

Erysichthon in Thessaly: Lament, False Stories, and Locality in Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter**

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Introduction

In his *Hymn to Demeter*, Callimachus recounts the story of a young man called Erysichthon, who damaged the sacred grove of Demeter in order to build a dining hall, and had to pay the price for it. Erysichthon underestimates the power of Demeter and unwisely insults the goddess. The rare combination of moral transgression and disrespect toward the divine inflicts a cruel form of retribution upon him: insatiable hunger (αἰθὼν λιμός). The myth invites us to draw a parallel: just as the sacred trees of Demeter are torn down, the youth is destined to go downhill. The ritual setting of the *Hymn* builds upon the popular myth of Demeter, who wanders in search of her displaced daughter Persephone. Granted that the archetype of the 'mourning mother' predominates in the narrative, a point of intersection between the ritual and the mythical sections can be traced in the maternal drama, which *mutatis mutandis* parallels Demeter to Erysichthon's mother, who mourns her own son in quite a different way.

The Callimachean narrator illustrates both public and domestic repercussions of Erysichthon's god-sent hunger when he focuses on the young man's parents: each one takes action within a different field of consequence — the mother in 'community politics' whereas the father in domestic ritual — and both are endowed with direct speech in order to express despondency in their own words. The areas linked with mother and father respectively mark a pleasant, if slightly unsettling, inversion of gender roles, and, given that the mother covers the social aspect, it is inevitable that she becomes more prominent than the father, the more so because her stance toward her son's critical condition is more controversial. In this paper, I undertake a thorough analysis of the idiosyncratic lament of Erysichthon's mother in Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter*, a rather underinterpreted part of the *Hymn*, in order to demonstrate how the figure of Odysseus, as known by the Homeric and Cyclic epic contexts of eating and lying, forms the main model for the central story of Erysichthon's divine affliction. I look into the precise relation of each one of the maternal pretexts in order to set the links of the narrative with early Greek epic of Homeric and Cyclic origin on firmer ground. Last, and most interestingly, I situate Erysichthon's pseudo-heroic cycle, which the series of pretexts mouthed by his mother draw up, within a specifically Thessalian context of narrative traditions that take issue with and compete against the unheroic panhellenic version of the story of Erysichthon's hunger. I begin with the ways in which the

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presentation of Cretan Odysseus in the *Odyssey* affects the portrayal of Erysichthon by Callimachus.

Erysichthon and Odysseus

Both the nickname Aithon of Erysichthon and his insatiable hunger accommodate the mythical story within an Odyssean discourse about the pivotal significance of the belly in mock epic contexts. This discourse is exemplified in the lowly figure of Aithon, the fake Cretan moniker of Odysseus. Anthony Bulloch has argued that the concluding narrative segment of the mythical story contains a lexical allusion that consolidates the parallelism of Erysichthon's misery to the tyrannical subjection of Odysseus the beggar to his belly:¹

καὶ τόχ' ὁ τῷ βασιλῆος ἐνὶ τριόδοισι καθῆστο
αἰτίζων ἀκόλως τε καὶ ἔκβολα λύματα δαιτός.

(Call. *Cer.* 114-5)

Then the king's son sat at the crossroads
begging for crusts and scraps thrown away from the feast.

(transl. N. Hopkinson)

πῇ δὴ τόνδε μολοβρὸν ἄγεις, ἀμέγαρτε συβῶτα,
πτωχὸν ἀνηρόν, δαιτῶν ἀπολυμαντήρα; 220
ὃς πολλῆς φλιῆσι παραστὰς φλίνγεται ὤμους,
αἰτίζων ἀκόλους, οὐκ ἄορα οὐδὲ λέβητας.

(Hom. *Od.* 17.219-22)

Where, you detestable swineherd, are you taking this wretched
man, this bothersome beggar who spoils the fun of the feasting,
the kind who stands and rubs his shoulders on many doorposts,
begging only for handouts, never for swords or caldrons.

(transl. R. Lattimore)

Odysseus several times evokes the fierce craving of his belly to justify the pathetic state of his existence:

ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ οὖν δὴ ἔργα κάκ' ἔμμαθεν, οὐκ ἐθέλῃσει
ἔργον ἐποιχεσθαι, ἀλλὰ πτώσων κατὰ δῆμον
βούλεται αἰτίζων βόσκειν ἦν γαστέρ' ἄναλτον.

(Hom. *Od.* 17.226-8)

But since he has learned nothing but mischief, he will not be willing
to go to work, but would rather go begging all through the district,

¹ Bulloch 1977, 108-9. See also Hopkinson 1984, 170.

asking for handouts and feeding up his bottomless belly.

ἦλθε δ' ἐπὶ πτωχὸς πανδήμιος, ὃς κατὰ ἄστν
πτωχεύεσκ' Ἰθάκης, μετὰ δ' ἔπρεπε γαστέρι μάργῃ
ἄζηχες φαγέμεν καὶ πιέμεν·

(Hom. *Od.* 18.1-3)

And now there arrived a public beggar, who used to go begging
through the town of Ithaka, known to fame for his ravenous belly
and appetite for eating and drinking.

(transl. R. Lattimore)

The *Odyssey* encapsulates in the nickname Aithon² the social and moral dimensions of boundless consumption and its affiliation with the practice of lying, as Pietro Pucci has come to maintain.³ The same thematic complex can be traced in Callimachus: whereas excessive eating applies to Erysichthon, the “poetics of falsehood”, a term we owe to Louise Pratt,⁴ is externally attached to the primary character by means of maternal rhetorics and, what is more, adds an intrinsic trait to his characterization that advances him to an Odysseus-like figure. Callimachus makes Erysichthon’s mother take a crucial Odyssean hint by which the belly’s mutative potential turns it into an inner drive that compels its bearer to be involved in various enterprises:

γαστέρα δ' οὐ πῶς ἔστιν ἀποκρύψαι μεμαυῖαν,
οὐλομένην, ἣ πολλὰ κάκ' ἀνθρώποισι δίδωσι·
τῆς ἔνεκεν καὶ νῆες εὐζυγοὶ ὀπλίζονται
πόντον ἐπ' ἀτρυγέτον κακὰ δυσμενέεσσι φέρουσαι.

(Hom. *Od.* 17.286-9)

² Levaniouk 2000, 41-51 provides a full assessment of the levels on which the byname Aithon nuances the lying persona of Odysseus. For Odysseus’ relation to lies in the *Odyssey* in general, see Walcot 1977, 9-19; Reece 1994, 169-71; Tsagalis 2012, 313-25.

³ For the seminal role of the belly (γαστήρ) in the *Odyssey*, cf. Pucci 1987, 157: ‘*gastēr* in the *Odyssey* assumes a significant role as the notion that points to the principles of death and life, of instinct and culture, of deprivation and fullness, necessity (death) and pleasure.’ Svenbro 1976, 50-9 and Vernant 1979, 94-5 delve into a semantic analysis according to which the belly is an ambiguous means that forges both social desolation and social cohesion, depending on the motives of individual community members. For the hunger of Odysseus the beggar from a sociological point of view, see Rose 1975, 142-4. Should Levaniouk be right in suggesting that Odysseus’ fake Cretan moniker Aithon draws on the Thessalian Erysichthon as a means of impersonation, then Erysichthon’s mother in Callimachus may be harking back to the *Odyssey* to establish an interconnection of the two mythical characters, though this time the other way round: if Homer compares Odysseus to Erysichthon, then Callimachus’ *Hymn* “returns the favour” by likening Erysichthon to Odysseus.

⁴ Pratt 1988, 11-94 takes her cues from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in order to substantiate the view that Homer prioritizes the discourse of truth over deviant stories designated (or not) as lies. Detienne 1996, 69-106 argues that Greek poetic discourse is very fond of staging all sorts of tensions arising from the distance between these two notions.

Even so, there is no suppressing the ravenous belly,
 a cursed thing, which bestows many evils on men, seeing
 that even for its sake the strong-built ships are handled
 across the barren great sea, bringing misfortune to enemies.

(transl. R. Lattimore)

Accordingly, the set of excuses of the mourning mother provides an imaginative insight into the potential enterprises of Erysichthon inspired by the words and deeds of his Odyssean namesake. Therefore, I argue that Erysichthon's assimilation to Odysseus is already introduced in the series of maternal pretexts and *then* rounded off in the section narrating his physical and social decadence.⁵

Maternal Lament, Falsehood, and Invitation-Declining

Although the text at first refers to both parents being ashamed of Erysichthon's crass degradation, we soon learn that the parent who invented every possible excuse was the mother. Erysichthon's mother comes up with a series of excuses hinging on diverse social occasions that aim to keep her son's public invisibility within reason. Fittingly, Anthony Bulloch has come to the conclusion that 'Callimachus was more concerned with the social embarrassment of the parents than with the religious issues inherent in the myth'.⁶ In this context, I wish to undertake a thorough analysis of the idiosyncratic lament of Erysichthon's mother. In more detail, I intend to show that the set of elaborate excuses is carefully designed to recall mythical incidents from Odysseus' mythical cycle as registered both in the Homeric and the Cyclic epics. As a result, I reassess the maternal rhetoric and place it within the boundaries of truth and falsehood, a rhetoric conditioned by the means through which the epic tradition is appropriated.

οὔτε νιν εἰς ἐράνῳς οὔτε ζυνδείπνια πέμπον
 αἰδόμενοι γονέες, προχάνα δ' εὐρίσκετο πᾶσα.
 ἦνθον Ἰτωνιάδος νιν Ἀθαναίας ἐπ' ἄεθλα
 Ὀρμενίδαι καλέοντες· ἀπ' ὧν ἀρνήσατο μάτηρ· 75
 "οὐκ ἔνδοι, χθιζὸς γὰρ ἐπὶ Κραννῶνα βέβακε
 τέλος ἀπαιτησῶν ἑκατὸν βόας." ἦνθε Πολυξώ,
 μάτηρ Ἀκτορίωνος, ἐπεὶ γάμον ἄρτυε παιδί,
 ἀμφοτέρων Τριόπαν τε καὶ νιέα κυκλήσκοισα.
 τὰν δὲ γυνὰ βαρύθυμος ἀμείβετο δακρύοισα· 80
 "νεῖται τοι Τριόπας, Ἐρυσίχθονα δ' ἤλασε κάπρος
 Πίνδον ἂν' εὐάγκειαν, ὃ δ' ἐννέα φάεα κεῖται."
 δειλαία φιλότεκνε, τί δ' οὐκ ἐψεύσας, μήτερ;

⁵ One is entitled to speak of Erysichthon's assimilation to, rather than identification with, Odysseus, as Levaniouk 2000, 39 points out. Given the poetic practice of assimilation, there is an important difference between the two literary characters: the barrier that effects the former's enclosure is quite a real one, insatiable hunger, and from this point of view does not comply with Odysseus' pretended subjection to the power of the belly. While Erysichthon is literally reduced to the state of a beggar, Odysseus impersonates a beggar and appropriates the "rhetoric of the belly".

⁶ Bulloch 1984, 222.

δαίνυνεν εἰλαπίναν τις· “ἐν ἀλλοτρίᾳ Ἐρυσίχθων.”
 ἄγετό τις νύμφαν· “Ἐρυσίχθονα δίσκος ἔτυψεν,” 85
 ἢ “ἔπες” ἐξ ἵππων,” ἢ “ἐν Ὀθρυϊ ποίμινι” ἀμειβεῖ.
 ἐνδόμυχος δῆπεια πανάμερος εἰλαπιναστάς
 ἦσθιε μυρία πάντα· κακὰ δ’ ἐξάλλετο γαστήρ
 αἰεὶ μᾶλλον ἔδοντι, τὰ δ’ ἐς βυθὸν οἶα θαλάσσης
 ἀλεμάτως ἀχάριστα κατέρρεεν εἶδατα πάντα. 90
 ὥς δὲ Μίμαντι χιών, ὥς ἀελίῳ ἐνὶ πλαγγών,
 καὶ τούτων ἔτι μέζον ἐτάκετο, μέστ’ ἐπὶ νεύροις
 δειλαίῳ ῥινός τε καὶ ὀστέα μῶνον ἐλείφθη.
 κλαῖε μὲν ἁ μήτηρ, βαρὺ δ’ ἔστενον αἱ δύο ἀδελφαί
 χῶ μαστὸς τὸν ἔπωνε καὶ αἱ δέκα πολλὰκι δῶλαι.

(Call. Cer. 72-95)

His parents were ashamed to send him to feasts
 and common banquets: all sorts of excuses were devised.
 The Ormenidae came to invite him to the games
 of Itonian Athene; his mother declined:
 ‘He is not at home: yesterday he went off to Crannon
 to demand a debt of a hundred oxen.’ Polyxo,
 mother of Actorion, came to invite both Triopas and his son
 (for she was preparing a marriage-celebration for her child);
 but in tears the heavy hearted woman answered her,
 ‘Triopas will come; but a boar in the fair valleys of Pindus
 has wounded Erysichthon, and he has lain sick for nine days.’
 Poor mother, what lies did you not tell for love of your child!
 Someone was holding a banquet: ‘Erysichthon is abroad.’
 Someone was taking a wife: ‘A discus has wounded Erysichthon,’
 or ‘He has fallen from his chariot’ or ‘He is counting his flocks on Othrys.’ Meanwhile,
 closeted in the house, he banqueted
 all day long and consumed all things imaginable.
 His wretched belly leapt as he ate more and more,
 and all his food flowed down as if into the depths of the sea.
 Like snow on Mimas or a wax doll in the sun
 – even more quickly than these he wasted away
 to the very sinews: only skin and bone were left the wretch.
 His mother wept; and his two sisters and the breast which has nursed him and the many
 tens of slave-girls all uttered heavy groans.

(transl. N. Hopkinson)

In this section, Callimachus toys with the mechanics of mock dialogue: the dual presence of narrator speech and character speech defines the interactive way in which this section progresses. The interchange of third person narrative and *Du-Stil* as well as the interspersing of this section with snippets of direct speech convey an unequivocal tone of urgency and *pathos* channelled into the mother. The voice of the sympathizing narrator and the responses of the suffering mother, the conveyors of *θέσις* and *ἄρσις* respectively in mere rhetorical terms, merge in a way that yields a unanimous point of view and imbue the speaking character with a sense of affection. These are effective technical

devices that Callimachus deploys so he can have personal grief voiced⁷ and make direct speech serve the focalization of a particular character.

The set of maternal excuses, six in sum, frames the narrative moment in which the mother socially interacts. These instances of maternal resourcefulness serve manifold narrative purposes: (a) they provide a scenario for Erysichthon's disappearance from social life; (b) they conjure up an image of him preoccupied with activities that mostly befit a heroic figure; (c) they serve as metaphors for eating as some of them centre upon an activity that involves cattle, swine or sheep, that is, the three main consumption target groups for Erysichthon, and (d) they point, in rather ironical fashion, to the animals he could have sacrificed to the goddess, stressing his lack of reverence and disentanglement from normative sacrificial conduct. The excuses betray the maternal fantasies that envision a social re-integration of the son and, therefore, correspond to that part of the ritual lament where the mourning individual expresses a counterfactual wish.⁸ Embarrassment mixed with sorrow prompts the mother not only to defend the seriously threatened social respectability of her household, but also to devise one for her de-socialised son. Against this backdrop, I am inclined to treat the excuses not so much as tokens of the mother's social flexibility, but rather as signs of her eagerness to fabricate an acceptable social 'reality' for her offspring. Within this context, the intertextual footing on which the maternal rhetoric operates is worth a closer look.

Yet before I turn to intertextual analysis, a preliminary remark of more general interest is due: the set of speech acts hosted in this narrative section amounts to the rather common in everyday conversational contexts "declining an invitation" pattern. In her seminal study on *Homeric Voices*, Elizabeth Minchin argues for the salience of this pattern in Homeric speech. Enquiring into the structural determinants of the pattern, Minchin discerns three integral stages "in a 'complete' refusal of an invitation, of which (1) non-acceptance itself and (2) word of appreciation are *optional*; but (3) a reporting, or statement of mission, is *essential*".⁹ What Callimachus has to offer is straightforward 3: invitations are answered with plain statements on the main reasons of refusal. The degree of situational crisis, which Erysichthon undergoes, leaves no room for courtesy, neither does the programmatic preference of Callimachus for small-scale storytelling. 'When the poet has one of his characters decline an invitation, he makes this choice with a number of aims in mind. The refusal may indicate urgency; it may function at the level of motivation, to move the narrative to its next stage; and it functions also [...] as a

⁷ On the "variety of tone" in the narrator's voice, see Morrison 2007, 175; cf. Harder 2004, 66; 2005, 55.

⁸ As a rule, a maternal lament is uttered on the occasion of the offspring's premature death or a critical situation that she/he undergoes. On maternal lament in Homer, see Murnaghan 1992; 1999.

⁹ Minchin 2007, 61. To take one example from Homer, the heroic model of Hecabe and Hector in *Iliad* 6 has the mother utter an invitation designed to relieve her son from his heroic tasks. Contrary to this model, Erysichthon's mother invents a series of pseudo-heroic excuses that aim at declining an invitation on her son's part instead of uttering one. Whereas refusing an invitation in Homer is a way to express a person's reluctance to accept domestic affection and thus be distracted from a higher cause, in Callimachus the intention lies far from detaining the invited person as he already dwells indoors preoccupied with all but heroic tasks.

means of characterization, as direct speech in narrative so often does [...] in order to give us greater insight into the nature of the person speaking.’¹⁰ A close contextual affinity between the application of the motif in Homer and Callimachus can hardly be sustained, though it might be significant that, out of the seven occurrences of the pattern in the *Odyssey*, one does indeed concern the reluctance of Odysseus the beggar to accept Penelope’s invitation to take a bath, sleep, and eat (19.317-22; 346-8). This is to say that the pattern does in fact entwine with the Odyssean context of Aithon.

The Pretexts

When Erysichthon is invited to participate in the contests of Itonian Athena, the mother says he is away at Crannon collecting debts (*Cer.* 76-7). This puts him in the position of a property man, who was willing to make the generous loan of one hundred oxen at some point in the past. The legal overtones of τέλθος ἀπαιτησῶν (*Cer.* 77) suggest, if anything, that his endeavour to vindicate his right is a legitimate one. A passage from *Odyssey* 2 thematizes precisely this right to receive back a benefaction made in the past:¹¹

οὐ γὰρ ἔτ’ ἀνσχετὰ ἔργα τετεύχεται οὐδέ τι καλῶς
οἶκος ἐμὸς διόλωλε. νεμεσσήθητε καὶ αὐτοί,
ἄλλους τ’ αἰδέσθητε περικτίονας ἀνθρώπους, 65
οἱ περιναιετάουσι· θεῶν δ’ ὑποδείσατε μῆνιν,
μή τι μεταστρέψωσιν ἀγασσάμενοι κακὰ ἔργα.
λίσσομαι ἡμὲν Ζηνὸς Ὀλυμπίου ἠδὲ Θέμιστος,
ἢ τ’ ἀνδρῶν ἀγορᾶς ἡμὲν λύει ἠδὲ καθίζει·
σχέσθε, φίλοι, καὶ μ’ οἶον ἐάσατε πένθει λυγρῷ 70
τείρεσθ’, εἰ μή πού τι πατὴρ ἐμὸς ἐσθλὸς Ὀδυσσεὺς
δυσμενέων κάκ’ ἔρεξεν ἐυκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοῦς,
τῶν μ’ ἀποτινύμενοι κακὰ ῥέζετε δυσμενέοντες,
τούτους ὀτρύνοντες. ἐμοὶ δέ κε κέρδιον εἴη
ὑμέας ἐσθέμεναι κειμήλιά τε πρόβασίν τε. 75
εἴ χ’ ὑμεῖς γε φάγοιτε, τάχ’ ἂν ποτε καὶ τίσις εἴη·
τόφρα γὰρ ἂν κατὰ ἄστνυ ποτιπτυσσοίμεθα μύθῳ
χρήματ’ ἀπαιτίζοντες, ἕως κ’ ἀπὸ πάντα δοθείη·
νῦν δέ μοι ἀπρήκτους ὀδύνας ἐμβάλλετε θυμῷ.

(Hom. *Od.* 2.63-79)

No longer are the things endurable that have been done, and beyond
all decency my house has been destroyed. Even you must be scandalized
and ashamed before the neighboring men about us,
the people who live around our land; fear also the gods’ anger,
lest they, astonished by evil actions, turn against you.
I supplicate you, by Zeus the Olympian and by Themis
who breaks up the assemblies of men and calls them in session:
let be, my friends, and leave me alone with my bitter sorrow

¹⁰ Minchin 2007, 72.

¹¹ I have discussed this passage also in Skempis 2010, 280-4 against the backdrop of Call. *Hec.* fr. 110 H.

to waste away; unless my noble father Odysseus
 at some time in anger did evil to the strong-greaved Achaians,
 for which angry with me in revenge you do me evil
 in setting these on me. But for me it would be far better
 for you to eat away our treasures and eat our cattle.
 If you were to eat them, there might be a recompense someday,
 for we could do through all the settlement, with claims made public
 asking for our goods again, until it was all regiven.
 But now you are heaping me with troubles I cannot deal with.

(transl. R. Lattimore)

Telemachus speaks in the assembly of the Ithacans and enquires into the reasons for their indolence. In his view, the Ithacans ought to be fearful of the gods and ashamed of their neighbours for not taking action against the suitors, who fritter away Odysseus' fortune. Then, he goes on to ask why they are not outraged at this appalling conduct. The young man devises a hypothetical argument in order to emphasize the urgent need for reciprocity within the Ithacan community: it would be much better if the assembled Ithacans squandered Odysseus' goods and chattels instead of the suitors, because in that case Telemachus and his family could raise the legitimate claim for compensation, they could demand the debts back and, what is more, they would get them. Telemachus' musings aim at introducing a morale according to which Odysseus emerges as benefactor of the Ithacans and, on these grounds, contrasts with the tremendous immorality of the suitors: Odysseus is tagged as ἐσθλός, "kindly" (71; cf. 46), and ἥπιος, "mild" (47), but the suitors are unequivocally linked with κακὰ ἔργα, "evil doings" (67; cf. 72; 73 κακὰ ῥέζετε). Now, the assembled Ithacans would resemble the indolent suitors, should they not acknowledge Odysseus' benefactions and go on to behave as the suitors do. The ungratefulness of the latter lies in the boundless consumption of foreign property, which would have been acceptable, were there a slightest chance of giving it back.

I contend that Callimachus takes his cues from this particular context in shaping the very first excuse by Erysichthon's mother. To begin with, shame is called upon as the prime motivation for mobilization, be it physical or rhetorical. In Homer, the Ithacans should be more sensitive to the ensuing plight of the palace out of shame for its public resonance, while in Callimachus Erysichthon's parents resort to a series of false pretexts because they are ashamed of their wretched son. Moreover, shame intertwines with the ethical aspects of consumption. Exemplified in the metaphor of eating (75 ἐσθήμεναι; 76 φάγοιτε), the discourse of consumption is overtly exploited in Homer. On the contrary, in Callimachus it is covert since Erysichthon is not really on a trip to Crannon, but eating like a horse barricaded in his parents' house. Ethics become all the more prominent in the way the principle of reciprocity and the role of justice are brought into play. In his effort to make a strong case for the reciprocity inherent in a well-governed community, Telemachus duly stresses the notions of public demand (78 χρήματ' ἀπαιτίζοντες) and just recompense (78 ἀπὸ πάντα δοθείη). In this context, he names cattle (75 πρόβασις) among the parts of his property that the Ithacans would have given back to him, had they spent it as the suitors have in the first place. In a similar vein, claiming back cattle within the frame of legitimacy is the reason that led Erysichthon to Crannon. Regarding formal stylistics, Callimachus not only varies the Homeric *hapax* ἀπαιτίζω with its more common allomorph ἀπαιτέω, but also turns πρόβασις into the rather regular βοῦς.

Considering that αἰτίζω is consistently used in Homer to denote Odysseus' begging, ἀπαιτέω might even end up implying Erysichthon's uncontrollable need to swallow one hundred oxen. The lexical parallels underpin the elaborate sense of continuity that runs through the texts: Erysichthon's mother claims that her son does exactly what Telemachus says he and his father Odysseus would have done, had the just Ithacans only replaced the depraved suitors. They would have asked for compensation and they would have won it, just as Erysichthon supposedly sets out to do at Crannon. The maternal excuse presupposes that there has been some sort of transaction in the past, which her son, in all heroic-like, Odyssean righteousness, seeks now to countervail. Of course, this is far from being true.

When Polyxo, apparently a neighbour, comes to invite Triopas and Erysichthon to her son's wedding, the mother pretends that her son has been wounded by a boar at Pindus and lies in the house for nine days now, so he is going to have to miss the wedding (*Cer.* 81-2). I have shown elsewhere that Erysichthon's professed participation in a hunt picks up the respective adventure in the wilderness, which Odysseus experiences in *Odyssey* 19, an analeptic excursus within the so-called foot-washing scene:¹²

αὐτίκα δ' ἔγνω
οὐλήν, τὴν ποτέ μιν σὺς ἤλασε λευκῷ ὀδόντι
Παρνησόνδ' ἐλθόντα μετ' Αὐτόλυκόν τε καὶ υἱας
(Hom. *Od.* 19.392-4)

And at once she recognized
that scar, which once the boar with his white tusk had inflicted
on him, when he went to Parnassos, to Autolykos and his children.

τὸν μὲν ἄρ' Αὐτόλυκός τε καὶ υἱέες Αὐτολύκοιο
εὖ ἱησάμενοι ἡδ' ἀγλαὰ δῶρα πορόντες 460
καρπαλίμως χαίροντα φίλως χαίροντες ἔπεμπον
εἰς Ἰθάκην. τῷ μὲν ῥα πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ
χαῖρον νοστήσαντι καὶ ἐξερέεινον ἕκαστα,
οὐλήν ὅττι πάθοι· ὃ δ' ἄρα σφίσιν εὖ κατέλεξεν,
ὥς μιν θηρεύοντ' ἔλασεν σὺς λευκῷ ὀδόντι 465
Παρνησόνδ' ἐλθόντα σὺν υἱάσιν Αὐτολύκοιο.
(Hom. *Od.* 19.459-66)

Then Autolykos and the sons of Autolykos,
healing him well and giving him shining presents, sent him
speedily back rejoicing to his own beloved country
in Ithaka, and there his father and queenly mother
were glad in his homecoming, and asked about all that had happened, and
how he came by his wound, and he told well his story, How in the hunt the
boar with his white tusk had wounded him as he went up to Parnassos with
the sons of Autolykos.

(transl. R. Lattimore)

¹² See Skempis 2008, 376-7 with n. 44; cf. Ambühl 2005, 174-5.

The youthful Odysseus goes to Parnassus where he joins the hunt of a wild boar together with the sons of his maternal grandfather, Autolycus. Although the boar appears before Odysseus and injures him on the loin, the hero manages to hit the beast dead with his spear after all. Both the hunt on the mountain and the wound caused during the hunt prompt the reader to assimilate Erysichthon's test of courage to that of Odysseus. Yet, the former's accident on Pindus appears to be a comic inversion of the latter's injury on Parnassus as Callimachus puts special emphasis on the repercussions the incident has for the ambitious hunter: whereas Odysseus gets back on his feet and quickly returns to Ithaca, Erysichthon has to lie down for nine whole days after his return home. Moreover, Odysseus' parents appear worried about their son's accident, and, from this point of view, they are in tune with the solicitous mother in Callimachus, although the concerns of the latter are to be set on a fairly different basis. Apart from that, it strikes the reader that the inset story of Odysseus' youthful deed is embedded within the context of his appearance as Aithon in *Odyssey* 19, a fact that makes the modelling of Erysichthon's fake accident on the Odyssean story all the more plausible.

The text makes clear that Erysichthon's mother lies like a trooper. Whenever her son is invited by someone, who arranges a banquet to attend, she responds on the plea that Erysichthon is abroad (*Cer.* 84 ἐν ἄλλοτρίῳ). The banquet may heighten the irony about her son's ceaseless hunger, but the allusiveness of the plea is even more intriguing. In the encounter of the beggar and Penelope, the theme of Odysseus' protracted absence takes centre stage.¹³ The encounter gives rise to a discussion in which Odysseus comes up with the ruse of the fake Cretan identity. The beggar at first resorts to shifts and excuses in order to avoid giving out his name and life story. He makes an appeal to the unwritten rules of social propriety, which do not allow a man to give vent to his grief in "a foreign house", a man who suffered much in life:

τῷ ἐμὲ νῦν τὰ μὲν ἄλλα μετάλλα σὼ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ,
μηδ' ἐμὸν ἐξερέεινε γένος καὶ πατρίδα γαῖαν,
μή μοι μᾶλλον θυμὸν ἐνιπλήσης ὀδυνάων
μνησάμενῳ. μάλα δ' εἰμὶ πολύστονος. οὐδέ τί με χρῆ
οἴκῳ ἐν ἄλλοτρίῳ γοόωντά τε μυρόμενόν τε
ῆσθαι, ἐπεὶ κάκιον πενήθεμαι ἄκριτον αἰεὶ.

(Hom. *Od.* 19.115-20)

Question me now here in your house about all other
matters, but do not ask who I am, the name of my country,
for fear you may increase in my heart its burden of sorrow
as I think back; I am very full of grief, and I should not
sit in the house of somebody else with my lamentation
and wailing. It is not good to go on mourning forever.

(transl. R. Lattimore)

¹³ The theme of Odysseus' absence from home and its impact on the Ithacan setting is extensively treated in Rutherford 1985, 137-45.

But the house is not actually foreign since he is in reality Odysseus, which makes him the rightful κύριος of the residence. Or is it, as long as the suitors are striving to usurp his property? ἀλλότριος has a dubious semantic weight indeed insofar as it renders the elusive narrative sway of Odysseus between Ithaca and foreign lands, between his own residence and a house taken over by countless unrighteous wooers of his wife. It is in this sense that the wandering of Erysichthon “in foreign lands” clashes with his actual enclosure under the most unfavourable circumstances. Untruthful pretension is the narrative means by which Erysichthon’s claimed sojourn abroad is nuanced by Odysseus’ alleged absence. Thus, Erysichthon’s mother reworks the theme of unconsummated *nostos* on the precise same canvas on which the Cretan lies of Odysseus have been drawn.

In what follows, the narrator shows how Erysichthon’s mother had to develop her improvisational skills to stifle the scandal: whenever a wedding took place, the mother had to excuse Erysichthon’s inability to attend with a series of fictitious pretexts, the first among which is his supposed participation in athletic contests. He is said to have been hit by a discus (*Cer.* 85). Athletic contests are in focus in *Odyssey* 8 where Odysseus is challenged to compete in the Phaeacian Games. It is telling that the irritated Odysseus responds to this challenge by competing only in discus throwing:

ἦ ῥα, καὶ αὐτῷ φάρεϊ ἀναΐξας λάβε δίσκον
 μείζονα καὶ πάχετον, στιβαρώτερον οὐκ ὀλίγον περ
 ἢ οἷῳ Φαίηκες ἐδίσκεον ἀλλήλοισι.
 τὸν ῥα περιστρέψας ἦκε στιβαρῆς ἀπὸ χειρός.
 βόμβησεν δὲ λίθος· κατὰ δ’ ἔπτηξαν ποτὶ γαίῃ
 Φαίηκες δολιχῆρετμοι, ναυσικλυτοὶ ἄνδρες,
 λαὸς ὑπὸ ῥιπῆς· ὃ δ’ ὑπέρπτατο σήματα πάντων,
 ῥίμφα θεῶν ἀπὸ χειρός. ἔθηκε δὲ τέρματ’ Ἀθήνη
 ἀνδρὶ δέμας εἰκυῖα, ἔπος τ’ ἔφατ’ ἔκ τ’ ὀνόμαζε·
 καὶ κ’ ἀλαός τοι, ξεῖνε, διακρίνειε τὸ σῆμα
 ἄμφαφόν, ἐπεὶ οὐ τι μεμιγμένον ἐστὶν ὁμίλῳ,
 ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρῶτον. σὺ δὲ θάρσει τόνδε γ’ ἄεθλον·
 οὐ τις Φαιήκων τόν γ’ ἵξεται οὐδ’ ὑπερήσει.

(Hom. *Od.* 8.186-98)

He spoke, and with mantle still on sprang up and laid hold of a discus
 that was a bigger and thicker one, heavier not by a little
 than the one the Phaiakians had used for their sport in throwing.
 He spun, and let this fly from his ponderous hand. The stone
 hummed in the air, and the Phaiakians, men of long oars
 and framed for seafaring, shrank down against the ground, ducking
 under the flight of the stone which, speeding from his hand lightly,
 overflowed the marks of all others, and Athene, likening
 herself to a man, marked down the cast and spoke and addressed him:
 ‘Even a blind man, friend, would be able to distinguish your mark by
 feeling for it, since it is not mingled with the common
 lot, but far before. Have no fear over this contest.
 No one of the Phaiakians will come up to this mark or pass it.’

(transl. R. Lattimore)

Odysseus' performance is exceptional insofar as his throw outdoes the marks of all Phaeacians. The gathered crowd even has to shrink against the ground and duck under the flight of the stone in order to avoid injury. Then, Athena appears in the guise of a man to certify Odysseus' athletic superiority.¹⁴ Now, are we to infer that Erysichthon was competing in discus throwing in an Odysseus-like manner? Or that he just attended the competition as a spectator? The fact that in the beginning of this narrative section Erysichthon is being asked by the Ormenidae to enter the games of Itonian Athena might suggest the first possibility (*Cer.* 74-5), but the reaction of the Phaeacian crowd to Odysseus' super-throw as well as Athena's remark may point to an inattentive viewer who is struck by the stone! Does Erysichthon enact a worst-case Homeric scenario? Should he be envisioned, in the face of Athena's exaggerating utterance, as a blind man who distinguishes Odysseus' mark by "feeling it" (ἄμφορόων) on his head or his body?¹⁵ If so, the maternal drama and the subsequent *pseudea* have a transformative effect on the critical situation, which Erysichthon goes through, as they urge a humoristic tone upon the way they interact with the epic tradition. Callimachus renders ambiguous the anxiety of the mother to concoct a story with Odyssean flair for Erysichthon as it turns out to be entertaining instead.

The fifth excuse also has a satirical tenor. Erysichthon is supposed to have been thrown off of his chariot horses and is thereby again incapable of social interface (*Cer.* 86 ἔπεσ' ἐξ ἵππων). The formal stylistics points to a Homeric junction, which stems from the contexts of hardcore Iliadic battle: in both cases "falling from the chariot horses" signifies the outcome of a deathful conflict before the Scaean Walls at Troy:

Γλαῦκος δ' Ἴππολόχοιο πάϊς Λυκίων ἀγὼς ἀνδρῶν
 Ἴφινόον βάλε δουρὶ κατὰ κρατερὴν ὕσμίνην
 Δεξιὰδ' ἵππων ἐπιάλμενον ὠκείων
 ὦμον· ὃ δ' ἐξ ἵππων χαμάδις πέσε, λύντο δὲ γυῖα.

15

(Hom. *Il.* 7.13-6)

And Glaukos, lord of the Lykian men, the son of Hippolochos,
 struck down with the spear Iphinoos in the strong encounter,
 Dexias' son, as he leapt up behind his fast horses, striking him in the
 shoulder. He dropped from car to ground and his limbs' strength was broken.

¹⁴ Felson 2007, 135-6 argues that the Phaeacian Games in *Odyssey* 8 reflect an osmotic moment of the proto-epinician ideology with which Odysseus has come to be linked as bearer of athletic excellence in the meta-Iliadic nostic epic of the *Odyssey*, and the crucial matter of praise in non-martial agonistic settings. On the role of Athena in the discus-throwing incident see Richardson 2007, 122-3.

¹⁵ The scenario of a discus-throw causing fatal injury in an athletic contest occurs in the Perseus myth: as soon as Perseus comes of age, he goes to Larisa to participate in a contest where he throws a discus that accidentally hits his maternal grandfather Acrisius, causes the latter's death and brings an oracle to pass according to which Danae was destined to bear a son who would kill her father (Pher. fr. 10-12 Fowler; Paus. 2.16.2; Apollod. 2.47; Lib. *Prog.* 2.41.1; Schol. in Lyc. *Alex.* 838). Of course, this story involves a different sort of maternal drama, though the common Thessalian setting is indeed noteworthy.

ὥς τοὺς Ἀτρεΐδης ἔφεπε κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
αἰὲν ἀποκτείνων τὸν ὀπίστατον· οἱ δ' ἐφέβοντο.
πολλοὶ δὲ πρηνεῖς τε καὶ ὕπτιοι ἔκπεσον ἵππων
Ἀτρεΐδεω ὑπὸ χερσὶ· περὶ πρὸ γὰρ ἔγχεϊ θύεν.

(Hom. *Il.* 11.177-80)

So Atreus' son, powerful Agamemnon, went after them
killing ever the last of the men, and they fled in terror.
Many were hurled from behind their horses, face downward or sprawling
under the hands of Atreides who raged with his spear in the forefront.

(transl. R. Lattimore)

Now, as far as Odysseus is concerned, he never appears as a charioteer in the Homeric epics; the only relevant episode in which he features is the 'Iliadic' story of the Wooden Horse in *Odyssey* 4:¹⁶

ἤδη μὲν πολέων ἐδάην βουλὴν τε νόον τε
ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων, πολλὴν δ' ἐπελήλυθα γαῖαν·
ἀλλ' οὐ πῶ τοιοῦτον ἐγὼν ἶδον ὀφθαλμοῖσιν
οἷον Ὀδυσῆος ταλασίφρονος ἔσκε φίλον κῆρ.
οἷον καὶ τόδ' ἔρεξε καὶ ἔτλη καρτερὸς ἀνὴρ
ἵπῳ ἐνὶ ξεστῷ, ἴν' ἐνήμεθα πάντες ἄριστοι
Ἀργείων, Τρῶεςσι φόνον καὶ κῆρα φέροντες.
ἦλθες ἔπειτα σὺ κεῖσε· κελευσέμεναι δέ σ' ἔμελλε
δαίμων, ὃς Τρῶεςσιν ἐβούλετο κῦδος ὀρέξαι·
καὶ τοι Δηΐφοβος θεοεἰκελὸς ἔσπετ' ἰοῦσῃ.
τρίς δὲ περιστιξας κοῦλον λόχον ἀμφοφώωσα,
ἐκ δ' ὀνομακλήδην Δαναῶν ὀνόμαζες ἀρίστους,
πάντων Ἀργείων φωνὴν ἴσκουσ' ἀλόχοισιν.
αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ Τυδείδης καὶ δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
ἦμενοι ἐν μέσσοισιν ἀκούσαμεν, ὡς ἐβόησας.
νόμι μὲν ἀμφοτέρῳ μενεΐναμεν ὀρμηθέντες
ἢ ἐξελθέμεναι ἢ ἐνδοθεν αἶψ' ὑπακοῦσαι·
ἀλλ' Ὀδυσσεὺς κατέρυκε καὶ ἔσχεθεν ἱεμένῳ περ.
ἐνθ' ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες ἀκὴν ἔσαν υἷες Ἀχαιῶν,
Ἄντικλος δὲ σέ γ' οἷος ἀμείψασθαι ἐπέεσσιν
ἤθελεν· ἀλλ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐπὶ μάστακα χερσὶ πίεζε
νωλεμέως κρατερῇσι, σάωσε δὲ πάντας Ἀχαιοὺς·

(Hom. *Od.* 4.267-88)

¹⁶ Extensively on this Homeric episode, see Andersen 1977, 8-13. In Skempis in progress, I enquire into the relation of micro-narratives in the *Odyssey*, which are designated as *hoion/hoia* stories, directly or indirectly corroborated by *hoios/hoie/hoion* indexing, the most representative examples being Helen's and Menelaus' antiphonal songs in *Odyssey* 4, the catalogue of men in *Odyssey* 11 that Alcinous asks for, and Mentor's Trojan pointers in *Odyssey* 22, with traditions of the Epic Cycle.

In my time I have studied the wit and counsel of many
 men who were heroes, and I have been over much of the world,
 yet nowhere have I seen with my own eyes anyone like him,
 nor known an inward heart like the heart of enduring Odysseus.
 Here is the way that strong man acted and the way he endured
 action, inside the wooden horse, where he who were greatest
 of the Argives all were sitting and bringing death and destruction
 to the Trojans. Then you came there, Helen; you will have been moved by
 some divine spirit who wished to grant glory to the Trojans, and
 Deiphobos, a godlike man, was with you when you came. Three times you
 walked around the hollow ambush, feeling it,
 and you called out, naming them by name, to the best of the Danaans, and
 made your voice sound like the voice of the wife of each of the Argives.
 Now I myself and the son of Tydeus and great Odysseus were sitting there
 in the middle of them and we heard you crying aloud, and Diomedes and I
 started up, both minded
 to go outside, or else to answer your voice from inside,
 but Odysseus pulled us back and held us, for all our eagerness.
 Then all the other sons of the Achaeans were silent:
 there was only one, it was Antiklos, who was ready to answer,
 but Odysseus, brutally squeezing his mouth in the clutch of his powerful
 hands, held him, and so saved the lives of all the Achaeans.

(transl. R. Lattimore)

The story is meant to praise Odysseus' unmatched heroism that saved the Achaeans from danger: as the Greek heroes dwelt in the Wooden Horse (4.272 ἵππῳ ἐνὶ ξέστῳ) they were tested by nobody less than Helen, who impersonated their wives by hailing just to see whether the Horse lurked dangers for the Trojans. Brave men such as Menelaus and Diomedes were tempted to respond to the alleged call of their wives and get out of the Horse, but were held back by Odysseus. Now, if one accepts the terms of the analogy I am trying to set up here, the Wooden Horse emerges as the horse par excellence in the wider context of Odysseus' mythical cycle — and were Erysichthon to be set against the Argive heroes, he would have been one who eventually “falls from the horse”, one whom Odysseus would not have managed to keep inside. Thus, if Erysichthon's mother does allude to an episode from Odysseus' heroic career, the ensuing homology does not seem to advance her son to the status of a heroic figure, but entails a critical edge with comic overtones. A comically heroic Erysichthon of such contours can be thought to spring out of the Cyclic reflections of Odysseus as long as the maternal pretext fails to assimilate himself to Odysseus from the Epic Cycle, who prevents himself as well as others from “falling from the [chariot] horse” (*Cer.* 86 ἔπεσ' ἐξ ἵππων as opposed to 4.272 ἵππῳ ἐνὶ ξέστῳ).

Nevertheless, the last maternal excuse envisages Erysichthon as epic hero, who supervises his flocks in the pastures of Mt. Othrys (*Cer.* 86). As Neil Hopkinson has aptly put it, ‘personal royal supervision of flocks or even tending of them is a feature from archaic poetry’.¹⁷ Even though the diction is hardly similar, the alleged enterprise is

¹⁷ Hopkinson 1984, 146. In Homeric terms, Erysichthon's mother envisages her son as a sort of ὄρχαμος ἀνδρῶν, given that he is supposed to be in charge of a large amount of flocks,

remindful of Odysseus' foray into the Peloponnese after the plot of the *Odyssey* comes to an end:

Οἱ μνήστορες ὑπὸ τῶν προσηκόντων θάπτονται. καὶ Ὀδυσσεὺς θύσας Νύμφαις εἰς Ἥλιν ἀποπλεῖ ἐπισκεψόμενος τὰ βουκόλια καὶ ξενίζεται παρὰ Πολυξένῳ δῶρόν τε λαμβάνει κρατῆρα καὶ ἐπὶ τούτῳ τὰ περὶ Τροφώνιον καὶ Ἀγαμήδην καὶ Αὐγέα. ἔπειτα εἰς Ἰθάκην καταπλεύσας τὰς ὑπὸ Τειρεσίου ρηθείσας τελεῖ θυσίαν.

(*Teleg. arg.* 1 W)

The suitors are buried by their families. Odysseus, after sacrificing to the Nymphs, sails off to Elis to inspect his herds. He is entertained by Polyxenus, and receives the gift of a mixing bowl, on which is represented the story of Trophonius, Agamedes, and Augeas. Then he sails back to Ithaca and performs the sacrifices specified by Teiresias.

(transl. M. L. West)

The *Telegony* tells the story of how the herdsman Polyxenus grants Odysseus hospitality when the latter visits Elis. One is told that the reason why the hero travels all the way to Elis is to inspect his livestock. And one already knows from the *Odyssey* that Odysseus' animal stock was innumerable both on Ithaca and in the mainland:

ἧ γάρ οἱ ζῳή γ' ἦν ἄσπετος· οὐ τι νι τόσση
ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων, οὐτ' ἡπείροιο μελαίνης
οὐτ' αὐτῆς Ἰθάκης· οὐδὲ ξυνεῖκοσι φωτῶν
ἔστ' ἄφενος τοσσοῦτον· ἐγὼ δέ κέ τοι καταλέξω.
δώδεκ' ἐν ἡπείρῳ ἀγέλαι· τόσα πώεα οἰῶν, 100
τόσσα συῶν συβόσια, τόσ' αἰπόλια πλατέ' αἰγῶν
βόσκουσι ξεῖνοί τε καὶ αὐτοῦ βώτορες ἄνδρες·
ἐνθάδε τ' αἰπόλια πλατέ' αἰγῶν ἔνδεκα πάντα
ἐσχατιῇ βόσκοντ', ἐπὶ δ' ἄνδρες ἐσθλοὶ ὄρονται.

(Hom. *Od.* 14.96-104)

See now, he had an endlessly abundant livelihood. Not one of the heroes over on the black mainland had so much, no one here on Ithaca, no twenty men together had such quantity of substance as he. I will count it for you. Twelve herds of cattle on the mainland. As many sheeflocks, as many troops of pigs and again as many wide goatflocks, and friends over there, and his own herdsmen, pasture them for him. And here again, at the end of the island, eleven wide flocks of goats in all are pastured, good men have these in their keeping.

(transl. R. Lattimore)

It is Eumaeus who gives a detailed account: twelve herds of cattle, sheep, swine, and goats respectively in the mainland, plus eleven flocks of goats on Ithaca and the swine

which he must tend. For the way Homer uses the collocation ὄρχαμος ἀνδρῶν within its immediate and wider contexts, see Haubold 2000, 17-28.

Eumaeus is in charge of. Taking the evidence from the *Telegony* into account, the ‘dark mainland’ (97 ἡπειρος μέλαινα) to which Eumaeus refers can be thought to imply Elis and therefore designates the *Odyssey*’s self-reflexiveness toward traditions pertaining to the Epic Cycle.¹⁸ Against this backdrop, the maternal imagination makes Erysichthon emerge as a second Odysseus, who travels around to preside over his animate property. Yet, in reality, he could have been counting other people’s flocks in order to satisfy his ravenous appetite. Be that as it may, the flock-counting incident on Mt. Othrys attributed to Erysichthon alludes to the conjunction of the Homeric tradition with Odyssean stories from the Epic Cycle just as the “fall from the chariot horses” incident does.¹⁹

Lies and Local Traditions

The narrator designates the maternal excuses as ‘lies’ (*Cer.* 83 τί δ’ οὐκ ἐψεύσαο, μᾶτερ;). But lying bears moral connotations that contrast with the liberties of fictional narrative. For the aim of fictional stories lies in offering alternatives to and deviations from the main narrative and thereby in entertaining the audience. It is precisely the sort of stories that Aithon/Odysseus narrates, stories concomitant with a cardinal statement that determines his relation to truth and falsehood and qualifies the conception of *pseudea* as verisimilar narrative accounts, which cannot be corroborated within the main narrative:

ἴσκε ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγων ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα·
 τῆς δ’ ἄρ’ ἀκουούσης ῥέε δάκρυα, τήκετο δὲ χρώς.
 ὥς δὲ χιῶν κατατήκετ’ ἐν ἀκροπόλοισιν ὄρεσσιν,
 ἦν τ’ εὖρος κατέτηξεν, ἐπὴν ζέφυρος καταχεύῃ,
 τηκομένης δ’ ἄρα τῆς ποταμοὶ πλήθουσι ῥέοντες.
 ὥς τῆς τήκετο καλὰ παρῆια δάκρυ χεούσης,
 κλαιούσης ἐὼν ἄνδρα, παρήμενον.

205

(Hom. *Od.* 19.203-9)

He knew how to say many false things that were like true sayings.
 As she listened her tears ran and her body was melted,
 as the snow melts along the high places of the mountains
 when the West Wind has piled it there, but the South Wind melts it,
 and as it melts the rivers run full flood. It was even
 so that her beautiful cheeks were streaming tears, as Penelope
 wept for her man, who was sitting there by her side.

(transl. R. Lattimore)

¹⁸ West 2013, 293; cf. Tsagalis 2015, 380. On the “*Odyssey*’s alternatives” as regards its relation to the Epic Cycle, see Finkelberg 2011, 201-2.

¹⁹ Sistakou 2004, 123-31; 2007; 2015 is concerned with the way Hellenistic poetry interacts with certain mythical variants contained in the tradition of the Cyclic epics, and provides important insights into the extent to which Hellenistic poets such as Callimachus make use of mythological material other than the “mainstream” Homeric one.

ὥς δὲ Μίμαντι χιών, ὥς ἀελίῳ ἐνὶ πλαγγόν,
καὶ τούτων ἔτι μέζον ἐτάκετο μέστ' ἐπὶ νευράς.
δειλαίῳ ῥινός τε καὶ ὀστέα μῶνον ἔλειφθεν.

(Call. *Cer.* 91-3)

Like snow on Mimas or a wax doll in the sun – even more
quickly than these he wasted away to the very sinews:
only skin and bone were left the wretch.

(transl. N. Hopkinson)

In his *Greek Mythology and Poetics*, Gregory Nagy points out the tension inherent in a myth with a panhellenic agenda and its local variants. Fictional narratives address the capacity of the mythmaking process to subject mythical variants to critical assessment and thus to generate a vying for hierarchization, which results in the suppression or compression of the variants.²⁰ Miriam Carlisle builds on this proposition by arguing that ‘pseudo-words applied to narrative sequences tag material deemed inappropriate for inclusion for one or two reasons: they transmit either a variant version of material accepted elsewhere by the text or “low” material not usually accommodated by epic transmission’.²¹ I suggest that the mother’s *pseudea* in Callimachus apply to this concept of rivalling traditions, though at the same time manage to subvert the Homeric proportions of “high” and “low” material. For her *pseudea* tally with “heroic stories” that strive for integration in, and standardization over, the established “low” narrative of Erysichthon’s hunger.

This antagonism between mythical variants and established versions is played out on the constantly renegotiated relation of ‘panhellenic poetics’, as Ian Rutherford termed it,²² and configurations of locality. In the terse set of maternal false stories, the Thessalian topography stands out. Therefore, it is worth taking a glance at the way these variants interact with narrative or non-narrative settings of panhellenic contours. At the narrative level, the story of Erysichthon’s participation in the boar hunt on Parnassus concurs with the account of the “tattoo-elegy” on the attendance of a certain Aithon to the hunt of the Calydonian boar and thus may count as mythical variant:

Οἰνείδης Μελέαγρος· ὁ γὰρ θηρέστατος ἦεν
πολλῶν ἡρώων σὺν τότε ἄθροισαμένων.
ἦλυθε μὲν Θησεὺς Πιτθηίδος, ἦλυθε δ’ Αἴθων.
ἦλυθε δ’ Ἀγκαῖος σὺν μεγάλῳ πελέκει,
ἦλθον καὶ Λήδης κοῦροι καὶ Ζηνὸς ἄνακτος

(SSH 970.20-4)

²⁰ See Nagy 1990, 36-82; 1996, 39-43.

²¹ Carlisle 1999, 56.

²² Rutherford 2005, 101.

Meleager, son of Oineus; for he was the best hunter
among the many heroes gathered back then.
Theseus came along, the son of Pittheus' daughter, Aithon came along,
Ankaïos came along bearing his big axe,
the sons of Lede and divine Zeus came along

(transl. my own)

It is interesting to observe the tension inherent in the panhellenic span of the gathering of heroes in Aetolia as narrated in the “tattoo-elegy” and the local twist, which Callimachus gives to its Thessalian counterpart. The fact that the mother utters the excuses and thus exemplifies the tense interrelation between panhellenic and local narratives makes the case all the more exciting as it has been recently argued that the original focus of female genealogical poetry, that is, of poetry centred on mothers and their offspring, was situated in Thessaly, in a territory falling within the range of the Delphic Amphictyony.²³ The most influential example of this sort of poetry to survive, the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, hosts an already consummated progression from the overtly Thessalian context in which *ehoie* poetry is, as a rule, embedded in a panhellenic perspective, which contains genealogical traditions from diverse parts of Greece. ‘The poet who set off to compose the *Catalogue*’, thus Ettore Cingano, ‘was faced with the immense task of collecting, connecting, and reconciling the vast number of independent or autochthonous traditions circulating in Greece, which related the main genealogies of the primary ancestors and their descendants, as well as the local genealogies connected to specific places’.²⁴ Ian Rutherford uses the entry of Erysichthon’s daughter Mestra as a case in point and shows that the *Catalogue* tends either to relocate stories in an Athenian setting or to highlight their individual ties with this city.²⁵ Although myth and ritual linked with Erysichthon traditionally adhere to Thessaly, the hero himself is based at Athens,²⁶ while the spatial shifts of his daughter enhance the affiliation of the story with local settings:

καὶ τὴν μὲν ῥ' ἐδάμασσε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων
τῇλ' ἀπὸ πατρὸς ἐοῖο φέρων ἐπὶ οἶνοπα πόντον
ἐν Κόωι ἀ[μ]φιρύτῃ καίπερ πολύιδριν ἐοῦσα[ν·
ἐνθα τέκ' Εὐρύπυλον πολέων ἡγήτορα λαῶν
Κω . . . α γείνατο παῖδα βίην ὑπέροπλον ἔχοντα.
τοῦ δ' υἱεῖς Χάλκων τε καὶ Ἀνταγόρης ἐγένοντο. 60
τῷ δὲ καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὀλίγης Διὸς ἄλκιμος υἱὸς
ἔπραθεν ἱμερόεντα πόλιν, κε[ρ]αῖζε δὲ κόμας
εὐθὺς ἐπ[ε]ὶ Τροίηθεν ἀνέ[πλε]ε νηυσ[ι] θ[ο]ήισι
... [.]λαιων ἔνε[χ' ἵπ]πων Λαομέδοντος·
ἐν Φλέγρηι δ' ἐ Γίγαντας ὑπερφιάλους κατέπεφ[νε]. 65
Μήστρη δὲ προ]λιποῦσα Κόων ποτὶ πατρίδα γαῖαν
νηὶ θοῇ ἐπέρ]ησ' ἱερέων ποτὶ γουνὸν Ἀθηνέων

²³ For the focus of female genealogical poetry on Boeotia and Thessaly due to the Delphic Amphictyony, see Fowler 1998, 11-13; Larson 2000, 206-22; Rutherford 2005, 99-101, 115.

²⁴ Cingano 2009, 114.

²⁵ Rutherford 2005, 99-101.

²⁶ For this crucial issue in the myth of Erysichthon, see Robertson 1984, 385-95.

ἐ]πεὶ τέκε παῖδα Ποσειδάωνι ἄνακτι.
αἰν]όμορον πατέρα ὃν πορσαίνεσκεν.

(Hes. CW fr. 43a.55-69 M-W)

... Her Poseidon the earth-shaker mastered
taking her far from her father over the wine-dark sea
in sea-girt Cos, although she was very wise.
There she gave birth to Eurypylus, leader of many men,
for [the hero] Cos gave birth to a child who had exceeding strength.
To him were born two sons, Khalkon and Antagoras.
For him, albeit from a small beginning, the valiant son of Zeus
sacked his desirable city and razed its villages
immediately after he sailed back from Troy with his swift ships
[] horses of Laomedon.
[In Phlegra] he slew the overweening Giants.
Mestra, leaving Cos for her native land,
crossed [in a swift land] to the hill of sacred Athens []
when she gave birth to a child for her Poseidon []
[] cared for (?) her doomed father

(transl. I. Rutherford)

Mestra is said to have been driven by Poseidon from Athens to Cos where she bore him Eurypylus, whose children were meant to be eponymous heroes of the island and also responsible for introducing the cult of Demeter in Cos. However, she eventually goes back to Athens where she is enmeshed in a series of marriage deals for Erysichthon's sake. The Hesiodic version of the story completely suppresses the Thessalian background of the Erysichthon story in favour of his displacement to Athens and subsequent assimilation to his Athenian namesake, all the while promoting a side-relation to Cos, an island, which retained multiple and strong ties with Thessaly. To put it another way: Mestra, in her capacity as a mother, illustrates the constraints of locality in Hesiod and, in this respect, resembles Erysichthon's mother in Callimachus, who brings forth potential local settings for the Erysichthon story.

It is worth taking a closer look at the relation of Cos and Thessaly. In doing so, I shall briefly turn to the very first invitation, which Erysichthon's mother turns down (*Cer.* 74-5): although the Ormenidae came to invite Erysichthon to enter the competition in the games of Itonian Athena, the latter is said to be unable to attend. It is beyond doubt that the games referred to were conducted during a festival held in Athena's temple at Itonos, the federal sanctuary of the Thessalian League. In fact, an only recently published decree from Cos dated ca. 242 BC attests that Coan *theōroi* attended the festival at Itonos:²⁷

[-----]καν Ο [-----]
[-----] τοὶ δὲ θεωροὶ τοῖ] αἰρεθέντες ἐς Ἴτωνον

²⁷ I am grateful to Ian Rutherford, who drew this decree to my attention. For the relation between this Koan inscription and *theōria*, see Sherwin-White 1978, 306-11; Chaniotis/Corsten/Stroud/Tybout 2003 [2007], 133-4; Rigsby 2004.

[ἀφικόμενοι ἐν τῷ πέμπτῳ ἔνιαι] τῷ ἐπαγγελλόντῳ τὰ
 [Ἀσκληπίεια ταῖς πόλεσι ταῖς ἐν] Θεσσαλίαι καὶ ἐν Ἄργει
 [τῷ Πελασγικῷ? τοὶ δὲ θεωροὶ τ]οὶ ἐς Σαμοθράικαν ἀποσ-
 [τελλόμενοι ἐπαγγελλόντῳ τὰ] Ἀσκληπίεια ἐγ Χίῳ καὶ
 [ἐν Λέσβῳ? τοὶ δὲ ἐς Κῶ παραγιν]όμενοι θεωροὶ φορεύντῳ
 [ἐν ταῖ πομπῇ στεφάνος θαλλοῦ· τὰν δὲ ἀ]φικνευμένων θεωρίαν
 [----- ἐπιμελείσθωσαν τοὶ ἱεροφύλ]ακες· τοὶ δὲ
 [-----] πανάγυρις

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[...] Having been elected to do so, the *theōroi* came in the fifth year to Itonos and announced the Asklepieia to the cities of Thessaly and Pelasgian Argos. Those among the *theōroi* sent to Samothrake announced the Asklepieia to Chios and Lesbos. Upon their arrival back at Kos they were bearing wreaths made of branches during the procession. The groups of the arriving *theōroi* were taken care of by the temple guardians. However, the [...]. [...] the festal assembly [...]

(transl. my own)

Most scholars have taken this decree as evidence that the festival of Itonian Athena had acquired a panhellenic rank by the mid third century Kent Rigsby adds that the presence of Coan *theōria* should be explained on the basis of a rather close relationship between Cos and Thessaly.²⁸ If so, what does this tell us about the crossover of panhellenism and locality as inferred from the narrative conduct of Erysichthon's mother?²⁹ I suggest that this passage by Callimachus should be read against the Hesiodic fragment, which solidifies Mestra's links to Cos. Just as Mestra hints at the Thessalian background of the Erysichthon story by establishing a connection with Cos and this way ushers the dynamics of locality into a narrative fused with panhellenic aspirations, her Callimachean equivalent, Erysichthon's mother, begins to fabricate alternative stories with a distinct local footing by stating the inability of her son to attend a Thessalian festival of panhellenic range. As a result, the invitation to a festival of panhellenic status and the decline that follows mark both the entrance of Erysichthon's mother into the narrative and the establishment of a strictly local, Thessalian context in which the mythical variants concerning Erysichthon's alternative career as Odysseus-like hero are inscribed.

Conclusion

Let me conclude with a few general remarks. I hope to have shown that the maternal false stories give vent to alternative ways of remythologizing, which are well attuned to the elaborate interplay of truth and falsehood, of established and suppressed mythical variants as instantiated in *Odyssey* 19 by means of the Cretan lies. The wishful thinking inherent in lament designates the many possible turns that the story of Erysichthon could have taken or the stories incompatible with Erysichthon's crass degradation that match

²⁸ Rigsby 2004, 11.

²⁹ On the thorny relation between Panhellenism and localities see Tsagalis 2011, 217-8.

the binarity of Odysseus as heroic royalty and beggar. The hero's mother is an internal narrator, who threatens to lead the course of the main narrative astray. In this respect, false stories provide access to the potentialities of mythmaking. The mother's excuses hark back to the Cretan stories of Aithon/Odysseus in order to provide Aithon/Erysichthon with his own tradition of mythical variants drawn from a Thessalian cycle.³⁰ In this sense, Callimachus succeeds in launching a carefully fabricated Thessalian version of dispersed alternative traditions that feed on a panhellenic myth. Even though he comes up with a sophisticated palimpsest, he sticks to a basic principle of inter-figural cohesion: characters named Aithon are contingent on their wanton, ravening bellies and are prone to falsehood that ensues from the harsh biddings of their bellies. Stories about the γαστήρ are parodies of physical deterioration and socio-moral decline, which are very far from traditional epic stories that feature introspective dialogue with the heroic θυμός. Whereas the *Odyssey* follows this rule, Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter* subverts it insofar as the main theme of Erysichthon's counterepic debasement seeks to be balanced through his mother's false stories of epic pomp. The commemorative qualities of the epic hero located in the γαστήρ, to build on the insights of Egbert Bakker,³¹ nest and cocoon at once a compulsion for storytelling.

It is frequently said that the deepest drama *lies* in the words left unsaid. For the conciseness with which the mother brings forth her excuses leaves room for the potential development of variants to full-blown stories, which are, nevertheless, not meant to occur within the narrative of the *Hymn to Demeter*. On these grounds, the mother's excuses are a means of overcoming the constraints posed by her personal drama and of appropriating the dynamics of fictional narrative in a purely Odyssean manner. Yet, the Callimachean narrator dismisses these Thessalian quasi heroic stories as "lies" in favour of the unheroic panhellenic version just as he does when he discredits the Cretan version of Zeus' birth over an Arcadian one in the *Hymn to Zeus* where he characterizes the Cretans as consistent liars (8 Κρήτες ἀεὶ ψεύσται).³² By framing the beginning and ending of his Book of *Hymns* with stories that vie against alternative versions, and whose mettle formally lies in *pseudea*, Callimachus signals his concern with a principal question, the question of how to tell a story in a captivating manner.

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³⁰ For the Odyssean function of false stories as *quotations* cf. Tsagalis 2012, 344: 'The false tales constitute one of the most extensive epic quotations (*Zitat*) embedded in the *Odyssey*, an intertextual window to alternative oral traditions of Odysseus' return.' For the function of false tales in the *Hymn to Demeter*, it is important that Tsagalis recognises *de-geographization* and *de-linearization* as two crucial poetological features.

³¹ Bakker 2010, 43-7.

³² I am indebted to Flora Manakidou for calling this passage to my attention.

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