have seen, through this song we glide back to previous strata of epic song culture, and the return to an archaic *hymnos* is also reflected on the level of content. All in all, we have seen that Homer's monumental and heroic epics are the special, marked case, whereas the shorter and less-heroic songs in hexameter are the general, unmarked case.

At this point, it is necessary to associate all the features that on the surface spoke in favor of linking the song about Ares and Aphrodite to a Hellenistic epyllion with much earlier historical strata, and to locate them in the Homeric tradition itself.

1) The song seems to be a self-contained digression, but at a closer inspection is well connected with the entire poem. Moreover, it has its own poetic and metapoetic function. 2) The domestic and bourgeois setting, the subversive point of view, and the light and playful tone are rooted in a very old tradition, which is reflected in Hittite and other Near Eastern poems, and not proof of a new and modern spirit. 3) Sex, adultery, and punishment are typical subjects of these ancient epic forms. We find similar scenes for example in the Διὸς ἄπῳτη (*Iliad* 14). 4) Near Eastern mythic epics often represent such a perspective. 5) *Mise-en-abyme* and metapoetical considerations do not speak in favor of a modern self-awareness but, as a matter of course, are a constitutive part of the *Odyssey*. 6-8) The unusual manner of narration, especially its quick pace, is characteristic of the much older mode of *hymnos* into which the song regresses. The same is valid for the song's internal focalization and direct speeches which convey a flavor of vivid dramatization. The immoral views of Hermes and Apollo are typical of such very old and Near Eastern traditions, too. 9) The setting in the primordial past and in the beyond reflects the very archaic status of the hymn. 10-11) The artful design by a self-conscious artist and references to motion, immobility, and circularity mirror the evolution of the epic genre, and are not proof of a modern style of composition.

The anachronistic way of reading the song as a Hellenistic epyllion in retrospect has serious editorial and hermeneutical consequences for the Homeric text and disregards the song's function in the whole composition of the *Odyssey*. In addition, we might wonder whether the Telchines who reprehend Kallimachos jealously that he does not create a

continuous poem of monumental size (ἐν ᾄεισμα διηνεγκές, Kall. *Ait.* fr. 1.3 Pf.) are not, as addressed in the song of Ares and Aphrodite by Demodokos, a remote reflection of Hephaistos and his *góes*-like companions, since they try to enchain, domesticate, and ‘bind’ the fluid hymn with magical spells, and the result is the regulated Homeric epic. Moreover, we must ask if this binding is not to be equated with the transposition of oral poetry into the new medium of literacy.⁸⁵ In addition, Kallimachos comes back to compose hymns in the Homeric way – we have relatively late copies of Homeric Hymns stemming from the fifth century BC. Thus Kallimachos’ hymns are somehow only “virtual” Homeric hymns, since they are characterized by an “eternal deferral of epic” and a negation of the poetics of a *metábasis* that leads to an epic-narrative section.⁸⁶ Finally, Hephaistos or the Telchines do not want to bind Kallimachos’ hymns any more, since chorality is inscribed in the poetic text only as a literal trace.

⁸⁵ Cf. Haase (2007) 45-63 on the Sirens, esp. 55 on binding.

⁸⁶ Cf. Nagy (2008/09) 246-248 (2§§118-122).