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Homer and Rhapsodic Competition in Performance[1]

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Introduction

One legacy of Homeric studies since the pathbreaking work of Milman Parry, Albert Lord, Gregory Nagy, and John Miles Foley has been an emphasis on the earliest stages of composition and performance. These scholars have shown in detail how poet-singers compose while they perform, and perform while they compose epic poetry. However, we have yet to apply the valuable insights gained from their research to later stages of a poetic tradition, particularly after the poetic "texts" have become stable and written down, while live performances of these "texts" continue. The time has now come to attempt such an application, but with important qualifications. This is because a performance tradition that takes place against a body of fixed texts is governed by different rules, as it were, than one that is as yet in a more fluid stage. For one, audience expectation will be different, and greater allusive precision may be achieved by live performers who modify and improvise textual elements to surprise, shock, or delight their audiences. It is important to stress at the outset that a fixed text need not be an impediment, and indeed it may be an impetus, to the contingent and improvisational demands of live poetic performance.

Scholars are only beginning to apply these insights to the long tradition of rhapsodic performances of Homeric poetry.[2] Although rhapsodes have received increasing attention in recent scholarship,[3] there has

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[1] Earlier versions of this paper were given at the annual meeting of the American Philological Association (December 1998), and before audiences at the Universities of Michigan, Iowa, and Missouri. I wish to thank all the participants for their encouragement and advice.

[2] For a general overview of rhapsodes, see Aly 1920, Pfeiffer 1968:8-12, and Ford 1988:300-7.

[3] See e.g. Nagy 1999 and Martin 2000.

still been no recent attempt to organize all of the evidence into a coherent whole.[4] This is not a task that I wish to undertake in the present paper. Instead, in what follows I aim to broaden a line of exploration concerning the competitive performance of rhapsodes,[5] which has faltered due to an ancient and modern prejudice against their "creative" abilities.[6] We know, for example, that improvisation[7] and innovation within the tradition is attested for rhapsodes as early as the mention of Kynaithos, sometime in the late sixth century B.C.E., apart from the etymological evidence for the term *rhapsôidos*, which may imply an improvisational capacity even earlier. We have evidence of a variety of rhapsodic games, which can be used to argue that rhapsodes were competent at many levels of poetic performance: they could, for instance, competitively recite memorized verses, improvise verses on the spot for elaboration or embellishment, and take up and leave off the narrative wherever they saw fit, all the while setting metrical and thematic challenges for their adversaries and attempting to win the audience to their side. These performance tactics comport in many respects with what we know about the quadrennial, greater Panathenaia, which unlike any other festival furnishes us with actual "rules" for rhapsodic performances.

Moreover, the sophist Alcidamas, who elsewhere shows an interest in rhapsodic performances (*On Sophists* 14), demonstrates several kinds of rhapsodic improvisation in his *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi* ("Contest of Homer and Hesiod") or some earlier version of the same, no doubt garnered

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[4] A point well emphasized by Herington 1985:167; see his discussion of rhapsodes on pp. 10-15 and his partial collection of testimonia in Appendix II.

[5] On competition in Greek poetry in general, see the fundamental article by Griffith (1990).

[6] Pavese (1998:64) and Nagy (1990a:42, 1996:113) remain opponents (correctly in my view) of the simplistic distinction between a "creative" *aoidos* and "reduplicative" *rhapsôidos*. This distinction still finds favor with some scholars, however, e.g. Powell 2000:118-19.

[7] Fundamental here is Hammerstaedt 1996; I thank Johan Schloemann for this reference. In this paper, I use the term "improvisation" to mean the spontaneous recomposition of traditional material (diction, formulae, etc.), rearranged in a novel way. McLeod (1961:323) compares the improvisation of rhapsodes with the formulaic nature of oracles after 400 B.C.E.

from his experience viewing rhapsodic contests.[8] The *Certamen* as we have it in manuscript form dates to the Antonine period, although much of the content including the contest proper was probably contained in Alcidamas' *Mouseion*.[9] As I will show, in the "epic" part of the *Certamen* (107-37) Alcidamas represents a hexameter dueling game that highlights the importance of enjambement as a connective technique, which can be compared to examples of enjambement found in Homeric poetry itself. At a later stage of the Homeric performance tradition, rhapsodes and, possibly, *Homêristai* continue to display improvisational skills during performances as reflected in the "eccentric" Ptolemaic papyri of Homer.

This suggests that we will have to revise our notion that rhapsodes merely "recited" memorized lines of Homer. Comparative research in cultures with live song, storytelling, and poetic contests also argues emphatically against such a notion. Clearly, rhapsodes also improvised their memorized lines or deployed traditional material in novel ways, though I do believe that they did so against the background of a stable body of texts, fixed perhaps by the time of Hipparkhos.[10] Throughout this discussion I will stress that the technical features of their improvisation cannot be understood apart from the competitive context in which they performed. Indeed, to press the point further, the competitive context of rhapsodic performances provides the best explanation for the types of creative improvisation that we find.

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[8] Rhapsodic contests were frequent and widespread enough that we may safely assume that Alcidamas, like thousands of other Greeks, had seen them. Cf. Xenophon, *Symposium* 3.6, where Nikeratos says that he sees rhapsodes reciting "nearly every day."

[9] See *Certamen* 33 and 240, and the testimonia collected in Allen 1912:218-20. Background on Alcidamas' *Mouseion* and the relationship of the *Certamen* to the Michigan papyrus 2754 can be conveniently found in Richardson 1981 and M. West 1967.

[10] This is a highly contentious issue, and while I do not think there is evidence for a Peisistratean recension *per se*, such rhapsodic improvisation as I will present it is more readily understandable against the background of relatively (and perhaps rigidly) fixed texts. See Allen 1924:226-38 for a collection of the primary evidence relating to the Peisistratean question. Kotsidu (1991:188, n. 56) rightly stresses that the question of Homeric recension and the Panathenaic rule need not be connected in any direct way. My view of the Homeric texts at this stage corresponds with what Nagy (1996:110) describes as his third, "definitive" period for Homeric textual fixation.

Modes of Innovation

The evidence of rhapsodic performance as we have it suggests that there were at least three basic types of improvisational activity in which rhapsodes engaged. The first involves the "stitching" or "weaving" of song, the second involves the insertion of newly composed "Homeric" verses into a preexisting text, and the third involves capping with hexameter verses. We are often at pains to determine which of these types was employed at a given performance venue, but we certainly have enough evidence to provide some suggestive indications. Let us begin with some familiar passages and scholia with regard to the etymology and meaning of the word *rhapsôidos* as "he who stitches the song." The *locus classicus* for this word, as well as for the description of the mechanics of rhapsodic performance, is Pindar's *Nemean* 2.1-3[11] and the scholia on those lines. At the beginning of *Nemean* 2, Pindar claims that he will begin where the Homeridae begin (Pindar, *Nemean* 2.1-3):

> Ὅθεν περ καὶ Ὁμηρίδαι
> <u>ῥαπτῶν ἐπέων</u> τὰ πόλλ' <u>ἀοιδοί</u>
> ἄρχονται, Διὸς ἐκ προοιμίου
>
> From the very point where the Homeridae,
> <u>singers</u> [*aoidoi*] <u>of stitched-together</u> [*rhapta*] <u>utterances</u> [*epê*], most often begin, from a proem of Zeus

Pindar's view that the Homeridae are singers of stitched-together utterances agrees with the linguistic evidence that *rhapsôidos* must derive from the verb *rhaptô* and the noun *aoidê*.[12] Scholars are in relative agreement on this derivation as opposed to the other one attested in the Pindar scholia, which holds that the first component of *rhaps-ôidos* derives from the noun *rhabdos* "staff" (scholia to *Nemean* 2.1c 29-30 Drachmann). Matters are much more complicated when it comes to defining exactly what it is that rhapsodes

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[11] All text citations of Pindar are taken from Snell and Maehler 1987. All translations are by the author.

[12] Schmitt 1967:300-30 and Chantraine 1968:s.v. ῥαψῳδός. Cf. Tarditi (1968:144), who argues that the basic activity of the ῥαψῳδός involves the interweaving (*intessere*) of individual material into that derived from epic tradition, while performers like the Homeridae stitch (*cucire*) together Homeric material. Such a distinction is too rigid in my view because it presupposes a clear sense of what was "Homeric" versus "individual" poetry, but this demarcation is not so clear.

weave. Of course they weave poetry or song, in the broad sense, but opinions have differed since Harald Patzer's important article on whether they weave together patches or segments of narrative, or perhaps smaller units of verse.[13] The Alexandrian scholiasts on *Nemean* 2.1-3 are themselves divided on this point.

There are several other testimonia in the same scholia, where we read that the poetry of Homer had been at some unspecified time scattered and divided into parts, so that to sing it rhapsodically meant to do something on the order of sewing the parts together to produce a whole (scholia to Pindar, *Nemean* 2.1c 30.5-8 Drachmann):

> οἱ δὲ φασι τῆς Ὁμήρου ποιήσεως μὴ ὑφ᾽ ἓν συνηγμένης, σποράδην δὲ ἄλλως καὶ κατὰ μέρη διῃρημένης, ὁπότε ῥαψῳδοῖεν αὐτὴν, εἱρμῷ τινι καὶ ῥαφῇ παραπλήσιον ποιεῖν, εἰς ἓν αὐτὴν ἄγοντας.
>
> Some say that, since the poetry of Homer had not been brought together under one thing, and since it was otherwise scattered and separated intoparts [*merê*], whenever they would sing it rhapsodically [*rhapsôideô*] they would do something similar to sequencing or sewing, producing it into one thing.

However one chooses exactly to define the word here for part, *meros*, clearly this definition of *rhapsôidos* or *rhapsôideô* suggests that each part was a longer segment of narrative, perhaps on the order of what we are told in Plato's *Ion*, where popular scenes from the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* are singled out for mention by Socrates—such as Nestor's advice to Antilokhos from *Iliad* 23, Odysseus at the moment when he leaps upon his threshold to kill the suitors from *Odyssey* 22, or the scene when Achilles lunges at Hektor in *Iliad* 22 (all featured at *Ion* 535b3-7), each of which might constitute a performable "part."[14]

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[13] As a response to Fränkel 1925, Patzer 1952:322-23 argued that the "stitch" (*Stich*, i.e., a line of hexameter verse) was the basic unit of composition implied by *rhaptein*, but he nevertheless conflated (like the scholiasts) the metaphors of weaving and stitching found in the scholia to Pindar.

[14] I do not agree with Taplin (1992:29-31), reflecting a wider assumption in scholarship, that the entire *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, from what we know as their beginnings to their ends, was performed at the Panathenaia. For the moment, I leave open the possibility that "parts," of the type just described in Plato's *Ion*, could have been performed in isolation and in no particular order. Cf. the testimony of Dionysios of

The scholia on *Nemean* 2.1-3 also include other descriptions of how rhapsodes perform, notably from Philochorus (scholia to Pindar, *Nemean* 2.1c 31.7-9 Drachmann=*FGrH* 328 F 212):

> Φιλόχορος δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ συντιθέναι καὶ ῥάπτειν τὴν ᾠδὴν οὕτω φησὶν αὐτοὺς προσκεκλῆσθαι.
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> Philochorus says that they [=rhapsodes] were thus called on account of the putting together [*suntithêmi*] and stitching [*rhaptô*] of the song [*aoidê*].

In this passage Philochorus, who may simply have rationalized his explanation based upon *Nemean* 2.1-3, connects the idea of assembling (*suntithêmi*) a song with the verb *rhaptô*. More tantalizing is that in conjunction with this Philochorus then cites a fragment attributed, perhaps wrongly, to Hesiod (F 357 Merkelbach-West):

> ἐν Δήλῳ τότε πρῶτον ἐγὼ καὶ Ὅμηρος ἀοιδοὶ
> μέλπομεν, ἐν νεαροῖς ὕμνοις ῥάψαντες ἀοιδήν,
> Φοῖβον Ἀπόλλωνα χρυσάορον, ὃν τέκε Λητώ.
>
> At that time, Homer and I, as singers, sang for the first time on Delos,
> stitching together [*rhaptô*] a song [*aoidê*] in new hymns [*humnos*]
> about Phoibos Apollo of the golden sword, whom Leto bore.

In this fragment Homer and Hesiod are imagined as rhapsodes who sing a song about Apollo ἐν νεαροῖς ὕμνοις ῥάψαντες ἀοιδήν "stitching together a song in new hymns." What interests me here is that Hesiod and Homer work together to sing *one* song about Apollo—a point that is often overlooked, as some scholars assume that Homer and Hesiod each sing a hymn to Apollo—and that they appear to do it by means of new verses or segments (if we can extract those meanings out of *humnos*[15] here), which could mean that they improvise them.[16]

Argos (scholia to *Nemean* 2.1d 31.2 Drachmann) that early rhapsodes sang whatever "part" of the tradition they wanted (ἕκαστος ὅ τι βούλοιτο μέρος ᾖδε).

[15] Cf. *Odyssey* 8.429, where the expression ἀοιδῆς ὕμνος implies that *humnos* is a subdivision of song.

[16] As Richard Martin has recently argued (2000:411-15), if Hesiod F 357 MW can be taken to refer to the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, we may plausibly account for the Delian and Pythian division of that poem as the competitive contributions performed respectively by "Homer" and "Hesiod." As to the Homeric poems themselves, especially

Balanced against all of this evidence for a stitching metaphor, in which preexisting segments are brought together into a whole, the scholia to *Nemean* 2.1-3 also contain hints of a different kind of metaphor for rhapsodic activity, that of weaving. Here I understand weaving to mean the criss-cross combination of warp and woof. As an example, a fragment attributed to Callimachus is adduced by the scholiast, in which the verb *huphainô* is used to describe the activity of song being wrapped around a staff:

καὶ τὸν ἐπὶ ῥάβδῳ μῦθον ὑφαινόμενον
. . . . . .
ἠνεκὲς ἀείδω δεδεγμένος

and the narrative [*muthos*] woven around a staff [*rhabdos*]
. . . . . .
I received and sing continuously (Callimachus 26.5, 8 Pfeiffer)

It has long been noted that this fragment hints at both derivations (from *rhabdos* and *rhaptô*) for the first component of *rhaps-ôidos*. In the metaphor behind the verb *huphainô*, threads of song corresponding to a warp and woof are more easily imaginable here than patches or quilts, which is what the sewing or stitching metaphor assumes.[17] I take this hint—and it is nothing more—to suggest a related kind of activity in which rhapsodes weave smaller segments of verse, or perhaps individual verses themselves, into a larger whole.

For this reason, a fragment from the historian Menaikhmos in the same *Nemean* 2 scholia (2.1d 14-15 Drachmann) may also be relevant. It mentions the term *stikhaoidos*, which Menaikhmos says a rhapsode was thus called because the *rhabdos* could also be called a *stikhos*. However, the term *stikhaoidos* has been taken by scholars like Ritoók (1962:226, n.7) to correspond not only with the false etymology of *rhapsoidos* as the singer who holds the staff, but also with the idea of the "singers of lines of verse," or *stikhoi*. The word *stikhaoidos* is actually attested in the *Greek Anthology* (16.316), and is there compared to the public speaker. Parenthetically, I note that Menaikhmos might well have had the singing of verses in mind, as he was a native of Sikyon, and Sikyon had its own earlier native tradition of

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the *Iliad*, Eustathius already believed that many stylistic features could be explained through Homer's improvisation; see Van der Valk 1976:xxvi-xxvii with note 1, and xxxix with note 3.

[17] The sewing metaphor is embraced by Nagy 1996:66.

rhapsodic contests. Indeed, our first mention of rhapsodic performance at contests comes by way of Herodotus, who mentions the contests at Sikyon that were banned by Kleisthenes (5.67).[18]

A second type of improvisational activity by rhapsodes is attested in one final example from the scholia to *Nemean* 2 (2.1c 9-18=*FGrH* 568 F 5):

> ʽΟμηρίδας ἔλεγον τὸ μὲν ἀρχαῖον τοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ ʽΟμήρου γένους, οἳ καὶ τὴν ποίησιν αὐτοῦ ἐκ διαδοχῆς ᾖδον· μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα καὶ οἱ ῥαψῳδοὶ οὐκέτι τὸ γένος εἰς Ὅμηρον ἀνάγοντες, ἐπιφανεῖς δὲ ἐγένοντο οἱ περὶ Κύναιθον, οὕς φασι πολλὰ τῶν ἐπῶν ποιήσαντας ἐμβαλεῖν εἰς τὴν ʽΟμήρου ποίησιν. ἦν δὲ ὁ Κύναιθος τὸ γένος Χῖος, ὃς καὶ τῶν ἐπιγραφομένων ʽΟμήρου ποιημάτων τὸν εἰς ᾿Απόλλωνα γεγραφὼς ὕμνον ἀνατέθεικεν αὐτῷ. οὗτος οὖν ὁ Κύναιθος πρῶτος ἐν Συρακούσαις ἐραψῴδησε τὰ ʽΟμήρου ἔπη κατὰ τὴν ξθ᾿ ᾿Ολυμπιάδα, ὡς ʽΙππόστρατός φησιν.
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> Originally they called the descendants of Homer the Homeridai, who sang [*aoidô*] his poetry in succession; after this the *rhapsôidoi* could no longer trace their lineage to Homer. Apparently they were from Kynaithos, who, they say, after composing [*poieô*] many utterances [*epê*] they [= the rhapsodes] put them into [*emballô*] the poetry of Homer. Kynaithos's family was from Chios, and of the poems that bear Homer's name, he wrote the *Hymn to Apollo* and attributed it to Homer.[19] This Kynaithos was the first to sing rhapsodically [*rhapsôideô*] the epics of Homer in Syracuse, in the 69th Olympiad [504/1 B.C.], as Hippostratos says.

In this rather long example, we learn both about the clan of the Homeridae, who once claimed to have descended from Homer, and then about Kynaithos, who is said to have been the first to person to sing the epics of Homer rhapsodically at Syracuse.[20] We also learn in the next sentences in this passage that Kynaithos composed his own utterances (*epê*), which here most likely mean individual verses, and then put them into the poetry of Homer. We do not know whether Kynaithos composed his

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[18] As Nagy (1990b:22, n. 22) suggests, the context of Kleisthenes' war with Argos makes it likely that the content of these epic performances involved material from the Theban cycle.

[19] Cf. Martin (2000:419, n. 58), who suggests that the expression ἀνατέθεικεν αὐτῷ may mean that Kynaithos "dedicated it [the hymn] to *him* (*autôi=Apollo*)" (italics in original).

[20] For more on Kynaithos, see M. West 1975.

utterances extempore during a performance and passed them off as Homer's, or whether this is something he did prior to his performance. Either way, two points are important here: 1) the Homeric poems are envisioned by this commentator (that is, Hippostratos) as being relatively fixed, and 2) Kynaithos composed lines that he then inserted into Homer. This story represents a type of rhapsodic improvisation in which a rhapsode creates his own lines for performance and display against the background of a more stable body of Homeric narrative. What remains implicit in the description of Kynaithos is *why* (beyond some generic desire for notoriety) he composed epic verses and a hymn and passed them off as Homer's. I will return to this point later, but the evidence for rhapsodic performance as it accumulates will suggest that Kynaithos created new material to compete with his rhapsodic opponents rather than with Homer.

Later Greek literature gives us a third series of improvisational activities by rhapsodes, all roughly organized around the principle of capping. As scholars have observed,[21] the *Certamen* itself depicts several different types of poetic competition: hexameter exchanges of philosophical questions and answers (lines 75-101, 140-75), completion of verse couplets or capping (107-37), and recitation of complete passages (180-204).[22] If we can be reasonably sure that the hexameter exchange of philosophical questions and answers is at least as old as the sixth century,[23] as the contest between Kalkhas and Mopsos suggests,[24] I see no reason why these other forms of competition cannot be as old.

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[21] E.g., Dunkel 1979:252-53.

[22] Although not involving rhapsodes, Dunkel (1979:252-53), following Dornseiff 1944:135, points to the parallel between these modes of poetic competition and those represented in Aristophanes' *Frogs* between Aeschylus and Euripides: general tests of σοφία (1420-65), recitation of passages (1126-87), capping a couplet given by the opponent (ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν, 1208-45). As an additional mode in the *Frogs*, the judge has them recite a line simultaneously to weigh the "heaviness" of its imagery (1378-1403).

[23] See Richardson 1981:1-2.

[24] From Hesiod's *Melampodia*=Frag. 278 MW. Cf. the tradition of the rhapsodic performance (*rhapsôidêsai*) of Empedocles' *Purifications* (31 A 1 Diels-Kranz).

Let us now turn to a more detailed examination of the types of improvisational activity that we find in Alcidamas' *Certamen*.[25] The *Certamen* is important not only because it depicts a fictional poetic contest that illustrates many of the features of rhapsodic performance for which I have been arguing, but also because we know that Alcidamas valued the extemporaneous speaking ability of sophists (*On Sophists* 3, 22-23, 24, 34), which he called καιρός,[26] and that he depicts this ability in several ways in the *Certamen*.[27] One of the most striking of these involves what I would call the epic part, lines 107-37, where the fictional Hesiod and Homer are made to duel with mock-epic hexameter lines. In this connection I am following the work of Ritoók, who believed that the *Certamen* represented the best point of support for the basic, archaic notion of the rhapsode as a creative stitcher of verse (1962:228-29). To be fair to Ritoók, however, I must note that he followed Davison in believing that rhapsodes merely recited memorized verses at an event like the Panathenaia. What I am interested in is the knowledge of hexameter versification that is presupposed by the fictional Hesiod and Homer, and whether we may generalize from that to actual rhapsodic performances in Alcidamas' day.

With respect to the epic part of the *Certamen*, Konrad Heldmann has observed that "the problem consists in continuing one verse, which must be as absurd as possible, through another verse so that both together to a certain extent produce a meaningful unity."[28] This is true, yet it all but wrings out the humor and improvisational artistry of the game. Even Wilamowitz had recognized in 1916 that the *Certamen* was, as he put it, "ein besonderes

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[25] All text citations from the *Certamen* are taken from Allen 1912. For general background to the *Certamen*, especially the issue of dating, see Richardson 1981, which is a response to M. West 1967.

[26] See the discussion by Ritoók (1991:160) and the more detailed analysis of Alcidamas' views in O'Sullivan 1992.

[27] For example, cf. the *amphibolos gnômê* at *Certamen* 170-71, where Hesiod asks: τῆς σοφίης δὲ τί τέκμαρ ἐπ' ἀνθρώποισι πέφυκεν; ("what is the mark of wisdom for men?"), to which Homer replies: γιγνώσκειν τὰ παρόντ' ὀρθῶς, καιρῷ δ' ἅμ' ἕπεσθαι ("to perceive present affairs correctly, and to keep pace with the right moment"). The translation cannot do full justice to this exchange, which among other things can be taken to reflect the skills demanded in the very improvisational game in which Hesiod and Homer are engaged.

[28] Heldmann 1982:81. The original reads: "Die Aufgabe besteht darin, einen Vers, der möglichst absurd sein muß . . . durch einen anderen Vers so fortzusetzen, daß beide zusammen eine einigermaßen sinnvolle Einheit ergeben. . . ."

Spiel ἐξ ὑποβολῆς" ("a special game by cue").[29] In any event, the humor in the *Certamen* is already evident in Hesiod's opening gambit to Homer (lines 97-98), Μοῦσ᾽ ἄγε μοι τά τ᾽ ἐόντα τά τ᾽ ἐσσόμενα πρό τ᾽ ἐόντα / τῶν μὲν μηδὲν ἄειδε, "Come, Muse, sing to me nothing" (*mêden aeide*—which is clearly a pun on the opening line of the *Iliad*, and perhaps simultaneously of *Iliad* 1.70 and Hesiod's *Theogony*, 38) "of what exists, what will come, and what has come before," σὺ δ᾽ ἄλλης μνῆσαι ἀοιδῆς, "you [Homer] remember another song." This last line plays on the standard ending of many Homeric hymns, where the voice of the poet says that he will now remember another song. Here Hesiod would rather Homer not sing anything traditional, and this request in some sense authorizes the improvisational gaming to follow.

The game continues with Hesiod's first challenge verse, in which he says: δεῖπνον ἔπειθ᾽ εἵλοντο βοῶν κρέα καὐχένας ἵππων ("then they took as their meal the flesh of cattle, and the necks of horses . . ."). At this point, which is to say right after the bucolic diaeresis, the noun *aukhên* looks as if it is going to remain the object of the verb *haireomai* ("take"), until Homer successfully enjambs the next line with a verb and participle in agreement with the noun, ἔκλυον ἱδρώοντας ("they unyoked [those necks] dripping with sweat"), and then fills out the rest of the line with a further comment, ἐπεὶ πολέμοιο κορέσθην ("when they had tired of war"). This does not just take a meaningless line of verse and turn it into a meaningful one, as Heldmann had so flatly observed, but rather successfully converts the outlandish idea of eating horses—a barbaric practice, perhaps reminiscent of what Herodotus tells us about the Scythians (4.61)—into a more mundane one about relieving them from their burdens during wartime.

These examples suggest that the game entirely depends upon enjambement, particularly upon where the sense break occurs in the lead verse spoken by Hesiod, which structures what kind of word can be placed in the runover position at the beginning of Homer's following line. Moreover, we are simply not able to recover from the texts themselves any metalinguistic signals, such as changes in intonation or emphasis, let alone any kind of gestural cues, that could have been used by one rhapsode to signal the next rhapsode as to exactly what feature of the lead verse he would need to focus on for his enjambement. But we may take such clues for granted, I believe, in a medium like this where dramatic enactment (or, shall we say, *mimêsis*) also consitutes part of the rhapsodic performance of

[29] Wilamowitz 1916:402. The expression ἐξ ὑποβολῆς, to be discussed below, is from Diogenes Laertius 1.57=*FGrH* 485 F 6 and refers to rhapsodes at the Panathenaia.

Homer.[30] We may recall that the rhapsode Ion tells Socrates how he is able to move his audience to tears with a riveting performance, or inadvertently to laughter with a poor one (Plato, *Ion* 535b-e). [31]

Sometimes the fictional Homer in the *Certamen* must wait until he hears the words that occupy the whole adonic at verse-end before he can know how to enjamb them. So for example at lines 119-20, Hesiod sings that ὣς οἳ μὲν δαίνυντο πανήμεροι, οὐδὲν ἔχοντες ("so they feasted all day long, having nothing"), at which point Homer should be confounded, yet he twists the idea around by enjambing an adverb <u>οἴκοθεν</u> ("having nothing . . . <u>from home</u>") ἀλλὰ παρεῖχεν ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων ("but Agamemnon lord of men supplied them"). On this occasion the enjambement is an adverb, at other times it may be a noun or participle coordinated with the end of the previous verse by its case.

In this section of the *Certamen*, where the challenge is one of responding to *amphiboloi gnômai* (102-3), Homer's technical mastery of enjambement is what is on display. Even if he does not win in the end, there can be no question that Alcidamas is manipulating a rhapsodic framework,[32] which resembles what we are told about rhapsodes at the Panathenaia. Moreover, references to improvisation (*skhediazein*)[33] are explicit elsewhere in the *Certamen* (*skhediasai* 279, again Homer), and therefore make it likely that Alcidamas is presenting a composite picture of rhapsodic and improvisational performance in the section on hexameter-dueling.

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[30] Herington 1985:12-13. Rhapsodes are frequently compared to actors at Plato, *Ion* 532d, 536a, and *Republic* 395a; Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1403b22 and *Poetics* 1462a5-6; and Alcidamas, *On Sophists* 14. On the comparison between sophists and oral poets in Alcidamas, see Ritoók 1991.

[31] Ion (Plato, *Ion* 535e) comes right to the point: δεῖ γάρ με καὶ σφόδρ' αὐτοῖς τὸν νοῦν προσέχειν· ὡς ἐὰν μὲν κλαίοντας αὐτοὺς καθίσω, αὐτὸς γελάσομαι ἀργύριον λαμβάνων, ἐὰν δὲ γελῶντας, αὐτὸς κλαύσομαι ἀργύριον ἀπολλύς ("I must pay very close attention to them [the audience], since if I set them crying, I myself will laugh because of the money I get, but if I set them laughing, I myself will cry because of the money I lose").

[32] Note the usage of the verb *rhapsôideô* to describe Homer at *Certamen* 56. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 600d, in which both Homer and Hesiod are described as rhapsodes (*rhapsôideô*).

[33] For a discussion of the terminology of improvisation, see Hammerstaedt 1996:1215.

It turns out that what Alcidamas' Homer is doing with these enjambements is not unlike what we can find in the Homeric poems themselves. As those who have studied enjambement[34] have well recognized, the runover position is one of the most characteristic features of Homeric style.[35] As an example from Homer of the kind that we have just seen, where a verb is enjambed and governs a noun in the preceding verse, consider these lines from the *Iliad*: [36]

> ὃς καὶ νῦν Ἀχιλῆα ἕο μέγ' ἀμείνονα <u>φῶτα</u>
> ἠτίμησεν
>
> And now he has Achilles, a much better <u>man</u> than him,
> dishonored
>
> (*Iliad* 2.239-40)

In this example we see that the noun *phôs* ("man") is governed by a verb in the runover position, and lest we think this is a formula, consider this next verse in which the same noun in the same position is governed by a different verb:

> ἔγχος μὲν τόδε κεῖται ἐπὶ χθονός, οὐδέ τι <u>φῶτα</u>
> λεύσσω
>
> This spear of mine lies on the ground, and I can no longer any <u>man</u>
> see
>
> (*Iliad* 20.345-46)

In the *Certamen* Homer also enjambs infinitives to limit and transform a leading verse from Hesiod. So for example at lines 131-32, Hesiod's lead verse says: αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ σπεῖσάν τε καὶ ἔκπιον <u>οἶδμα θαλάσσης</u> ("but when they poured libations and drank, <u>the swell of the sea</u> _. . . ,"), which makes no sense until Homer enjambs it with the infinitive

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[34] On Homeric enjambement in general, I mention only Basset 1926; Edwards 1966; Kirk 1976:146-82; Foley 1990:152, 163-64; and Higbie 1990. The work on enjambement by Bakker 1990 and 1997:152-55, focusing as it does on cognitive units rather than the runover position in hexameter verse, is not relevant to the game in the *Certamen*.

[35] Edwards 1966:138.

[36] All text citations of Homer are taken from Monro and Allen 1920, and Allen 1917.

pontoporein and makes it depend on *mellô*, <u>ποντοπορεῖν</u> ἤμελλον ἐυσσέλμων ἐπὶ νηῶν ("there were minded to sail [the swell of the sea] on well-benched ships"). We may compare this to another example from the *Iliad*, which although not exactly the same, similarly enjambs an infinitive that governs a preceding noun:

> ἐξέλετ᾽ ἄσπετα πολλά· τὰ δ᾽ ἄλλ᾽ ἐς δῆμον ἔδωκε
> <u>δαιτρεύειν</u>, μή τίς οἱ ἀτεμβόμενος κίοι ἴσης.
>
> [Neleus] took a huge amount; but the rest he gave to the people
> <u>to distribute</u>, so that no one would go away without a just share.
> (*Iliad* 11.704-5)

In this example, Nestor recalls how his father Neleus, in a dispute with the king of Elis, took for himself a vast amount of spoil and "the rest he gave to the people to distribute, so that no one would go away without a just share." Here the infinitive *daitreuein* is enjambed in what appears to be a redundant way, as Bassett once noted about this line (1926:122), and the rest of the line does not appear to add anything substantial to the sense. If Neleus gave spoils to the people, he clearly did so for them to distribute among themselves. More striking is the fact that Zenodotus actually rejected line 705 and Aristarchus athetized it, believing that it borrowed a verse (it is almost identical with *Odyssey* 9.42). Yet I want to suggest that this is exactly the kind of thing we should expect from a performing rhapsode, who at this point could have used the enjambing infinitive and the remainder of the verse as a transition to the next part of the story, which in fact does shift somewhat as it begins to describe another battle between the men of Pylos and Elis.

In the epic part of the *Certamen* as a whole, the bucolic diaeresis and verse-end, as we might expect, are the most prominent sense breaks that are used by the fictional Homer to create his enjambements. In passing, I note that there is a pervasive assumption underlying current Homeric enjambement studies of a performance model involving one singer, for whom enjambement has served diachronically as a mnemonic device. If I am right, however, enjambement can also serve the immediate performance demands of rhapsodes competitively leaving off and taking up the narrative stream where they see fit. It is tempting to speculate further that rhapsodic gaming of this kind actually *generated* longer narratives,[37] but even if that

[37] Cf. Martin (2000:410) again on the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* . His notion of expansion of Homeric formulae can be found at 1989:209-10 (splitting and replacement), 214-15 (elaboration), and 216-19 (telescoping).

cannot be proven, we may more narrowly conclude that such gaming contributed to the development of enjambement as a connective technique.

The most prominent rhapsodic competition that we know about took place at the Panathenaia in Athens. In this competition rhapsodes performed by exchange and by cue in a manner that seems to reflect, albeit indirectly, what we observed in the *Certamen*. I will only discuss here the two most prominent testimonia for what J. A. Davison (1955, 1958) once called the "Panathenaic Rule." The first relates how the rules were laid down by Hipparkhos:

> Ἱππάρχῳ, ὃς τῶν Πεισιστράτου παίδων ἦν πρεσβύτατος καὶ σοφώτατος, ὃς ἄλλα τε πολλὰ καὶ ἔργα σοφίας ἀπεδείξατο, καὶ τὰ Ὁμήρου ἔπη πρῶτος ἐκόμισεν εἰς τὴν γῆν ταυτηνί, καὶ ἠνάγκασε τοὺς ῥαψῳδοὺς Παναθηναίοις ἐξ ὑπολήψεως ἐφεξῆς αὐτὰ διιέναι, ὥσπερ νῦν ἔτι οἵδε ποιοῦσι.
>
> Hipparkhos, who was the eldest and wisest of the sons of Peisistratos, and who, among the other many and beautiful deeds that he displayed as proof of his wisdom, first brought the utterances of Homer to this land [=Athens], and required [*anankazô*] the rhapsodes at the Panathenaia to go through [*dia-ienai*] these things [*auta*=utterances] in sequence [*ephexês*], by relay [*ex hupolêpseôs*], as they [=rhapsodes] still do even now.
>
> ([Plato], *Hipparchus* 228b-c)

In this passage we are told that Hipparkhos, a son of Peisistratos, first brought the Homeric poems (*epê*, which most likely means in written form[38]) to Athens, [39] and then required that rhapsodes at the Panathenaia go through them in sequence (*ephexês*[40]) and by relay (*ex hupolêpseôs,* from the verb *hupolambanô* "to take up, reply"). This idea of relay is crucial, because as we have seen in the example of the Homeridae, they also stitched or wove their poetry together by turn-taking, and it seems to me that if this practice

[38] I agree with Nagy (1996:133) that texts of Homer were not essential to the origin and early development of rhapsodic competitions, but I believe that written texts are assumed by the author of this passage. At Alcidamas, *On Sophists* 14, written texts are also assumed in the performance of rhapsodes and actors.

[39] Cf. the related account of Lycurgus, who brought the Homeric poems from the descendants of Kreophylos of Samos back to the Spartans (Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus* 4.4). Discussion in Burkert 1972 and Nagy 1996:79, with testimonia given in his Appendix 1.

[40] I take *ephexês* to refer to the sequence of performance by rhapsodes, that is, one after another, rather than to the sequence of poetic material. Cf. Schwartz 1940:5.

was institutionalized by Hipparkhos, then it must in some sense represent a distinguishing characteristic of rhapsodic performance at the Panathenaia,[41] as opposed to, say, the competitions between kithara or pipe players. The Panathenaia might have allowed for the display of various improvisational techniques, such as embellishing and the sequencing of scenes in expansion, as well as a clever pick-up through enjambement by one rhapsode from the previous rhapsode. Although the evidence does not permit definitive answers here, it is important to stress that all of these possibilities are conceivable within Hipparkhos' rules for performance. Any claim that the entire *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were recited from beginning to end at the Panathenaia is simply insupportable.[42]

The idea of exchange between rhapsodes is refined in the reference to the Panathenaic Rule in Diogenes Laertius, who attributes it to Solon:

> τά τε Ὁμήρου ἐξ ὑποβολῆς γέγραφε ῥαψῳδεῖσθαι, οἷον ὅπου ὁ πρῶτος ἔληξεν, ἐκεῖθεν ἄρχεσθαι τὸν ἐχόμενον.
>
> He [=Solon] wrote a law that the poetry of Homer was to be performed rhapsodically [*rhapsôideô*] by cue [*ex hupobolês*, from *hupoballô*], so that where the first person left off, from that point the next one would begin.
>
> (Diogenes Laertius 1.57 [*Life of Solon*])

Here we read that Solon wrote a law that the poetry of Homer was to be performed rhapsodically *ex hupobolês* "by cue," and that where the first singer left off, the next one would begin at that point.[43] What this means exactly is not as clear as scholars like H. A. Shapiro would have us believe:

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[41] There may be ideological implications to the Panathenaic rule as well, which I intend to address in a forthcoming work. Some attempt has been made to treat the democratic nature of the Panathenaia (particularly with respect to the *euandria* contest) after the accession of Kleisthenes; see Neils 1994.

[42] E.g. by Sealey (1957:342, 349); strong hints of the same position can be found in Shapiro (1993:104). Doubts on this point have (rightly in my view) been expressed by Burkert (1987:50) and Boyd (1994:118). Kotsidu (1991:44), although suggesting that *die Reihenfolge des Textes*—whatever this is exactly—had to be maintained by rhapsodes, does not assume that both epics were performed at the Panathenaia. Yet she does assume that at least one of them was performed in its entirety. This same view was expressed much earlier by Meyer (1918:332). As we shall see, the evidence as we have it does not even support this claim.

[43] Cf. the related but derivative accounts of the "Panathenaic Rule" in Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates* 102 and Plutarch, *Pericles* 13.6.

it could mean, as he argues (1993:104), that after a coherent scene, of the kind mentioned earlier in connection with Plato's *Ion*, one rhapsode stops and the next one begins. But there is no reason to assume that possibility only. It could also be the case that two rhapsodes may both be engaged in singing by turns the same "scene," just as Homer and Hesiod were engaged on Delos to sing one hymn to Apollo, and they alternated with one another in producing it. We do not know the frequency with which rhapsodes, given this performance mode, might have alternated with one another. In the list of performable scenes given by Socrates in the *Ion* (535b), the possible length appears to vary from as little as seven lines (*Iliad* 22.430-36 concerning Hekabe) to several hundred (*Iliad* 24.144-717 on Priam). Although Ion in Plato's dialogue can recite whole scenes himself, this does not mean that recitation on such a scale was the only performative mode at the Panathenaia.[44] If this is correct, it provides an answer to the interesting problem of how rhapsodes were prevented from arbitrarily appropriating to themselves the better scenes (a point originally raised by Sealey [1957:343]), however we conclude what makes a scene better or worse in Homer. This concern does not arise if rhapsodes are performing the same scenes together, and equally importantly, it does not arise if we assume that what was competitive about rhapsodic performance lay not primarily in the content of what was performed, but rather in the technical and dramatic skill with which it was performed.

The term *ex hupobolês* deserves a special note. I follow *LSJ*'s basic translation of this phrase, but I do not agree with their suggestion that rhapsodes recited from an external cue, as if the cue here were some kind of actor's prompt.[45] Research in cultures with living oral traditions shows that in competitive poetic contests oral cues can be given by one singer to another in performance, without any difficulty and at times with great virtuosity. The cues are sometimes as simple as a given word that is handed off, as it were, leaving it up to the next singer to do something innovative with it, or to do something that is not necessarily innovative but nonetheless shows a mastery of the game. As one non-Greek example, I cite a dueling rhyme game discussed by Alan Dundes (1987) that has been documented among modern Turkish boys, aged roughly 8-14. In this rather simplistic

[44] And it certainly does not exclude the kinds of improvisation, especially the addition or elaboration of verses, for which I have been arguing.

[45] Cf. Boyd 1994:115, n.16, where he unnecessarily posits the existence of "attendants" or "officials" who preside over the competition and who clock each rhapsode's performance.

game, the object is to cast an opponent into a passive homosexual role. One boy starts by giving an image, say a bear (in Turkish, *ayı*). The next boy must then say something clever like "let a violin bow enter the bear," saying it in such a way that the final word of his sentence, "bow" (*yayı*), rhymes with the word for bear. The violin bow, by the way, is a particularly appropriate image because it is long and thin, and the bowing motion itself suggests sexual motion. Then the first boy must find an equally apposite retort, perhaps something to the effect that it is better if a real man replaces the bow and enters the second boy, again making his line-end rhyme with the previous line-end.[46] Provided each boy makes a successful retort with end-rhyme, linking image to image, the game continues, sometimes with dozens of exchanged lines. Sometimes the exchanged lines are improvised on the spot, but just as frequently certain of them are in fact traditional responses, and so part of the object of the game is to show by means of these responses how well one has mastered the traditional repertoire. The loser will be the boy who fails poetically to thwart his opponent's attempts to cast him in a passive homosexual role or who breaks the rhyme scheme. As these non-professional games show, cueing and exchange between players are dictated by the internal dynamics of the game and by the tradition. Similarly in the case of Greece, we need not look beyond the performing rhapsodes themselves for the *hupobolê*.

We actually have later evidence in Greece (particularly in Ionia) that rhapsodic exchange, as a general performance mode, also took place at the non-professional level of boys' games. Plato in the *Timaeus* (21b) mentions that boys at the festival of Apaturia were said to engage in "rhapsodic contests" (*aithla rhapsôidias*) set up by their fathers, where the objective was apparently to exchange the elegiac verses of Solon. Perhaps the most interesting boys' games are documented in inscriptions from Chios and Teos, dated to the second century B.C.E., set up to commemorate the victors. In the inscription from Chios (*CIG* 2214=*SIG* 959), we read about competitions between different age levels of boys in *rhapsôidia*, as well as *anagnôsis* (reading), *kitharismos/kitharisis* (lyre-playing), and *psalmos* (harp-playing), not to mention more physical exercises like the *diaulos* (running race). Dittenberger, following Boeckh, in his commentary on this inscription, relates this description of events to the inscription from Teos (*CIG* 3088=*SIG* 960n1), which lists many of the same competitive events but also mentions an event *hupobolês antapodoseôs* for the older age-set of boys (*hêlikia*). This is possibly some kind of give-and-take competition by cue, a game Wilamowitz (1884:266) connected to the *Certamen*. The give-

[46] These examples in Dundes 1987:86.

and-take competition seems parallel to the mention of *rhapsôidia* in the Chios inscription, as well as to the more advanced and specialized rhapsodic competitions at the Panathenaia. Following Dittenberger and Boeckh, I would argue that the reference to *hupobolê* certainly suggests the exchange of poetic verses, and again that, contrary to *LSJ*, these boys' competitions, as in the Turkish example, need not entail any external prompt. Rhapsodes, moreover, with their extensive memorization and mastery of Homeric texts,[47] would surely not have needed any external cue by which to exchange verses.

There is widespread evidence from all over Greece that rhapsodic performances continued vigorously for centuries—the Panathenaia itself is attested down to the third century C.E.[48] But when we look at the period between roughly the fourth and first centuries B.C.E., some innovations in the structure and content of professional rhapsodic performances begin to emerge. Victory lists for this period found in inscriptions from a wide array of cities in Greece, usually in the context of festivals in honor of gods or local cult heroes, which have been thoroughly studied by Maria Pallone,[49] show quite clearly that not only rhapsodes were victorious, but also a new breed of contestant, the ποιητὴς ἐπῶν or "poet of epic," began to win. Pallone has explained that, beginning in the fourth century, new works of poetry in hexameter began to be composed for these festival contests, and that they were performed either by a rhapsode or occasionally by the poet himself, who may be listed as victorious under both the title of poet and rhapsode.[50] Typically the content of these new epic creations is mythological, historical, or what Pallone calls "court" epics. So for example there were poems composed about the deeds of Herakles or the Argonauts, the exploits of Dionysus, as well as more localized stories about individual communities and their foundation legends. As a model for these compositions, Pallone suggests (1984:163), we might compare the seventh- and sixth-century B.C.E. compositions of the Epic Cycle poems, attributed

[47] Memorization by rhapsodes is assumed at Xenophon, *Symposium*, 3.6.

[48] See the inscriptions cited in M. West 1996:1312. Cf. Herington 1985: Appendix II.

[49] Pallone 1984. Cf. the brief treatment of this period in Gentili 1990:174-76.

[50] E.g. *Inscriptiones Graecae* 7.419.14-17 (first century B.C.E.).

to rhapsodes such as Leskhes of Lesbos or Arktinos of Miletus,[51] which covered the exploits of Herakles and the Theban and Trojan wars. However, the difference between the Hellenistic compositions and those of elite Alexandrian poets such as Apollonius of Rhodes, Callimachus, and Theocritus, to name only a few, are that the former were composed for popular performance and competition at these localized festivals, not for a narrow circle of literati directly associated with the Library of Alexandria.[52]

Variatio Homerica

We may correlate this period of innovation in rhapsodic performances, roughly from the fourth to the first centuries B.C.E., with a small corpus of Homeric papyri from the Ptolemaic period (305-145 B.C.E.) that stand out for the peculiarity of their divergences from the vulgate of Homer. The Ptolemaic papyri of Homer, collected and edited by Stephanie West (1967), give us many examples of so-called "plus-verses," which are additional verses that survive but do not appear in the vulgate Homer as it becomes standardized after the editorial activity of Aristarchus, perhaps in 150 B.C.E. or so. These papyri, dating from about 300 to 150 B.C.E. are considered "eccentric" or "wild" because they diverge so much from the Roman papyri of Homer, which deviate much less from the medieval manuscripts. As West points out, these papyri "cannot be explained by the processes of mere mechanical (that is to say, scribal or copyist) corruption" (1967:11). The divergences simply show too intimate a knowledge of the Homeric texts to be errors in the usual sense, and are more readily understandable as the product of a still lively poetic tradition.[53]

Many scholars, including Thomas Allen (1924:267), have argued that these variations are specifically due to the performance of rhapsodes.[54] This

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[51] See Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.144 and Aly 1920:246 on Leskhes' contest with Arktinos. Leskhes is said to have won.

[52] Pallone 1984:162-64 and Gentili 1990:174.

[53] Foley (1990:22-26, espec. 26) presents a forceful argument for this view and emphasizes the contribution of rhapsodes.

[54] Stephanie West is another; see S. West 1967:13, and her essay "The Transmission of the Text" in Heubeck et al. 1988:33-48, espec. 35, though I emphatically disagree with her notion that rhapsodes thought of themselves as "improving" the text.

same conjecture was made in the nineteenth century (in the wake of Friedrich August Wolf's rhapsodic *Liedertheorie* of the composition of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*), but at that time scholars like Arthur Ludwich regarded rhapsodes (such as Kynaithos) as inferior forgers and falsifiers of the Homeric text.[55] Allen adopted this same prejudice when, following Ludwich, he argued that rhapsodes were attempting to "increase and improve" the Master (1924:326), that is Homer, whence he proceeded to give an allusion to Mozart's supplements to Handel. More recently, Michael Apthorp has argued along similar lines that the Ptolemaic papyri should be understood as "lapses of memory" or the result of inevitable "alterations and additions to the poems in the process of recitation" by rhapsodes that arise during an oral performance (1980:67-68). Instead, it is more likely that these papyri reflect new ground rules for (competitive) improvisation in performance, or the representation of improvisation in performance in Hellenized Egypt. As we have seen, the papyri appear during the same period in which other types of innovation in rhapsodic performances in Greece emerge, which included the creation of new epic material. So it is more pertinent to ask why some Greeks in Egypt preferred, at least in the eccentric papyri, to reorganize the text of Homer rather than to create new material. Their actions reflect a very specific performance demand, rather than merely, as others have argued,[56] a generalized reintroduction of fluidity into the textual tradition.

In this connection it is worth noting two related details about rhapsodes that involve the manipulation of Homeric material within individual verses, which give added dimension to the potential subtlety of their performances. The first involves an anecdote in Plutarch about Ptolemy II Philadelphus on his wedding day.[57] Ptolemy II married his sister

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[55] See Ludwich 1898:159-64, espec. 160, n.1, where he specifically attacks the earlier arguments of Kirchoff (1893:903), who thought that the variations derived from "Memorirexemplare der Rhapsoden" who used the variations in performance, along the lines of what we are told about Kynaithos (see above). Although it is not clear that rhapsodes created their own texts as memory-aides for performance, Kirchoff's point about a rhapsode's freedom to manipulate Homer in performance is very close to my own. Ludwich (1898:160-61), however, refused to regard rhapsodes like Kynaithos as anything but forgers, and certainly not poets. We should distinguish between what the variations tell us about improvisation in live performances from their relationship to the origin of the vulgate text of Homer.

[56] E.g., Nagy 1996:144.

[57] Cf. the discussion of this passage in Nagy 1996:161-62.

Arsinoe, who would become one of the most important women rulers in Egypt, yet at the time the marriage was considered scandalous by Greeks. In any case, Plutarch relates the story of the rhapsode whom Ptolemy II had hired to perform at his wedding, and this rhapsode became famous for beginning his performance with a line from book 18 of the *Iliad*:

> καὶ ὁ μὲν ῥαψῳδὸς εὐθὺς ἦν διὰ στόματος πᾶσιν, ἐν τοῖς Πτολεμαίου γάμοις ἀγομένου τὴν ἀδελφὴν καὶ πρᾶγμα δρᾶν ἀλλόκοτον ‹νομιζ›ομένου καὶ ἄθεσμον ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπῶν ἐκείνων·
> Ζεὺς δ᾽ Ἥρην <u>ἐκάλεσσε</u> κασιγνήτην ἄλοχόν τε (from *Iliad* 18.356)
>
> and the rhapsode was the talk of everyone—the one who, at the wedding of Ptolemy, who by marrying his sister was believed to be doing something unnatural and unlawful, began with the following verses:
> 'And Zeus <u>summoned</u> Hera, his sister and wife' (from *Iliad* 18.356)
> (Plutarch, *Quaestiones convivales* 736e)

Whoever this rhapsode was, he was clever enough to begin his performance by adducing an apt line from Homer, but there is greater subtlety to his recitation than scholars have noticed. In the vulgate of Homer, this line does not say that Zeus summoned (καλέω) Hera, with its more stately implication, but rather the following:

> Ζεὺς δ᾽ Ἥρην <u>προσέειπε</u> κασιγνήτην ἄλοχόν τε
>
> And Zeus <u>addressed</u> Hera, his sister and wife (*Iliad* 18.356)

In other words, according to the vulgate Zeus merely spoke to or addressed (προσεείπω) Hera at this point, since what follows this line is actually a speech by Zeus. Although we do not know the source of Plutarch's quotation, it is possible that our rhapsode not only aptly quoted this line of Homer, but also that he improvised the verb to make the whole line more consonant with the circumstances of Ptolemy's wedding.

The second example comes from the T scholia to *Iliad* 21.26. After a description of Achilles' slaughter of Trojans in the Xanthus river, the great hero wearies of killing and then takes twelve Trojan youths as a recompense for the dead Patroklos. Of Achilles' fatigue specifically, we read:

> ...ὁ δ᾽ ἐπεὶ κάμε <u>χεῖρας</u> ἐναίρων

> . . . and when he tired in his hands from killing (*Iliad* 21.26)

The idiom in Greek requires that the noun χεῖρας, in the accusative, represent the body part that is fatigued in connection with the verb κάμνω "to weary," while the participle ἐναίρων (from ἐναίρω "to slay, kill") describes the action from which one is fatigued. However, the T scholia report that a rhapsode named Hermodoros (otherwise unknown) placed a different construction on this line. The scholion reads:

> Ἑρμόδωρος ὁ ῥαψῳδὸς χεῖρας ἐναίρων ἤκουε 'χειροκοπῶν,' κατεχρήσατο δέ.
>
> The rhapsode Hermodoros for χεῖρας ἐναίρων heard "hand-cutting," and used it wrongly.

If we distinguish Hermodoros' interpretation of the line from the scholiast's condemnation of his syntactic knowledge, we may detect a hint of deliberate playfulness and an "improvised" interpretation of Achilles' actions at this point in the narrative. By taking the noun χεῖρας as the direct object of the participle ἐναίρων rather than with κάμνω, Hermodoros represents Achilles as actually cutting off the hands of the twelve youths whom he will take in the following lines (21.27-8) as recompense for Patroklos. Rather than a misunderstanding or misapplication of Greek syntax, I interpret Hermodoros' play as a purposive improvisation meant to depict Achilles in a more gruesome fashion. As in the previous example, such minor variations considered from the standpoint of a modern textual editor or an Alexandrian scholiast may seem irrelevant, and yet these very types of changes may be further direct evidence of performance improvisations characteristic of rhapsodes. The fact that Hermodoros' interpretation is reported at all suggests that his violation of Greek syntax nevertheless resulted in a striking and memorable image.

Yet rhapsodes alone may not be the only performers responsible for textual changes or improvised interpretations. We must also briefly consider the figure of the ὁμηριστής (Latin *homerista*),[58] about whom much less is known but who is closely related to the rhapsode. In at least one account (Athenaeus 620b) the *homêristês* is actually said to be identical with the rhapsode. There has been some dispute over the exact historical relationship

[58] Nagy 1996:156-74 is fundamental. I draw heavily upon his discussion in what follows.

between rhapsodes and *homêristai*, because the name *homêristês*, derived from the verb *homêrizein* ("to act Homer"),[59] in other contexts suggests that they both recited and mimed Homeric poetry.[60] Nevertheless, the connection between them seems to relate to the degree of acting involved in the performance of Homer, with the *homêristai* representing a more dramatic phase in the tradition.

In the third quarter of the fourth century, when Demetrius of Phalerum (ruled 317-307 B.C.E.) was at the height of his political and cultural influence in Athens, we are told that he was the first to introduce those who are now called *homêristai* into the theaters:

> ὅτι δ᾽ ἐκαλοῦντο οἱ ῥαψῳδοὶ καὶ Ὁμηρισταὶ Ἀριστοκλῆς εἴρηκεν ἐν τῷ περὶ Χορῶν. τοὺς δὲ νῦν Ὁμηριστὰς ὀνομαζομένους πρῶτος εἰς τὰ θέατρα παρήγαγε Δημήτριος ὁ Φαληρεύς. Χαμαιλέων δὲ ἐν τῷ περὶ Στησιχόρου καὶ μελῳδηθῆναί φησιν οὐ μόνον τὰ Ὁμήρου, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ Ἡσιόδου καὶ Ἀρχιλόχου, ἔτι δὲ Μιμνέρμου καὶ Φωκυλίδου. Κλέαρχος δ᾽ ἐν τῷ προτέρῳ περὶ Γρίφων 'τὰ Ἀρχιλόχου, φησίν, Σιμωνίδης ὁ Ζακύνθιος ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις ἐπὶ δίφρου καθήμενος ἐρραψῴδει.' Λυσανίας δ᾽ ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ περὶ Ἰαμβοποιῶν Μνασίωνα τὸν ῥαψῳδὸν λέγει ἐν ταῖς δείξεσι τῶν Σιμωνίδου τινὰς ἰάμβων ὑποκρίνεσθαι. τοὺς δ᾽ Ἐμπεδοκλέους Καθαρμοὺς ἐρραψῴδησεν Ὀλυμπίασι Κλεομένης ὁ ῥαψῳδός, ὥς φησιν Δικαίαρχος ἐν τῷ Ὀλυμπικῷ. Ἰάσων δ᾽ ἐν τρίτῳ περὶ τῶν Ἀλεξάνδρου Ἱερῶν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ φησὶν ἐν τῷ μεγάλῳ θεάτρῳ ὑποκρίνασθαι Ἡγησίαν τὸν κωμῳδὸν τὰ Ἡσιόδου, Ἑρμόφαντον δὲ τὰ Ὁμήρου.
>
> That rhapsodes were called also *Homêristai* Aristocles says in his book *On Choruses*. Demetrius of Phalerum first introduced those now called *Homêristai* into the theatres . Chamaeleon, in his book *On Stesichorus*, says that not only the poetry of Homer was sung melodically, but also that of Hesiod and Archilochus, and even that of Mimnermus and Phocylides. Clearchus, in the first of his two books *On Riddles* says, "Simonides of Zacynthus, seated on a stool, used to perform rhapsodically the poetry of Archilochus in the theatres." Lysanias, in the first book of his *On the Iambic Poets*, says that Mnasion the rhapsode used to act in public performances some of the iambic poems of Simonides. And Kleomenes the rhapsode performed rhapsodically the *Purifications* of Empedocles at Olympia, as Dichaearchus says in his book the *Olympic*. Jason, in the

[59] For the verb *homêrizein* in Achilles Tatius 8.9.2-3, see Nagy 1996:164-65.

[60] Nagy 1996:167 *contra* (e.g.) Robert 1936:237.

> third book of his work on the *Divine Honors to Alexander*, says that in the great theatre of Alexandria Hegesias the comedian acted the poetry of Hesiod, and Hermophantos acted that of Homer (Athenaeus 620b-c).

I quote this passage at length because it provides significant background on the wide variety of poetry that was performed in theatres, such as the hexameters of Hesiod and Empedocles, and also the iambic poems of Archilochus and Simonides. Most significantly for the present, however, is that the great theatre of Alexandria is singled out as the locale for the acting (*hupokrinomai*) of Hesiod and Homer. To follow Athenaeus' logic of presentation, even the fact that the poetry of Homer and Hesiod was acted by comedians (κωμῳδός) in Alexandria can be seen as a development of the greater theatricalization of Homeric performance begun by Demetrius.

Athenaeus says explicitly that the term *homêristai* was another name given to rhapsodes, hence our need to confront the *homêristai* more directly. In general our evidence for the nature of their performances is very scant, but other literary evidence in conjunction with several papyri suggest that both in large-scale public and smaller-scale private venues *homêristai* performed well into the third century C.E. So, for example, one incidental reference to what the *homêristai* did comes to us from the *Interpretation of Dreams* by Artemidorus, dated to the third century C.E., in which there is an anecdote about a surgeon who once dreamed that he was acting Homer. The surgeon draws an analogy between the motions made by *homêristai* as they gesture in performance and those made by a surgeon as he operates:

> καὶ γὰρ οἱ ὁμηρισταὶ τιτρώσκουσι μὲν καὶ αἱμάσσουσιν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀποκτεῖναί γε βούλονται· οὕτω δὲ καὶ ὁ χειρουργός

> just as the *homêristai* injure and draw blood, but do not intend to kill, so also does the surgeon (Artemidorus 4.2, ed. Pack).

Another passage from Petronius' *Satyricon* is more descriptive, but also gives some indication of the changing venues for *homêristai* performances. In this passage, Trimalchio, a poorly educated but degenerately wealthy aristocrat who is in the midst of feasting his friends at his home, asks that everyone be festive and watch the Homeristae as they make their entrance:

> *'simus ergo, quod melius est, a primitiis hilares et Homeristas spectemus.' intravit factio statim hastisque scuta concrepuit. ipse Trimalchio in pulvino consedit, et cum Homeristae Graecis versibus colloquerentur, ut insolenter solent, ille canora voce Latine legebat librum.*

> 'Let us be festive, which is better, from the start and watch the *Homêristai*.' Immediately a troupe entered clanging on their spears and shields. Trimalchio himself sat on a cushion, and while the Homeristae were dialoguing in Greek verses in their usual bombastic manner, he read along in Latin in a loud voice. (Petronius, *Satyricon* 59.2-3)

There is much humor in this scene—of course, not only are the *homêristai* lavishly decked out in military armor but their dialogue is loud and affected. Moreover, Trimalchio obviously knows no Greek and therefore must read along in his Latin translation of Homer to follow the performance. Trimalchio becomes more of a fool in what follows, when he asks the *homêristai* to stop while he explains the plot to them. He completely confuses the characters by saying that the brothers concerned were Diomedes and Ganymede (instead of Agamemnon and Menelaos); that their sister was Helen, whom Agamemnon rescued and substituted a deer for Diana. He goes on to say that Agamemnon gave his own daughter Iphigeneia as a wife to Achilles, but that on account of this (instead of Achilles' armor) Ajax went insane (59.4-6). This is all quite absurd, but finally, at the mention of Ajax, Trimalchio's servants begin to scurry about making preparations for the entry of a boiled calf, which is brought in on a heavy tray with a helmet on its head. Then a man dressed as Ajax, possibly a *homêristês*, comes in with a sword and begins to mime as if he were the insane Ajax madly cleaving at herds of cattle, all the while collecting bits of meat on the end of his sword and passing it to the guests who look on in amazement (59.6-7). For our purposes, this parodic display does at least support the idea that the *homêristai*, who not only performed in theatres but as we have just seen could also be hired out for elite dinner parties, both recited Homeric verses and mimed the dramatic action.[61]

Other evidence for *homêristai* performances comes from papyri dated from the second-third centuries B.C.E. that are contemporary with the eccentric papyri of Homer. As the papyrologist Geneviève Husson has demonstrated, there are at least five papyri from Oxyrhynchus, some of which are contracts for actual performances (with fees indicated) in which *homêristai* are sometimes paired with mimes. This suggests that the *homêristai* recited Homer while the mimes did the acting;[62] however, the

[61] Robert (1936:237) argued that *homêristai* only mimed Homeric battle scenes.

[62] Husson's third text, *SB* 7336 (1993:97, n. 18), mentions payment to a reader (*anagnôstês*) who might have read out loud while the *homêristai* mimed the scenes. The question remains: what exactly was read?

content of their performances is not described. But the setting would once again have been of large-scale public performances like that of rhapsodes—we know for example that the theatre at Oxyrhynchus could hold upwards of 11,000 people[63]—and the context for these performances would likely have been competitive. Indeed one papyrus, *P.Oslo* 3.189.19 studied by Husson (her text 2) mentions a contest of poets (*agôn poiêtôn*), somewhat along the lines of the Hellenistic victory inscriptions discussed earlier.

Taken together, then, this evidence for *homêristai* suggests that, by virtue of their performance need to recite Homer, they too could be responsible for the variations that we find in the eccentric papyri. If rhapsodes are occasionally credited with textual changes in the Homeric scholia,[64] this may reflect their (historically) greater prestige as public performers as compared to the *homêristai*. But from the standpoint of trying to explain the Ptolemaic textual variation, we cannot exclude other performers of Homer like the *homêristai*,[65] the content of whose performances largely elude us but which could have demanded the special effects achieved in the eccentric papyri.

To restate the argument briefly: the evidence we have for rhapsodic performance suggests that they could competitively recite memorized verses, improvise verses on the spot for elaboration or embellishment, and take up and leave off Homeric (or other) narratives wherever they chose. Further evidence suggests that rhapsodes could modify words within a verse, or modify Greek syntax where plausible to create new meaning from a known verse. To the extent that *homêristai* performed in a manner comparable to rhapsodes, we may attribute the same skills to them. Viewed in this light, the Ptolemaic eccentric papyri show direct evidence of this kind of manipulation. What we now need to explain is the effects achieved by the plus-verses, which are the distinguishing feature of these papyri.

The creation of a vivid and memorable image is a case in point. A typical example comes from *Iliad* 22.316, in the scene where Achilles lunges at Hektor. This is, by the way, one of the several performable scenes or episodes mentioned by Socrates in Plato's *Ion* (535b). In the *Iliad* scene, Hektor and Achilles have exchanged some boasts and abuse, and then

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[63] Bowman 1986:144.

[64] Ludwich (1898:163) already noted how infrequently rhapsodes are mentioned in the scholia. *Homêristai* do not appear to be mentioned at all.

[65] In this sense, it is irrelevant whether they are considered "low-class" actors, as M. West (1996:1312) dismissively states.

Hektor calls upon his brother Deïphobos to give him a spear. Realizing that Deïphobos is not near enough to do this, Hektor senses that his fate is near, and so gathers himself together and makes a run at Achilles. At this moment, Achilles charges in return, and we hear about his helmet, with its golden plumes, glittering in the sun:

> χρύσεαι, ἃς Ἥφαιστος ἵει λόφον ἀμφὶ θαμειάς
>
> golden, which Hephaistos had let fall thick along the crest of the helmet
> (*Iliad* 22.316)

In the Papyrus labeled P^{12} (in the Bodleian Library at Oxford and University Library in Heidelberg), datable to the early to mid-third century B.C.E., we find three plus verses to accompany line 316, which I give below:

> P^{12} *Iliad* 22.316a, b, c = 22.133-35
>
> 316 [χρύσεαι, ἃσ Ἥφαιστοσ ἵει λόφο]ν ἀμ[φὶ θαμ]ε̣[ιά]σ̣,
>
> 316a [<u>σείων</u> Πηλιάδα μελ]ίην κατὰ [δεξιὸν] ὦμον
> <u>shaking</u> the Pelian ash spear by his right shoulder
>
> 316b [δεινήν· ἀμφὶ δὲ χαλκὸ]σ̣ ἐλάμπ[ε]τ̣ο̣ [εἴκελοσ αὐγῆι
> dangerous; and the bronze all around shone like a ray
>
> 316c [ἢ πυρὸσ αἰθομένου ἢ ἠελίου] ἀνιόντ̣[οσ.
> either of blazing fire or of the rising sun

Note especially that the enjambing word (*seiôn*) in 316a is a participle, a frequent and flexible type of enjambement in Homer and the *Certamen*, and that this is consistent with the uses of enjambement by rhapsodes for which I argued earlier. In any case, these three verses are identical to verses 133-35 from the same Book 22 of the *Iliad*, as transmitted through the vulgate. Now the question is, simply, why do these plus verses appear at line 316 in this eccentric papyrus?

I think we can provide an answer, but in order to do so we have also to supply a little imagination. All we really have to suppose is that our audience knows book 22 well enough to know the context of lines 133-35, and that they were used in a rhapsodic or homeristic performance. Before those lines occur, King Priam and Queen Hekabe have unsuccessfully attempted to keep Hektor from battling Achilles. Hektor then reflects on the tight position that he is in: if he retreats he will be ridiculed, but since he has

by his own recklessness endangered the Trojans, he feels compelled to continue fighting. He then debates in his heart about refusing to fight, giving up Helen, and even laying down his armor and propitiating Achilles. This does not seem satisfactory either, and so he resolves to let Zeus decide the victor. It is at this moment that we see Achilles beginning to close in on Hektor, shaking his dangerous Pelian ash spear by his right shoulder with his helmet blazing in the sun. So go verses 22.133-35. Now when Hektor sees this, he can no longer stand his ground and so flees, frightened, toward the base of the Trojan wall. Clearly the appearance and description of Achilles is decisive for Hektor at this moment, yet it is not until Achilles' next lunge for Hektor, at lines 312 and following, with our plus verses in the papyrus, that he will make the fatal spearthrust through Hektor's throat.

Therefore what I am suggesting is that, given a hypothetical performance context, lines 316a-c could well be an improvisation on the part of one rhapsode or *homêristês* who is simply embellishing and intensifying the description of Achilles at the fatal moment for Hektor. For an audience who knows their Homer, they add even more pungency to the description of Achilles' final lunge at verse 312 and following. Of course we cannot determine whether a rhapsode might have embellished line 316 as a virtuoso flourish, or whether a *homêristês* used them parodically to accentuate the presentation of a costumed mime, impersonating Achilles, as he stood there brandishing a spear in defiance (as the following lines indicate).

In all this I am not suggesting that we assume a one-to-one correspondence between papyrus P^{12}, or any papyrus, and a given performance, or that these texts are necessarily scripts or memory-aides for performance. This suggestion goes back to Kirchoff in the nineteenth century (1893:903) and, while it remains an attractive hypothesis, we still do not know the true origin of these papyri. However, the advantage of the approach outlined here is that it offers an alternative to attributing such plus verses and variations to pedantic scribes or misinformed copyists, or to dismissing them as uncreative interpolations of inferior performers. The variations suggest that knowledge of Homeric texts, and an ability to manipulate passages, was of primary importance to the authors and performers of these papyri because the innovation here involves the novel deployment of traditional material. The motivation for the variations is best explained by the competitive context of rhapsodic performances or, possibly, by the parodic context of homeristic performances. However, the "stitching" nature of the variations in the papyri on the whole incline me toward the rhapsodic performance scenario. What we can probably exclude

is the possibility that the variations are due to poets,[66] because as we saw earlier in the discussion of Hellenistic performances from the fourth to the first centuries B.C.E., the so-called poets of epic (ποιητὴς ἐπῶν, ἐποποιός) typically were rewarded for the creation of new epic material largely treating historical and mythological subjects.[67] What we may conclude is that these papyri reflect the interests of a delimited group of performers/authors who specialized in Homer, because we do not find the same extent of verse manipulation in Homeric papyri after 150 B.C.E., while rhapsodic (and homeristic) performances continue until the third century C.E. I regard it as more than probable that these papyri have issued from the Ptolemaic equivalent of the Homeridae of Chios or the Kreophyleoi of Samos.

Conclusion

Nearly fifty years ago Raphael Sealey cautioned his readers that in regard to the Homeridae, the fifth-century clan from Chios who at one time claimed exclusive descent from Homer (1957:315),

> the distinction that has been drawn . . . between a poet and a mere reciter is one that must be handled with care; doubtless there were men at some time in Greece who did both things. They composed poems of their own and they recited poems that they had learned from other poets; as reciters they may have modified the poems that they learned by introducing much of their own. Nevertheless it is possible to identify the extremes of the distinction.

For Sealey, and many scholars before and after him, Phemios and Demodokos in the *Odyssey* represent the poets (*aoidoi*) who compose while they perform, while Ion, the rhapsode (*rhapsôidos*) featured in Plato's dialogue by that name, represents the opposite extreme of the largely recitational performer. The case for creativity among rhapsodes has not been made easier by the prejudices of Plato (as evidenced in the *Ion*) and Xenophon, who ranks them among the stupidest of men (*Symposium* 3.6, *Memorabilia* 4.2.10). For Plato and Xenophon, although rhapsodes may recite Homer's words correctly, they simply do not know what they mean.

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[66] Unless, as is occasionally attested, a given poet competes as both poet and rhapsode, on which see Pallone 1984:162.

[67] Pallone 1984:162-66.

Even in the largely defamatory treatment of rhapsodes in Plato's dialogue *Ion*, however, we may detect a hint of the importance of improvisation. When Ion of Chios boasts of his victory at a rhapsodic contest at Epidauros, he says:

> Καὶ μὴν ἄξιόν γε ἀκοῦσαι, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὡς εὖ κεκόσμηκα τὸν Ὅμηρον· ὥστε οἶμαι ὑπὸ Ὁμηριδῶν ἄξιος εἶναι χρυσῷ στεφάνῳ στεφανωθῆναι.
>
> And indeed it is worth hearing, Socrates, how well I have embellished [*kosmeô*] Homer; so that I think that I am worthy of being crowned with a golden crown by the Homeridae (Plato *Ion*, 530d6-9).

The verb *kosmeô* ("embellish, adorn"), as others have noted,[68] elsewhere in the *Ion* refers to adornment with regard to clothing (530b5, 535d1), and in itself cannot be translated as "improvise." However, given the improvisational skills of rhapsodes that we have seen, I suggest that Ion's "embellishment" of Homer be interpreted broadly to subsume the totality of rhapsodic performance activities surveyed here—including mimetic and gestural elements, vocal range, and improvisation of verses. Verbal improvisation against tradition is thus integral (but admittedly not exclusive) to the popular appeal of rhapsodic competition in performance, and we must see that such competition is essentially a poetic game. The master of that game, like Ion, will be the one who most deftly displays the range of rhapsodic abilities discussed here.

The negative, conventional view of rhapsodes should be taken to reflect the narrow intellectual preoccupations of Xenophon and especially Plato, who sought to vitiate the claim that by knowing the "thought" (*dianoia*) of Homer about a given subject, a rhapsode could translate that into direct experience.[69] Such hostile views are simply not commensurate with the widespread evidence for public interest in rhapsodic performance attested from the sixth century B.C.E. down to the third century C.E. This evidence surely bespeaks the popularity of *rhapsôidia* as a mode of live performance, and it is the hold of this type of performance over the

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[68] E.g., Boyd 1994:116.

[69] Murray 1996:129. In the *Ion*, ridicule is sharply made of Ion's claim that by knowing from Homer the sort of speech appropriate to a general, he could in fact become a general (*Ion* 540d-541c), on which see Stehle 1997:16. For more on the *dianoia* of Homer, see Nagy 1999:143, n.4.

imagination of the Greeks that we should seek to explain. Although we cannot be certain that all performances by rhapsodes were competitive, we can be certain that the major contests, such as those at the Panathenaia and at Sikyon, were indeed competitive.[70]

So why, to put it simply, were rhapsodic performances so engaging?[71] One answer, as I have outlined it here, is that the damning opinions of Plato and Xenophon have overshadowed a degree of creative improvisation in rhapsodic performance. Such improvisation in the context of competition allowed for spontaneity and audience engagement against the backdrop of an extremely well known body of poetry. Moreover, Ion's statement cited above also suggests that his creative embellishment, rather than the popularity of Homeric poetry itself, would prompt the Homeridae to reward him. Thus a rhapsode's ability to embellish was central to his technique.

The most important practical implication to be derived from this perspective is that by incorporating a more fluid model of live performance into our understanding of the performance tradition of Homer, we may be able more effectively to account for variations in the manuscript tradition, including the eccentric papyri.[72] But we must first dismiss the idea that the variations we find by rhapsodes (or *homêristai* for that matter) were meant to compete with "Homer," an idea that inevitably leads to the conclusion that their innovations are inferior.[73] Until we remove the stigma attached to rhapsodes by the likes of Plato and Xenophon,[74] we will not make any headway in understanding the context for their variations. And yet these

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[70] Signaled foremost by the term *agôn* (e.g. Herodotus 5.67.1) and the verb *agônizesthai* (e.g. Plato, *Ion* 530a).

[71] Not all rhapsodic performances, of course, were engaging. Diodorus Siculus 14.109 reports that Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse, sent rhapsodes to perform his own poetry at the Olympic games in 388 B.C.E. At first the rhapsodes impressed the crowd, but subsequently the badness (*kakia*) of Dionysius' poetry was such as to cause the audience openly to ridicule him and his rhapsodes.

[72] Nagy's work (1996:7-38) is essential here.

[73] Cf. Labarbe (1949:425), who subordinates the verses attributed to rhapsodes to the *génie* of Homer.

[74] Similarly, Isocrates' negative mention of rhapsodes who perform Homer and Hesiod at the Lyceum (*Panath*. 18 and 33) should not be taken to reflect a rhapsode's verbal artistry. For the most part, the attacks of Plato, Xenophon, and, indirectly, Isocrates are limited to a rhapsode's ability to understand and interpret Homer; on which, see Murray 1996:20-21.

variations, such as they are, may give us direct access to how Homer was actually performed, and interpreted in performance, which simply cannot be recovered from the vulgate alone. The analogy with the performance of tragic poetry is instructive: we know that by 330 B.C.E. the Athenian statesman Lycurgus sought, for better or worse, to curtail the improvisations of actors with a decree limiting their lines to fixed texts of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides ([Plutarch], *Lives of the Ten Orators* 841.43).[75] My claim here is that we see the same underlying process at work in the performance tradition of rhapsodes: fixed texts of Homer provided the backdrop[76] to innovations and extemporaneous flourishes produced in live performances to win over the audience, which, as Plato's Ion (*Ion* 535e) reminds us, was always the ultimate arbiter of victory.[77]

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[75] For more, see Page 1934. In this connection we may also note the remarks of Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 10.1.66, that the Athenians allowed Aeschylus' tragedies, unpolished and disorganized as they were, to be corrected by later poets, on which see Nagy 1996:176. I intend to deal further with the implications of state-sponsored restrictions on performance, and their relationship to the popularity of improvisation, in a forthcoming work.

[76] Foley (1991:6-9, espec. ch. 2) is essential to understanding the performance of Homer as re-enactment against a body of known material. Further pertinent observations can be found in Bakker 1993:10-12.

[77] I would like especially to thank the specialist reviewer at *Oral Tradition* for many helpful and clarifying suggestions.

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