Symbolic Action in the Homeric Hymns: The Theme of Recognition

Was ihm heilig ist, will das Volk nicht nur glauben, sagen und singen, sondern auch schaunen.

What had the Homeric Hymns to do with rituals? The question still bedevils us, even after several recent studies have rendered the consensus of modern scholarship on these mysterious and beautiful texts more secure than ever. Points of contact and discontinuity between “literary” and cultic hymns are more finely adumbrated; the formal constituents of the Hymns have been traced and retraced; we have even come to appreciate—better late than never—the folly of attempting

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1. Above all Calame 1995; Clay 1989, 1997; Cassola 1975, whose text I quote (with due consideration of other editors), provides a thorough scholarly apparatus up-to-date for its day; Allen, Halliday, and Sikes 1936 remains valuable. On hymns in general, there are several recent survey articles: Bremer 1981, 1998a; Furley 1981, 1997; Burkert 1994. Important works considering hymn and prayer together are Depew 2000; Paz de Hoz 1998; Pulleyn 1997. In this essay, “the Hymns” stands for “the Homeric Hymns”; “hymn(s)” is used for the generic. The epigraph is taken from Usener 1913: 422.

2. Bremer opp. cit.; Furley 1981, 1995. These articles all assume a clear division between cultic and literary hymns; in his Neuer Pauly article, Furley 1997 sets out the distinction graphically, devoting a separate section to each. Fröhder 1994 goes so far as to suggest that the form—though not the cultic function—of the rhapsodic hymns is borrowed from (choral) cult hymn and, thus disembodied, became the stuff of song competitions; cf. Koller 1956. Earlier work, e.g., Meyer 1933 and Norden 1913, tended to emphasize similarities, as does Calame 1995.

3. Most recently Fröhder 1994: 17–89 (cf. tables, 370–82); Janko 1981; Race 1982; and Pavese 1991 (“motivic” structure). Earlier: Meyer 1933; Ludwich 1908 (consecutive readings with...
to sever “sacred” too cleanly from “secular” poetic experience in archaic Greece. We are passing through a new phase in the study of the Hymns, in which scholars are beginning to direct their attention away from the purely formal studies that have tended to mark most of the last two centuries’ work and instead are growing interested in how the Hymns functioned in their original social context. The new orientation allows for a more decisive statement on the ritual operation that the Hymns carry out, and how it is that they do so: the operation is the achievement of a god’s presence, and the means by which it is achieved is symbolic action. The purpose of this paper will be to defend this claim by examining a central thematic constituent of hymnic poetry, what I shall call the theme of recognition (before revelation).

The value of ethnographic autopsy and contact with informants is manifest: if we had those methods at our disposal, they would help us establish the exact social context of the Hymns’ performance (festival, private audience, etc.), mode of presentation (rhapsodic or acidic; sung, chanted, or declaimed; danced to or performed with accompanying mime or ritual motion), instrumental accompaniment (lyre, kithara, unaccompanied voice), audience, geographical setting, and social ramifications of performances. For evidence on these facets of performance, students of the Hymns have had to lean heavily on certain internal indications, every word of which carries interpretative difficulties. In some shorter Hymns, for example, the hymnist seems to refer to some kind of singing competition (most clearly at VI.19–20); in the Hymn to Hermes, the young god sings just like a boy in a singing match (IV.54-56), which could very well be an instance of that way Greek poets have, especially perhaps Pindar, of glorifying themselves by association. But do these references compel us to generalize a particular agonistic situation across the other Hymns? It is a sign of our ignorance about the public context of the Hymns that the best recent literary study devoted to these poems, that of J.S. Clay, has it that they are “documents containing some of the most sustained and systematic theological speculation of the archaic period,” while arguing simultaneously that they were performed


5. The need for these factors in determining genre is well emphasized by Cassio 1991. Studies such as Janko 1981, excellent in its way, have sometimes caused a misleading equation of form with genre.

at aristocratic banquets as after-dinner entertainment. The evidence we gain of such entertainment from the *Odyssey* is perhaps not so powerful as to preclude theological speculation from such a scene, but it does not make it especially plausible either. And Clay’s own book compiles persuasive evidence that the Hymns do much more than entertain and, in the end, has the effect of arguing against such a function.

Still, something tells us that the Hymns are, in some non-trivial sense, religious texts. But what exactly does this mean? To some extent, of course, we must grapple with terminology and take a stand on what we mean by “hymn,” *prooimion*, etc. Most scholars abide by a minimalist definition of hymn, one that accommodates the Homeric Hymns: a hymn is a song of praise to a god. But if “literary” hymns are distinct from “cultic” ones, where does praise fit into religious observance outside of cult, or more broadly, where does it fit into religious practice at all? Are we in danger here of retrojecting a Judeo-Christian notion of worship (and perhaps a mystical one at that)? Plato, of course, thought praise of the gods was a good thing, but the contexts in which he promotes it are surely no guide to archaic hymnic usage—or do we wish to assume that they are? Another problem: to many, the purely “literary” nature of the hymns of Callimachus stands in contrast to the Homeric Hymns, but just how is left unclear. Thus Burkert can say that “Callimachos … präsentiert … Dichtungen, die sich teilweise an die Homerischen Hymnen anlehnen, doch dem realen Kult entrückt sind und das Göttliche aus poetischem Bewußtsein, nicht selten auch aus ironischer Distanz gestalten.” Implicit here is the assumption that the Homeric Hymns were indeed attached “dem realen Kult,” though the same author says, in almost the same breath, “[j]edenfalls handelt es sich bei diesen Gedichten evidentmässen um Einleitungen, *prooimia*, zu altepischen Rezitationen, situationsgebundene n ‘Vorsprüchen’ .” But if the Homeric Hymns are attached to cult, precisely how are *prooimia* imagined to function in it? When questions such as these are not easily answered, scholars sometimes withdraw into vagueness: “We may view [the hexameter *prooimion*] partly as a devotional piece designed to secure the favour of a god for the poet’s performance, and partly as a first taste of the poet’s

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7. Clay 1989: 267 (quotation). Professor Clay has now modified this position: long hymns represent “an autonomous genre of hexameter epos, developing alongside, and complementary to, heroic epic” (1997: 498). I embrace much of her discussion but will dissent from this particular view.

8. Costantini and Lallot 1987; Aloni 1980 explore the semantic development of the key terms; the term *hymnos* is studied by Wünsch and more recently by those mentioned in n. 1 (above). For the etymology of *hymnos*, see, in addition to the standard etymological lexica, Pavese 1991: 156.

9. Thus, among recent scholars, Depew 1997: 231; Fröhder 1994 (“Preislied” passim); Furley 1995: 32; Calame 1995: 4, 15 (where he proposes replacing *epica pars* with *epica laus*); but the designation is ancient, dating at least to Plato. Bremer 1998b considers the hymn’s function as offering of thanksgiving. See further n. 1, above.


narrative prowess designed to impress the audience.”¹² On the question of religious or cultic function, a formulation like this is neither objectionable nor informative (“devotional piece”)?). Still, in spite of some dissent,¹³ a seemingly invulnerable consensus has built up around the ancient designation of the Hymns, strongly reaffirmed for modern scholars by F. A. Wolf, as just what the term prooimion suggests, namely something that preceded the singing of a heroic οἶμος.¹⁴

Calame has rightly emphasized the continuity in form and function between cult- and rhapsodic hymn.¹⁵ We may, for certain purposes, draw a distinction between them, as Bremer and Furley do; but it does not follow that the Homeric Hymns were either secular, in any useful sense, or remote from ritual practice, as “literary” texts.¹⁶ Cult hymns are identified as such by the context in which they were inscribed or in which a poet has asked us to imagine them performed;¹⁷ whereas the extent of our testimonial evidence for the Homeric Hymns relates to their function as prooimia alone, not to specific functions in cult or rite.¹⁸ Nevertheless, it is my contention here that elements of ritualized discourse in the Hymns point directly to ritual motivation and function and that these elements can still be partially recovered through an attentive reading of the texts. The kind of reading I offer here can compensate somewhat for the lack of external testimonial evidence proving specific cult function. To be sure, my results will not yield anything like a ritual narrative—no script or libretto—of the kind sometimes

¹². Furley 1995: 27. Elsewhere in the essay he expresses further uncertainty: “Their [the Hymns’] content may give us authentic material about a god and his attendant myths, but the context of their performance seems distinct from worship proper” (p. 29).
¹⁴. Prolegomena ad Homerum (Berlin, 1795) 106–107 = 81–82 Peppmüller = Wolf 1985: 112–13. Cf. testt. 22–24 Böhme 1937: 23–24, in which ancient scholars etymologize the term thus: defined by Alonì 1980, who discusses the relevant external evidence; also in favor are the authors of the basic reference articles (see above, n. 1). Paz de Hoz 1998, writing quite recently, joins those who insist that not all of our Homeric Hymns need be assigned the same function of prooimion before a performance of epic poetry. Rather, the short Hymns bear a consistent resemblance to cult prayers, especially as represented in lyric poetry, and must have served as prooimia, whereas the longer hymns are expansions of the essential prayer material, “...que se han desarrollado cuando la ocasión justifica un canto autónomo y del que se pueda disfrutar por sí mismo,” i.e., having been “developed for occasions that called for an independent song that could be enjoyed in its own right” (65). Though I do not see an essential functional difference between the Hymns of various size (see, e.g., Koller 1956), I admire Paz’s insistence on the role of the audience in shaping genres of song (see esp. 50–51, 65).
¹⁶. A point that Bremer 1998a: 513 of course appreciates. However, even while we must welcome the new Bremer-Furley collection of cult texts, it would be a pity if it had the effect of perpetuating the unfortunate dichotomy between “truly religious,” “authentic” religious texts on the one hand (the cult hymns) and “literary,” “artificial” texts on the other (e.g., the Homeric Hymns).
produced by the Cambridge Ritualists; as Calame has recently reaffirmed, mapping narrative directly onto rite must be abandoned as bad method.\textsuperscript{19}

I hope to show that the Hymns do perform a ritual function basic to all public ceremonies in early Greece: the ritual achievement of divine presence. The god is brought by the hymnist into attendance not \textit{via} explicit \textit{klēsis} (as happens in prayer and cultic hymn), nor by the use of apostrophe or Du-stil; rather, he is summoned by symbolic means. Instead of calling out “hither!” “come!” or “join us!” or addressing the god directly as “you who . . . ,” the hymnist was charged with achieving the god’s presence through narrative. It was a mark of his authority that he could tell us about the gods, follow them through their deeds and misdemeanors, and convey to his audience their very words;\textsuperscript{20} it was a mark of his skill as a singer that he could achieve \textit{klēsis} with a story. This is the kind of narrative power that investigators of magical texts have seen in the \textit{historiolae}, or “effective stories,” found in incantations.\textsuperscript{21} Practitioners of magic in the Mediterranean basin—very prominently in Egypt, but also in Greece and among early Christians and others—at times inserted small-scale narratives into therapeutic messages with the apparent intention of establishing an analogical relation between narrated situations and acts, on the one hand, and the real outcome desired, on the other. The social group(s) that formed community with such practitioners clearly represented them as affecting (or even effecting) reality through narrative for the duration of the performance.\textsuperscript{22}

Students of magic have often found it useful to draw on the work of S. J. Tambiah, who produced several perceptive studies of speech and action in magical and other ritual practice.\textsuperscript{23} The achievements of his work lie in two main areas.

19. Calame 1996, esp. 162–73, 447–49; both arise from a society’s symbolic systems, though interaction is obviously possible. The priority of ritual was famously insisted on by Robertson Smith in his \textit{Lectures on the Religions of the Semites} (1st ser., 1889); Douglas 1996 endorses Robertson Smith from a modern anthropological position.

20. Graf 1991: 192; 1997: 218, 220 similarly argues that in magical texts the cataloguing of cult-titles and the rehearsal of attributes conferred credit and authority on the sorcerer, just as the “\textit{pars epica}” did on the hymnist.

21. The \textit{historiolae} in magical texts have been defined as “short stories recounting mythical themes that sympathetically persuade the sufferer’s illness to cease” (Kotansky 1991: 112); the classic discussion is Heim 1892: 495–507. For a fine recent synthesis, see Frankfurter 1995; cf. Usener 1913: 423; Graf 1997: 224–29. Fröhder 1994: 17–35 and Furley 1995: esp. 39, 40, 42 have found similar conventions in “cult” hymn, but neglect of this function in the Homeric Hymns has been prolonged by the artificial division between hymnic types, to which I referred above.

22. I can only note in passing the parallel presented by the historical part of prayers, sometimes introduced by \textit{εἰ nοτε} (“if ever I roofed your temple,” etc.), which establishes a persuasive analogy between a narrative and a hoped-for outcome.

23. Tambiah 1985c-e. (An earlier essay, 1985b, is sometimes cited in this connection; but there Tambiah made no use of speech-act theory \textit{per se} [cf. 1985c: 78]). These principles were well applied to classical and Egyptian material by Frankfurter 1995; to Greek material by Furley 1995; cf. Graf 1997. But see now especially a monograph devoted entirely to this aspect of the language of curses and oaths in Homer and Greek lyric, Giordano 1999. For a thorough study of “performative utterance” in ritual discourse, including an analysis of the Catholic Mass, see Werlen 1984.
First, in a critique of Malinowski’s influential theory of magical language-use, Tambiah successfully shifted the discussion from an inherent, quasi-mystical potency of words to their expressive contribution to the manual aspects of ritual.\textsuperscript{24} By symbolic means, especially metaphor and analogy, language mediates, animates, and gives focus to the handling of \textit{materia magica}. Tambiah secondly put speech-act theory to work to describe the performative (or illocutionary) value of magical utterances: “The vast majority of ritual and magical acts combine word and deed. Hence, it is appropriate to say that they use words in a performative or illocutionary manner, just as the action (the manipulation of objects and persons) is correspondingly performative.”\textsuperscript{25} In brief, speech-act theory takes a functional approach to language-use, especially utterances whose referential content is minimal (or nil) but whose consequences in context are nonetheless very real. Such utterances are typically present-tense announcements of actions, made before an audience, that are firmly bound to specific conditions of performance, such as spatial and temporal setting, the speaker’s authority, the listener’s acceptance of that authority (sometimes under compulsion, as often in courtrooms), etc.\textsuperscript{26} Given the right conditions, a well-formulated utterance of the performative kind is empowered by social consent to bring about the very state of affairs of which it treats. In his study of \textit{historiolae}, David Frankfurter adds a key qualification. In the case of these narratives, analogy by itself is insufficient.\textsuperscript{27} “The \textit{historiola} is effective . . . by becoming dynamically real within the ritual context.”\textsuperscript{28} Thus the “magical power of words” (in Tambiah’s phrase) can be liberated from the manipulation of magical objects and words alone can be seen as action. Seeing narrative in this light—and I emphasize that we are dealing with narrative performed in ceremonial settings—will help us qualify the sharp

\textsuperscript{24} Esp. Tambiah 1985b.
\textsuperscript{25} 1985c: 80.
\textsuperscript{26} The classic discussion is J. L. Austin, \textit{How to do things with words} (Oxford, 1962), though a considerable literature has developed around his work. Recently, linguistic anthropologists have warned of the hazard of extending Austin’s theory to non-English language-use (e.g. Rosaldo 1982), and indeed Tambiah himself had to move far beyond Austin’s original purview. Descriptions of Greek views about language, such as the one we are describing here, will affect what kind of speech-acts we attribute to the Greeks, and clearly they do not in all cases overlap well with the English speech acts described by Austin and his successors.
\textsuperscript{27} But notice that there can be functional overlap between \textit{historiolae} and the common magical figure known as \textit{similia similibus}, in which the sorcerer manipulates objects (fire, dolls, small animals), seeking to effect a desired outcome for the patient by enunciating the analogies between the outcome and the objects’ disposition. On this figure, see Graf 1997: 118–74 (= ch. 5), esp. 124–25; also 205–33 (= ch. 7), relevant in its entirety to this discussion; Müller 1965 relates the \textit{similia similibus} figure to philosophical developments; Lloyd 1966, esp. 117–209 gives general background from early Greece and other societies.
\textsuperscript{28} Frankfurter 1995: 470. There is a parallel here in the work of Bakker 1993, 1997, who has recently adopted the notion of “activation” from discourse theory to the poetics of Homeric oral art, which shows, he finds, a “strong intensification of the cognitive features . . . and social dynamics of the ordinary spoken word” (1993: 10).
modern dichotomy of magic vs. religion\textsuperscript{29} and see, at the same time, the potent ritual virtue of what has heretofore been complacently categorized as a literary form, the rhapsodic Hymns.

The craft of using narrative in this way can be called “symbolic action,” a term coined by the American literary critic Kenneth Burke to describe the principal rhetorical function of spoken and written texts.\textsuperscript{30} Burke developed a method for analyzing textual artifacts for their “dramatistic” aspects, or social factors that conditioned their meaning, which amounted to an elaborate outgrowth of classical rhetoric.\textsuperscript{31} Anticipating central concerns of later sociolinguistics, he spoke of the “realistic function of rhetoric,” by which he meant its concrete effect as action in a bounded time and place: “For rhetoric as such is not rooted in any past condition of human society. It is rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols.”\textsuperscript{32} This is the rhetorical role of words in magical settings, where “the ‘pragmatic sanction’ for this function of magic lies outside the realm of strictly true-or-false propositions; it falls in an area of deliberation that itself draws upon the resources of rhetoric . . . .” The extraordinary character of “word magic” can be explained as “an attempt to produce linguistic responses in kinds of beings not accessible to linguistic motive.”\textsuperscript{33} What will interest us in the use of the term symbolic action will be the “wholly realistic” rhetoric underpinning its public use.

Burke’s theoretical works have played an important role in symbolic anthropology. In essays collected in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, for example, Clifford Geertz put Burke’s thought to work in formulating methods for this new discipline.\textsuperscript{34} He extended Burke’s metaphor, symbolic action as the “dancing of an attitude” by an author in a literary work, to indicate the bodying forth through symbolic behavior of social attitudes, tensions, hierarchies, etc.\textsuperscript{35} Godfrey Lienhardt found in his study of Dinka religion that certain rites were carried out while the effects they were meant to produce had naturally begun to appear (the onset

\textsuperscript{29} This in fact is the cumulative effect of Tambiah’s essays cited above. See esp. 1985e; also Graf 1997.

\textsuperscript{30} Burke 1973: 8–33; cf. the analysis of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* at 164–89 and the essays in 1966.

\textsuperscript{31} Burke established a “dramatistic pentad” for this purpose: act, scene, agent, agency, purpose. See 1969: xv–xxiii. He furnishes a brief intellectual history of this approach (tracing it ultimately to Aristotle) in Burke 1968. At the center of his thought lay the act: “‘Act’ is . . . a terministic center from which many related considerations can be shown to ‘radiate,’ as though it were a ‘god-term’ from which a whole universe of terms is derived” (1968: 445). The “terms” to which he refers here made up the critical vocabulary that he developed over a long career, whose utility remains great in the modern study of rhetoric.

\textsuperscript{32} 1950: 43.

\textsuperscript{33} 1950: 44, 43.

\textsuperscript{34} Geertz 1973 passim.

\textsuperscript{35} 1973: 451n.40; based on Burke 1973: 9–12. For a collection of essays in symbolic anthropology explicitly founded on Burke, see Sapi and Crocker 1977. Burke influenced other exponents of symbolic anthropology too, such as James Boon and Victor Turner.
of the rainy season, for example). “In these [rites the Dinkas’] human symbolic action moves with the rhythm of the natural world around them, re-creating that rhythm in moral terms and not merely attempting to coerce it to conformity with human desires.”

Again, “[t]he symbolic actions . . . re-create, and even dramatize, situations which they aim to control, and the experience of which they effectively modulate. If they do not change actual historical or physical events—as the Dinka in some cases believe them to do—they do change and regulate the Dinkas’ experience of those events.”

The tendency here, as in the work of Tambiah, is to shift emphasis from a supposed inherent, coercive power in words onto their rhetorical, persuasive function within the group. When we add Frankfurter’s amendment, that the magical *historiola* renders actual the entities and actions of which it tells, we can approach narrative in the Homeric Hymns anew, as one of many symbolic means by which a specialist (for us, a hymnist) effects ritual action. This will provide the vital link between theories of magic and the apprehension of the Hymns’ religious function.

I. RECOGNITION OF THE GOD

All hymn, then, in early Greece, was kletic. To use this term may appear reckless at first, because for Menander the Rhetorician, to whom we owe it, “kletic” was one of many kinds of hymns. But Menander, say what you will about the value of his treatise, was interested only in what now seems a rather pedestrian taxonomy that was meant to serve pupils of rhetoric rather than historians of religious song.

I propose to borrow the word but attach its original meaning (“summoning”) to the function by which all hymns achieve divine presence on some ritual occasion. Now, this has often been claimed for prayer and cult hymn. I hope in this study to recover a similar function in the Homeric Hymns, which have, as I have suggested, been dangerously segregated by students of the form as “literary,” “rhapsodic,” “epic,” etc.—in other words, not cultic, and therefore (it is implied) somehow inauthentic. By saying that all archaic Greek hymns were kletic, I am objecting to these distinctions and attempting to reunite the various forms of hymn and prayer under a rubric typified by common traits that are essential to their religious function.

38. Tambiah 1985c: 73–74 also invoked the idea of symbolic action. When the sorcerer explicitly invokes a metaphor or analogy, of the kind “just as this vine sheds leaves as it grows, so let the peeling of your skin give life, not sickness,” the utterance “represents symbolic, not causal, action.” (The magical formula here is my own distillation from Tambiah’s discussion.) Bjerke 1979, esp. 174–75, elaborates a similar notion, “symbolic magic.”
41. Where their religious authenticity is defended, as we have seen, scholars have little to say on how they worked in ritual settings.
The models of klēsis (“calling forth into the presence of [a] worshipper[s]”), are prayer and cult hymn, which dispose of explicit forms of direct address, Du-Stil, apostrophe, second-person imperatives (or virtual imperatives such as ἔσεσο). The successful effect of klēsis can be shown by the actual appearance of the god before the invoker in poetic scenes mimetic of prayer. Thus, for example, Poseidon comes out of the sea to Pelops in Pindar’s Ol. 1 (71–74):

... ἑγγὺς ἐλθὼν πολλῶς ἀλῶς οἶος ἐν ὀρφναὶ ἄπευν βαρύκτυπον
Εὐτρίκιαναν ὁ δ’ αὐτῶι πᾶρ ποδὶ σχεδὸν φάνη.

Note that Pelops’ prayer itself, which follows this passage, begins with the request proper: the verb ἄπευν in the passage cited (72) represents the kletic formula, itself unquoted. A similar calling-forth from the sea is Achilleus’ summoning of Thetis, Iliad 1.351–56. Here, too, the actual klēsis goes unquoted. The poet simply says, πολλὰ δὲ μητρὶ φίλη ἀράματο χείρας ὀρεγνύς (351; ὀρεγ.: ἀναπτᾶς Zen.: ἀνασχόων cet.) before putting only five lines into Achilleus’ mouth: πολλὰ, therefore—though it can mean “loudly” or “with heavy intent”—must mean here that Achilleus had said much before the five-line prayer, and this unquoted portion will have been imagined to include the summons to which Thetis then responds, “rising out of the foamy surf like a burst of seaspray” (χαρπαλίμως δ’ ἀνέδυ πολλῆς ἀλῶς ἦτ’ ὀμήλη, 359); swift and absolute success indeed, for this gifted rhetorician. It is a sign of promised success in prayer that this initial request, the presence sought, is granted.

At times, the gods of myth roam the earth unbidden. They go among mortals for love and revenge, to help and hinder, and to put the unsuspecting to the test. And they are not always recognized, coming sometimes in disguise as birds or beasts, as children or aged women. Sometimes a god is recognized even before he or she is unveiled, and due reverence, or some expression of awe, is shown by the wisest of mortal observers or neglected by the morally oblivious. Then the perspicacious, those mortals who acknowledge godhead in the visitor, despite his disguise, or because of the way luminous divinity shines through it, thereafter enjoy a privileged relationship with the deity or some supernatural recompense (riches, success, a reward in the afterlife); whereas the oblivious or hostile must suffer some kind of punishment or curse.

42. These have been thoroughly studied. See Norden 1913 (esp. 143–76); Pulleyn 1997 takes fresher research into account; see Depew 1997 and 2000 for engagement with current theoretical approaches to prayer.

43. For a phenomenology of theophany, see in general Versnel 1987. For Homeric theophany see in particular Clay 1974; Dietrich 1983; Smith 1988. D. Bremer 1975 is a stimulating study of theophany in three of the longer Hymns and of the idea of divinity in Plato; the author is particularly interested in the imagery of light and darkness, the hidden and revealed, and the human confronted with the divine.
This complex of motifs—deity in disguise, recognition by a mortal (or failure therein), and reward (or punishment)—constitutes a coherent narrative pattern that forms the basis of many scenes in the Homeric Hymns and epic.\textsuperscript{44} The test implied in the disguise, as well as other narrative elements, would be recognized by folklorists as a common motif in traditional verbal art.\textsuperscript{45} But we may avail ourselves of analytical tools that bring us even closer to the corpus of Hymns associated since antiquity with the name of Homer. Already, the literature on typescenes, motifs, themes, story patterns, and the related concepts of “composition by theme” and “narrative inconsistency” is extensive.\textsuperscript{46} The gains of this scholarship will not only help us analyze the theme of recognition (before revelation) but will allow us to treat certain of its formal features and narrative functions summarily or allusively. On the other hand, scholars have devoted little attention to how social meaning and action are achieved \textit{via} narrative patterning, my own present concern.

One special manifestation of the theme of recognition has received careful attention, the so-called “theoxeny,” or the request by a god (sometimes more than one) for hospitality.\textsuperscript{47} But it is best to reserve that designation for stories about the visits of gods to the hearths of mortals, also widely attested. In it, the banquet

\textsuperscript{44} Sowa 1984: 236–72 provides a valuable collection of evidence, to which I am indebted, though it will become clear that our paths diverge in some matters of interpretation. She believes the epiphanies are aetiological stories and attaches great significance to the linkage between epiphany and the institution of cultic rites. As I will argue later, I do not regard the hymns as cult histories, theological treatises, or the like; rather, for me their chief function is kletic.

\textsuperscript{45} S. Thompson, \textit{Motif index of folk literature} (Bloomington, Ind., 1955–1958), H 45, esp. 45.1 (under “Recognition through personal peculiarities”); Flückiger-Guggenheim 1984 draws attention to tale-type parallels: Aarne-Thompson, \textit{The types of the folk-tale} (Helsinki, 1961) 750–52 (“God repays and punishes”).

\textsuperscript{46} We owe the fundamental bibliographical coverage to Mark Edwards 1992. His remarks on terminology (285), on which there is unfortunately too little agreement, are very important. Nagler 1974, for example, used the term “motif” where most would now prefer “type-scene” (after Arend 1933); A. B. Lord applied the term “theme” to a range of narrative patterns larger than the line, from type-scenes (1960: 68 etc.) to folktales and myths (284n.1), though most of his analyses too (68–98) are applied to a level most would call the type-scene. The term “theme” is useful, since it calls attention to narrative patterning at various levels; I use it to indicate a bundle of narrative elements or motifs traditionally established in a typical sequence that acts as a vessel for encoding culturally dense meaning. A rough hierarchy of traditional verbal patterning would begin with the word and proceed up from the formula, motif, and type scene, to the story pattern, a term normally used for the largest order of magnitude in traditional narrative organization; see J. M. Foley 1999: 15 c. nn. Basic works on composition by theme include Arend 1933 with Parry 1936 = 1971: 404–407; A. B. Lord 1938, 1960: 68–98; Hansen 1972; Gunn 1970, 1971; Nagler 1974: 64–166; Edwards 1987, 1991: 11–23. Powell 1977 attempts a thematic analysis of Odyssean narrative at a rather high level of abstraction; even more abstract levels are explored by Dundes 1963 (Native American narrative) and Bremond 1973 (general).

\textsuperscript{47} The best treatment of this theme is Flückiger-Guggenheim 1984; the older discussion, Deneken 1881, is still valuable for its gathering of \textit{loci}. See also Burnett 1970; Hollis 1990: 341–54; Kearns 1982; Reece 1993: 47ff.; on the episode of Baucis and Philomenon in Ovid (\textit{Met.} VIII.611–724) and parallels, see Hollis 1970: 106–12, 151–53; Börner 1977: 190–96. These all mention the pattern within discussions of theoxeny, but in my opinion, the theoxeny-pattern belongs \textit{alongside} the one
itself is important, and it is bound up with the motif of mortals supping with gods, a privilege of the most blessed, such as royal ancestors, heroes, and those who inhabit the ends of the earth. It will become clear that the motif of theoxeny could act symbolically, too, especially, one imagines, when it was invoked in performance at festivals devoted to divine-human feasts.

The narrative pattern that I study in this paper belongs with theoxeny in the same family of motif-bundles, but is not coextensive with it. It is possible that there is something like a genus/species relationship, though at present I see no reason to insist on one. It will therefore suffice to observe that our pattern displays more general characteristics than theoxeny. It has the following elements, to which I shall refer according to the segmentation given:

A. Visitation and presence of a god (usually in disguise)
   A.1 The god appears in disguise...
      A.1.a... as a mortal
      A.1.b... as an animal
      A.1.c... in some other form
   A.2 Verbal interaction between god and mortal(s)

B. Recognition of or failure to recognize (before revelation) a god
   B.1 Failure to recognize
      B.1.a Simple obliviousness
      B.1.b Mistreatment of god
   B.2 Recognition
      B.2.a Mortal notes beauty, radiance, or miracle of god
      B.2.b \( \chi\alpha\iota\rho\epsilon \)
      B.2.c Mortal wonders or guesses which god
   B.3 The god acknowledges recognition
      B.3.a \( \theta\acute{\alpha}\rho\varphi\varepsilon\iota \) \textit{vel sim.}
      B.3.b God identifies self (\( \varepsilon\iota\mu\lambda\delta^{\prime}\ \dot{\varepsilon}\gamma\dot{\omega} \ldots \))

C. Retribution
   C.1 The god terrifies or punishes the oblivious
      C.1.a Terrific signs
      C.1.b Punishment
   C.2 The perspicacious are rewarded
      C.2.a Reward in life
      C.2.b Reward in afterlife

discussed here under a larger rubric. This is so because many examples of the theme of recognition are highly developed outside of theoxenic contexts.

49. Cf. Hollis 1990: 343: Hymn II “bears only a slight resemblance” to “the hospitality theme,” or theoxeny.
50. Sowa 1984: 251 provides a table for her different emphases; Flückiger-Guggenheim’s table 1984: 11–12 is a more general synopsis of divine visitation in folklore.
II. SYMBOLIC ACTION IN THE HOMERIC HYMNS

HYMN VII, TO DIONYSOS

The Homeric Hymns achieve divine presence in part by raising it to a thematic level within the narrative itself; they narrate visitation in order to secure it for ritual purposes. This is a major internal index of the ritual nature of the hymns’ occasion, and, as a feature of the poetics governing their composition, of the situational pragmatics that are the prime justification of their formal and thematic traits. I will discuss the importance of this observation further ahead.

The simplest illustration of this form of symbolic action may be drawn from Hymn VII, to Dionysos. In this hymn, the singer leaps, with minimal introduction, into an abrupt confrontation between Dionysos, who appears (ἐφάνη) in the guise of an adolescent, and a band of pirates (τάγχα δ’ ἄνδρες ἐξουσιάζουσιν ἀπὸ νησίς ληστατι προγένοντο; A.1.a).\(^1\) The pirates have mischief on their minds (B.1.b). The adolescent is hastily taken aboard and an attempt is made to bind ... boy Dionysos simply sits down, grinning eerily (14–15). At this point, there is a recognition of his divinity (15–21):

χυβερνήτης δὲ νοήσας
αὐτίκα ὁς ἐτάροισιν ἐκέχλετο φῶνταν τε:
δαιμόνιοι, τίνα τόνδε θεοῦ δεημεύεσθι ἐκόντες
χαρτερόν; οὐδὲ φέρειν δύναται μιν νησίς εὐεργής.
η γὰρ Ζεὺς ὦ δε γ’ ἔστιν, ἢ ἀργυρότοξος Λαύλλων,
η Ἡσειδάων ἔτει οὐ πνεύμα βροτοῖσιν
εἰκελος, ἀλλὰ θεοῖς οὐ Ὀλύμπια δόματ᾽ ἔχουσιν.

The helmsman sees through the god’s disguise only after he has performed a minor miracle (B.2.a); the others remain blind to his divinity all the same. So deceived is the captain, in fact, that he can suggest, to the helmsman’s pleas that the god be released (22–24), that this boy was a gift to the pirates from the gods (31). The

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\(^{1}\) Propp 1968: 21–22.

\(^{2}\) I begin here to note thematic elements by the segmentation given above.
captain’s greed for ransom money blinds him to Dionysos’ divinity, which the god then proceeds to demonstrate (C.1.a).

Amid the menacing roars of the bear and lion (A.1.b), all but two of the crew leap overboard and are transformed into dolphins (C.1.b). The god (in lion’s guise) throttles the captain but halts the helmsman’s jump (53–57):

\[
\text{kubernētēn δ' ἐλεήσας ἔσχεθε καὶ μιν ἔθηκε πανόλβιον εἰπὲ τε μύθον θάρσει, διὲ πάτερ, τού ἐμὸι κεχαρισμένε ἥμων ἐμὶ δ' ἔγω Διόνυσος ἐρίβρομος ὅν τέχε τήτηρ Καμηῆς Σεμέλη, Δίος ἐν φιλότητι μιγείσο.}
\]

Not only is the steersman spared, he is rewarded for his perspicacity (C.2.a [C.2.b?]). Taking pity on him (ἐλεήσας, 53), the god grants him the highest blessing (ἔσχεθε καὶ μιν ἔθηκε πανόλβιον, 54); in his speech, he addresses the mortal affectionately (if Zimmerman’s διὲ πάτερ, 55, or something similar, is right) and calls him “most dear to my heart” (τού ἐμὸι κεχαρισμένε ἥμων). All of this is ratified by the god’s self-revelation (56–57; B.3.b). The steersman earns Dionysos’ favor by his clarity of vision, his ability to see beyond the radiant beauty of the boy to the god within. But we should avoid the hazard of saying that the sailor is spared because of his moral goodness, because his heart was soft, he pitied the boy. . . . In fact, we know nothing about his moral nature, nor need we. We know only that he had an insight: it was dangerous, deadly, to abuse this boy. He has earned his life and happiness by recognizing divine beauty when it was present among men.

Hymn VII gives us in brief compass the basic thematic pattern of recognition before revelation and is remarkably complete. 53 Each of the major hymns displays it in more or less developed form. Let us look at some of these other occurrences.

HYMN III, TO APOLLO

The similarities between Apollo’s encounter with the Cretan traders and that of Dionysos with the pirates has been remarked many times before. But it is instructive to observe the different treatment of the theme of recognition, which is all I propose to do here. In Hymn VII, most of the pirates fail to recognize the god and are punished; one alone does and is saved. Apollo’s visitation of the maritime traders in the third Hymn, on the other hand, is motivated by his explicit purpose of seeking out stewards for his Delphic shrine (388ff.), so we may expect them (as chosen by the god himself) to recognize him at once; but at first they do not, as I will show. The test to which he puts the seagoing merchants differs from the apparition of Dionysos in that Apollo appears to them at first only as a monster (an enormous dolphin [400–401], A.1.b). The chance that was given to the pirates, of gazing on a beautiful boy and seeing a god, was withheld from

53. A summary table of motifs represented in the major Hymns is given below.
the traders until after the monstrous apparition. In this important respect, then, the two manifestations of the theme differ, but the Hymn to Apollo recovers this motif (A.1.b / B.2.a) later, as it were out of place (see below). Why the displacement? The obvious distinction between the pirates of Hymn III and the merchant seamen of Hymn VII is the difference between brigandage and lawful trade, but more importantly, one alone of the pirates is “chosen” by Dionysos, whereas Apollo is seeking out a group. Having selected them as his stewards the god now waylays them; a subtler test of their perspicacity, the god’s appearance as a beautiful ephebe, will wait and be introduced later. Consider the first appearance.

For their part, the mariners cower at once in fear: can this first reaction—very far from the arrogance of the pirates—count as recognition? The answer may lie concealed in a passage long considered textually corrupt. I reproduce Càssola’s text and some of his apparatus (402–403):

\[
\text{τὸν δὲ τις κατὰ θυμὸν ἐπιφράσασαι βοήσαι πάντως ἀνασσεῖσε, τίνασσε δὲ νῆμα δοῦρα.}
\]

402. τὸν codd.: τὸν Weiher | ὡστὶς Ψ: εἰ τις Ilgen οὕτις M \(\Gamma^2\) | ἐπιφράσασαι \(p\) (Stephanus): ἐπιφράσασαι \(x\) ἐπι-
φράσασαι At D ChalcondyIes ἐπιφράσασαι M | βοήσαι
Bolkestein \(\text{Mnemosyne} 1968, \text{p. 283}: \text{νοήσαι codd. ροήσαι}
van Leeuwen \(\text{Mnemosyne} 1911, \text{p. 184}. 403. \text{πάντως} \text{Franke:}
\text{πάντωθι} \text{M} \Theta [...] \)

Scholars have evidently been at work on these two lines since ancient times. It is often thought that the wording offered by M, the important Mosquensis MS now in Leiden (early 15th century), looks like a local attempt to repair the sense of the passage. Allen supposed that the disintegration of letters in the archetype, \(Ψ\), was to blame, and he set about restoring the text. But I would suggest that the strangeness of the thought in these lines is due to “noise” in the oral tradition.

The main difficulties that modern editors have quarreled over have been the meaning of ἐπιφράσασαι and the truth behind νοῆσαι. Bolkestein, whose conjecture Càssola prints, rejects the latter, reasoning that the dolphin would not punish the crew merely for having the idea of looking at him. He proposes instead that the crew must have got it in their heads to shout—and this the god must punish with his tremors (though not, for example, by striking them dumb). In so doing, he agrees with editors since Allen in suspecting νοῆσαι and seeking to replace it. But Càssola detects some weakness in Bolkestein’s case and, in approving his conjecture, would understand βοήσαι not merely as “shout” (“il gridare, in sé stesso, non giustifica l’ira del dio”) but “shout a [nautical] command”: the god, according to Càssola, makes the ship quake (every time—note the optative

of repeated action and the v.l. \( \pi\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\theta \) because he wants control of the ship’s steerage.\(^{55}\) All this appears implausible.

Given the cardinal importance of the theme of recognition in this context, we should try to keep \( \nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu\n
What makes Odysseus such a peerless companion is that “better than others, he has the insight to νοησις.” As will become increasingly clear, this last is a general verb of perception, but especially of seeing sharply (ὁξυ νόησε 8 x II.), that is, perspicacity. Odysseus’ ability to recognize Athene in the Odyssey is a major narrative topic. And the invulnerability that this implies is part of what makes his participation crucial to the success of the dangerous mission. Diomedes cannot have made a better choice.

Let us return to our passage in Hymn III. It is probably impossible to repair the textual disruption to everyone’s satisfaction. I would simply conclude for now with the suggestion that we retain as much of the manuscripts’ wording as possible, certainly including the thematically important νοησις, and seek less drastic solutions than the one offered by Bolkestein or his predecessors. Yet we know from a later passage that the mariners, at 402–403, do not yet know that this is a god, for when the ship comes to Tainaros (414–17):

οί μέν ἂρ’ ἄνθις ἔθελον νήμα σχεῖν, ἢδ’ ἀποβάντες
φράσσασθαι μέγα θαῖμα, καὶ ὄφθαλμοισιν ἰδέαθαι
eἰ μενέει νηρὸς γλαυμόρης δαπέδουσι τέλωρον,
ἡ ἑὶς οἴδιμ’ ἄλιον πολύεθυμον ἀμφίς ὀροῦσει.

What is implied here is a distinction between seeing with the eyes and perceiving godhead with the faculty of νοησις, not at all the same thing. The sailors want to stop their ship and watch to see whether the monster will leap o

It is because of this scene that I believe that the Mosquensis (and the marginal hand in G, Bruxellensis 74) correctly preserved an original negative at line 402. At the time of the dolphin’s first appearance, the seamen did not recognize the god; and it was because of this, presumably, that the god showed his anger by his tremendous thrashing (C.1.a). The poet has the captain realize only in retrospect (in his speech, 473) that “a god” brought the Cretans unwillingly to Crisa.

It is not until the god passes through two further avatars that he is explicitly recognized. In the first case (A.1.c) it is the women and girls of Krisa who acknowledge the god (B.2.a) with the ὀλολυγμός (440–47):

ἔνθε’ ἐκ νηρὸς ὀροῦσεν ἀναξ ἐκάρεγγος Ἀπόλλων
ἀστερὶ εἰδώμενος μέσιω ᾦματι’ τοῦ δ’ ἀπο πολλαί
συμναθρῖδες ποτῖντο, σέλας δ’ εἰς ὄφναν ἤκεν’
ες δ’ ἄδυτον κατέδυνε διὰ τριπόδων ἑρώτιμων.
ἔνθε’ ἂρ’ ὦ γε φλόγ’ ἐδασε παραυσικόμοιον τά ἄ κηλα,

57. Matthiae, Hermann, Abel, Baumeister, and Evelyn-White tried to work with M’s negative (Bolkestein 1968: 283–84). The latter four accepted a lacuna of at least one line between 402–403. I am less interested in endorsing one of the these solutions specifically than in attributing the disruption to the narrative tension produced by the manipulation of thematic material. But the syntax is not smooth here. If the negative and the sequence of verses are right, one would like 403 to begin, e.g., πάντα δ’ . . . (rather than πάντοσ’/πάντοθ’ with the manuscripts), though the omission of the new subject (the monster) would admittedly be difficult.
As Jean Rudhardt has argued, this cry very likely represents, in a cultic setting, an acknowledgment of the god’s presence. But it is no simple welcome: “... il exprime l’émotion que cette présence inspire à l’homme et doit, par sa violence, le rassurer quelque peu.” As such, it is to be echoed at the end of this—and nearly every—hymn by the singer’s own emotionally charged cry of welcome, the telltale generic sign, χαῖρε. But to that we shall return.

The passage quoted above is full of foundational significance, but as elsewhere in the hymns, the effect is not explicitly, but only allusively, aetiological. After much debate on whether the Hymns are charter myths for local festivals (e.g., the Ionia on Delos), or cults and shrines (of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis or Apollo at Onchestos, Delos, and Delphi), we have little progress to show. What seems increasingly clear, on the contrary, is the panhellenic generality of these references. The significance of the foundational, aetiological, and originary elements in the Hymns is not that these are cult histories; rather, the display of arcane knowledge enables the hymnist to claim authority before his audience and the god he invokes. Passages like the one above not only establish the standing of the singer in dispensing knowledge of the acts of the gods and the origins of their cults, but also constitute an announcement that he is able to produce in his actual context some facet of the mythic reality of which he sings. The Homeric Hymns are not works of theology or cult history: they present the god to a group of celebrants.

Apollo makes one last appearance to mortals in Hymn III, this time in the guise of a youth “in early manhood” with locks flowing free (449–50; A.1.a). He addresses the mariners with the formulaic interrogation often directed towards strangers coming in off the high seas, and the mariners feel reassured (indexed, as often, with the concept θάρσος, 462; B.3.a). The Cretan captain, as spokesman for his entire crew, answers with a clear demonstration of his perspicacity (464–66):

Having acknowledged the youth’s divinity, the captain welcomes his presence with χαῖρε (B.2.b) and makes a quaint wish, the highest a mortal can offer.

The Cretans were selected by Apollo before they showed this perspicacity, but now that they have done so, he may announce to them their reward (C.2.a). This is to administer the temple of Apollo at Delphi (478–79), to know the intentions

60. See further below, under The Theme of Recognition in the Hymns.
of the gods, and be honored by their sanction (483–85). Their correct recognition of divine presence (albeit belated) recommends their competence to take on the tendance of the temple and to mediate the communication to mortals of divine will.

HYMN V, TO APHRODITE

When the goddess Aphrodite appears before the mortal Anchises, with whom she is enamored, the first words out of his mouth betoken recognition of her divinity (92–99):

χαίρε, ἄνασσ', ἥ τις μακάρων τάδε δόμαθ' ἱκάνεις,
Ἄρτεμις ἦ Λητώ ἦ χρυσὴ Ἀφροδίτη,
ἡ Θέμις ἦ γύγνης ἦ γλαυκότις Αθηνή,
ἡ πού τις Χαρίτων δεύρ' ἠλυθες α区管委会
πάσιν ἐταιρίζουσι καὶ ἀθάνατοι καλέονται,
ἡ τις νυμφῶν αἱ ἀλλα ἄλσα καλά νέμονται,
ἡ νυμφῶν αἱ καλὸν ὤρος τάδε ναιετάουσι
καὶ τηγάς ποταμῶν καὶ πίσεα ποιήνετα.

With a greeting (B.2.b) and ceremonious guesses (B.2.c), Anchises intimates his perspicacity. In the passage that follows on this one, the poet has Anchises anticipate—rather strikingly—the goddess’s self-revelation. As if she has already confirmed his intuition, he presses on with prayers, going far beyond the love-struck gasp “you are so beautiful—surely you are a goddess?” to offer her year-round cult observances and ask that the goddess be propitious enough to grant him a flourishing progeny and, for himself, stature in Troy and a long life of prosperity (ὀλβίων, 106; C.2.a-b.; cf. 195, Hymn III.54). These mimetic petitions (102–106) anticipate that real one implied in the hymnist’s own expert rhetorical performance—that the goddess reward him with her advent; Anchises’ χαίρε will accordingly be echoed by the singer’s own pronunciation of the greeting at the successful close of his hymn (292).

What follows is one of the most charming passages in archaic Greek literature, Aphrodite’s lie.61 The goddess must not only invent a mortal autobiography for herself, but (what is most important) explain to Anchises how she appeared before him from nowhere. She concedes to her dazzled lover that the agency behind her appearance is only divine insofar as Hermes, having abducted her from a girls’ chorus dedicated to Artemis, brought her, nubile, before Anchises. So far from admitting her divinity, Aphrodite introduces the jargon of mortal bridehood, wishing even to be taken to meet her new in-laws. Anchises responds: “If you are in fact mortal, if the mother who bore you was a woman, and if your father was indeed well-known Otreus, as you claim, and you come here courtesy

61. Sowa 1984: 241ff., perhaps rightly, counts the god’s deception as an important structural element in her discussion of the theme (or “thematic cluster”) “Epiphany and institution of rites.”
of the divine guide Hermes, then you shall be pronounced my wife—till death do us part!” (145–48).

The charm of this passage is worked in part by the image of Aphrodite steering the theme of recognition from its path before deigning to concede revelation. The poet introduces the theme, arousing all the attendant expectations in his audience, but then momentarily thwarts its outcome, since a self-revelation here would obviate Zeus’ intention of mating the goddess with a mortal.

Momentarily: for after their lovemaking, when Anchises wakes from the sleep that Aphrodite has laid on his eyes, he protests that he had recognized her divinity from the beginning. It is a protest, one might say, as much against Zeus (and the poet) as against the ruse of the goddess herself (185–90):

\[ \text{ἀὔτῆα σ' ώς τὰ πρῶτα, θεά, ἵδιον ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἔγνων ώς θεός ἥσθα: σὺ δ' οὗ νημετέρες ἔσπεις. ἀλλὰ σὲ πρὸς Ζηνὸς γουνάζουσαι αἰγιόχου μὴ με ξοντ' ἀμενήγον ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ἐάσης ναίειν, ἀλλ' ἐλέαρ'. ἐπεὶ οὔ βιοθάλμως ἄνηρ γίγνεται ὃς τε θεαῖς εὐνάζεται ἀθανάτησιν.} \]

The whole sequence—recognition, deceit by the god, revelation proper, protest—makes for subtle humor, achieved in part by the transgression of the traditional “rules” of the theme. To break the rules of narration is analogous to punning, where it is the disturbance of expected sequences, and their abrupt replacement with unexpected significance, that stirs laughter (as in Wilde’s “Work is the curse of the drinking classes”).

The return of conformity to those rules is announced by the simple injunction θάρσει (193; B.3.a), “take heart,” which gods often use to reassure cowering mortals.62 But this is followed by a lengthy expansion of another thematic component, the concession of rewards (C.2). First among these, “you are favored by the gods” (195; cf. Hymn VII.55), as high a prize as a mortal can hope for. This status is brought home to Anchises by two mythological paradigms (one positive, one negative), the stories of Ganymedes (202–17) and Tithonos (218–40). As Ganymedes was granted immortality, to the joy of his bereaved father, so too will Anchises’ issue be forever godlike (200–201). The goddess is seemingly reminded, by this story, of Eos’ love for Tithonos. This, too, happened in the Troad; it, too, involved the abduction of a mortal favorite by a goddess. But the paradigmatic lesson taken from it is different: let this not be the way that you, Anchises, are divinely favored; further, as Eos failed to procure eternal youth for her favorite, so too must you suffer old age. Aphrodite thereby indicates that Anchises’ reward entails a happy afterlife only in the form of the enduring fame and power of his offspring. Thus does the theme of recognition intersect with that of the abduction of a favorite by a deity with consequent grant of immortality. This

hymn presents a model of such confluence, and by nesting two paradigms—we would rather say *historiolae*—within the larger paradigm, the plot of the Hymn itself, the hymnist enhances the power of his song and assures its successful outcome.

And further nested in these hymnic designs, we now see, was that lie. Seeking a union in love with her favorite, Aphrodite claimed that she herself had been the apple of Hermes’ eye—but no, only that Hermes was meant to deliver her to Anchises... (117–30). The play of themes is evident if we compare Aphrodite’s lie the fate of Polymele in *Iliad* 16. She is the mother of the Myrmidon Eudoros (181–86):

This is the familiar motif to which Aphrodite nods in her lie. The gods often made their selection of mortal conquests from girls at dance or play, especially at the transition rites of Artemis, when they were at their most nubile. And so the formal mythic exempla she offers Anchises during her self-revelation bore messages already subtly hinted at in their first conversation. There was no denying that Anchises had read them well from the start.

**HYMN IV, TO HERMES**

Of all the hymns, this one represents the least contact between god and mortal; nevertheless, the old man from Onchestos, whom Hermes encounters while absconding with Apollo’s oxen, presents a clear cautionary figure best understood within the framework I am proposing. Because he does not recognize the god Hermes, and respond to his presence accordingly, he would presumably face punishment, were it not that this version of his story is told in such reduced outline that we hear nothing else of him after his treachery towards Hermes.

On his way back from Pieria with the oxen, Hermes meets the old man, who is constructing his lush vine rows. The man is an eyewitness to the theft, so Hermes swears him to silence (87–93):

63. Richardson 1974 *ad 5* for reff.
64. Because of Aphrodite’s divine deceit, however, Anchises is said at first to lie beside her, a mortal next to a goddess, οὐ σάρξ εἰδὼς (167), momentarily “uncertain.”
65. Recognized by Sowa 1984: 238 as “the least important, structurally, of all the Epiphanies of the *Hymns*, since [Hymn IV] is concerned almost entirely with relationships between gods, rather than between gods and men.”
The god says this and departs; it is not an elaborate scene. In spite of the compressed style, though, it is plain enough that Hermes, though undisguised, has gone unrecognized by the old man, which is confirmed when Apollo interviews him later on. The Onchestan, asked about the stolen oxen, says (208–11):

παίδα δ’ ἢδοξα, φέριστε, σαφές δ’ οὐκ οἶδα, νοὴσαι,
ός τις ο’ παίς ἄμα βουσίν ἐὔχαριστοις ὑπῆδει,
νόπιος, εἰχε δε ράμδον, ἑπιστροφάδην δ’ ἐβάθιζεν,
ἐξοτίσω δ’ ἀνέεργε, κάρη δ’ ἔχεν ἀνίον αὐτῷ.

Apollo hears this and departs; the encounter with the mortal is over. Later versions of this story, however, such as the encounter of Mercury and Battus in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* 2.680ff., have the god return to test the old man’s fidelity to his promise and punish him when he fails, and we do see a trace of this in the first scene, where Hermes promises to make the man’s harvest abundant, provided he keep faith (91–93; ~ C.2.a). There is no threat of retribution for treachery, and when the Onchestan tells what he knows to Apollo, we are left to imagine the consequences. Nevertheless, there is just enough here to claim a partial sketch of the theme of recognition, which may give listeners the framework for filling out the untold parts of the story.

**HYMN II, TO DEMETER**

This Hymn raises peculiar difficulties in that the elements of the theme, though clearly present, seem to be handled with great freedom. Here, more than anywhere else in the Hymns, it is tempting to speak of “narrative inconsistency,” since actions at times seem to be only half performed. But we should resist this, because although the story pattern appears more coherently elsewhere, the Hymn to Demeter, of all the Hymns, raises it most explicitly to a governing narrative idea. But it is combined, almost to the point of conflict, with the overarching story patterns of “withdrawal and return,” which have been shown to provide the larger narrative architecture of this Hymn, and the motif of the theoxeny. These patterns merge so readily with the theme of recognition because it is from the divine to the human world that Demeter withdraws; and, as it is hinted, rewards and

66. ἐνόψε (87) can only mean “perceived,” but owing to its resonances, we may have irony here. It is also possible that the presence of the verb influenced the hint of reward that is discussed below.

punishments are meted out according to whether mortals see her works for what they are. No sooner does she learn the fate of Korē than she forsakes Olympos to roam among mortals (90–94), and at this point we are explicitly told, of the goddess, that during her sojourn on earth (94–97):

οὐδὲ τις ἀνδρῶν
eἰσορῶν γήγνωσκε βαθυζώνον τε γυναῖκῶν
πρὶν γ᾽ ὅτε δὴ Кελεώδ δαίφρονος ἤκετο δῶμα,
δὲ τὸ τ᾽ Ἐλευσίνος θυοέσης κοίρανος ἤν.

This leads the listener to expect a recognition of Demeter, but there are complexities. When the daughters of Keleos find the old woman, they address her at once—innocent, however, of her identity: οὐδ᾽ ἔγνον χαλεποὶ δὲ θεοὶ θητοῖσιν ὀρᾶσθαι, “and they knew her not, so difficult are the gods for mortals to perceive” (111; B.1.a). Their first question to her is further indicative of their ignorance—
tις πόθεν ἔσσι γρηγὺ παλαιγενέων ἀνθρώπων; (113)—and they continue in this vein.

We should remember what we were told: Demeter was not to be recognized until she reached Keleos’ palace. But here begin the difficulties. For whereas the daughters of Keleos were openly said to fail in recognizing the goddess, Metaneira’s ability to do so seems to be admitted at first and then withdrawn. Her first reaction is this (188–91, where the opening pronoun refers to Demeter):

... ἤ δ᾽ ἀφ᾽ ἐπ᾽ οὐδὸν ἐβη ποσὶ καὶ ῥα μελάθρου
κυρε χάρη, πλήσεν δὲ θύρας σέλαος θείοιν.
τὴν δ᾽ αἰώνιος τε σέβας τε ἵππ δὴ χλωρόν δέος εἰλεν·
εἰς δὲ οἱ κύσιμοι καὶ ἐδριάσασθαι ἄνωγεν.

The signs of recognition here are unmistakable (B.2.a) and may be compared with the awe of the perspicacious in the other instances of this pattern. But here the story takes an odd turn. Instead of acknowledging Metaneira’s piety, Demeter forsakes this story element forever and refuses the throne, opting instead for a chair presented by the mysterious lamb. For the hymnist, the figure of this household servant—whatever her link to cult and ritual humor—is important enough, the force of her role of sufficient narrative power, that her entrance knocks the theme off course, and it never recovers the element of acknowledgment. As often in the Hymns, the poet compels his theme to accommodate a narrative exigency, here Demeter’s refusal and withdrawal. Still, he does not suppress, as we may expect a literate poet to do, all traces of the theme superseded.

This thematic “competition,” then, is one reason for the disruption of the logic of the narrative. Another is the poet’s incorporation into the Hymn of narratives of foundation. Demeter’s withdrawal does not mean she is on strike;

68. I am here in disagreement with M. L. Lord, who writes that “[t]he epiphany is partial because [Demeter] is still unrecognized” (1994: 187). II.94–96 give the impression that the poet “planned” a recognition while performing.
far from inactive, she is, like Apollo in the third Hymn, busy with establishing cults in her honor, which provide a narrative justification for the scenes with Keleos and his family. But although the goddess’s visit occasions a recognition by Metaneira, this is denied to the daughters and apparently to Keleos himself. Herein lies an important contrast with the Hymn to Apollo, where the Cretan mariners are given an unambiguous recognition as a condition of their favored position in the service of Apollo. Demeter’s original revelation, upon her entrance into the palace, on the other hand, is not fully achieved; it is wholly non-verbal (at 188–91, her stature and brilliance are divine, but she does not speak, though the exchange of the greeting χαίρε by Metaneira and the goddess [213, 225] seems to certify recognition). Furthermore, the expected acknowledgment is interrupted by the important scene with Iambe, as well as the episode of Demophon. Demeter’s tendance of Demophon is difficult to interpret, given its apparently allusive nature. The allusion may well be to a cultic background, but that does not determine for us the public use of the Hymn. 69 On the contrary, a plain description, history, charter, or other account or justification of a cult (or other religious institution, doctrine, or belief) seems far from the purpose of this or any of the Homeric Hymns. Demophon’s fate is used by the goddess to moralize about human folly (256ff.) and (probably) to allude to a popular aition for the internecine wars ritually enacted by the Eleusinians (266–67). 70 But the cultic components in the narrative are best seen as ingredients added by the hymnist to establish his own competence in performing the task at hand.

When revelation comes in the Hymn, it follows the form of other revelations (εἰςίλ ἐ Ἔγγυτητ... [268ff.], B.3.b), but does not betide a reward for the perspicacious Metaneira: in the Demophon episode, Metaneira has forfeited her favor. 71 The poet shifts the theme midway to the parallel version, in which the mortal subjects fail to recognize the god and even abuse him or her. We have here a narrative doublet—not uncommon in the adjustments that surround the deployment of traditional material (cf. the triple apparition of Apollo in Hymn III): Demeter again appears in all her splendor, but now abruptly departs the house (281); Metaneira is left to collapse in mute terror. The goddess’s second epiphany is handled as if it were the first and Metaneira were merely the fool who misunderstood Demeter’s nurturing of Demophon; and in the end, Metaneira is never rewarded for her original perspicacity, for defying the truism that χαλεπὸν δὲ θεοί θνητοίσιν ὀφάσθαι. The poet, pressed by a narrative purpose divergent from his traditional theme, leaves hanging his original promise (94–96), to tell how Demeter went unrecognized until she came to the palace of Keleos.

69. Clinton 1992: 28–37 argues that if the scene is meant to be reminiscent of cult at all it is likelier to reflect the Thesmophoria than the Eleusinian Mysteries. His diligent study still leaves unresolved the Hymn’s precise cultic purpose, as indicated by this connection.

70. This is the Βαλλησᾶς. Richardson 1974 ad loc.

71. Metaneira’s rapid fall from favor is rendered starkly and in sharp contrast to the makarismos of 480/486 (with 488–89 and Richardson 1974 ad locc.).
### III. THE THEME OF RECOGNITION IN THE HYMNS

The elements of the narrative pattern as it appears in the major hymns may now be schematized:

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<tr>
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<td>54 (?)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>196ff.</td>
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[] Indicates a complexity, usually a doublet or disruption of narrative order.
() Indicates supplementary details or partial registry of motif.

The theme thus takes on major significance and its apprehension is consequently important for the interpretation (literary or cultural) of the Hymns. It serves not merely as a conventional building block in hymnic structure (though it may have attained that function too), but plays a rudimentary religious role. I have suggested that this role is the symbolic act that fulfills the kletic function of the hymn. This must now be clarified.

A salient property of the Hymns, and one of great significance, is that each is addressed to a single god (Helios and Selene are treated as such; there are also Hymns to Heracles and Asclepios), or to closely related groups, such as the Dioscuri, or Apollo and the Muses; in other words, it is usual that a specific god’s attention is summoned on a specific occasion (we do not yet need to agree on the occasion). Careful research on the possible cult connections of the longer Hymns, especially those exhibiting interest in the foundation of cult practices (Hymns II, III, IV), has tended to reaffirm the panhellenic nature of the Hymns, as opposed to their local, cultic value.72 I do not wish to assert that there cannot have been some

cultic occasion for some one of these Hymns that have come down to us in the ancient sylloge; only that as we have them, they are probably too little allusive of local setting to indicate a function in local cult, as attached to a permanent shrine.  

Be that as it may, we are able to say at a minimum that for some public, ceremonial purpose—a festival setting has long seemed attractive—a given Homeric Hymn addressed a single god. But we still need some caution even here: “addressed” in what way? It is often noted that the Hymns make very limited use of the “Du-Stil” known principally from prayers and cult hymns. Yet, unlike prayers, the Hymns regularly reserve direct address for the closing lines. This is significant, for if I am right that the function of reciting the theme of recognition in some form is to summon the god into the presence of the hymnist and his audience, then it is only at the end—after the god’s presence has been achieved—that direct address is possible.

All this is further confirmed by the greeting, χαίρε, which is regularly pronounced in the closing lines. There has been some recent interest in the whole semantic complex surrounding the key notion behind this imperatival form, that of χαίρε. For Race, “[i]f there is one dominant concern common to all Greek hymns, it is surely the notion of χαίρε,” while the second-person imperatival form χαίρε “is much stronger than just ‘hail’ or ‘farewell,’ and is part of the general concern of the hymnist to please the god.” Certainly this is part of what the hymnist sets out to do; the emphasis that Race has placed on this aspect of the notion is most welcome. But it is doubtful whether limiting “the rhetorical intention of the hymnist” to “creat[ing] a hymn which will please the god” is sufficient. Race’s valuable insights on the rhetoric of Greek hymnody should

narrated an aetiological story for the Eleusinian Mysteries; for a recent defense of this view, see Parker 1991.

73. For “deictic” reference in cultic hymns, by which is meant internal indices of external situations, see esp. Depew 2000 with her references.

74. Exceptions: I (where the opening is supplied by editors from a quotation in Diodorus), VIII (not ancient; see Cassola’s introduction to this Hymn [1975: 297–99] and Gelzer 1987). I am deliberately discounting the few cases in which the Muse is asked to tell or sing of the god who is subject.

75. Fröhder 1994: 57 is quite right to take divine presence seriously in the case of cult hymns, but in the Homeric Hymns she seems to assume that the god’s presence is somehow achieved beforehand: “Am Ende seines Preislieds paßt sich der Rhapsode erneut dem Stil des Chorhymnus an, da auch er sich nun der Gottheit persönlich zuwendet. Die Grußformel χαίρε, die den Schlußteil fast aller homerischen Hymnen einleitet, zeigt, daß nicht nur der Gemeindechor, sondern ebenso der Rhapsode während des Hymnenvortrags in einem persönlichen Verhältnis zur Gottheit zu stehen glaubt. Von ihr will er jetzt Abschied nehmen und sich dem Heroenstoff der Epen zuwenden.” (Note that Grußformel here means “farewell.”)

76. The most recent literary studies are MacLachlan 1993 and Scheid-Tissinier 1994. Latacz 1966 produced a comprehensive semantic field study that remains very useful. The most recent studies of χαίρε in the field of religion are Parker 1998; Yunis 1988; Versnel 1981. Further refl. below.


78. As Race 1982: 14 would have it.
be made to do more work than show how an individual singer establishes this relationship with a god. Assuming for a moment that cultivating a relationship of χάρις (sensu “pleasure”) with a god is the aim of the hymnist, we must at least reintroduce (as far as we can) the song’s ceremonial aspect, its public, and say that the hymn not only does that but is proffered by a specialist on behalf of his community; the hymnist, then, represents the public before which he performs his hymn. Indeed, a virtually technical acceptance of χάρις has been observed before: the term can denote a song-offering that taps the potential energy of ceremonial reciprocity.

But we may go even further by accepting the pragmatic dimension of the word, common already in Homer, that is activated in moments of welcome. According to the most recent comparative-linguistic study of the exclamation χαίρε, that of Rudolf Wachter, the full force of the term χάρις should be felt to underlie the form used for greeting. Judging by some rather striking parallels that Wachter finds in the Rig Veda, we are safe to posit the syntagma χαίρεων + dative (“to rejoice in some thing”) as the basic formulation out of which the imperative greeting developed. “Kurz zusammengefasst dürfte der Ursprung unseres Grusswortes χαίρε somit in der Aufforderung an den Gastfreund gelegen haben, Geschenken—und d.h. vorwiegend Begrüssungs- oder Abschiedsgeschenke—freudig anzunehmen und zu geniessen. Dabei kam erstens . . . auch Götter als Gäste in Frage.”

79. Cf. Race 1982: 10: “The rhetorical τέλος of a hymn is, then, to secure the god’s pleasure by a ‘pleasing’ choice of names and titles (especially prominent in the Orphic hymns) and by the ‘proper’ narration of his powers and exploits (especially prominent in the longer Homeric hymns, Callimachus’ hymns, and the prose hymns of Aristides and Menander).”

80. This point is made in Day 1994; Calame 1995, 1997; Depew 2000. (On a similar conclusion in Wachter 1998, see below.) These authors emphasize the nature of votive epigrams and hymns (Calame alone dwells mainly on the Homeric Hymns) as γάλακτας to the gods they celebrate or gratify; Bremer 1998b is again relevant; Svenbro 1988 had discussed the poem as sacrifice, arguing that this was its original function. While I do not deny this facet of hymnic composition in many cases, we should not overgeneralize it for all hymnic practice, since it can lead us to see all hymns as artifacts (a designation better suited to inscribed epigrams, prayers, hymns, as discussed by Depew 2000). Here I am promoting a view of the Homeric Hymns as symbolic acts rooted in direct religious practice in an oral setting.

consideration of these ingredients in Vedic hymns leads him to the Homeric Hymns. Noting that the greeting is always pronounced before any petition is addressed to the god, he interprets the use of χαίρε as an invitation to the god to accept the song as an offering: “In vier dieser Gesänge wird zudem explizit gesagt, dass der Hymnus das Geschenk an die Gottheit sein soll, gleichsam als Entgelt für die Gunst, um die gebeten wird. […] Die Opfergabe … ist das schöne Preisgedicht.” 86

Wachter’s study is correct, it seems to me, in identifying the background of the imperative χαίρε with the situation surrounding the exchange of gifts at the coming and going of visitors. 87 But when, observing that it often occurs at the end of the Hymn, immediately preceding the petition, he concludes that “[s]omit passt weder die Begrüssungs- noch die Abschiedsfunktion,” 88 we have reason to dissent. For Wachter, the salutation’s connection to the broader range of meaning surrounding χάρις and exchanges of social encounter is evidently limited to the apprehension of the song as Opfergabe.

According to Wachter, then, the spirit of χαίρε + dative lurks in the closing lines of the Hymns. This is certainly possible. But in fact this syntagma itself appears only in a single repeated line in the Hymns (IX.7 = XIV.6; never in the longer ones), and two other expressions that are thought to do the work of χαίρε + dative may be interpreted in a way more consonant with the pragmatic view for which I am arguing. These are the phrase καὶ σὺ μὲν οὕτω χαίρε (I.20, III.545, IV.579, IX.7, etc.) and the syntagma ἰλαμαι + dative. Race and Wachter advocate taking the first as equivalent to χαίρε + dative (“rejoice thus” = “rejoice in this”). 89 Race adds the second parallel. 90 If we accept these equations, it would strengthen Wachter’s case that χαίρε marks the song as a gift. But difficulties remain.

First, the repeated line καὶ σὺ μὲν οὕτω χαίρε, θεά θ’ ἁμα πάσαι ἀοιδή (IX.7 = XIV.6), the only use of χαίρε + dative in the Hymns, presents an unexpected pitfall for this aspect of Wachter’s thesis. Owing to the evidence that the Hymns served as prooimia to further song performance, ἀοιδή cannot be understood to refer unambiguously to the Hymn itself; the χάρις offering could be the ἀοιδή that is to follow, as is more clearly the case in a parallel line: χαίρε θεά καὶ τήνδε σάω πόλιν ἄρχε δ’ ἀοιδῆς (XIII.3), etc. A Hymn is not the ἀοιδή, despite lines such as ἀυτὰρ ἐγών ὑμέον τε καὶ ἄλλης μνήσομ’

86. 1998: 72; of the four he cites, only two, which I discuss below, actually make this offering with χαίρε + dative. The other two are II.490–94 (esp. 494) and XXX.17–18, where the petition is offered ἀντ’ ὀiedadῆς. See below for the difficulty of interpreting this phrase. (For song as gift in reciprocal exchange, cf. Day 1994, Calame 1997.)
87. On χαίρε and conventions of xenia, see his discussion at 1998: 73–74.
88. Loc. cit.
89. Race 1982: 9 (not cited by Wachter) translates “take pleasure in the song”; and Wachter, loc. cit., translates “und du mögest Gefallen finden daran (scil. an diesem Gedicht).”
90. Loc. cit.
which is often understood to refer to “another ἄοινθη” and hence identify the Hymn itself as one too. Against this, there is plentiful evidence that supports the interpretation of ἄλλης . . . ἄοινθης as “something else, namely an ἄοινθη”—and not necessarily as “another ἄοινθη.” The latter translation is possible, but the former, normal Greek of the period, harmonizes better with an apprehension of the Hymns as prooimia. Koller suggests another possibility. metabαίνειν ἄλλον ἐς ὑμνον, he argues, should be taken to mean “übergehen zum folgenden Hauptteil, des Gesanges, des Hymnos.’ Hymnos ist also die Bezeichnung für das Ganze, das Prooimion und das (nicht überlieferte) Hauptstück,” and the same would go for ἄοινθη mutatis mutandis. We encounter a similar difficulty with the line καὶ σὺ μὲν οὕτω χαίρε, ἀναζ, ἱλαμαι δέ σ’ ἄοινθη (XIX.48), if the text as the editors print it is right. here again this could refer to the song that follows.

Another difficulty for the argument that χαίρε simply marks its own Hymn as a gift is that even the smallest Hymns, some of only a few lines, pronounce χαίρε to the god (XIII was quoted above, a three-liner). It seems far likelier that the hymnist considered his χάρις-offering (if we are right in thinking of the hymn as partly that) to be the οἰμή itself, not strictly the προοίμιον. We must accept the real possibility that if an offering is in question, it is the ἄοινθη that follows the performance of the Hymn (prooimion) that the singer conceives as the offering of χάρις to which he has alluded in the closing line of the preceding Hymn. But this is very far from denying William Race’s excellent observation that the notion of χάρις is fundamental to the Hymns, especially the long ones, in which the singer may be seen as building up, playfully and exuberantly, to the final cry, hastening past his petition and onward to the great song beyond. This would be so even if the song-offering is the οἰμή.

Is there actually a difficulty in the fact that many of the shorter Hymns also pronounce the χαίρε, despite the absence of an epica pars (and hence historiola with recognition theme)? The many problems surrounding these works may prevent us from understanding the significance of this fact. The brief Hymns have been variously seen as extracts, summaries, mnemonics, and so on—even as the only true prooimia. Nothing compels us to believe that all the Hymns had identical origins and functions; but on balance, there is room to wonder why these particular texts, some of them very unremarkable, were collected at all—unless they were evocative of something larger. Cassola makes this point by comparing Hymns XVIII and IV, both devoted to Hermes. They show considerable overlap

91. LSJ s.v. ἄλλος, II.8.
92. 1956: 177. He argues that such lines, taken out of context, gave rise much later to the specialization of the term hymnos for prooimion.
93. ἱλαμαί is accepted by Gemoll, Allen, and Cassola from a marginal addition to Π; the scholar responsible for it may have known similar usage in other hymns. Other manuscripts have metrical flaws here, mainly in a form of λίσσομαι (Barnes suggested λτομαι, for which cf. XVI.5).
94. See the discussions of Cassola 1975: xvii-xxii; Allen, Halliday, and Sikes 1936: xciii-xcv.
95. 1975: xviii-xix.
in wording, so that the former seems to be susceptible of expansion into the latter; or the longer of being collapsed into the shorter. I see no need, then, to explain the \( \chi\alpha\iota\varphi\epsilon \) of the shorter hymns as functionally different from that of the longer hymns: it is still a greeting. I would observe, though, that if the shorter Hymns were performed as they appear to us, an expression like \( \kappa\alpha\iota \ \sigma\omicron\upsilon \ \mu\nu\nu\o\omicron\upsilon\omega \ \chi\alpha\iota\varphi\epsilon \) in them could well pass in sense from “so greetings to you, then . . .” (as it would be taken, for example, at III.545) to “greetings to you even thus (sc. lacking a story).”\(^{96}\) But it is even likelier that we see in the \( \chi\alpha\iota\varphi\epsilon \) of the shorter Hymns the full evocative force of the formulaic expression it is, with its ability to suggest in its very public pronunciation the fulfillment of a larger traditional context that lies unexpressed, but immanent all the same, in these Hymns.\(^{97}\)

The way is clear, then, for us to interpret the exclamation \( \chi\alpha\iota\varphi\epsilon \) as the singer’s welcome of the arriving god. This should not be difficult to accept, owing to the consistent use of \( \chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma \)-based words at moments of contact—or hoped-for contact—with a god. We have already seen how \( \chi\alpha\iota\varphi\epsilon \) is attested as a greeting within the narratives of the Hymns. Moreover, it may be said generally that discussions of \( \chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma \) in the Homeric Hymns have suffered from a deficit in attention to the visual aspects of this complex concept. We would not be far wrong in saying that \( \chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma \) is the presence—in woman, man, song, art—of something divine, its manifestation being often visual. Bonnie MacLachlan has made the intriguing suggestion that the \( \chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma \) shed by a god over the skin of a mortal, almost as an unguent, acts to clarify the sight of those who look on and awaken their awareness of the supernatural qualities in the subject. “Odysseus’ \( \chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma \)-unction in Book 8 [of the \textit{Odyssey}] has as its intent the transformation of the hero from a dangerous outsider to a friend among the Phaeacians. . . . With \( \chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma \) Athene removes the natural barriers that separate people who are unknown to each other, who might be experienced as a threat.”\(^{98}\) We may add to this an observation by Richard Seaford, that “given the constant association of \( \kharis \) (‘delight,’ ‘favour’) and its cognates with reciprocity, and their frequent application to sacrificial offerings, it may not be a coincidence that in Euripides’ \textit{Bakkhai} (139–40) the presence of the god among his worshippers is mentioned in the same breath as the ‘raw-eating \( \kharis \)’ involved in the killing of a goat.”\(^{99}\) If \( \chi\alpha\iota\varphi\epsilon \) in the Hymns is a welcome, it is equally a cry of success. Having sung his \textit{prooimion} with grace (one aspect of \( \chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma \)) and with all the charged meaning of a ritual exchange of gifts (another); having lured the god, if the situation and the singer’s talent allowed, by a fuller enumeration of godly attributes, epithets, deeds; and having included among these

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96. Here I follow Koller in taking \( \omicron\upsilon\omega \) in this formula to refer to the \textit{manner} of the \textit{prooimion}’s presentation: “Der Gott soll sich mit dem kurzen Anruf und der Geburtsgeschichte zufrieden geben . . .” (1956: 175); though it does not necessarily refer to brevity (in addition to the passage from III. see IV.579).

97. On this power of traditional oral art, see J. M. Foley 1991 esp. 6–37 with bibliography.


a story of how the god came among mortals and of what consequences there were if that god were recognized or not—having excelled at this, the poet might display his skill to the crowd of celebrants by greeting him, in the hope that the coming god might revel in the song proffered, as his worshippers do also.

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