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### Read on Arrival

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The poetics of traveling poets are analyzed with the help of evidence from Greece (6th c BCE to 6<sup>th</sup> c CE), West Africa, and Ireland. A detailed explication of Aristophanes *Birds* 904-957 is used to explore further the tropes used by bards and rules of interaction with *poeti vaganti*. The *Lives* of Homer tradition is shown to match up with descriptions of cognate poetic performances (Greek and other) in this regard.

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## Read on Arrival

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The international community of vagrants calling themselves Classicists can well appreciate at least one problem faced by the poets whom they study. Wittingly or not, modern scholars have replicated the complicated itineraries, competitive atmosphere, quest for patronage, and desire for publicity that were all known to ancient Greek performers. They may not get mugged like Ibycus or have to jump ship like Arion but, eventually, as did the ancients, they face the rhetorical dilemma: what should I say when I get there? <sup>1</sup>

My solution to the dilemma (at least for this paper) is to take a look at *their* solutions. Rather than pick one synchronic slice in the long history of Greek poetic practices, I shall attempt to make a diachronic cross-cut. By examining the poetic strategies of those figures who were represented as performers that moved from place to place, we can nail together a rough typology. That typology, in turn, can enable us to explore further the poetics of a number of genres, beyond those that are explicitly connected with travelling poets. In fact, just as heroes and outlaws usefully trace for us the outlines of the possible, wandering poets are most beneficial when they force us to scrutinize the habits of the stable and stay-at-home. <sup>2</sup>

This dynamic, the give-and-take between center and periphery, may sound like another version of metanastic poetics, a term proposed some years back to describe the workings of Hesiodic composition.<sup>3</sup> But what I would like to sketch here, while related, is not the same. The ideal metanastic figure has acquired a sort of one-way ticket. Hesiod, except for the odd trip to Chalkis, is not going anywhere, yet his status in Ascra is that of a semi-outsider, a marginal figure who is by virtue of that position, empowered to speak

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<sup>1</sup> My thanks are due to Professors Richard Hunter and Ian Rutherford for placing me in the jaws of this dilemma and making the experience so pleasant. Perhaps the tales told about Ibycus (*Suda* I 80=ii 607 Adler; *Anth.Pal.*7.745) and Arion (Hdt.1.24) originated in *autobiographical* discourses, worked into the performance commentary or even into the poetic compositions of these poets. An alternative source for the details of personal misfortune could be folktale-style narratives told later (and sometimes concocted from poetic remains, as in the stories of the death of Euripides elaborated via his *Bacchae*): for the phenomenon see Lefkowitz (1981).

<sup>2</sup> Three exemplary studies of the uses of such figures: Nagy (1985), Ó hÓgáin (1985) and Brown (2003).

<sup>3</sup> Martin (1992).

his mind.<sup>4</sup> Anacharsis the Scythian, so totally out of the loop that he can even question the value of gymnastics in Greek culture, gives us a similar figure, from the prose tradition.<sup>5</sup> He does eventually go back home, but the essence of the tradition about him centers on his foreign residency—what he sees and then misinterprets (for our ultimate benefit) while staying in a place not his own.

In contrast to the metanastic stance, the poetic strategies of wandering poets have to do with the realities of short-term encounters. Instead of a one-way ticket, these types, as they are represented to us, have obtained the equivalent of a long-term Eurail pass. The social context is different. It resembles less resident alien status, more a whistlestop campaign. How do you present yourself, and continue to operate successfully, in the cultural situation of licensed itinerancy? What are the pressures and what techniques exist to deal with them? What are the rules—which is to say, in terms of verbal art, the poetics—of this mode? Let us call these rules, for the sake of complementarity and Greek derivation, “planetic poetics.”

An investigation of wandering poetics might trail all over the map. As it is, we have a fairly good pilot for part of the journey in the form of a parodic passage from Aristophanes. At *Birds* 904-957, Peisetairos has just dismissed the priest and undertaken to sacrifice to the avian gods himself, when a wandering poet interrupts him:<sup>6</sup>

#### ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ

Νεφελοκοκκυγαν

τὰν εὐδα μονα κληῖσον, ὦ

905

Μοῦσα, τεαῖς ἐν ὕμνων

ἀοιδαῖς.

{Πε.} τουτὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα ποδαπόν; εἰπέ μοι, τς εἶ;

{Πο.} ἐγὼ μελιγλώσσων ἐπέων ἰεῖς ἀοιδὰν

Μουσάων θεράπων ὄτρηρός,

κατὰ τὸν Ὀμηρον.

910

<sup>4</sup> On the self-representation of “Hesiod” in terms of his relation to Perses and the community, see now Edwards (2004) 176-84. For the poet’s various poses as displays of poetic *sophia*, see most recently Steiner (2005).

<sup>5</sup> Martin (1997).

- {Πε.} ἔπειτα δῆτα δοῦλος ὧν κόμην ἔχεις;
- {Πο.} οὐκ, ἀλλὰ πάντες ἐσμέν οἱ διδάσκαλοι  
Μουσάων θεράποντες ὄτρηρο ,  
κατὰ τὸν Ὀμηρον.
- {Πε.} οὐκ ἐτὸς ὄτρηρόν καὶ τὸ ληδάριον ἔχεις. 915  
ἀτάρ, ὦ ποιητά, κατὰ τ δεῦρ' ἀνεφθάρης;
- {Πο.} μέλη πεπο ηκ' εἰς τὰς Νεφελοκοκκυγας  
τὰς ὑμετέρας κύκλιά τε πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ  
καὶ παρθένεια καὶ κατὰ τὰ Σιμων δου.
- {Πε.} ταυτὶ σὺ πότε' ἐπο ησας; ἀπὸ πο ου χρόνου; 920
- {Πο.} πάλαι πάλαι δὴ τήνδ' ἐγὼ κλήζω πόλιν.
- {Πε.} οὐκ ἄρτι θύω τὴν δεκάτην ταύτης ἐγώ,  
καὶ τοῦνομ' ὡσπερ παιδ ω νυνδὴ ἴθέμην;
- {Πο.} ἀλλὰ τις ὠκεῖα Μουσάων φάτις  
οἷαπερ ἵππων ἀμαρυγὰ. 925  
σὺ δὲ πάτερ, κτ στορ Αἴτνας,  
ζαθέων ἱερῶν ὁμώνυμε,  
δὸς ἐμὶν ὅ τι περ τεᾶ κεφαλαῖ θε-  
λης πρόφρων δόμεν. 930
- {Πο.} τουτὶ παρέξει τὸ κακὸν ἡμῖν πράγματα,  
εἰ μή τι τούτῳ δόντες ἀποφευξοῦμεθα.  
ο τος, σὺ μέντοι σπολάδα καὶ χιτῶν' ἔχεις·  
ἀπόδυθι καὶ δὸς τῷ ποιητῇ τῷ σοφῷ.  
ἔχε τὴν σπολάδα· πάντως δέ μοι ριγῶν δοκεῖς. 935
- {Πο.} τόδε μὲν οὐκ ἀέκουσα φ λα  
Μοῦσα τὸ δῶρον δέχεται·  
τὸ δὲ τεᾶ φρενὶ μάθε  
Πινδάρειον ἔπος.
- {Πε.} ἄνθρωπος ἡμῶν οὐκ ἀπαλλαχθήσεται. 940
- {Πο.} νομάδεσσι γὰρ ἐν Σκύθαις ἀλᾶται στρατῶν

<sup>6</sup> Text as in Dunbar (1995) 96-97. Translation mine.

ὄς ὑφαντοδόνητον ἔσθος οὐ πέπαται.

ἀκλεῆς δ' ἔβα

σπολὰς ἄνευ χιτῶνος.

ξύνες ὅ τοι λέγω.

{Πε.} συν ημ' ὅτι βούλει τὸν χιτων σκον λαβεῖν.

ἀπόδυθι· δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ποιητὴν ὠφελεῖν.

ἄπελθε τουτονὶ λαβών.

{Πο.} ἀπέρχομαι,

κὰς τὴν πόλιν γ' ἐλθὼν ποιήσω τοιαδ·

κλῆσον, ὦ χρυσόθρονε, τὰν τρομεράν, κρυεράν· 950

νιφόβoλα πεδ α πολύπορά τ' ἤλυθον.

ἀλαλα .

{Πε.} νῆ τὸν Δ ' ἀλλ' ἤδη πέφευγας ταυταγὶ

τὰ κρυερά τονδὶ τὸν χιτων σκον λαβών.

τουτὶ μὰ Δ ' ἐγὼ τὸ κακὸν οὐδέποτ' ἤλπισα,

οὔτω ταχέως τοῦτον πεπύσθαι τὴν πόλιν.

Poet

Cloud-cuckoo-land the blessed, celebrate, O Muse, in your hymnic songs.

Peisetairos

What and from where is this annoyance? Tell me, who are you?

Poet

I am he who pours forth the song of honey-tongued words,

zealous servant of the Muses, according to Homer.

Peisetairos

A slave, and you wear long hair?

Poet

No, but in fact all we producers are

zealous servants of the Muses, according to Homer.

Peisetairos

Well, that's a hol-ey zealous little cloak you've got ,too. But, poet, what's the reason you turned up here?

Poet

Songs have I composed in honor of your Cloud-Cuckoo, many and splendid circle-dances and parthenia and things after the manner of Simonides.

Peisetairos

Just when did you compose them? Since what time?

Poet

Long, long now have I been celebrating this city.

Peisetairos

But am I not right now sacrificing for its tenth day and haven't I only just named it, like a baby?

Poet

Like the flash of steeds, swift is the Muses' report. Thou father, Aitna-founder, namesake of god-filled holy rites, give to me whatsoever you will to give, by your head's assent.

Peisetairos

This wretched thing will cause us problems if we don't get rid of him by giving something. (*To assistant*). You there, you've got a jerkin as well as tunic. Take it off, give it to the wise poet. (*To the poet*). Have this jerkin. You do seem chilly.

Poet

Not unwillingly does my dear Muse accept this gift; but let thy mind learn the Pindaric saying.

Peisetairos

The man just will not shove off from us.

Poet

“For among the nomad Scyths, he wanders apart from the host, who acquires no woven-whirled garment. Unglorified goes a jerkin without tunic.” Understand what I say.

Peisetairos

I understand that you want to get the little tunic. (*To assistant*). Take it off. We have to help the poet. (*To the poet*). Here it is—take it and get out.

Poet

I am going, and having gone to the city I will make such verses: you of the golden throne, celebrate the shivering, freezing one; to snow-blasted many-wayed plains have I come. *Alalai!*

Peisetairos

By Zeus, you're away from the chills already, since you got the tunic. This pain, by Zeus! I never expected this guy could learn so quickly about the city.

The hermeneutically useful aspect of parody is that the joke once had to work: that is, in order for an audience to find humor, actual traits of style and character must have been presented, albeit in exaggerated form.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, we can use this passage as a kind of evidence (albeit stylized) for the typical behavior one might expect from a certain kind of Greek poet encountering a potential patron in the later 5<sup>th</sup> century. The following microanalysis of the discourse will take each strategic “move” in the order it comes. Under each heading I will then glance at the related evidence from a range of other Greek poems, some planetic, others not. While the conclusion may not end the way this passage does, with the wandering scholar, like the poet, getting a new coat, I shall be content if we arrive at a new appreciation of the systematicity underlying an important set of data in Greek culture.

To start with the opening gambit: if one were compiling a best-selling handbook for would-be wandering poets, this strategy would be titled “praise the place, and let the people come later.” Of course there already exists such a handbook from antiquity, in the form of the guide to epideictic oratory by Menander Rhetor, who goes into great detail on how to praise a city, a harbor, or a citadel. He even advises one on how to praise such an encomiastically challenged location as Hesiod's Ascra (you should say “the inhabitants must perforce be philosophical and enduring”--sect. 347.27-30).<sup>8</sup> Menander is writing for the local intelligentsia of the Imperial age, but the basic rhetorical practices and the

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<sup>7</sup> Rose (1993) presents a useful theoretical overview.

<sup>8</sup> Text in Russell and Wilson (1981) 34.

situations that call for them are surely much older.<sup>9</sup> His prescriptions are extensive, but oddly enough he never advises that the encomiast call a city “blessed.” Perhaps there is something more fundamental happening in the *Birds* parody.

Of the eight times that Pindar uses the adjective *eudaimôn*, only once, toward the end of *Pythian* 4, does it modify the name of a city (275-80):<sup>10</sup>

τὶν δὲ τούτων ἐξυφα νοῦται χάριτες.  
 τλᾶθι τᾶς εὐδα μονος ἀμφὶ Κυρά-  
 νας θέμεν σπουδὰν ἄπασαν.  
 τῶν δ' Ὀμήρου καὶ τόδε συνθέμενος  
 ῥῆμα πόρουν· ἄγγελον ἐσλὸν ἔφα τι-  
 μὰν μεγ σταν πράγματι παντὶ φέρειν·

But for you the blessings of such things are unfolding  
 Dare to devote all your serious effort  
 to the cause of blessed Kyrene.  
 And among the sayings of Homer, take this one to heart  
 and heed it: he said that a good messenger  
 brings the greatest honor to every affair.

It is perhaps significant that the word's deployment comes within the one passage in Pindar where we see the poet most directly asking for a favor. In this *envoi*, Pindar pleads with his addressee Arkesilas IV, ruler of Kyrene, to call back from exile the young man Damophilos. Furthermore, the entire close of *Pythian* 4 is constructed as advice on how to handle a city. Arkesilas is compared at line 270 to a healer (*iatêr*). In other words, he is a fellow *dêmiourgos*, if we recall the famous list of travelling craftsmen (seers, doctors, carpenters and singers) at *Od.*17.382-86:

τς γὰρ δὴ ξεῖνον καλεῖ ἄλλοθεν αὐτὸς ἐπελθῶν

<sup>9</sup> On his milieu see now Heath (2004).

<sup>10</sup> Translation from Race (1997a) 295.



ἄλλον γ', εἰ μὴ τῶν, οἱ δημιοεργοὶ ἕασι;  
 μάντιν ἢ ἰητῆρα κακῶν ἢ τέκτονα δούρων,  
 ἢ καὶ θέσπιν ἀοιδόν, ὃ κεν τέρπησιν ἄε δῶν.  
 ο τοι γὰρ κλητο γε βροτῶν ἐπ' ἄπε ρονα γαῖαν·

For who goes and calls another, a stranger, from elsewhere  
 unless it be one of the public workers?  
 A seer, or healer of ills or shaper of wood  
 Or even inspired singer, who can delight with song--  
 For these among mortals are ones summoned upon boundless earth.

Pindar the out-of-town poet, and his royal addressee, are therefore placed on the same level, at least in the imaginary.<sup>11</sup> And one senses that in this relationship Pindar has the upper hand: the seemingly generic line 275 (τὴν δὲ τούτων ἐξυφα νονται χάριτες) as translated by Race (“For you the blessings of such things are unfolding”) misses the Pindaric specificity of both noun and verb. *Kharites*, in Pindar, can mean favors or blessings but is also, quite commonly, used to mean poems, songs or the glory one gets from poetry.<sup>12</sup> And *exuphaino*, in its only other Pindaric attestation, refers to the creation of praise poetry, when the poet calls to his lyre “*exuphaine ...melos* (“weave out this song,” (*Nem.* 4.44).<sup>13</sup> We need not enter here into the further resonances of *huphaino*, other than to say that it was taken even in antiquity as the root of the noun *hymnos* “hymn.”<sup>14</sup> In brief, the double-edged message of *Pyth.* 4.275 is “you are blessed” and “you are getting poetic praise created for you.” In this immediate context, the next line: “Dare to devote all your serious effort to the cause of blessed Kyrene” can be read as a summary *quid pro quo*: because you are praised so extravagantly, act in a way to deserve praise. Finally, if this is indeed the sociopoetic exchange being transacted, the

<sup>11</sup> In the same section, Pindar also likens himself to a herald (lines 278-9)—the only other trade designated *dēmiourgos* in Homer (*Od.*19.135).

<sup>12</sup> See the nine instances in Slater (1969) 542 s.v. *kharis*, 1.b (α and β). Slater puts *kharites* at *Pyth.*4. 275 under the heading (1c. α) “favour, blessing.”

<sup>13</sup> Slater (1969) 180.

<sup>14</sup> On the word’s etymology and semantics see Nagy (2000).

adjective *eudaimôn*, applied to Kyrene, is proleptic, anticipating the desired outcome. Act this way and Cyrene *will* be “blessed.”

This might seem like a lot of semiotic baggage to tote back to the first lines of our bardic *Birds* passage. But it is the sort of comparison we especially need when dealing with the highly stylized and well-known set of poetic codes underlying ancient Greek praise-poetry. What further meanings do we obtain on taking the *Birds* poet as a potential partner in an exchange with Peisetairos? First, the stakes are raised because what is in question is civic identity. Whereas Peisetairos might be expected to eject him for asking a personal favor, the ragged poet has already ensured himself a reward by blessing the city rather than an individual; to call it *eudaimôn* is both to wish for it to be so and to make it happen. This is the ultimate performative utterance. And second, the utterance promises to resound into the future, because it is the Muse who performs the praise. Cloud-cuckoo-land, like it or not, has become matter for song. The implicit bargain is that its *kleos* will spread, through the medium of *mousikê*. Just as Pindar’s allusion to the blessings of Arkesilas foregrounds the continuing role of his own art in the eventual successes of ruler and city, the anonymous poet’s invocation of the Muse in Aristophanes’ play hints at the potential of reperformance.<sup>15</sup> The encomiastic command has produced a song.

The initial strategy of generalized praise does not immediately captivate Peisetairos. “What and from where is this annoyance? Tell me, who are you?” he exclaims. Yet even when asked directly for identification, the poet prefers to describe himself in a periphrasis. For that matter, he himself does not pause to ask who his audience is either, which might imply that he could ever imagine stooping to flatter them. In our handbook on the habits of highly effective vagrants, this move would be bullet-point #2: “make yourself the voice of tradition.” Several facets of the bard’s self-description catch the eye. First, by calling himself *Mousaôn therapôn* (“servant of the Muses”) the anonymous singer not only blends himself into the poetic past, but activates a deeply traditional set of associations through which poets are equated with cult heroes. Gregory Nagy fully explicated this trope in *The Best of the Achaeans*, with reference especially to the phrase as it operates in the Hesiodic *Theogony*.<sup>16</sup> Let me point out that

<sup>15</sup> On the important notion of reperformance in archaic poetic composition, see Nagy (1996) 7-23, 53-58.

<sup>16</sup> Nagy (1999) 292-97.

Bacchylides in 476 BCE can still use the term to introduce himself in the opening of his *epinikion* for Hieron, while specifying that he serves the Muse Ourania (Bacch. 5.7-14):<sup>17</sup>

δεῦρ' ἐπάθρησον νόω,  
 ἧ σὺν Χαρ τεσσι βαθυζώνοις ὑφάνας  
 ὕμνον ἀπὸ ζαθέας  
 νάσου ξένος ὑμετέραν πέμ-  
 πει κλεεννὰν ἐς πόλιν,  
 χρυσάμπυκος Οὐραν ἄς κλει-  
 νὸς **θεράπων**.

Turn your thoughts this way;  
 With the help of the slim-waisted Graces your guest friend,  
 the famous servant of Urania with her golden headband,  
 has woven a song of praise and sends it from the sacred island  
 to your distinguished city.

As Nagy demonstrated, the *Lives* traditions concerning Homer, Archilochus, and Hesiod fit the pattern of such cult heroes.<sup>18</sup> In this light, it is significant that the anonymous *therapôn* in the *Birds* chooses to describe himself further as “uttering a song of honey-tongued words” (μελιγλώσσων ἐπέων ἰεῖς ἀοιδᾶν). For the last two words of this phrase could be taken as a gloss on the very name “Hesiod,” which has been plausibly etymologized as a speaking-name: “he who emits the voice” (from *hiêmi* and *audê*).<sup>19</sup> In the *Birds* phrase, the dictional choice of *aidê* “song” simply makes use of a surface lexical renewal within the same semantic field; furthermore, *aidê* and *audê* function as synonyms already in Hesiod.<sup>20</sup> In effect, this wandering bard names himself in terms of his function, and in coded bardic fashion, in words that recall the famous hymnist of the gods.

<sup>17</sup> Translation from Campbell (1992) 139.

<sup>18</sup> In addition to Nagy (1999) 297-308, see now Clay (2004).

<sup>19</sup> Nagy (1999) 296-97. On the Indo-European mythopoeic traditions behind *meliglôssos*, see Bader (1989) 31-32.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. within the same scene of poetic induction, line-final *aidê* at *Theogony* 22 and 44, with line-final *audê* at *Theogony* 31 and 39, all describing songs of praise.

I have been trying thus far to reach beyond the superficial concepts of “cliché” or “well-worn tropes” to which commentators on the *Birds* passage have inevitably resorted.<sup>21</sup> Instead of these reactions, we might imagine that the Aristophanic parody of a *Mousaôn therapôn* accurately, albeit with comic exaggeration, captures the actual discourse of praise-poets in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. That the poets seen so far in this portrait range from Hesiod to Pindar and Bacchylides could be taken as an accident. But the alternative is more poetically intriguing and also practicable. In generic terms, the figure of Hesiod, poet of the *Theogony*, was a praise-poet. In genetic terms, Pindar and Bacchylides can consciously be modelling themselves on Hesiod (as would many Alexandrian poets to come).<sup>22</sup> To go even deeper, Homer, Hesiod and the varieties of Greek praise-poetry are all evolutionary off-shoots of Indo-European praise-poetry traditions.<sup>23</sup> What might seem problematic is that none of these poetic predecessors to our *Birds* bard seems to represent *himself* as a *planetic* poet. This will be dealt with at the end of the paper.

A final observation on this second gambit --“blend into tradition”-- before we move on. When the commentators offer Bacchylides for a parallel to the use of the word *meliglōssos*, it is similarly in the same *pro forma* tone, pointing to a surface phenomenon. But let us examine the *function* of the conclusion of Bacchylides’ praise-poem, where the word occurs (3.90-98):

ἀρετᾶ[ς γε μ]ὲν οὐ μινύθει  
βροτῶν ἅμα σ[ώμ]ατι φέγγος, ἀλλὰ  
Μοῦσά νιν τρ[έφει.] Ἰέρων, σὺ δ’ ὄλβον  
κάλλιστ’ ἐπεδ[ε ξ]ιο θνατοῖς  
ἄνθεα· πράξα[ντι] δ’ εὔ  
οὐ φέρει κόσμ[ον σι]ω-  
πά· σὺν δ’ ἀλαθ[ε α] καλῶν  
καὶ μελιγλώσσου τις ὑμνήσει χάριν  
Κηΐας ἀηδόνοσ.

## ΤΡΑΝΣ

<sup>21</sup> The most recent examination, by Loscalzo (2005), also views the passage as a pastiche with no specific target or parodic method.

<sup>22</sup> On some of the varied uses of Hesiod in Hellenistic poetics, see Stephens (2003)163, 252-57. Cameron (1995) 362-86 makes useful distinctions concerning Hesiodic influence on Alexandrian writers.

<sup>23</sup> On Homer and praise-poetry, see Nagy (1990) 146-214. On this function of the poet in Indo-European culture, see Watkins (1995) 68-84.

The gnomic cap, “silence does not bring adornment to one who has done well” leads into the final declaration that the poet’s *kharis* –both his graceful song and his grateful recompense--will itself become a topic of song. Bacchylides might well be imagining two related sociopoetic phenomena. First, his *poem* will be re-performed (a fact that the Aristophanes parody in effect confirms); and second, the further story of his *relationship* with Hieron will be told, perhaps in the form of another poem, or in stories that embed the poems. That is to say, Bacchylides is aware of the on-going process of mythologizing the performer. That such ancient para-poetic traditions did exist is attested by the various *Lives* traditions, from the *Certamen* of Homer and Hesiod to the Mnesiepes inscription about Archilochus. I would argue that, given the Greek and the comparative evidence, no traditional poetry ever travels *without* such contemporaneous para-poetic traditions. I think especially of medieval Celtic prose tales concerning poets, but also of Provençal troubadour *vidas* and *razos*, the anecdotes that explain how a song came to be.<sup>24</sup>

Bacchylides’ assertion is that his true poetic telling of Hieron’s deeds (σὺν δ’ ἄλαθ[ε α] καλῶν) will result in his own story being told. But he does not say “my story”; he refers to “the *kharis* of the nightingale of Keos.” It is the periphrasis that should interest us. The two parallel passages that feature similar tropes of poet-patron symbiosis simply refer to the poet in the first person: Pindar in *Olympian* 1 prays for fame in *sophia* (115-17):<sup>25</sup>

εἴη σέ τε τοῦτον ὑψοῦ χρόνον πατεῖν,  
 ἐμέ τε τοσσάδε νικαφόροις  
 ὀμιλεῖν πρόφαντον σοφῶν καθ’ Ἑλ-  
 λαναῶν ἐόντα παντῶν.

May you walk on high for the time that is yours,  
 and may I join victors whenever they win  
 and be foremost in wisdom among Hellenes everywhere.

<sup>24</sup> For an introduction to the range of such Celtic tales, see the essays in Nagy and Jones (2005); on Provençal tales, see Poe (1995) and VanVleck (1991) 40-47, 56-60.

<sup>25</sup> Translation from Race (1997a) 59.

Similarly, Ibycus in his ode to Polycrates mentions his own *kleos* (PMG 282.45-47).<sup>26</sup> By contrast, Bacchylides awards himself a praise-name, the sort of phrase that we expect from the later generations who will refer to him, not from the poet himself. He is in effect already collaborating in the work of memorialization, doing his own public relations. Keeping in mind the poetic periphrasis “one who utters the song” (ἰεὺς ἀοιδᾶν) of the bard at *Av.* 907, we can triangulate the bird-like Bacchylides with a third poet, also periphrastically self-described. In an often-cited departure scene in the *Hymn to Apollo*, the performer of the hymn bids farewell to the Delian maidens (166-175):<sup>27</sup>

χα ρετε δ' ὑμεῖς πᾶσαι· ἐμεῖο δὲ καὶ μετόπισθε  
 μνήσασθ', ὅπποτε κέν τις ἐπιχθον ὦν ἀνθρώπων  
 ἐνθάδ' ἀνε ρηται ξεῖνος ταλαπε ριος ἔλθῶν·  
 ᾧ κοῦραι, τ ς δ' ὕμιν ἀνήρ ἥδιστος ἀοιδῶν  
 ἐνθάδε πωλεῖται, καὶ τέω τέρπεσθε μάλιστα;  
 ὑμεῖς δ' εὔ μάλα πᾶσαι ὑποκρ νασθ' ἀμφ' ἡμέων·  
 τυφλὸς ἀνήρ, οἰκεῖ δὲ Χ ω ἔνι παιπαλοέσση,  
 τοῦ πᾶσαι μετόπισθεν ἀριστεύουσιν ἀοῖδα .  
 ἡμεῖς δ' ὑμέτερον κλέος οἴσομεν ὅσον ἐπ' αἶαν  
 ἀνθρώπων στρεφόμεσθα πόλεις εὔ ναιεταώσας·

Farewell to you all. And remember me hereafter,  
 when some man of the earth, a stranger much-enduring,  
 comes and asks “Girls, who is the sweetest singer hereabouts,  
 Who delights you most?’ All of you, answer well of us:  
 ‘A blind man, he lives in rocky Khios; it’s his  
 songs, all of them, that are best in later times.’  
 And we will bring *your* fame as far on earth

<sup>26</sup> On the intertextual relations of his assertion, see Steiner (2005).

<sup>27</sup> Translation mine; on Marx’s emendation ἀμφ’ ἡμέων adopted here, see Càssola (1975) 497-98.

as the well-inhabited cities on our circuit.

This, too, is a *kleos*-bargain: you praise me, and I shall spread your praises. But the *Hymn* poet also carefully chooses to rehearse the maidens in what they are supposed to say when another wanderer (some weary *xeinos*) encounters them. He is a blind man who lives in Khios, and whose songs are the best ever. Why is the blind man nameless? Several practical functions are fused within the periphrastic strategy. The mechanism enables mimesis of the poet by performers who are not the “original” first-person speaker.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, the coded signature implies that the composer is already far beyond seeking fame—the masked man never has to utter “I am Zorro.” But most of all, this sort of self-characterization naturalizes the poet as the voice of tradition by making him part of the accepted canon, the “songs that are best in later times.” The *Birds* bard is the essence of a certain type of poetry, but not just in Aristophanes’ parodic vision: it is an important feature of the poetry’s own essentializing.

Two of the aforementioned three self-effacing self-praisers are explicitly depicted as wandering poets. Bacchylides would seem to be the odd man out (but more on that later). We can also note that the *Birds* praise-poet does in fact name *someone*: he has an annoying tic of referring to Homer, when using the phrase *therapôn otrêros*. Even the scholiast *ad loc.* noted “some say these are too much.”<sup>29</sup> It does strike us as the desperate move of an insecure poet, or at least, as a gesture of secondariness. It reminds me how certain singers of short poems when interviewed on their home turf, in the White Mountains of western Crete, asserted the authenticity of their performances by bringing out tattered song-books to show that their texts matched that on the old page.<sup>30</sup> Homer was credited with the phrase *Mousaôn therapôn*, from the opening of the *Margites*, but the comic point here is not that the *Birds* bard has to go around citing a text of that

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<sup>28</sup> A similar merging of multiple performers can occur in Provençal poems: on the tension between assuring transmission and preserving authorial claims, see VanVleck (1991) 164-77. On the Homeric rhapsode as a “re-composed” performer, and the Delian maidens as a model for re-enactment, see the extended discussion in Nagy (1996) 61-82.

<sup>29</sup> Scholion ad 913 in Dübner (1877): *perissa tines tauta*. Cf. Rutherford (1896) 505 who takes the phrase as indicating possible interpolation. The upshot is the same, whether the words denote content (“excessive”) or repetition (“redundant”).

<sup>30</sup> Personal fieldnotes and audiotape from Karanos, Crete, June 1996.

poem.<sup>31</sup> Instead, I submit, he is doing what praise-poets actually do, citing Homer by name.<sup>32</sup> The Pindar passage cited above (*Pyth.* 4. 277-78) is a good example (τῶν δ' Ὀμήρου καὶ τόδε συνθέμενος ῥῆμα πόρουν' ).

You might say that Pindar cites Homer for an idea, not a stylistic nicety, but the parodied bard is doing the same, making an assertion that poets are indeed *Mousaôn therapontes* (*kata ton Homêron*). At least, this is the point that Peisetairos takes up for the next joke, misunderstanding *therapôn* in its debased sense: if you're a slave how come you have long hair? The bard's reply---no, all of us *didaskaloi* are *Mousaôn therapontes*—casts him as a choral instructor in the mode of a dithyramb-writer, or even a dramatic poet. As it turns out, an actual dithyrambic poet, Kinesias, will turn up in *Cloud-cuckooland* some 400 lines after this point (*Av.*1373-1409). He will identify himself as a *kukliodidaskalos*, one who is the object of competition by the tribes (*Av.*1403). The contrast is instructive. The Kinesias scene depends for its humor on a critique of the airy, new-fangled, Timotheus-style dithyrambic language.<sup>33</sup> Kinesias, however, is not a wandering poet, but already deeply embedded in civic *agônes* (where all know of his talents and therefore want him to train their tribe's chorus). His flying fantasy is like a sublimated form of wandering—it is all in the mind and words, an escape from his more mundane task as *didaskalos*.<sup>34</sup> And his plan of getting wings from Peisetairos abruptly ends when the city-founder offers him the scrawniest *chorêgos* and a tribe of birds to train.

The wandering bard, as opposed to the would-be nightingale Kinesias, actually gets what he wants. Why does he succeed? Obviously, he has read the vagrant's

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<sup>31</sup> Dübner (1877) ad *Av.*913 ἐπεπ στευτο δὲ καὶ ὁ Μαργ της τοῦ Ὀμήρου εἶναι. ἐν ᾧ εἴρηται Μουσάων θεράπων καὶ ἐκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος. From a papyrus fragment (West *IEG* <sup>2</sup> “Homerus” 1) it appears the line comes from the proem, telling how an old poet came to Kolophon; apparently this mention (like *Hy.Ap.*172-74) was widely taken to be a self-portrait of “Homer.” For Homer's relations with Kolophon, as depicted in the *Vitae*, see below.

<sup>32</sup> Around 100 BCE, the *grammatikos* Dioskourides of Tarsos is commemorated by an inscription at Delos for having composed for the people of Knossos in Crete an *enkômion kata ton poiêtan* about their city. The striking continuity of this poetic strategy, three centuries after Aristophanes parodied it, might even have extended to an explicit citation of Homer by name in the composition of Dioskourides (whose pupil, Myrinos, a melic and epic poet, actually performed the encomium): for text and commentary see Guarducci (1929) 637-38 and 655, who suggests that the poet might have elaborated the praises of Crete found in e.g. *Od.*19.172-79.

<sup>33</sup> See Csapo (2004) for the fullest account of this style and its ethos.



handbook, strategy # 3—“for success, don’t dress.” Well-known dithyrambic court-supported poets, like Arion, dress sumptuously. Even *aulos* players and *chorêgoi* associated with this sort of poetry are always well turned out.<sup>35</sup> But the wandering *didaskalos* dresses down. Peisetairos, picking up on the poet’s adjective, remarks at lines 915 “no wonder you’ve got an *otrêron lêdarion*—“nimble little tunic.” As Dunbar points out, he is making a pun on words like *trêma* “perforation” ---in other words, the poet’s garb is “(w)hol(l)y in fashion” for dirt-poor warblers. This is the basis for the ensuing dialogue, to which we might now skip ahead. The poet comes on with a rather direct request: “give to me whatsoever you will to give, by your head’s assent” (τεῶ κεφαλᾶ). Though Dunbar thinks that this phrase is “deliberately odd, showing the poet’s want of skill,” a closer look at Pindar shows that this is in fact highly exact technical language for a transaction involving supplication, honor, and oaths.<sup>36</sup> Peisetairos gets the picture and, to get prevent further trouble from “this bad thing” orders a companion to hand over his jacket, since the sidekick still has a *khitôn* to wear. There is general agreement that the scene evokes Hipponax (esp. fr.32 *IEG*<sup>2</sup>), and we could leave it at that.<sup>37</sup> But the poet’s gracious reply opens up further possibilities for interpretation. In a neat *men/de* construction, he takes and gives: “Not unwillingly does my dear Muse accept this gift (*men*); but let thy mind (*de*) learn the Pindaric saying.” Like all good comedy, this moment gets its punch from a serious potential breach in social relations. Peisetairos thinks he can banish his problem by a quick payoff, the way one gets rid of roaming accordionists at outdoor restaurants. But the paid poet is working with a different perspective of the exchange relationship. He has been paid (*men*) and so he will *repay* in his own verbal medium (*de*). Which then of course would require counter-payment.

An interesting parallel appears in Thomas Hale’s volume on west African griots or *jeliw*. In a section covering griot financial arrangements called “Rewards at home vs

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<sup>34</sup> On the biographical details, including his victories, see Dunbar (1995) 660-61. On the imagery of flying, see Loscalzo (2005) 230-31.

<sup>35</sup> For Arion: Hdt. 1.24. On aulete costuming, see Wilson (1999) 72-77, and on the Aristophanic play with this convention within the *Birds*, see Barker (2004) 198-202. For the finery of the *chorêgos*, as part of the *lamprotês* and *megaloprepeia* associated with the agonistic event, see Wilson (2000) 136-43.

<sup>36</sup> Dunbar (1995) 534. Compare the contexts of *heai kephalai* in *Ol*.6.60 (“asking for some honor to nourish the people, for/by his own head”) and *Ol*.7.67-8 (“to agree [literally nod] with the son of Kronos that [the island] would be for his head/by her head a prize of honor ever after”).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Dunbar (1995) 535, Loscalzo (2005) 232-33.

rewards on the road,” Hale says: “The traditional patron who gives the griot anything—a blanket, \$10, a goat—seals an unwritten life contract with the bard. The griot may now ask the donor for anything at any time, and the patron is normally under the obligation to do his or her best to accede to the request.” He continues, “The concert promoter, on the other hand, gives the griot a check for \$750 and may not see the performer again for several years, if at all. The relationship is not personal; it is commercial.”<sup>38</sup> To put the *Birds* scenario into these terms, the bard, although on the road, is looking for a sugar-daddy patron with whom he can settle down; Peisetairos, on the other hand, wants to cut the cord with a check. In a small way, we can glimpse here the clash of symbolic and monetary exchange cultures that Leslie Kurke has explicated in her *Coins, Bodies, Games and Gold*.<sup>39</sup> In this, too, the anonymous bard is more like Pindar than Pindar would ever admit.

A wandering poet cannot loiter, because he presents an implicit threat: either he becomes a drain on the economy, with his continuous high-priced praise and advice, or worse, he can turn mean. Plenty of comparative evidence exists concerning praise poets who get outrageous payoffs by turning to satire. Ruth Finnegan tells of the virtual blackmail tactics of roving solo singers among the Hausa, who come into town, apostrophize the local big-wig in praise-verses, and then, if not paid, gradually shift stanza by stanza into harsher innuendoes about his occupation, reputation and political integrity<sup>40</sup>. The Middle Irish story of the Ulster poet Aithirne Ailgesach (“Aithirne the demanding”) who obtained as payment the (only remaining) eye out of the head of the Connaught king Eochaid, paints a similar picture.<sup>41</sup> The *Birds* bard seems relatively tame, by these standards, at least on the basis of what he says. It could be that in a context of patronage-hunting and its protocols, he does not need to say any more. As it turns out, the counter-gift consisting of the bard’s treasured Pindaric *epos*, features further innuendo that cannot be ignored. The lines run (941-45):

“For among the nomad Scyths, he wanders apart from the host, who acquires

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<sup>38</sup> Hale (1998) 302.

<sup>39</sup> Kurke (1999) especially 101-65

<sup>40</sup> Finnegan (1970) 92-98.

no woven-whirled garment. Unglorified goes a jerkin without tunic. Understand what I say.”

Peisetairos gets the point, hands over his companion’s tunic in addition to what has gone before, and tells the poet to take it and get lost (*apelthe—labôn*). The shtick with the clothes is fast and funny enough that we may not catch all the artfulness of this turn. First, there is the lovely pathetic irony of a marginal wandering type implicitly comparing himself to a marginal type among a marginal people—not just a Scythian but a Scythian *outcast*. Next, there is the implied threat—the “jerkin” going “without glory” is a barely coded way of saying “no one will ever get my transmitted *kleos* about you and your city unless you give me more.” We may be reminded of similar exchanges within the Phaeacian episode of the *Odyssey*, which is after all our first extended representation of another extortionist wandering poet who controls the threat of ill fame (see especially *Od.11.333-384*).<sup>42</sup>

Finally, when we hold up this passage against the original Pindaric *hyporchêma* the innuendo gets sharper. As we have it (thanks largely to scholiasts explicating this very passage in the *Birds*), the Pindar passage ran (fr.105a-b).<sup>43</sup>

Σύνες ὄ τοι λέγω,  
ζαθέων ἱερῶν ἐπώνυμε  
πάτερ, κτ στορ Αἴτνας,  
νομάδεσσι γὰρ ἐν Σκύθαις ἀλάται στρατῶν,  
ὅς ἀμαξοφόρητον οἶκον οὐ πέπαται.  
ἀκλεῆς <δ> ἔβα.

Understand what I tell you  
you whose name means holy temples,  
Father, founder of Aitna.  
For among the nomadic Skythians the man is excluded

<sup>41</sup> Book of Leinster folio 114b1-30 (the opening of the 11<sup>th</sup>-century tale *Talland Étair*); summary and further bibliography in Ó hÓgáin (1991) 22-23.

<sup>42</sup> On the metapoetic nuances of the hero’s interaction with his Phaeacian patrons in this so-called *intermezzo*, see Doherty (1991), Wyatt (1989) and Martin (2001).

from the folk who does not possess a house borne on a wagon,  
and he goes without glory.

Modern commentators like Kugelmeier and Dunbar innocently resist, but Tzetzes long ago saw this as disparaging, and not just parodying, Pindar. “*Diasurei ton Pindaron*” says the Byzantine scholar: “he rips him apart.”<sup>44</sup> Aristophanes has cleverly taken the first line of the *hyporkhêma* (σύνες ὄ τοι λέγω) and placed it *after* the lines about the poor garment-less Scythian, which the bard has pointedly used to get himself a tunic. This way, the original phatic utterance of Pindar to Hieron (“now hear this”) becomes much more mercenary (“now hear *this*—give me *that*”). But the ultimate satiric point is that Pindar himself in his poems to Hieron was angling for some bling. What kind of accessorizing did he have in mind? The *Birds* poet just wants some clothes, but the phrase ὑφαντοδόνητον ἔσθος is a metapoetic (and partial rhyming) rewording of Pindar’s original which mentions a house on a wagon (ἀμαξοφόρητον οἶκον). Is Aristophanes implying that the real Pindar was hitting up Hieron for a sort of Scythian suburban utility vehicle?<sup>45</sup> At the risk of making a parodic interpretation of this parody, I will simply point to a fragment of another *hyporkhêma* in which Pindar reminds Hieron that, while other places are good for various goods, Sicily is the world leader in production of the fancy mule-car (*okhêma daidaleon*, fr.106.6). Perhaps the roving Pindar really needed new wheels and not so subtly told Hieron to pimp his ride.

One cannot help falling into this language of hip-hop, because there are many structural similarities between ancient and modern pay-per-poem performers. The constant threat of public blame for disrespect (i.e. non-payment) has already been mentioned. Self-mythologizing is another (cf. among rappers, anyone from Eminem to Fabolous). Tied up with the presentation of self are the next two maxims for wandering poets: #4--inflate your worth and #5—diversify. These may sound like strategies from the

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<sup>43</sup> Text and translation Race (1997b) 336-38.

<sup>44</sup> Ad Av.930 in White (1901) 85. Kugelmeier (1996) 115 thinks there is no parody of Pindar intended, but that the lines are simply convenient for the beggar.

<sup>45</sup> Rogers (1906) 129-30 notes that the scholiast implied that Pindar’s original poem embodied his own request, and that the fragment was thus understood by Schneider in his commentary. Rogers himself cautiously suggests that “it would certainly make the Aristophanic adaptation more pungent, if Pindar was begging the additional present on his own account.”

Enron accounting department, but in the poet's case they are both connected to the essentially unregulated and open-ended nature of his occupation, as opposed to that of the stay-at-home performer. It is precisely because he appears out of nowhere, and can say anything about where he has been and is going, that the planetic poet can make his initial encounter into an investment tool. An excellent way to show how important you are is to mention the exciting, exotic or simply better places to which you must be moving on. In planetic discourse, this can be used to imply that the locals are stingy but over in (*insert name of next town*), boy, do they ever pay big. A neat example of this strategy occurs in the novelization of Homer's life attributed to Herodotus.<sup>46</sup> The young and newly blind Homer has wandered from Kolophon to Smyrna and thence to *Neon Teikhos* where he finds a gig at a cobbler's shop, entertaining people with hymns and tales from the Theban cycle. He makes a living (*mêkhanê*) that way but then starts falling short of cash and decides to head for the metropolis, Kymê. Before he departs he says (lines 127-28 Allen):<sup>47</sup>

αἶψα πόδες με φέροιεν ἐς αἶδο ὦν πόλιν ἀνδρῶν·  
τῶν γὰρ καὶ θυμὸς πρόφρων καὶ μῆτις ἀρ στή.

May my legs bring me soon to a respectful town:  
the heart of such men is willing, their devices the best.

While it is an indirect snub, the operative words *aidoios* and *prophrôn* (appearing at emphatic caesural points in the line) are keys to the mercenary implications of the couplet (recall here *prophrôn* in the request at *Av.* 930). As Markwald has shown in his study of the Homeric epigrams, these words are used in formulaic fashion in scenes of encounter in the *Odyssey*, in which the hero is seeking a kindly reception.<sup>48</sup> Within the ps.-Herodotean life, the formula αἰδεῖσθε ξενῶν κεχρημένον (“have respect for the man who needs guest-friendship”) has in fact already been used by the blind Homer when he

<sup>46</sup> Graziosi (2002) provides a sophisticated reading of this and other *Lives*, in the context of later ancient “inventions” of an author to accompany the reception of Homeric verse.

<sup>47</sup> Translation from West (2003) 365.

<sup>48</sup> Markwald (1986) 24-25, 30.

first encounters the people of Neon Teikhos (a poem we shall examine shortly). Alas, no one rushes out with cash in hand to prevent Homer from leaving Neon Teikhos. The quid pro quo he has in mind is revealed when he gets to Kymê and frankly tells the governing council that, in return for public support (*demosiei trephein*), he will make their city as famous as possible (*eukleestatên*). In the case of the *Birds* bard, this bargain is never as explicit but must lie just under the surface. In the Homeric life, the Kymaeans' refusal of support leads to an outcome that we might have predicted based on the African and Irish parallels to which I have referred: Homer, in verse, bewails his ill treatment in the presence of the presiding council member, promising that he will leave immediately for a different *polis*:<sup>49</sup>

Aeolian Smyrna, seaneighbor, holy shore,  
traversed by the bright water of holy Meles—  
going forth from there Zeus' daughters, his glorious children,  
desired to celebrate a noble land and city of men,  
but they in their folly refused the holy voice, the word of song (ἱερὴν ὄπα, φῆμι  
ἄοιδῆς).

Homer refashions the council's refusal into an insult to the Muses themselves, who have come from Smyrna (a coded reference to his own poetry). With the self-important phrase ἱερὴν ὄπα, φῆμι ἄοιδῆς he adheres to rule # 2—"make yourself the voice of tradition." The poem also contains a threat that he will get pay-back, and the subsequent prose tells us that he laid a curse on the people of Kymê, that they never produce a great poet (probably, as West suggests, an allusion to the lore that Hesiod's father came from Kymê—in which case this is a slap at the poetic tradition that most rivaled the Homeric).<sup>50</sup> Praise-poets can be touchy.

If we take this *Life* of Homer as articulating a basic strategy whereby poets allude to their value by mentioning greener pastures where they can get "respect," then Aristophanes' stylization of planetic discourse becomes all the funnier. At *Av.* 948, the

<sup>49</sup> Translation from West (2003) 369.

<sup>50</sup> West (2003); cf. the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* (West [2003] 318-53).

poet takes his new clothes and says, “I’m off.” This is a crucial moment because the audience will now expect to hear whether the wandering bard intends to go somewhere else where he will get better treatment and denigrate Cloud-cuckoo-land, or instead, go off content and spread the *kleos* of the new city, as his re-payment for their hospitality. But the expectation is jilted. What he says is: “And going into the city I will make such verses as the following”. What city? Says Dunbar, “the juxtaposition of prepositional phrase and *elthôn* suggesting going into the city when he is now about to leave it, is awkward, but may be another example of the hack poet’s ineptitude.” Far from it, I think. The whole joke must be that the poet has been paid and therefore will stay in this very city of Cloud-cuckoo-land—the outcome that Peisetairos had feared from the start. But—even funnier—he’s now shifting gear into what is obviously a different poetic register, that of new-dithyramb (compare the later Kinesias poem). And joke #3: using the planetic strategy of saying “I’m off to greener pastures now ” he tells us that he intends to praise the city as being freezing cold, snow-struck, and full of passage-ways (*polupora*). Not too attractive, but it fits the aerial locale perfectly, while hinting heavily that he requires another anorak . *Polupora* must be another hint, that this boundless cloud-city offers endless opportunities for his extortionistic-encomiastic “ways of song,” for *poros* in late 5<sup>th</sup> century usage often refers to monetary “ways and means”.<sup>51</sup>

As my own ways of song are not endless, I will not delay over the evidence that Solon and Xenophanes knew and used strategy #4.<sup>52</sup> Instead, let me turn now to the penultimate gambit #5—diversify. Once again, the pseudo-Herodotean *Life* is a good place to start. A simple inventory of the poems embedded within this composition, or alluded to therein, yields a range of thirteen different genres: praise/supplication (*epigr.* 1, 9; Eiresione=*epigr.* 15); blame (*epigr.* 16—to the riddling boys); epic (¶ 16=*Little Iliad* fr.10, ¶ 9 =*Expedition to Thebes*); epic as praise-poetry after the fact (¶ 26, 28); local history (¶ 16 Phocais); parainetic (*epigr.* 5, 1, 13—the last-named also a begging poem?); propemptic (to himself=*epigr.* 2, 4, 6); epitaph (*epigr.* 3 for Midas’ tomb); plaint (*epigr.* 7); threat/curse (*epigr.* 8, 12, 14); oracle (*epigr.* 10); hymns (¶ 9); paignia (¶ 24).

The composer of the *Life* sometimes places Homer in fairly far-fetched situations

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<sup>51</sup> *LSJ*<sup>9</sup> s.v. II.3.

simply to explain how a particular (most likely pre-existent) poem has come to be attributed to him. But we should not dismiss the prose as padding. Like the Provençal *razos*, and medieval Irish bardic romances (such as the story of Cearbhall and Fearbhlaidh). The anecdotal tradition travels with the poetry; it can be as informative (and authentic) as the compositions themselves.<sup>53</sup> Certainly, Homer is being credited with the use or even invention of almost all important non-melic genres.<sup>54</sup> In this, he encapsulates the essence of rhapsodic performance as we can reconstruct it from other sources. He is also made into the essence of folk tradition, with the remarkable assertion that it was Homer who invented the *Eiresiônê* song and custom while wintering in Samos. His invented tradition continued forever after, as a children’s performance, at a local feast of Apollo. The composition is itself a perfect illustration of the dynamics of planetic discourse. In company with children, Homer would approach the most well-off houses and praise the occupant for his wealth and power, then switch to requests for hand-outs (*epigr.* 15, lines 3-7,11-15):<sup>55</sup>

αὐταὶ ἀνακλ νεσθε θύραι· Πλοῦτος γὰρ ἔσεισιν  
πολλός, σὺν Πλούτῳ δὲ καὶ Εὐφροσύνη τεθαλυῖα,  
Εἰρήνη τ’ ἀγαθή. ὅσα δ’ ἄγγεα, μεστὰ μὲν εἶη,  
κυρβάςῳ ἢ δ’ αἰεὶ μάζης κατὰ καρδόπου ἔρποι.  
νῦν μὲν κριθα ἦν εὐώπιδα σησαμόεσσαν.....

νεῦμα τοι νεῦμαι ἐνιαύσιος ὥστε χελιδών·  
ἔστηκ’ ἐν προθύροις ψιλὴ πόδας· ἀλλὰ φέρ’ αἶψα.  
ἄνδρ’ ἄνδρ’ ἄνδρ’ ἄνδρ’ ἄνδρ’ ἄνδρ’ ἄνδρ’ ἄνδρ’ ἄνδρ’  
κεῖ μὲν τι δώσεις· εἰ δὲ μή, οὐχ ἔστήξομεν,

<sup>52</sup> See West *IEG* <sup>2</sup> Solon fr.19 (his departure from Solii); Xenophanes fr. 6.(a threat to spread rumors about a cheap patron?).

<sup>53</sup> On the Irish tale, see Doan (1985).

<sup>54</sup> The relationship of this fact to his “first” name *Melesigenes* (cf. ps-Herodotean *Life* ch.3) bears further scrutiny. The successive names of Homer suggest an evolutionary perspective on the level of individual performance career, which can in turn be taken as metonymic for the greater span of the development of distinctive genres out of an originally indeterminate category of “song” (*melos*). For this evolution on the macro level, see Nagy (1990) 30-51 and 359-81.



οὐ γὰρ συνοικήσοντες ἐνθάδ' ἦλθομεν.

Open of your own accord, doors, for Wealth will enter  
in plenty, and with Wealth, flourishing Cheer  
and welcome Peace. May the grain jars all be full,  
And the mound of dough ever top the kneading trough.  
Now [give us] beautiful barley meal laced with sesame....

I'll return, I'll return each year, like the swallow.  
I stand at the porch, feet stripped, so bring something quickly.  
For Apollo's sake, lady, give us something!  
If you will, well and good; if not, we won't wait about,  
we didn't come here to make our homes with you.

Homer's generic versatility is given pragmatic grounding by the realistic depiction of the various contexts that surround his compositions. We can go even further and speculate that the anecdotal tradition preserves some memory of actual occasions when real wandering poets—and not just their stylizing rhapsodic descendants—found a use for verse. In this it helps to triangulate the generic diversity of wandering bards with information from Egypt, both in early and modern times, and 19<sup>th</sup> century Ireland.<sup>56</sup> Alan Cameron, in his justly famous article on poets of Byzantine Egypt observes that one of the characteristics of Pamprepius, Horapollon, Christodorus and their kin was the ability to handle a whole range of material, from invective to encomia, epithalamia to epic, and especially local histories—for which they seem to have been paid by the locals.<sup>57</sup> I am reminded of the *Life's* picture of Homer's dictation of the *Phocais* (ch.16). As Cameron stresses, the *Gelegenheitsgedichte* of such poets have to be distinguished from productions of the non-wandering scholar-poets; in most cases, the very occasionality of the *vaganti* verses has led to their disappearance, while big-ticket scholarly poets like

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<sup>55</sup>Text and translation from West (2003)394-97. On this poem and the very similar *Koronisma* attributed to Phoenix of Kolophon, see Furley (1994).

<sup>56</sup> On the work and biography of a wandering epic performer in modern Egypt, see Slyomovics (1987).

<sup>57</sup> Cameron (1965).

Nonnus survive. No doubt the same applies to the bulk of the verse performed by wandering Greek poets of all eras.<sup>58</sup>

From 5<sup>th</sup> century Egypt to 19<sup>th</sup> c. Ireland is not that far, in terms of poetic practices. The sociopolitical landscapes also look similar: in both cases, as the result of regime change, men educated in a millenia-old poetic tradition were no longer readily employed; they take to the road, seeking patronage, meanwhile making a living as *grammatici* or as hedge-school masters, turning out polished poems according to the canons of their ancestors. In the case of Irish tradition, it was only the efforts of antiquarians and the nationalist stirrings of such scholarly collectors as Douglas Hyde that preserved the words of the last poet in this wandering tradition, Antoin Ó Reachtuire (Raftery, in English). Having lost his sight as a child, this illiterate performer spent most of his 51 years wandering around Galway between Athenry and Loughrea. Hyde in his edition notes the generic range of the surviving verses: “Raftery made songs in praise of people who helped him, or whom he liked, or in praise of the places in which they lived; he made political songs spurring the people against the Galls, or English enemy, and helping Daniel O Connell’s party. He made an occasional love song, and an occasional religious song, and now and again a song of dispraise, a satire or “*aer*” as the old Gaels used to call it.”<sup>59</sup> Many points here could be paralleled with the *Life of Homer* tradition: I choose just one such *aer*, which Raftery made upon a farmer’s wife. The woman was preparing dinner, and Raftery smelled the beef and cabbage, but she told the blind man there was not a bite to eat in the house, at which point he said:<sup>60</sup>

Cluinin an torann, ach ní fheicim an bia:  
An té’ dhéanfas leathchuma orm, nár fheice sí Dia.

I hear the noise, but I see no food:  
Who keeps me deprived, may she never see God!

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<sup>58</sup> In this connection, it is interesting to see the range of genres performed by the poets referred to in epigraphic evidence collected by Guarducci (1929); see for example her # 7, in which Kleokhares of Athens is commemorated at Delphi in 230 BCE for composing a *prosodion*, paeon, and hymn to be sung yearly by children at the *Theoxenia*.

<sup>59</sup> Hyde (1903) 15.

<sup>60</sup> Text and translation in O’Flynn (1998) 214-15.

We might compare Homeric epigram 12 and the accompanying story. Homer, on the way to celebrate the Apatouria on Samos, encountered some women sacrificing to Kourotrophos at a crossroads. When the priestess told him to keep away from the ritual, Homer cursed her:<sup>61</sup>

κλῦθι μοι εὐχομένω Κουροτρόφε, δὸς δὲ γυναῖκα  
 τήνδε νέων μὲν ἀνήνασθαι φιλότητα καὶ εὐνήν,  
 ἢ δ' ἐπιτερπέσθω πολιοκροτάφοισι γέρουσιν,  
 ὧν ὥρη μὲν ἀπήμβλυνται, θυμὸς δὲ μενοινᾶ.

Hear my prayer, Kourotrophos, and grant that this woman  
 refuse the love and bed of younger men:  
 let her fancy be taken by old men grey at the temples,  
 whose vigor is blunted away, though their hearts still hanker.

The main point, however, is simply that poetic diversity—the ability to handle many genres—is an evolutionary survival response to the dilemma of the wandering poet. The further consequences of this multi-tasking mechanism might be worth exploring at some other time. For instance, it could be shown that such flexibility enables formulas and motifs to pass easily from one sort of composition to another, as they are all in the same poet's head. Furthermore, it is likely that this ability—reflected in the concept of *polyeideia*—is what Callimachus and later poets are striving to reclaim in their own production. Ion of Chios, one of the Classical models for Callimachus, seems to have enjoyed the skill, but probably even he is just archaizing: it is poets like Hipponax (another emblematic figure for Callimachus) who are more likely to have really required and displayed generic diversity in their travels.<sup>62</sup> Circling back to the *Birds* passage, we can now see that the bard's declaration on entry—that he has many melic songs for Cloud-cuckoo-land—is an entirely logical assertion for a poet seeking employment. He

<sup>61</sup> Text and translation from West (2003) 390-91.

<sup>62</sup> On the concept of *polyeideia* and its extensive repercussions, see Acosta-Hughes (2002).

mentions dithyrambs, (*kuklia polla*), *partheneia* and songs in the style of Simonides—in other words, civic poetry.<sup>63</sup> The last-named figure is a further hint at two facts: first, Simonides himself is emblematic of a huge range of genres, including hymns, *thrênoi*, encomia, epigrams, paians, *prosodia*, dithyrambs and even tragedies (if one believes the *Suda*).<sup>64</sup> Second—and certainly not unrelated—Simonides, according to a body of lore about him, was a money-obsessed, skinflint poet-for-hire.<sup>65</sup> So to say you can do things *à la* Simonides is both a compelling advertisement and a warning signal.

We arrive finally at the last handbook strategy, which might also explain this paper's title, *Read on Arrival*. To put it in the words of the New Yorker who was asked by an out-of-towner how to get to Carnegie Hall: practice, practice, practice. The most amazing part of the *Birds* bard's pitch is that he has *already* composed songs (Μέλη πεπόηκ' εἰς τὰς Νεφελοκοκκυγας) for a city that has barely been founded. "When did you do that?" asks Peisetairos, naturally. The poet answers "For a long long time now I've been celebrating this city." Like the flash of steeds, swift was the Muses' report that came to him, says the poet. And then, just before asking for a gift, he addresses Peisetairos at line 925-6 as "Thou father, Aitna-founder, namesake of god-filled holy rites." This, say the scholiasts, is a quotation of the Pindaric *hyporchema* mentioned earlier (fr. 105), in which Pindar puns on the name of his tyrant addressee, Hieron the 1<sup>st</sup>. Once again, we can choose to see this as a bit of comic bungling and leave it at that. But the parody must go deeper. Aristophanes, in sketching the wandering poet, has given us a performer with a *modus operandi* in every other respect consistent with what we know of other wandering bards, real or imagined. What he is making comically obvious is that *this* bard—and by implication others—uses canned material. New to the area and short on details? No problem--a 60-year-old praise-poem for Hieron can be recycled. This is a *rehearsed* performance, and the material has indeed been around *palai palai*. The bard has practiced and practiced this all before. As it happens, we have an interesting piece of evidence that might confirm the practice in question. The first epigram in the ps.-Herodotean *Life* of Homer represents the wandering Homer's first plea for support. In

<sup>63</sup> On this point see Loscalzo (2005) 225, who stresses the appropriateness of a poet not seeking private patronage from the city founders.

<sup>64</sup> For an overview stressing the poet's generic variety, see Bowra (1961) 308-72.

<sup>65</sup> On the stories, see Bremer (1991) 49 with further bibliography. I owe this reference to Felix Budelmann.

good planetic fashion he praises the place (see rule#1). But what place *is* this? The prose introduction clearly states that the poet came to Neon Teikhos a colony of Kymê, and said these lines. But the codices of the *Lives* unanimously make it sound as though he has arrived at *Kymê* (the next stop on his itinerary), “Kymê the fair daughter.” The Greek as printed in Allen’s text, runs (lines 101-05):

αἰδεῖσθε ξενῶν κεχρημένον ἠδὲ δόμοιο,  
οἱ πόλιν αἰπεινὴν Κύμην ἐριώπιδα κούρην  
να ετε, Σαρδῆνης πόδα νε ατον ὑψικόμοιο·  
ἀμβρόσιον πνοντες ὕδωρ θεου ποταμοῖο  
Ἔρμου δινήεντος, ὃν ἀθάνατος τέκετο Ζεὺς.

Have Respect for one in need of house and hospitality  
you that dwell in the steep city, *the fair-eyed daughter Kymê*,  
on the lowest spur of high-forested Saidene,  
drinking the ambrosial water of the divine river,  
the eddying Hermus, born of immortal Zeus.

Martin West, on whose recent Loeb edition of the *Life* the above translation is based, prints at the end of the second line *numphês eriôpidos Hêrês*, “of fair eyed-Hera the Bride,” a phrase he constructs on the basis of another version of this short poem (one that completely avoids the place-name) found at the end of several manuscripts of the *Homeric Hymns*.<sup>66</sup> Pauw’s emendation *Kumês* (the genitive) might seem the sanest solution, and that is what Markwald prints. According to the latter, the geographical detail about proximity to the river Hermos can only fit *Neon Teikhos*, the new city, not older Kymê, and so the poem should say “the daughter (i.e. daughter-city) of Kymê.”<sup>67</sup> But I wonder whether it is not safer to stick with the received text. The psychological error was not scribal but bardic, an authentic performance item rather than a wrong-

<sup>66</sup> West (2003) 363. The hymn version has *numphês eratôpidos Hêrês*. On this poem as an *envoi* to the *Hymns* collection, see Allen et al. (1936) 442-43.

<sup>67</sup> Markwald (1986) ad loc.

headed transcription. Homer, practicing for his reception in the bigger town of Kymê, got ahead of himself, or didn't shift his formulas to fit changed circumstances.<sup>68</sup>

For a card-carrying oralist the scripsist title "Read on Arrival" might seem regressive. But the process I have been describing as endemic to wandering poetics seems to require a kind of temporary textualization of one's repertoire, ready to "read" under any circumstances, as much as it requires the fluid, composition-in-performance strategies of oral tradition. The successful roaming poet will be one who makes the memorized look spontaneous.<sup>69</sup> I am not suggesting that *poeti vaganti* were the key to the writing down of early Greek verse, but they were certainly part of the cultural conditioning that accepted and encouraged re-performance in increasingly familiar forms.

This brings us at last to the apparent target of the *Birds* in its parodic portrait. Like Aristophanes' portrait of Socrates in the *Clouds*, the whole caricature can be easily dismissed as a comic composite of several types--Hipponax, Simonides, and Pindar. But it could also be a clear-headed de-mystification of Pindaric pretense and its dangers.<sup>70</sup> No matter how often Pindar in his odes professes inspired spontaneity, going so far as to adopt the conversational style that Andrew Miller has so well delineated, these poems are paid commissions, prepared in advance, rehearsed—most likely—and performed by trained choruses.<sup>71</sup> Pindar had no Plato to play the part of his apologist, but everyone, starting from his original patrons on down, willingly collaborated with his high-minded conceit that his praise is non-mercenary *kharis*, and his status as wandering poet really

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<sup>68</sup> That the performance of prepared encomiastic poems was acceptable, at least in post-Classical times, seems clear from such inscriptions as Guarducci (1929) #12, commemorating the young Ariston of Phocaea for his several *akroaseis* in assembly and theater at Delos in 146/5 BCE, at which he read aloud (*anaginous*) poems already made (*[p]epragmateumena e[g]komia*, line 10) and also hymned Apollo.

<sup>69</sup> It must be stressed that the existence of such units in no way detracts from the overall phenomenon of live composition-in-performance; the units function like formulaic phrases, or at the higher level, like "themes," as aids to rapid verse manufacture. In this way, pre-fabricated sections actually confirm the habits of oral composition, for otherwise such devices would not be needed.

<sup>70</sup> MacDowell (1995) 210, like most, veers away from direct attack, proposing instead a generic target: "Evidently there were in fact poets in Athens at this time who offered for sale songs for special events, like Pindar's odes at an earlier date, and Aristophanes is mocking them here." One objection to seeing the historical Pindar as the parodied poet is of course that the audience of 414 BCE would have been a generation removed from his activity. But it can be argued 1) that a similar generation gap did not prevent Aristophanes from parodying Aeschylus (e.g. in the *Frogs*); 2) that there is a strong possibility Pindaric poetry would have been familiar from *reperformance* in Athens and elsewhere, on which see now Currie (2004); and 3) that there were good contemporary motivations in 414 BCE for a comic attack on Pindar (and, metonymically, any patron-paid poets), on which see below.

<sup>71</sup> Miller (1993).

that of a guest-friend, a *xenos*. To act otherwise would be to question the basis of the entire system that produced the precious praise commodity and its aristocratic bases.<sup>72</sup> But, by contrast, as a citizen from Kydathenaion, a deme in the heart of democratic Athens, working in a poetic medium finally freed (thanks to state support) from the total control of any one powerful individual, in which one-time high-risk productions were the rule, Aristophanes transcends the lot of would-be court poets. His is a tougher art-form (though he does not have to travel to get work). Thus, he can cast a cold eye on his predecessors in the craft of verse-making.

Why would he want to? Perhaps because tragedy itself, the complement and rival to Aristophanic drama, was (so it seems) regularly subject to the pressures of political patronage. We know of the role played by prominent *chorêgoi* who happened also to be ambitious public figures (Themistocles, Pericles). Bremer's evidence for payments to tragedians (and also comedians) raises the much larger issue of Athenian drama's relationship to traditional patron-supported encomiastic poetry, out of which it may in fact have grown under the Peisistratids.<sup>73</sup> In addition, we must factor in the age-old tendency for politicians to take advantage of all possible poetic outlets. In this regard, the epinikion composed by Euripides in honor of Alcibiades, on the occasion of his Olympic chariot victory, stands out. As it happens, the victory took place in 416 BCE and the poem must have followed shortly-- that is to say, not long before the *Birds* went into production.<sup>74</sup> While piling the clothes onto his Pindar-stand-in, Aristophanes may have been making yet another stab at Euripides and stripping bare a genre that still posed a threat to democracy.

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<sup>72</sup> Kurke (1991) remains the best articulation of the full system and its ideology.

<sup>73</sup> Bremer (1991) esp. 54-60.

<sup>74</sup> Testimonia and fragments: *PMG* 755 and 756. The latter (from Plut. *Dem.*1.1) quotes Euripides as saying that requisite for the fortunate man (*eudaimôn*) is a glorious (*eudokimos*) city. Cf. *Av.* 905.

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