Poetry's Politics in Archaic Greek Epic and Lyric

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In memoriam John Miles Foley[1]

The *Iliad*'s Politics of Consensus

In a recent book (Elmer 2013) examining the representation of collective decision making in the *Iliad*, I have advanced two related claims: first, that the *Iliad* projects consensus as the ideal outcome of collective deliberation; and second, that the privileging of consensus can be meaningfully correlated with the nature of the poem as the product of an oral tradition.[2] The *Iliad*'s politics, I argue, are best understood as a reflection of the dynamics of the tradition out of which the poem as we know it developed. In the course of the present essay, I intend to apply this approach to some of the other texts and traditions that made up the poetic ecology of archaic Greece, in order to illustrate the diversity of this ecology and the contrast between two of its most important "habitats," or contexts for performance: Panhellenic festivals and the symposium. I will examine representative examples from the lyric and elegiac traditions associated with the poets Alcaeus of Mytilene and Theognis of Megara, respectively, and I will cast a concluding glance over the *Odyssey*, which sketches an illuminating contrast between festival and symposium. I begin, however, by distilling some of the most important claims from my earlier work in order to establish a framework for my discussion.

Scholars have been interested in the politics of the Homeric poems since antiquity. Ancient critics tended to draw from the poems lessons about proper political conduct, in accordance with a general tendency to view Homer as the great primordial educator of the Greeks. Thus Philodemus, in the first century BCE, wrote a treatise called *On the Good King according to Homer*, extracting lessons from both poems about the appropriate exercise of power; Dio of Prusa has Alexander of Macedon expounding to his father, Philip, Homer's

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[1] This article is a lightly revised version of a paper delivered as the twenty-sixth annual Lord and Parry Lecture at the University of Missouri's Center for Studies in Oral Tradition on March 13, 2012. Though I feel it is an inadequate tribute, I offer it to the memory of my gracious host on that occasion, John Miles Foley, whose work has been a constant source of inspiration for me.

[2] This work focuses on the *Iliad* but also includes a short appendix on the *Odyssey*.

preeminent virtue as an instructor of princes (*Oration* 2).[3] Modern scholars have tended instead to treat the poems as documents for early Greek history—or rather, prehistory. In the wake of Milman Parry's demonstration of the thoroughly traditional character of Homeric poetry, it has come to seem plausible that the poems, by preserving a tradition that antedates our earliest written texts in alphabetic Greek, may offer a precious glimpse into the prehistory of Greek politics. Historians are thus able to offer the poems as evidence for the political forms and structures of late Bronze Age and early Iron Age Greece. Still the best-known example of this kind of argument is Moses Finley's *The World of Odysseus* (1978 [1954]), which founds a number of claims about the society of the so-called Dark Age (roughly 1100-800 BCE) on nothing more than the testimony of these two literary texts.[4]

The appeal of such an approach is readily apparent—it holds the promise of providing access to a period for which textual sources are otherwise lacking—but so are the perils. One must always exercise caution when seeking to correlate a literary text with historical realia.[5] This is particularly true when no external documentary evidence is available as a control. In the case of Homeric poetry, an additional problem arises from the very same circumstance that seemed to open up the possibility of a prehistory of Greek politics in the first place, namely, the indebtedness of the Homeric poems to a very lengthy oral tradition, as demonstrated by Milman Parry and Albert Lord. It is in the nature of such a tradition to preserve within its inherited and formulaic diction traces of chronologically diverse periods, so that the "Homeric World" described by Finley is really an amalgam of elements from very different eras.[6] For example, within the world of the *Iliad*, the boar's tusk helmet worn by Odysseus in Book 10—a Bronze Age piece of equipment that would not have been seen in Greece after, say, the fifteenth century BCE—can happily coexist with Iron Age weapons and implements that first came into use centuries later. A similar kind of synthesis can be observed with regard to marriage customs, burial practices, and combat techniques. But if this is the case, how confident can we be that the poems reflect a single, identifiable historical context with respect to political structures?

My reading of politics in the *Iliad* attempts to resolve these interpretive difficulties by correlating the poem's political dynamics not with a single, identifiable historical context but rather with the dynamics that shaped the Iliadic tradition as it developed over time. The *Iliad*, as I

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[3] Asmis 1991 offers an English translation and commentary on Philodemus' treatise; see also Murray 1965, which emphasizes connections with the world of contemporary Roman politics.

[4] Finley 1978 [1954]. For other examples of this historicizing approach, see Morris 1986; van Wees 1992; Donlan 1997; and Raaflaub 1998.

[5] Tim Whitmarsh, responding to a review in the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, gives an eloquent statement of the problem (*BMCR* 2012.02.54, http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2012/2012-02-54.html): "Of course literary works allude in all sorts of ways to contemporary structures and events, but as a rule they do so in opaque, multifarious, and sometimes self-contradictory ways. If we are to give a historicist account of such works, we have to do more than simply join the dots between features internal to the text and external reference points; we need, rather, to grasp (as best we can; this, I concede, is also an elusive quest) the nature of the particular form of textuality in question, and ask what kind of (phantasmatic, or kaleidoscopic) 'history' is being projected."

[6] Snodgrass 1974 (reprinted with introductory comments in Snodgrass 2006) remains a cogent exposition of the "composite" nature of the world represented by the Homeric poems. For a critical response to Snodgrass, see Morris 1986:105-15. Some writers (for instance, Allan 2006:9 n.40) go so far as to characterize the world of the Homeric heroes as a "fiction."

have said, is the end product of a lengthy tradition, out of which the poem as we know it gradually evolved. This tradition can be conceptualized as a kind of long-term process of collective decision making, in which an emerging consensus among performers and audiences determined what counted as a legitimate performance of the story of Achilles' wrath. The rhapsodes who performed Homeric poetry and their audiences were undoubtedly aware of their participation in an ongoing process of negotiation over the norms of Iliadic narrative. Such an awareness would have arisen naturally in the context of the large regional and supra-regional festivals in which Homeric poetry appears to have evolved, and which can be loosely grouped together under the rubric of "Panhellenism."[7] These festivals, which were the premier venue for the performance of the Homeric poems, attracted visitors from the many diverse communities that made up the Greek world, each of which had its own distinctive heroic traditions. Performers at these festivals were faced with the task of presenting poetry that somehow connected with all of these traditions while corresponding exactly to none.[8] At the same time, audiences would implicitly be asked to suspend their local allegiances by accepting and endorsing a performance that took a broader, more Panhellenic perspective. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* demonstrably reflect the cosmopolitan outlook of such Panhellenic audiences, and this reflection is a direct result of the negotiation that would take place at every recurrence of a Panhellenic event such as the Panathenaic festival in Athens and could over time produce a masterpiece of cultural synthesis like the *Iliad*. At events such as these, audiences and performers would, as I have said, be made aware of their participation in an ongoing process of negotiation over the synthetic, Panhellenic narrative.[9] And it is precisely this awareness, I claim, that is reflected in the *Iliad*'s distinctive representation of political deliberation and collective decision making.

Approaching the politics of the *Iliad* in this way resolves the difficulty of finding a specific historical point of reference since the chronological depth that makes that task so difficult is now precisely the point: the poem's politics encode an awareness of the poem's evolution over time. Moreover, this approach helps us to make sense of one of the more curious features of politics in the *Iliad*, which is the unique value the poem appears to set on *consensus* as the optimal form of collective decision making. Consensus-based decision making is *not* a particularly prominent feature of historical Greek political cultures. In classical Athens, for example, reliance on the majority principle permitted the flourishing of an adversarial political culture that set no great store by solidarity. Meanwhile, the general preoccupation with civil

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[7] On Homeric poetry as a Panhellenic phenomenon, see the formulation of Nagy 1999 [1979]:7-8. Various festivals have been indicated as possible contexts for the composition and development of the Homeric poems. The Panathenaia features prominently in Nagy's own "evolutionary model," for which see Nagy 1996:chs. 5-7; Frame (2009:515-647) argues that the poems were composed in the context of the Panionia; Whitman (1958:76, 81) mentions both of these festivals, along with the Delia. (The poems may in fact reflect multiple performance contexts.) All of these festivals may be considered "Panhellenic" to various degrees (*pace* Davison 1955:12 on the limited appeal of the Panathenaia). For Panhellenism as a relative concept, see Nagy 2009:275.

[8] I adapt here the phrasing of Nagy's characterization of Homeric poetry as a Panhellenic tradition (1999 [1979]:7): "this poetic tradition synthesizes the diverse local traditions of each major city-state into a unified Panhellenic model that suits most city-states but corresponds exactly to none."

[9] For the *Iliad* as an example of the "synthetic narrative" of Panhellenic heroic traditions, see Marks 2010.

conflict (*stasis*) we observe in early Greek literature suggests that consensus was not ordinarily a feature of archaic political life.[10] Egon Flaig, author of a study on the "consensus principle" in the *Iliad*, has stressed the extent to which this principle does *not* match up with the political cultures of the historical Greek city-states (1994:30). As I have emphasized, however, the negotiation over the Panhellenic narrative tradition of the *Iliad* that took place at large festivals such as the Athenian Panathenaia *can* meaningfully be characterized in terms of consensus, for in such a context the most successful performance would be the one that appealed most broadly to audiences with diverse local interests.

Thus far my discussion has been fairly abstract. Let me begin to introduce more concrete detail by explaining, in the first place, just how and where we can detect the privileging of consensus that I claim characterizes Iliadic politics. My comments will also, I hope, be interesting as an illustration of the formulaic technique described by Parry and Lord.

Discussions of the political system represented in the Homeric poems typically focus on the power of the ruler, who often seems to impose his own will on the group. Exhibit A is Agamemnon, who in Book 1 rejects a request to ransom a captive woman in spite of the approval of the Greek army as a whole and then forcefully appropriates a captive woman belonging to Achilles over the objections of his advisors. But closer examination reveals a clear and unambiguous set of signals that—in all cases in which a proposal is put before a group—it is in fact collective will that is decisive. The key here is a system of formulaic expressions that describe the responses of audiences in decision making contexts. There are in the *Iliad* exactly five ways in which an audience may respond to a deliberative proposal, each characterized by a distinctive verb. Listed according to representative types (some of which exhibit minor variations), they are:[11]

> 1. ὣς ἔφαθ᾽, οἳ δ᾽ ἄρα πάντες ἀκὴν ἐγένοντο σιωπῇ
> He spoke thus, and they were all silent
> 3.95, 7.398, 8.28, 9.29[12]

> 2. ἔνθ᾽ ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες ἐπευφήμησαν Ἀχαιοί
> Thereupon all the other Achaeans expressed support
> 1.22, 1.376

> 3. ὣς ἔφαθ᾽, οἳ δ᾽ ἄρα πάντες ἐπίαχον υἶες Ἀχαιῶν
> He spoke thus, and all the sons of the Achaeans shouted in response
> 7.403, 9.50; cf. 2.333, 2.394

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[10] Cf. Loraux 2002:30: "The egalitarian *polis* of consensus . . . exists because actual cities are divided."

[11] All translations in this essay are my own. Greek quotations are taken from the following editions: Allen 1931 (*Iliad*); Burnet 1902 (*Republic*); Lobel and Page 1955 (Alcaeus); von der Muehll 1962 (*Odyssey*); Young 1971 (Theognis).

[12] In addition to these four occurrences in deliberative contexts, the formula is used six times to characterize responses to a challenge, to an appeal for individual action, or to a particularly astonishing speech (specifically, Achilles' rejection of Agamemnon's offer of compensation): see 7.92, 9.430, 9.693, 10.218, 10.313, and 23.676.

4. ὡς Ἕκτωρ ἀγόρευ᾽, ἐπὶ δὲ Τρῶες κελάδησαν
Hector spoke thus, and the Trojans roared in response
8.542, 18.310

5. ὣς ἔφαθ᾽, οἳ δ᾽ ἄρα πάντες ἐπήνησαν βασιλῆες
He spoke thus, and all the kings approved
7.344, 9.710; cf. 2.335, 3.461, 4.29, 4.380, 16.443, 18.312, 21.290, 22.181, 23.539-40

Of these five responses, the first—"they were all silent"—is unambiguously negative and signals the immediate rejection of a proposal. If an audience reacts with silence, we know immediately that the proposal in question will not be put into effect. The remaining four responses all appear to be positive, but in fact—and this is the crucial point—only one of them, the last, designates a definitive ratification. I have translated the key verb *epaineîn* as "approve," but this is actually a poor approximation of the powerful social force encapsulated in this verb, a force that might justifiably be equated with our notion of "consensus." Only in the case of this response is a proposal immediately and without further qualification put into effect. Each of the other apparently positive responses can be shown to be deficient in some respect, and each is, moreover, restricted to a fairly specific set of circumstances so that none duplicates exactly the function of another. So rigid is this system and so direct the connection between audience response and the outcome of an assembly that explicit notice of a proposal's efficacy becomes redundant once the audience's reaction has been reported: silence automatically means rejection, while the *epaineîn* formula—and that formula alone—indicates a decisive ratification that automatically carries a proposal into effect.

The deficiencies affecting the three positive responses that are less than fully decisive can help to clarify just what is so special about the fifth response. One of these deficiencies emerges clearly in a scene I have already mentioned—Agamemnon's rejection of a proposal to ransom a captive woman, which is, moreover, the event that sets the entire plot of the *Iliad* in motion. At the very beginning of Book 1, Chryses, priest of Apollo, comes to the Greek camp to sue for his daughter's release (1.17-25):

Ἀτρεΐδαι τε καὶ ἄλλοι ἐϋκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοί,
ὑμῖν μὲν θεοὶ δοῖεν Ὀλύμπια δώματ᾽ ἔχοντες
ἐκπέρσαι Πριάμοιο πόλιν, εὖ δ᾽ οἴκαδ᾽ ἱκέσθαι·
παῖδα δ᾽ ἐμοὶ λύσαιτε φίλην, τὰ δ᾽ ἄποινα δέχεσθαι,
ἁζόμενοι Διὸς υἱὸν ἑκηβόλον Ἀπόλλωνα.
<u>ἔνθ᾽ ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες ἐπευφήμησαν Ἀχαιοὶ</u>
αἰδεῖσθαί θ᾽ ἱερῆα καὶ ἀγλαὰ δέχθαι ἄποινα·
ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ Ἀτρεΐδῃ Ἀγαμέμνονι ἥνδανε θυμῷ,
ἀλλὰ κακῶς ἀφίει, κρατερὸν δ᾽ ἐπὶ μῦθον ἔτελλε·

"Sons of Atreus and you other well-greaved Achaeans,
may the gods who dwell on Olympus grant
that you sack Priam's city, and return home safely.

> But release my dear child, and accept this ransom,
> showing reverence for Apollo, the far-shooting son of Zeus."
> <u>Then all the other Achaeans expressed support (*epeuphēmein*)</u>
> for respecting the priest and accepting the bright ransom.
> But this did not please (*handanein*) the heart of Agamemnon son of Atreus;
> he rudely dismissed the priest and enjoined on him a harsh word of command.

In these lines, the army at large expresses their support for Chryses' request, but, we are told, "this did not please the heart of Agamemnon." The crucial difference between this response, designated by the verb *epeuphēmein*, and the one designated by the verb *epaineîn* is that in this case the response most emphatically does not include all members of the group. It falls short of the kind of total group cohesion that characterizes the *epaineîn* response, and it is precisely this cohesion that permits us to speak of "consensus" in connection with the one decisive mode of collective approval. There are two things I would like to emphasize about this critical scene in Book 1. The first is the way the narrator speaks of what "pleases" Agamemnon. Throughout the *Iliad* and elsewhere in archaic Greek poetry, "pleasure" is a byword for the kind of strong personal preference that fractures a political community or social group, a preference that obstructs the formation of a consensus.[13] References to what is "pleasing" or "displeasing" frequently highlight the fault lines in a community—perhaps because these sentiments are always experienced on a fundamentally individualized and personal basis and are not therefore easily collectivized. I mention this motif now because it will later prove to be significant in relation to the poetry of Theognis. The second thing I would like to stress about *Iliad* 1 is that, even if the collective response is not sufficient to guarantee the immediate approval of Chryses' request, Agamemnon is not therefore entitled to do as he pleases—he is still bound in an important sense by collective will. When Apollo afflicts the army with a plague and another assembly is convened to meet the crisis, Agamemnon is compelled to release the woman, his own preference notwithstanding. In other words, the absence of collective support for the course of action he pursues dooms that course of action to failure. In this way the poem emphasizes that collective will—and, more to the point, *consensus*—is absolutely essential to the achievement of any collective purpose.

The poem begins, as I have said, with Agamemnon's attempt to impose his own will over and against that of the group. If the rule that governs collective decision making in the *Iliad* is that the will of the group should ultimately be decisive, then Agamemnon's behavior at the beginning of the poem is an attempt to suspend the norms of deliberative practice. This attempt fails, and the rest of the poem can be regarded as a gradual movement toward the restoration of those norms, and in particular toward the restoration of consensus as the default way of reaching a decision. Interestingly, however, the poem never quite arrives at this implied goal. Even when consensus is achieved, it is always limited in some crucial respect. Up until the very last lines of the poem, a fully cohesive collective will remains something much desired but never completely

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[13] I am speaking in particular of the semantics of the verb *handanein* ("please"), but I hasten to add that this "counter-consensual" use of the verb, while consistently observable in the Homeric corpus, is not universal, even in explicitly political contexts. The phrase ἔϝαδε πόλι ("it pleased the city," using the aorist of *handanein*) is broadly attested in Cretan inscriptions in connection with decisions enacted by the community. Cf. Ruzé 1983:302.

realized. This incomplete teleology is one feature that connects the representation of politics within the poem to the experiences of audiences in the real world: as Johannes Haubold (2000) has stressed, the communities depicted within the Homeric poems present an imperfect image of a potential that is implicitly realizable only by the historical Greek communities for whom the poetry was performed. It is in the world of the audience, in the consensus they achieve over the contours of the Iliadic tradition, that the desire for a cohesive collective will reaches fulfillment.

Another indication of the way in which the poem's politics reflect real-world negotiations over the shape of the tradition can be found in depictions of the Olympian gods as they debate the events unfolding on the plain of Troy. These debates always focus on events crucial to the plot of the *Iliad* and to the larger Troy tradition. In them, we see the gods discussing and negotiating what the Troy tradition should look like. We can take as an example a scene from Book 4, in which Zeus attempts to provoke Hera by proposing that the gods debate whether or not to exempt Troy from its fated destiny (4.5-29):

αὐτίκ' ἐπειρᾶτο Κρονίδης ἐρεθιζέμεν Ἥρην
κερτομίοις ἐπέεσσι παραβλήδην ἀγορεύων·

    .   .   .

ἡμεῖς δὲ φραζώμεθ' ὅπως ἔσται τάδε ἔργα,
ἤ ῥ' αὖτις πόλεμόν τε κακὸν καὶ φύλοπιν αἰνὴν
ὄρσομεν, ἦ φιλότητα μετ' ἀμφοτέροισι βάλωμεν.
εἰ δ' αὖ πως τόδε πᾶσι φίλον καὶ ἡδὺ γένοιτο,
ἤτοι μὲν οἰκέοιτο πόλις Πριάμοιο ἄνακτος,
αὖτις δ' Ἀργείην Ἑλένην Μενέλαος ἄγοιτο.

    .   .   .

Ἥρη δ' οὐκ ἔχαδε στῆθος χόλον, ἀλλὰ προσηύδα·
αἰνότατε Κρονίδη ποῖον τὸν μῦθον ἔειπες·

    .   .   .

ἔρδ'· ἀτὰρ οὔ τοι πάντες ἐπαινέομεν θεοὶ ἄλλοι.

Straightaway the son of Kronos tried to provoke a quarrel with Hera,
speaking maliciously with taunting words:
"   .   .   .

Let us consider how these matters will be:
will we again stir foul war and dread slaughter,
or should we establish friendship between them?
If, somehow, this should be dear and sweet to all,
let the city of lord Priam live on,
and let Menelaos take back Argive Helen."

    .   .   .

Hera's breast could not contain her anger; instead, she said:
"Most dread son of Kronos, what sort of speech have you uttered?

    .   .   .

Do as you like, but we other gods do not all approve (*epaineîn*)."

This scene provides the basis for Egon Flaig's study (1994) of the "consensus principle": Zeus makes an unpopular proposal but is compelled by the objections of Hera to come around to a position that is acceptable to all. It is the distinctly metapoetic character of this debate—that is, the way in which it comments on one of the fundamental assumptions of the Iliadic tradition itself, namely, the destruction of Troy—that permits us to see here an image of the formation of agreement on Iliadic norms among historical audiences. The gods are discussing what the *Iliad* should look like—should it, in fact, lead to the destruction of Troy? Notice that, while Hera evokes consensus with her use of the verb *epaineîn*, she does so in order to withhold her consent. Consensus is not explicitly achieved in this scene; that is because the true consensus over the Iliadic tradition belongs to the poem's audiences.

At least one representative of an ancient audience for Homeric poetry appears to have understood this scene in the way I am suggesting—that is, as a subordination of poetic tradition to collective will—and that person is no less an authority than Plato himself. In Book 2 of the *Republic*, Socrates speaks explicitly about shaping the Homeric poems so that they conform to the requirements of life in his ideal city. As he makes a set of increasingly specific suggestions about the kinds of poetic narrative that are to be included in the educational curriculum for the city's guardians, he makes use of a variety of expressions to capture the notion of "inclusion" or "exclusion." But when he comes to speak about specific changes that must be made to the *Iliad* in particular in order to make it serviceable to the state, he adopts a distinctly Iliadic way of speaking. In fact, he alludes directly to the passage we have just been examining (*Rep.* 379e2-4):

> τὴν δὲ τῶν ὅρκων καὶ σπονδῶν σύγχυσιν, ἣν ὁ Πάνδαρος συνέχεεν, ἐάν τις φῇ δι᾽ Ἀθηνᾶς τε καὶ Διὸς γεγονέναι, <u>οὐκ ἐπαινεσόμεθα</u>. . . .

> But if anyone should say that the violation of the treaty oaths and libations, which Pandaros confounded, came about through the agency of Athena and Zeus, <u>we will not approve</u> (*epaineîn*). . . .

Socrates' remark points directly to the exchange between Zeus and Hera, the immediate aftermath of which is the dispatching of Athena to ensure that Pandaros violates the Trojans' truce with the Achaeans, thereby propelling events once more toward their inevitable conclusion, the destruction of Troy. Moreover, Socrates echoes Hera's very words in insisting that the citizens of Kallipolis "will not approve" any telling of the story that attributes Pandaros' actions to divine influence. Like Hera, Socrates uses the verb *epaineîn* to indicate more than mere disapproval: he means to say that the citizens of his ideal city will not accept the *Iliad* as it is into their repertoire of civic traditions (just as Hera and her faction will not accept Zeus' proposed *Iliad*, an *Iliad* that ends in reconciliation rather than destruction). Socrates repeats this characteristically Iliadic locution the very next time that he comes to speak of a critical adjustment to the plot of the *Iliad*.[14] By appropriating the *Iliad*'s political vocabulary in this way,

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[14] *Rep.* 383a7-8: πολλὰ ἄρα Ὁμήρου ἐπαινοῦντες, ἀλλὰ τοῦτο <u>οὐκ ἐπαινεσόμεθα</u>, τὴν τοῦ ἐνυπνίου πομπὴν ὑπὸ Διὸς τῷ Ἀγαμέμνονι ("So, though we approve much in Homer, this <u>we will not approve</u>: Zeus' sending of the dream to Agamemnon").

Plato makes clear that he is imagining the shaping of a poetic tradition in terms of the Iliadic depiction of consensus.[15] It is a nice twist of irony that he has Socrates expunge from his authorized *Iliad* the very scene that seems to license within the poem the subordination of poetic tradition to community standards.

Plato is thinking, I suggest, not just in terms of a written text, but also in terms of a performance tradition. And his basic assumption—that a community has the ability to shape its performance traditions—corresponds to the way that very many traditions work cross-culturally. Carl von Sydow, one of the founders of modern folkloristics, stressed the powerful influence exercised on traditions by what he called "passive tradition-bearers"—those members of a community who, although they may not be competent or authorized themselves to perform and transmit to others a given element of tradition, are nevertheless knowledgeable about it to a greater or lesser extent, and are therefore able to judge and evaluate the activities of "active tradition bearers," whose competence extends to performance (1948:12-15). Many traditions have ways of making explicit the control exercised by such passive tradition-bearers over the realization of a tradition in performance. One relevant example is provided by the Kuba people of central Africa. On those ceremonial occasions when the chief offers an authoritative performance of the community's historical traditions, there is a highly formalized, even ritualized, way of expressing collective approval. Jan Vansina reports their ritualized expressions of communal assent as follows (1965:207 n.4):

> "We have indicated to those whose work it is to take up the words of the king. And/you/notables/if you have anything to say, then say it," says the king. At the end he asks: "My mother's clan, is it not thus?" "The mountains are thus, are thus," is shouted in reply. The king continues: "And you, come along. Confirm what I have said." The dignitaries *mbeem* and *mbyeeng* rise and declare that he has spoken the truth.

The response formula "the mountains are thus, are thus" and the declarations of tribal officials make explicit the role of the community in controlling and affirming group traditions. The *Iliad*'s language of consensus is only a slightly veiled way of pointing to the same collective power to authorize and shape a tradition, and in Plato's hands it becomes just as explicit as these Kuba formulas.

The Politics of Sympotic Poetry and Song

My argument so far has been that the *Iliad*'s representation of political dynamics reflects the dynamics of the poetic tradition that produced the *Iliad*, and, specifically, that the value the poem sets on consensus corresponds to the experiences of Iliadic tradition-bearers, both active and passive, in the particular performance context of the large Panhellenic festivals. These festivals, however, were by no means the only context for the performance of traditional poetry

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[15] I do not mean to suggest that Plato's ideal city is to be ruled by consensus, but only that Plato is exploiting the *Iliad*'s discourse of consensus in order to stress the subordination of poetic tradition to standards accepted as valid for the community as a whole.

in the archaic period. In fact, much of our extant corpus of archaic Greek poetry—especially when it comes to what is generally classed as "lyric" poetry—seems not to have belonged to the festival repertoire. Instead, many (if not most) surviving lyric poems and songs belonged to what we would call the "sympotic" repertoire, that is, the repertoire of songs customarily performed at the symposium, the male drinking-party that was an institution of central importance in the city-states of the archaic period.[16] The surviving poems and songs clearly derive from oral performance traditions, and in some cases we can actually observe signs of the development of these traditions over time in a way that parallels the development of the Homeric corpus.[17] As a result, we are entitled to ask whether the poetry of the symposium does not similarly reflect the circumstances of its development, and whether it too might not contain an image of the social and political world that reflects in some way the dynamics of the performance culture in which it is rooted.[18]

Among the poets frequently associated with performance at symposia, two stand out for the prominence of political motifs in their poetry: Alcaeus of Mytilene, on the island of Lesbos, and Theognis of Megara, a Doric city near Athens. In speaking of individual poets tied to specific places, I do not mean to suggest that the poems associated with these figures should be understood as expressions of the biographical experience of a particular person at a particular place and time. Alcaeus and Theognis are as much traditional personae as they are historical persons, and the poems attributed to them undoubtedly give voice more to the tradition as a whole than to a particular author's point of view. The tradition may have originated in a particular community and social environment—late seventh-century Mytilene, say—and so it may be considerably less Panhellenic in orientation than the Homeric tradition. The important point, however, is that these poems reflect the concerns and experiences not so much of an original composer as of the many composers and audiences that transmitted them in performance. Given that these poems originated in a "song culture" in which poems and songs were transmitted independently of written texts, the only way to account for their survival is to

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[16] Kurke (2000:86) asserts that the bulk of what remains of Greek lyric is sympotic poetry. For the purposes of this discussion, I treat "lyric" as a broader category than "melic" (or "sung") poetry; I include within it the corpus of elegiac poetry, which could be sung or not, depending on the context, but which was certainly not performed to the accompaniment of the lyre (as the term "lyric" ought strictly to imply). On elegy as a sung medium (performed to the accompaniment of the *aulos*, or reed pipe), see Faraone 2008:6-7, espec. n.22. Bowie (1986) argues that, while the symposium is the only securely attested performance context for the poems of the surviving elegiac corpus, there existed in antiquity also a form of long, narrative elegy intended for performance at public festivals such as the Panathenaia. The existence of this "public" form of elegy can be expected to have heightened awareness of the distinctive features of sympotic elegy, especially with regard to the representation of political and social entities.

[17] See, for instance, Nagy 1985 on the Theognidea, the corpus of elegiac poems attributed to Theognis of Megara: the so-called "Meliora" show signs of belonging to a more Panhellenic phase of the tradition than the so-called "Deteriora." Nagy's argument implicates other elegists (for instance, Solon) in the development of elegiac poetry in the context of oral performance.

[18] It is important to note that "the poetry of the symposium" is not necessarily restricted to lyric genres. Aloni (2010) argues that Hesiod's *Works and Days* derives from a sympotic tradition of performance. Significantly, Aloni includes in his evidence numerous parallels with the poetry of Theognis, one of two poets I discuss below. Aloni's observations on Hesiod's politics could easily be correlated with my arguments about the sympotic origin of similar motifs in the poetry of Theognis and Alcaeus.

suppose that they resonated enough with a variety of performers and audiences to maintain their position in the performance tradition over time until they could be collected in writing.[19] In the case of Theognis, for example, we find references to historical events spanning many generations; the poetry of Theognis clearly represents a Megarian tradition of considerable chronological depth. When I speak of "Theognis" or "Alcaeus," then, I speak of the traditions represented by these figures.

Theognis and Alcaeus share more than just a preoccupation with politics. They also share a particular perspective on the politics of their communities: both speak from the point of view of the disenfranchised, alienated aristocrat, and in both cases the speaker's experience of political estrangement is tied to some betrayal by former friends, that is, a rupture in the social group to which the speaker once belonged.[20] Consider these lines from a poem of Alcaeus, fragments of which were recovered from an ancient papyrus (fr. 130 LP, lines 16-20):

> . . . ὀ τάλαις ἔγω
> ζώω μοῖραν ἔχων ἀγροϊωτίκαν
> ἰμέρρων ἀγόρας ἄκοσαι
> καρυ[ζο]μένας ὠγεσιλαΐδα
>
> καὶ β[όλλας . . .
>
> . . . in misery
> I live a rustic life,
> longing to hear the herald's summons
> to the assembly, O son of Agesilaos,
>
> and to the council . . .

The speaker is in exile, longing to be reintegrated into the political community to which he once belonged, represented here by the "assembly" and civic "council." Fragments of other poems permit us to reconstruct a quasi-biographical narrative into which this situation can be fitted: as a member of an opposition faction, Alcaeus repeatedly suffered exile, at one point because of the rise to power of one of his own former associates, Pittakos. In a fragment transmitted in Aristotle's *Politics*, Alcaeus depicts Pittakos' rise to power as a matter of the collective will of the Mytileneans (fr. 348 LP):

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[19] Kurke (2000:60-62) presents a succinct version of this argument; see also the incisive remarks of Aloni (2010:136-38) with regard to the apparent historical and biographical specificity of Hesiod's *Works and Days*. The term "song culture" originates with Herington 1985.

[20] The similarity between the ways in which alienation is expressed in the poetry of Theognis and Alcaeus is noted by Nagy (1993). Nagy's explanation for this connection differs from the one presented here, although our arguments are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

τὸν κακοπατρίδαν
Φίττακον πόλιος τὰς ἀχόλω καὶ βαρυδαίμονος
ἐστάσαντο τύραννον, μέγ᾽ ἐπαίνεντες ἀόλλεες

That base-born
Pittakos they have made tyrant of a city that forgets its anger and suffers the weight
of an evil fortune, with a tremendous expression of collective approval (*epainenai* = *epaineîn*).[21]

What is most striking about these lines is that the Homeric word for consensus—the verb *epaineîn*—is here used in what seems to be a very un-Homeric way to describe the unity of a *splintered* community, a community from which the poet and his friends are excluded. This usage is un-Homeric to the extent that Homeric poetry regards the cohesion signaled by the verb as something total and absolute. We might note, however, that Alcaeus' lines resonate more profoundly if we hear in them an echo of Homeric usage: projecting an Iliadic vision of total solidarity onto the Mytileneans serves to emphasize the alienation of the speaker and his social group that much more.

The image of Megara conjured in the poetry of Theognis is, like Alcaeus' Mytilene, an image of a fractured, divided community. The speaker of these poems, however, typically presents himself not as an exile but as a man still enmeshed in the life of his city, attempting to find some semblance of security amid its rival factions and shifting loyalties.[22] Once again, a political vocabulary recognizable from the *Iliad* provides a prominent index of social and political disorientation. Now, however, it is not the language of unity that resonates, but the language of discord and disaffection. I stressed above the way the *Iliad* signals Agamemnon's disruption of social cohesion by highlighting the individual preference that "pleases" him, and him alone. Theognis does something similar, referring again and again to the "pleasure" and "displeasure" of his fellow citizens as a way of pointing to the conflicting interests that divide the community against itself. And it is Theognis himself who does or does not please, as in these lines (367-70):

οὐ δύναμαι γνῶναι νόον ἀστῶν ὅντιν᾽ ἔχουσιν·
    οὔτε γὰρ εὖ ἔρδων ἁνδάνω οὔτε κακῶς·
μωμεῦνται δέ με πολλοί, ὁμῶς κακοὶ ἠδὲ καὶ ἐσθλοί·
    μιμεῖσθαι δ᾽ οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀσόφων δύναται.

I am not able to judge the disposition of the townsmen,
    for neither treating them well nor doing them harm do I please (*handanein*) them.
Many blame me—bad and good men alike—
    but no one who is without wisdom (*asophos*) is able to imitate (*mimeîsthai*) me.

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[21] In the Aeolic dialect of Alcaeus, the present and imperfect tenses of the so-called "contract verbs" of Attic-Ionic (a class to which *epaineîn* belongs) are expressed according to the athematic conjugation of the so-called "-μι verbs." That is, Alcaeus uses the Aeolic form corresponding to Homeric *epaineîn*.

[22] Theognis' repeated emphasis on the lack of any secure social relationship makes him a kind of "resident exile." Trusting no one, he is cut off from social networks; not even his beloved Kyrnos is a reliable *philos*.

Of particular interest here is the way that the disapproval of Theognis' fellow citizens is correlated with their inability to "imitate" him. The word for "imitation" here is *mimeîsthai*, the word that ultimately gives us the term *mimesis*. In the context of archaic Greek poetry it has unmistakable performative connotations. Characterizing those who disapprove of him as "without wisdom," another term with poetic and performative connotations, Theognis is saying not just that they won't be able to "imitate" him, but that they won't be able to *perform* him—that is, perform the poetry of the Theognidean tradition.[23] In other words, these verses are constructing the divisions within the society of Megara in terms of groups constituted in and through poetic performance. And the key to being included in the select group of qualified performers of Theognidean poetry is whether or not Theognis "pleases."

An even richer example of the same device can be observed in the poem that has prompted more commentary than any other in the Theognidean corpus, the so-called "Seal of Theognis" (19-26):

> Κύρνε, σοφιζομένωι μὲν ἐμοὶ σφρηγὶς ἐπικείσθω
>   τοῖσδ' ἔπεσιν, λήσει δ' οὔποτε κλεπτόμενα,
> οὐδέ τις ἀλλάξει κάκιον τοὐσθλοῦ παρεόντος·
>   ὧδε δὲ πᾶς τις ἐρεῖ· 'Θεύγνιδός ἐστιν ἔπη
> τοῦ Μεγαρέως· πάντας δὲ κατ' ἀνθρώπους ὀνομαστός.'
>   ἀστοῖσιν δ' οὔπω πᾶσιν ἁδεῖν δύναμαι·
> οὐδὲν θαυμαστόν, Πολυπαΐδη· οὐδὲ γὰρ ὁ Ζεύς
>   οὔθ' ὕων πάντεσσ' ἀνδάνει οὔτ' ἀνέχων.

> O Kyrnos, as I practice my art, I will set a seal
>   on these verses—no theft will go unnoticed,
> nor will anyone be able to substitute a worse one for the good one that is there.
>   And everyone will say: "these are the verses of Theognis
> of Megara; his name is recognized among all men."
>   But I am not yet able to please (*handanein*) all the townsmen.
> This is hardly surprising, O son of Polypaos; for neither does Zeus
>   please (*handanein*) all, either sending rain or withholding it.

These lines are remarkable for the direct way in which they speak about their own status as poetry. Each line would repay careful study. One could, for instance, explore at length the way the speaker ascribes a rigid fixity to his verses. Since oral traditions are very often characterized by the fluidity of their texts, which are constantly recomposed in performance, one might wonder whether this assertion does not belie my description of Theognidean poetry as the record of an oral performance tradition. And yet the speaker's declaration could be paralleled by the evidence of many verifiably oral traditions in which performers profess to maintain the integrity of their

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[23] For the performative connotations of *asophos* ("without wisdom") and *mimeîsthai* ("imitate") in these lines of Theognis, see Nagy 1996:223 and 2004:44.

songs with word-for-word accuracy,[24] and in any case the claim to rigid fixity is itself belied by the internal evidence of the Theognidean corpus, which exhibits many examples of precisely the kind of variation and "multiformity" that characterizes oral traditions.[25]

This is just one of many lines of inquiry opened up by this brief poem. I would like to focus, however, on the contrast between the universal fame the speaker envisions for himself in the future and the much more limited success he claims to enjoy here and now in the fractured community of Megara. That limited success and the social fragmentation it implies is once again indexed with reference to Theognis' ability to "please"—an ability that he claims is never universalizable, since not even Zeus himself is able to "please all."

Gregory Nagy has suggested that we may understand this contrast in terms of a tension between the Panhellenic aspirations of Theognidean poetry and its connection to the local traditions of Megara.[26] Without a doubt, this is a very productive way of approaching these lines: the text envisions a degree of acceptance among all Hellenes that is on a par with the Panhellenic reception of Homeric poetry, and this eventual Panhellenic acceptance is brought into a certain relation with the status of Theognis' poetry within his own community. But there is more to be said, I think, about the reason why the poet's here-and-now is characterized not by acceptance but by rejection, and why the speaker seems unable to attain in the present the kind of unified audience he imagines in the future. This is the specific problem I would like to address, in part by correlating Theognis' professed alienation from his fellow-citizens with the similar situation of Alcaeus.

One might seek to account for the convergences in the poetry of Theognis and Alcaeus in terms of parallel historical circumstances, or even in terms of certain common developmental trends that are thought to have been widespread among the city-states of the late archaic period. I am thinking here of such commonplaces as the rise of tyranny as a political form and the disruption of traditional social hierarchies by the introduction of coined money. I prefer instead to account for these convergences in terms of a shared performance context, namely, the symposium. My reasoning on this point is identical to the reasoning I applied above in connection with the nature of poetic personae in the "song culture" of archaic Greece: in order to survive, these poems must have resonated with a variety of performers and audiences over time, and so they are unlikely to have preserved references to specific historical circumstances unless those references could also be made meaningful to potentially very different audiences at different times and places.[27] Without discounting the meaning and importance of historical references in their original contexts, we must also take into account the trans-contextual

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[24] A very famous example is provided by the Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian singers interviewed by Parry and Lord, many of whom claimed to be able to repeat a song they had heard *riječ za riječ*, "word for word." On the meaning of this expression in context, see Foley 1990:44-45, 49-50.

[25] See, for example, the "doublets" 39-42~1081-82b and 619-20~1114a-b, explained by Nagy 1983:88-90 in terms of the workings of oral poetry.

[26] See Nagy 1985, espec. §§16-19. For the possible reflection within the Theognidean corpus of relatively more and relatively less Panhellenic phases of the tradition, see Nagy 1983:90-91.

[27] Nagy 2004 considers the sympotic transmission of Alcaeus in the light of this general approach to the dynamics of archaic and classical Greek song culture.

reconfiguration of meaning that, in the final analysis, is the only thing that permits us to explain the survival of the poetry. The constant in the early transmission history of Alcaeus and Theognis is performance at the symposium. The symposium itself, it should be stressed, was not a single, homogeneous phenomenon: there is evidence for its practice at a variety of social and institutional levels.[28] But by attending to certain consistent features of *performance* at the symposium we may isolate factors that can account for the shared political sensibilities of the poetry of Theognis and Alcaeus.

The salient feature of the symposium for my purposes is that it was the occasion for the gathering of a small group of men—typically somewhere between fourteen and thirty—who perceived themselves as being united by a common social bond.[29] This bond could have political overtones: symposia were an important means by which political parties and factions, such as the one to which Alcaeus is represented as belonging, could cement loyalties among members. But even in the absence of such overtones, the symposium provided the scene for the staging of solidarity among a select group of closely interconnected individuals. And this was true regardless of the political aspirations or the social status of the participants. The various rituals of commensality by which the symposiasts demonstrated their solidarity—including collective prayers, toasts, the coordinated consumption of wine, and, of course, the performance of song and poetry—all served to set apart the intimate bonds uniting the members of the sympotic group from the relatively weaker ties that linked them to the community at large. Which is to say that the symposium staged not only solidarity but also separation and difference—difference from the broader civic community, which was in many ways a far less intense form of association.[30]

It is, I suggest, in the contrast between the symposium as an enclosed, secluded, intimate context for performance and the large, public festivals at which Homeric poetry was typically performed that we find an explanation for the preoccupation of sympotic poetry with political alienation. Panhellenic festivals were inclusive events that gave attendees the experience of participation in a broad collectivity that transcended even the boundaries of civic communities. This experience, as I have said, has left its imprint on the Iliadic vision of politics, which is a vision that privileges a maximally inclusive consensus.[31] The poetry of the symposium was no less sensitive to the occasion for its performance; but in this case, the tradition-bearers who shaped the poetry did so in a context that stressed the isolation and exclusivity of a small, select social group differentiated from the community at large. In fact, the performance of sympotic poetry was one of the principal means by which participants reinforced this sense of separateness. The performer who re-created the persona of Alcaeus or Theognis at the

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[28] Cf. Hobden 2009.

[29] On the spatial constraints of "sympotic space," see Bergquist 1990, an investigation of the architectural expression of the need to foster "visual and auditory coherence" (39) among symposiasts—a need that imposes certain limits on the size of the gathering.

[30] Cf. Bowie 1986:34: "The symposium is a social institution in which groups within the city strengthened their mutual bonds and expressed their identity as a group—and their difference from other groups—in a context which involved both ritual and relaxation."

[31] There are limits on this inclusivity; in Elmer 2012 I discuss the temporary establishment and ultimate failure of a "Greek and Trojan super-community" in *Iliad* Books 3 and 4.

symposium was also using that persona to construct a social space that set the symposiasts apart from their civic community. This, I argue, is why these figures seem continually to stress their alienation from the political life of their cities: the poetry associated with them has been shaped by a performance context that exploits a sense of detachment and difference in order to enhance the solidarity of those participating in the event.

Now, perhaps, we can understand better why the universal acceptance of Theognis' poetry is always relegated to the future and never realizable in the present. This poetry imagines for itself a Panhellenic reception on a par with that of the Homeric tradition—and there is good evidence to suggest that it did, in fact, achieve such a status. If it did, however, the vehicle by which it was transmitted throughout the Greek world was not the large, public festival but the symposium, a vehicle that derived a large share of its social power from its ability to mark divisions within the community. Even if the Theognidean tradition could become Panhellenic, the *modality* of Homeric Panhellenism was permanently unavailable to it. And so it can only imagine universal acceptance on a Homeric scale, which it must conceive of as something attainable only in an indefinite and ever-deferred future. In the present, the tradition remains persistently skeptical of a cohesive response among the community as a whole. It focuses instead on the isolated figure of Theognis, who sets his own seal on his poetry as a way of asserting an individualism that is largely independent of collective dynamics.

I have been describing a contrast between two crucial performance contexts that characterize Homeric poetry, on the one hand, and sympotic poetry on the other. These contexts, I have argued, have significant consequences for the way the poetry in each case represents the political life of the community and, in the case of sympotic poetry, the position of the poet-figure with respect to that community. One of the most intriguing aspects of the picture I have sketched is that its outlines can already be discerned in the second of the two Homeric poems, the *Odyssey*. The *Odyssey* takes an extraordinarily self-conscious interest in the performance of poetry, offering portraits of two different singers: Phemios, the poet who performs for the suitors occupying Odysseus' house on Ithaca, and Demodokos, the poet among the Phaeacians, the idealized community of island-dwellers who ultimately bring Odysseus back home. Although the *Odyssey* does not assign different generic repertoires to these two figures—all singers in the poem compose in hexameters, the medium of heroic poetry—it does nevertheless distinguish between the contexts in which they perform.

Phemios sings for the suitors as they drink their wine after their meal.[32] He sings, in essence, at a symposium—albeit one that exceeds by a significant margin the normal dimensions of the classical symposium.[33] To the extent that this symposium is made up of young men whose principal loyalties are to themselves, and who have only loose connections with the civic

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[32] Cf. Telemakhos' words at *Od*. 1.339-40: οἱ δὲ σιωπῇ / οἶνον πινόντων ("let them [the suitors] drink their wine in silence"). Athena/Mentes had arrived while the meal was in progress. When Telemakhos rejoins the group after her departure, the evening is in the drinking phase.

[33] According to *Od.* 16.247-53, there are 108 suitors. This number exceeds the capacity of even the larger dining rooms surveyed by Bergquist (1990), if capacity is calculated by the number of couches that could be accommodated. Bergquist points out, however, that, since the custom of reclining was not adopted until the late seventh century BCE, one cannot calculate capacity by this method for the earliest period. In any case, we should be prepared to allow for a degree of exaggeration in the *Odyssey*.

community of Ithaca, it faithfully reflects the social dynamics of the archaic symposium as I have outlined them. The suitors are depicted as an enclosed, self-contained group that is set apart from, and in many ways opposed to, Ithacan society at large.

The Phaeacian audience for the performances of Demodokos could not be more different. The feast at which Demodokos performs his first song may take place in the palace of the king, but it is explicitly and emphatically an inclusive occasion that brings together representatives of the entire community. The public nature of this gathering is reinforced when it moves from the palace to the *agora*, the "public square" or "marketplace," where Demodokos performs again on a program that also includes athletic contests and dance. Because of their public setting and the juxtaposition with athletic competition, some scholars have seen in Demodokos' performances an image of precisely those public festivals that provided the occasion for Homeric poetry.[34] In the contrast between Demodokos and Phemios, then, we can perceive the contrast between the public festival and the symposium as two very different contexts for the performance of poetry.

This contrast is not confined, however, solely to the settings in which the two poets perform. It also shapes the identities the *Odyssey* assigns to each. Demodokos, the singer of the Phaeacians' public gatherings, bears a name that identifies him explicitly as a "poet of the people." The name "Demodokos" means, literally, "he who is acceptable to the people." (The "demo-" of "Demodokos" is the same as in "democracy.") His very name, then, tells us that Demodokos, as a performer at public festivities, enjoys the kind of universal acceptance that a sympotic poet like Theognis can only dream of. And if Demodokos achieves this kind of acceptance, it is because his songs, too, are "acceptable to the people"—that is, they represent the *collective* tradition of the Phaeacians, for which Demodokos is simply the mouthpiece.

Things are very different with the suitors' bard on Ithaca, Phemios. His name, too, is significant: it means "the man of utterance," or perhaps "the rumor-man."[35] This name does not speak explicitly about Phemios' connection to his community—but that fact in itself might point indirectly to a measure of detachment that would distinguish this figure from his Phaeacian counterpart. If the name is not conclusive, however, Phemios' own characterization of his relationship to his audience leaves no room for doubt. When Odysseus has killed the suitors, Phemios pleads for his own life to be spared by stressing his independence and autonomy (22.344-48):

> γουνοῦμαί σ', Ὀδυσεῦ· σὺ δέ μ' αἴδεο καί μ' ἐλέησον.
> αὐτῷ τοι μετόπισθ' ἄχος ἔσσεται, εἴ κεν ἀοιδὸν
> πέφνῃς, ὅς τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισιν ἀείδω.
> αὐτοδίδακτος δ' εἰμί, θεὸς δέ μοι ἐν φρεσὶν οἴμας
> παντοίας ἐνέφυσεν. . . .

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[34] See, for example, Ford 1992:116-17. Power (2010:209-11) links Demodokos to citharodic song, a variety of lyric song (often with strong epic overtones) that was prominently featured at many large festivals, including the Panathenaia in Athens.

[35] See Bakker 2002:142.

> I am pleading with you, Odysseus; have respect and pity for me.
> You yourself will feel grief hereafter if you slay me,
> a poet who sings for both gods and men.
> I am self-taught, and a god has instilled songs
> of all kinds in my mind. . . .

In these lines Phemios claims that he ought not to be held responsible for the suitors' misdeeds. These remarks, and especially Phemios' assertion that he is "self-taught," have prompted long discussions by scholars, many of whom are troubled by the apparent contradiction in claiming simultaneously to be both "self-taught" and divinely inspired.[36] What these scholars miss, however, is the significance of the one source of poetic material that Phemios does *not* specify— namely, the collective knowledge of the community. Phemios' point is that, wherever his songs come from—whether from his own storehouse of themes or from knowledge vouchsafed by the gods—they do not draw on the resources of the community for which he performs. Phemios, in other words, is no Demodokos, no spokesman for the collective traditions of his audience; he should not therefore be in any way identified with that audience.[37]

There is a certain affinity between the autonomy claimed by Phemios and the assertive "seal" set on the Theognidean tradition in the "Seal of Theognis." It is perhaps just as surprising to find a traditional poet announcing that he is "self-taught" as it is to hear him declaring that his verses will remain forever unchanged in the course of their transmission. In both cases we are dealing with the self-assertion of an individualized persona. I would like to suggest that this individualization is directly related to the restricted scope of the audiences to which these personae address themselves. The poetry of the symposium expresses, even performs, a certain difference from the community at large, and so it must at least profess to present an independent point of view, even when it manifestly represents a widespread tradition. Phemios, performing in a sympotic context, cannot be a "poet of the people" like Demodokos, so he must be a "self-taught" singer instead. In constructing a contrast between these two singers, the *Odyssey* presents

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[36] Cf. Pucci 1987:230-31; Bakker 1997:137-38; Finkelberg 1998:54-57; Assaël 2001.

[37] These remarks on the contrast between Demodokos and Phemios draw on my discussion at Elmer 2013:230-31.

us with, so to speak, a Theognis and a Homer, and it encourages us to consider the differences between them in terms of the audiences they address.[38]

It would be possible, I think, to extend this contrast between Phemios and Demodokos, Theognis and Homer to include archaic sympotic lyric and epic writ large. I am thinking here of the contrast between lyric's preference for personalized, apparently autobiographical statements —the so-called "lyric I"—and the impersonal, objective third-person of epic narration. Let me conclude, however, by reflecting in a more general way on the politics of archaic Greek poetry. In spite of their many differences, both epic poetry—the poetry of the festival—and lyric poetry —the poetry of the symposium—are profoundly political. Their politics, as I hope to have demonstrated, are closely tied to the circumstances and dynamics of oral performance. I want to stress, however, that political motifs in these traditions are not merely metaphors or allegories for facts of a different order. On the contrary, the performance of poetry was a fundamentally political event in archaic Greece: regardless of whether it occurred at the symposium or the festival, it articulated social and political relationships, heightening participants' awareness of their connections to others in the audience and in society at large. It is essential to keep this political context in mind as we read the poetry of archaic Greece. It might even be said that all art, of all periods, becomes profoundly political as soon as it is activated and realized in some lived interaction with others.

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[38] Murray, seeing the *Odyssey* as "a celebration of the banquet in both content and structure" (2008:167), argues that the poem was in fact composed for performance at symposia. The composer was, in his view, reacting to the development of the symposium as a new context for performance. I agree with Murray that the *Odyssey* highlights sympotic settings and modes of performance, but I prefer to see in this set of thematic preferences a reflection of the poem's focus on social dislocation and fractured communities. The contrast between festival and sympotic performance offers a way of distinguishing between more and less integrated social environments. Thus Ithaca, where the suitors represent an "anticommunity" (cf. Elmer 2013:226), is characterized by sympotic performance, while Demodokos has a discernibly public role among the Phaeacians, an optimally integrated society. Of course, there are symposium-style performances among the Phaeacians as well—above all those of Odysseus himself—but these may be tied to the fact that Odysseus is the consummate exile. Social dislocation, in other words, is still an issue in the Phaeacian episode, and sympotic performance therefore remains a prominent motif. Similarly, in spite of the *Iliad*'s general interest in social cohesion at the broadest level (the subject of Elmer 2013), when the poem stresses the social dislocation of its protagonist, Achilles, it exploits a version of sympotic performance to underscore the point, presenting Achilles as singing to the lyre for the minimal audience of Patroklos (*Il.* 9.186-91). I discuss this scene at Elmer 2013:77, but without noting its sympotic aspects (which were suggested by Justin Arft during the question and answer portion after my Lord and Parry Lecture): Achilles and Patroklos have evidently finished their meal and are now in the drinking phase of the evening (cf. 9.202-03).

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