

Homer, a Poet of an Individual Style

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At *Od.* 8.73-78 we find:

Μοῦσ' ἄρ' αἰοῖδὸν ἀνήκεν αἰειδέμεναι κλέα ἀνδρῶν,
οἴμης τῆς τότ' ἄρα κλέος οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἵκανε,
νεῖκος Ὀδυσσῆος καὶ Πηλεΐδew Ἀχιλλῆος,
ὥς ποτε δηρίσαντο θεῶν ἐν δαιτὶ θαλείῃ
ἐκπάγλους ἐπέεσσιν, ἄναξ δ' ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων
χαῖρε νόψ, ὃ τ' ἄριστοι Ἀχαιῶν δηριόωντο κτλ.

(‘... the Muse stirred the minstrel to sing the songs of famous men, even that lay whereof the fame had then reached the wide heaven, namely, the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles, son of Peleus; how once on a time they contended in fierce words at a rich festival of the gods, but Agamemnon, king of men, was glad in his mind when the noblest of the Achaeans fell at variance etc.’)¹

The two last verses of this passage have drawn much scholarly attention, mainly because of the puzzling χαῖρε νόψ, unparalleled elsewhere in Homer and disagreeing with the normal Homeric usage of the word *noos*.² But the passage also

¹ Trans. S. H. Butcher and Andrew Lang, very slightly changed.

² Because *noos* is the seat of the intellect rather than of emotions, see J. Boehme, *Die Seele und das Ich im Homerischen Epos*, Berlin 1929, 53; K. von Fritz, ‘Νόος and νοεῖν in the Homeric Poems’, *CP* 38, 1943, 83-4; B. Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind*, trans. T.G. Rosenmeyer, New York 1953, 12; E.L. Harrison, ‘Notes on Homeric Psychology’, *Phoenix* 14, 1960, 73 n. 56; P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la langue grecque*, Paris 1968, s.v. νόος; T. Jahn, *Zum Wortfeld ‘Seele-Geist’ in der Sprache Homers*, München 1987, 102-10. Normally, when Homer’s expressions of joy involve mental organs, they employ such terms as *thumos*, *phren*, or *ker*, see e.g. χαῖρε δὲ θυμῷ *Il.* 14.156, 21.423, 22.224; *Od.* 8.483, 14.113, 24.545; γεγήθει δὲ φρένα *Il.* 11.683, cf. 8.559, *Od.* 6.106; γηθόσυνος κῆρ *Il.* 4.272 and 326, 7.122, 13.82, 18.557. The only parallel to *Od.* 8.78 is *Hymn.Hom.* 19.41 χαῖρεν δὲ νόψ περιώσια δαίμων.

contains a metrical irregularity (-ω staying long in hiatus),³ and necessary enjambement splitting the subject from the verb.⁴ Compare now the following:

νεῖκος Ὀδυσσῆος καὶ Πηλεΐδew Ἀχιλλῆος,
 ὡς ποτε δηρίσαντο θεῶν ἐν δαιτὶ θαλείῃ,
 *τοὺς δὲ ἰδὼν γήθησεν ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων
 *χαίρων οὐνεκ ἄριστοι Ἀχαιῶν δηριῶντο κτλ.

The latter passage, which I have composed from descriptions of joy encountered in the Homeric poems,⁵ differs from *Od.* 8.78 in that it expresses the same idea without involving the above peculiarities: it has neither necessary enjambement nor hiatus, and the semantically irregular χαίρε νόω is absent from it. In a word, it is more 'correct' than the authentic Homeric passage.

One can see that the amendment which I proposed differs from the Homeric original at three points: it omits the expression ἐκπάγλους ἐπέεσσιν at v. 77; the imperfect tense of the original is replaced by the aorist; and the expression χαίρε νόω is missing. As the difference between the imperfect and aorist is rather immaterial in the context under discussion, only the expressions χαίρε νόω and ἐκπάγλους ἐπέεσσιν can be seriously considered as Homer's motive for the deviation. That is to say, it was important to the poet to emphasize either (a) that Agamemnon rejoiced in one of his mental organs and that this mental organ

³ νόω, ὄ τ' at v. 78. It can be argued that the long vowel in hiatus, widespread as it is in epic usage (see below), cannot be called an 'irregularity' in the strict sense of the word. At the same time, it cannot unreservedly be identified as the epic 'norm' either. Hence, as far as this particular Homeric usage is concerned, 'irregularity' is still the most appropriate term. Cf. Parry's view that the same processes are responsible for both the severe irregularities, such as the short syllables in hiatus or *breves in longo*, and the more 'mild' ones; see 'Homeric Formulae and Homeric Metre', A. Parry ed., *The Making of Homeric Verse*, Oxford 1981, 192-4, 235-7 (henceforth MHV).

⁴ This is the second of Parry's two kinds of 'necessary' enjambement, the one in which 'the word group is divided between two verses' ('The Distinctive Character of Enjambement in Homeric Verse', *MHV* 263). G.S. Kirk suggests calling this type 'integral', see his 'Verse-Structure and Sentence-Structure in Homer', *YCS* 20, 1966, 107; according to M.W. Edwards' classification ('Some Features of Homer's Craftsmanship', *TAPA* 97, 1966, 122-5), the present instance falls into the 'harsh' type of necessary enjambement, that is, the one in which the sense-unit is not complete within the verse

⁵ Cf. τοὺς δὲ ἰδὼν γήθησεν ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων *Il.* 4.255 (cf. καὶ τοὺς /τὸν μὲν γήθησεν ἰδὼν κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων *ibid.* 283 and 311, οὐδ' ἄρα τῶγε ἰδὼν γήθησεν Ἀχιλλεύς *Il.* 1.330) and γήθησεν δὲ πολὺτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς / χαίρων οὐνεκ ἑταῖρον κτλ. *Od.* 8.200; cf. μείδησεν δὲ ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς / χαίρων *Il.* 23.555-6, γήθησεν δὲ πολὺτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς / χαίρων *Od.* 13.250-1 and 353-4.

would be his *noos*, or (b) that Odysseus and Achilles quarrelled ‘in terrible words’.

Yet, while it is true that the addition of a mental organ has an effect in that it emphasizes the fact that the joy experienced by Agamemnon was an inner rather than an overt one, it may be doubted whether such an addition was in itself indispensable. Thus, although in the second part of the *Odyssey* there is more than one occasion on which Homer depicts the inner joy of the disguised Odysseus, he regularly does this simply by using the verb γηθέω.⁶ Indeed, descriptions of joy involving mental organs constitute only about one-fourth of the descriptions of joy in Homer taken all together,⁷ whereas in the other cases Homer simply uses the verbs χαίρω and γηθέω without further qualification. In view of this it is reasonable to suppose that in the majority of cases the function fulfilled by the addition of mental organs to Homer’s descriptions of joy and of other emotions was metrical rather than semantical. Furthermore, it may well be doubted whether the question in which mental organ Agamemnon’s inner joy should be located was of real importance to Homer. This is made especially clear by the fact that in the case of χαῖρε νόω at the beginning of the hexameter there was no metrical way to employ one of the mental organs regularly combined with verbs of joy: instead of ~ - needed in this position (and supplied, though at the expense of hiatus, by νόω), θυμῷ would have given - -; φρενί/φρεσί, scanned ~ ~, though in principle capable of making the last syllable positionally long, was excluded because it would have lengthened the preceding syllable; and κηρί would have given - ~. In other words, χαῖρε νόω looks like an emergency solution forced by the metrical context rather than a deliberate choice by the poet.

In view of the aforesaid, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Homer was manoeuvred into the phrase ἀναξ δ’ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων / χαῖρε νόω, ὄ τ’ κτλ. by his insertion of the expression ἐκπάγλοις ἐπέεσσιν at v. 77. Undoubtedly, ἀναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων in the second half of the verse, like any other formula containing a hero’s name, is one of the most regular Homeric usages.⁸ No less regular is the combination of such a formula with a verb of joy, for the most part γηθέω, placed in the first half of the hexameter.⁹ In our case, however, since the first part of the verse was already occupied by the expression ἐκπάγλοις ἐπέεσσιν, room was left for the Agamemnon formula only in the second part of the verse. Consequently, the predicate expressing the idea of Agamemnon’s rejoicing was transferred into the following line — a practice

⁶ See *Od.* 13.250 and especially 18.281.

⁷ Out of 106 occurrences of the verb χαίρω registered in Gehring’s *Index Homericus*, only 20 involve mental organs; in the case of γηθέω, the ratio is 46 to 12.

⁸ 37 times in both epics, see Parry, ‘The Traditional Epithet in Homer’, Table I, in *MHV* 39.

⁹ See e.g. *Il.* 6.212, 8.278, 17.567; *Od.* 7.329, 8.199, 13.250, 18.281. Cf. M. Finkelberg, ‘Formulaic and Nonformulaic Elements in Homer’, *CP* 84, 1989, 182.

usual in sentences which do not begin after the bucolic diaeresis.¹⁰ That the poet preferred the verb χαίρω in this specific position may be explained by the fact that the participle χαίρων is habitually used in the first foot for amplifying a sentence after the unperiodic enjambement (see the examples adduced in n. 5 above). But the imperfect χαῖρε scanned - ~ is much more problematic in this position than the self-contained χαίρων scanned - -, which would have permitted the poet, by means of some connective like οὐνεκα (see my amendment), to embark safely on the phrase ἄριστοι Ἀχαιῶν δηριόωντο at the end of the second foot. Instead of this, he had to amplify the imperfect χαῖρε by adding, as usual in such situations, the location of joy in one of the mental organs. As the metrical position itself was unusual, none of the mental organs usually employed in such cases could fit into it. This is how the irregular χαῖρε νόω seems to have originated.

It is worth remembering in this connection that there are weighty arguments in favour of the view that the quarrel of Odysseus and Achilles, the subject of the song of Demodocus to the description of which the lines under discussion belong, is Homer's innovation modelled on the description of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon at the beginning of the *Iliad*.¹¹ Now it is reasonable to suppose that the newly invented subject would not be narrated by the poet in the same manner as the traditional one. The poet presenting a given subject for the first time cannot be absolutely sure how his verses would be shaped several lines ahead, that is, how a word or an expression used in a given verse, traditional though it might be in itself, would influence words and expressions which follow it. As we saw above, this seems to have been the case with the expression ἐκπάγλοις ἐπέεσσιν at *Od.* 8.77. But why was it important to the poet to say that Odysseus and Achilles quarrelled 'in terrible words'? Traditional though it is, ἐκπάγλοις ἐπέεσσιν is a rare expression, whose only other occurrence is at *Il.* 15.198, in the description of a quarrel among the Olympians. Could it, as the anonymous reader of this article suggests to me, be a reminiscence of 'the terrific eloquence of the quarrel in *Iliad* 1'? As was noticed long ago, one such reminiscence, Διὸς μεγάλου διὰ βουλᾶς at v. 82 below, directly evokes the words Διὸς δ' ἔτελείετο βουλή at *Il.* 1.5 by which the quarrel of Agamemnon and Achilles is introduced. However this may be, there is no doubt

¹⁰ In his study of Homeric enjambement M.W. Edwards showed that enjambement in sentences beginning after the bucolic diaeresis differs from the other kinds of enjambement in that in such cases the verse-end involves no break in sense: these in fact are syntactic units deeply rooted in the Homeric technique of verse-making (op.cit., pp. 170-5).

¹¹ Cf. W. Marg, 'Das erste Lied des Demodokos', *Navicula Chiloniensis. Festschrift F. Jacoby*, Leiden 1956, 16-29; P. Von der Mühl, 'Odyssee', *RE* 1940, Suppl. 7, 696-768. See also M. Finkelberg, 'The First Song of Demodocus', *Mnemosyne* 40, 1987, 128-32 (with bibliography).

that it was the introduction of this specific expression that resulted in the chain reaction of metrical and other irregularities characteristic of the passage under discussion.

Let us consider now *Od.* 1.346-50, Telemachus' rebuke to Penelope:

μη̄τερ ἐμή, τί τ' ἄρα φθονέεις ἐρίηρον ἀοιδὸν
 τέρπειν ὄππῃ οἱ νόος ὄρνυται; οὐ νύ τ' ἀοιδοὶ
 αἴτιοι, ἀλλὰ ποθι Ζεὺς αἴτιος, ὅς τε δίδωσιν
 ἀνδράσιν ἀλφηστῆσιν ὅπως ἐθέλησιν ἐκάστω.
 τούτῳ δ' οὐ νέμεσις Δαναῶν κακὸν οἶτον ἀεῖδειν κτλ.

('O my mother, why then dost thou grudge the sweet minstrel to gladden us as his spirit moves him? It is not minstrels who are in fault, but Zeus, methinks, is in fault, who gives to men, that live by bread, to each one as he will. As for him it is no blame if he sings the ill-faring of the Danaans etc.')

The primary object of my attention here is vv. 347-48. Like the passage discussed above, this one is also characterized by some minor irregularities: ὄππῃ οἱ at v. 347, which can probably count as a long vowel in hiatus;¹² two occurrences of necessary enjambement and, again, inappropriate use of *noos*, in that this mental organ behaves in this passage as the active 'mover', a function usually assigned to *thumos*. Admittedly, necessary enjambement after the bucolic diaeresis is much more normal than the other kinds of necessary enjambement;¹³ however, the starting of a new phrase within a verse which itself begins after necessary enjambement, together with several syntactical stops within the line, produces a certain harshness of scanning and locution which is not dissimilar to that observed in the first passage dealt with.

However, all these peculiarities come out with special force if we compare this passage with another passage of similar content, *Od.* 8.43-45:

... καλέσασθε δὲ θεῖον ἀοιδόν,
 Δημόδοκον· τῷ γάρ ῥα θεὸς πέρι δῶκεν ἀοιδίην
 τέρπειν, ὄππῃ θυμὸς ἐποτρύνῃσιν ἀεῖδειν.

¹² Insofar as it is unlikely that *Od.* 1.347, nontraditional as it is in more than one respect, could have been created before the disappearance of the digamma. For a further discussion see A. Hoekstra, *Homeric Modifications of Formulaic Prototypes*, Amsterdam 1965, 64-5.

¹³ Parry *MHV* 264, cf. n. 12 above. Unfortunately, in his statistical study of Homeric enjambement G.S. Kirk supplies no figures concerning this specific type. But, as Kirk himself admits, the differences between his conclusions and those of Parry 'are not alarming' (op.cit., p.119).

The formulaic affinity of *τέρπειν, ὄππῃ θυμὸς ἐποτρύνῃσιν αἰεῖδεν* at *Od.* 8.45 and *τέρπειν ὄππῃ οἱ νόος ὄρνυται* at *Od.* 1.347 is obvious. It is also obvious which of the two phrases should be considered traditional. Indeed, *Od.* 8.45, a full hexameter long and free of irregularities, is much more deeply rooted in epic diction, not to mention the fact that *thumos* appears here in its standard role as the internal 'mover'. The fact that *Od.* 8.45 serves as part of a general characteristic of the Phaeacian singer Demodocus also gives us reason to consider it a formulaic expression cast for general description of the singer's activity.

Obviously, the formulaic line was broken by Homer in order to introduce the idea that it is Zeus rather than the poets themselves who is to be held responsible for the content of their songs, in that he caused the events of which the poets sing. For this purpose, the regular *θυμὸς ἐποτρύνῃσιν* was abridged to the irregular *νόος ὄρνυται*, a transformation which in its turn caused an additional necessary enjambement and hiatus. But could not the same idea have been expressed by other, more conventional means? Let us try again to amend Homeric verses:

μηῆτερ ἐμή, τί τ' ἄρα φθονέεις ἐρήρον αἰοῖδον
 τέρπειν ὄππῃ θυμὸς ἐποτρύνῃσιν αἰεῖδεν; (= *Od.* 8. 45)
 τοῦτω δ' οὐ νέμεσις Δαναῶν κακὸν οἶτον αἰεῖδεν,
 τὸν δὲ θεοὶ μὲν τεύξαν, ἐπεκλώσαντο δ' ὄλεθρον (= *Od.* 8.579)
 ἀνθρώποις, ἵν' ἔησι καὶ ἐσσομένοισιν αἰοῖδή. (= *Od.* 8. 580)¹⁴

The idea that the gods fashion human fates which eventually become the subjects of songs is well attested in the epics.¹⁵ Yet *Odyssey* 1 supplies what can be seen as a unique variation on this idea, in that it turns it into an apology for singers (*aidoi*) who are not to blame for the content of their songs as long as these only relate what really happened. Accordingly, it can be suggested that the poet's deviation from the traditional pattern was caused by his desire to express this idea. As the poet could not be sure of the final form his newly invented apology for the poets would take, he tried to introduce it as early as possible at the expense of the traditional expression, without considering that this idea could be expressed just as well by traditional means.

It goes without saying that it is possible to take into account also other reasons that could have caused the poet's deviations from traditional models at his disposal.¹⁶ Still, it seems not to be mere coincidence that the metrical and formu-

¹⁴ ἵν' ἔησι: this is a correction of the ἵνα ἔησι of the vulgate. See Hainsworth, ad loc., A. Heubeck, S. West, J. B. Hainsworth, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* I, Oxford 1988, 384: 'ἔησι as it stands is an Atticism. ἔησι would be a trivial correction, restoring both dialect and smooth metre.' I am grateful to Ra'anana Meridor for drawing my attention to the possibility of this reading.

¹⁵ Cf. *Il.* 6.357-58, *Od.* 8. 577-80.

¹⁶ Some of these reasons are discussed in M. Finkelberg, 'A Note on Some Metrical Irregularities in Homer', *CP* 83, 1988, 206-11.

laic irregularities observed above are found in those parts of the Homeric text which are innovatory in their content. As Jasper Griffin put it recently, 'It will seem reasonable to think that the singers had to do more inventing when they dealt with a subject-matter rarely depicted, or rarely depicted at such length, in the tradition'.¹⁷ If this is correct, then metrical and formulaic irregularities like those observed here should be regarded as by-products of the poet's creative intervention in the traditional idiom. This seems to be a reasonable explanation of the fact that, although the poet could have expressed both the idea of Agamemnon's joy and that of Zeus' responsibility for the poet's songs by traditional means, in both cases he gave his own, technically less satisfactory, variations of traditional patterns purporting to express the ideas in question.

In *Les Formules et la métrique d'Homère*, Parry describes the situation of a poet committing a metrical fault: 'The bard, accustomed to expressing his thought through the medium of traditional expressions, will often have to choose between using two formulae which perfectly express his thought but whose junction entails a metrical fault, and renouncing formulae to make up expressions of his own'.¹⁸ As Parry believed that the second option was only relevant to 'a poet of an individual style', and as he did not hold Homer to be such a poet, his study of metrical irregularities in Homer dealt with the first alternative only. Yet neither *Od.* 8.77-78 nor *Od.* 1.347-48, though they undoubtedly display formulaic associations of various kinds, can be accounted for as resulting from the processes of modification and juxtaposition of formulae analysed by Parry. In Parry's terms, these verses should belong to 'a poet of an individual style'. Now the kinds of irregularities found in the two passages discussed here can hardly be seen as having something extraordinary about them. Approximately 23 percent of Homeric verses contain necessary enjambement, $-\omega$ stands long in hiatus 23 percent of the time, and $-\eta$ 19 percent.¹⁹ The same seems to be true also of the nonformulaic expressions such as $\chi\alpha\lambda\acute{\iota}\rho\epsilon \nu\acute{o}\omega$ and $\nu\acute{o}\varsigma \delta\rho\nu\upsilon\tau\alpha\iota$: as I have argued elsewhere, the proportion of such expressions in Homeric diction is about 30 percent.²⁰ Thus, if we are indeed dealing here with the features of an individual style, it cannot be denied that such a style must have played a considerable part in the Homeric diction.

It is unlikely that *Od.* 8.77-78 or *Od.* 1.347-48, paralleled as they are by more regular alternatives in the stock of traditional expressions, could survive the transmission. Consequently, these verses 'of an individual style' must have belonged to 'Homer' or whoever is the poet responsible for our version of the *Odyssey*. To prove that the conclusions arrived at in the case of two Homeric

¹⁷ J. Griffin, *Homer. Iliad Book Nine*, Oxford 1995, 34.

¹⁸ *MHV*, 196.

¹⁹ See Kirk, *op.cit.*, 119; D.B. Monro, *A Grammar of the Homeric Dialect*², Oxford 1891, 356; cf. Parry *MHV* 192 and note 1.

²⁰ See Finkelberg, *CP* 84, 1989, 196.

passages must be valid for all other such usages as well, it is not necessary to seek for more regular alternatives to all other anomalous Homeric usages. The evidence is provided by the simple fact that Homer's formulaic expressions as a rule contain neither metrical nor semantic irregularities like those described above. This is not to say of course that Homer contributed to epic diction only by creating irregular expressions. But, though we can safely suppose that Homer did create new expressions in accordance with the rules of traditional diction, the very traditional character of such innovations makes their identification within the epic corpus a difficult task. Paradoxically enough, it is in less felicitous passages that the *ipsissima verba* of Homer are easier to discern.

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I was extremely lucky to study part of my time as a postgraduate student at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem under Abraham (Addi) Wasserstein, who first introduced me to Pindar and the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Reading Greek authors with him was a really enjoyable experience. With years, I was privileged to learn that the mixture of wisdom and fun, so charming in Addi Wasserstein the teacher, was no less there in Addi Wasserstein the witty interlocutor, the amiable host, and the friendly adviser on matters both academic and private. ὁ γὰρ οἶος ὄρα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω.

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