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Spoudaiogeloion Revisited: Homeric Text between a Scholar and a Cook

Abstract: This chapter discusses several comic and parodic fragments in which extracts of epic text are examined, quoted, or ridiculed. Two questions are posed: first, what prompts comedy to engage with Homeric texts and what effect it might have on the audience; second, how comedy contributes to the textual transmission of the Homeric epics. The first part of the chapter looks at the texts of ancient comedy and their interaction with the epic past. The second part examines key aspects of epic parody and how it contributes to the transmission of the Homeric epics. Finally, the third part analyses examples from later Greek comedy and how they use the epic tradition. The continuing preoccupation of comic and parodic poets with the Homeric text affords a glimpse into the state of the text in the pre-Hellenistic period, before the Alexandrian scholarly work. Parody and comedy preserved the treasure of the earliest layers of the Homeric textual heritage.

In his insightful study on the definition of comedy, Michael Silk emphasised the semantic difficulty of "seriousness" and analysed different senses of being "serious" in Greek.[1] Text transmission is a "serious" issue, and Greek comedy is known to engage with the early transmission of the Homeric epics and to play various games with the Homeric text.[2] Various literary genres reflect the diffusion of Homeric criticism in the course of the fifth and fourth century BCE. Comic and parodic authors sometimes deliberately distort Homeric "errors" and "problems". I suggest in this chapter that, while creating and employing a particular set of tools of epic-comic interweaving, both comedy and epic parody serve as important evidence for the contexts of Homeric textual transmission in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE.

Our awareness of the textual setting of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in pre-Hellenistic times derives from direct quotations and commentaries in other authors, from

1 Silk 2000, 42–97, 301–349. On the problem of the "seriousness" of comedy, see also Henderson 1990; Lowe 2007, 58–60; Ruffell 2011, 54–111; Jendza 2020, 25–35. See also Reckford 1987, 367–387. On the dialectic of humour and seriousness, see Billig 2005, 175–199.

2 On the interaction of comedy with epics, see De Lamberterie 1998; Macía Aparicio 1998; Macía Aparicio 2000; Platter 2007, 108–142; Quaglia 2007; Bertolín Cebrián 2008; Macía Aparicio 2011; Revermann 2013; Telò 2013; Novokhatko 2018; Farmer 2020.

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https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111295282-010

numerous papyrus fragments found in Egypt dating (at the earliest) to around 300 BCE, and from the information preserved in the Homeric scholia about the work of the Alexandrian critics and the readings in their sources.[3] This evidence suggests that in pre-Hellenistic and early Hellenistic times the poems were preserved in various "city-editions", individual "editions" (such as Antimachus' of Colophon), and the so-called *koinai*.[4] All these "editions" were marked by random interpolations, omissions, and variations in wording. The early attestations are sparse, so that in addition to the evidence of Aristotle and the scholia, which pertain to specific Homeric readings and explanations in a thoroughly "scholarly" context, evidence from Old Attic Comedy on Homeric textual criticism should also be considered crucial. This is not "scholarly", but rather points to the increasing popularity and availability of Homeric (and perhaps not only Homeric) textual criticism.

In the following, I will discuss some comic and parodic fragments in which epic textual quibbles are considered, or Homeric verses are quoted or ridiculed. In doing so, I pose two questions: first, what makes comedy engage with Homeric texts and what effect it might have on the audience, and second, in what way comedy contributes to the textual transmission of the Homeric epics. The first part of the chapter discusses the texts of Old Comedy and their interaction with the epic past, the second part examines some key aspects of epic parody and the way it contributed to the transmission of the Homeric epics, and the third part analyses some examples from later Greek comedy and the way they use the epic tradition.

1 Homeric transmission and Old Attic Comedy

In a much-debated fragment (fr. 233) from Aristophanes' *Daitales* (427 BCE), the speakers are a father and a son. They engage in a discussion of Homeric versus Solonian vocabulary.[5]

A. πρὸς ταύτας δ' αὖ λέξον Ὁμήρου γλώττας, τί καλοῦσι κόρυμβα;
... τί καλοῦσ' ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα;
B. ὁ μὲν οὖν σός, ἐμὸς δ' οὗτος ἀδελφὸς φρασάτω, τί καλοῦσιν ἰδύους;
... τί ποτ' ἐστὶν ὀπύειν;

3 Haslam 1997 and Pagani/Perrone 2012.
4 See Novokhatko 2020, 59–61.
5 On this fragment, see Montanari 2011 and Novokhatko 2017. See also Cassio 1977, 75–77; De Lamberterie 1998, 36; Olson 2007, 163–164; Perrone 2020, 346–347.

A. And now come on in turn tell Homeric words, what do they mean by *korymba*?
... what do they mean by *amenena karena*?
B. But let this guy, your (son?) and my brother, explain, what do they mean by *idyoi*?
... what is *opyein*?

The whole dialogue is set around the play with the explanation of obsolete words. One son studied law and rhetoric with the sophists, while the other son (ἐμὸς δ' οὗτος ἀδελφός) was educated in the traditional way. It follows from this text that apart from learning epic texts by heart, pupils had to learn to explain Homeric words such as κόρυμβα ("stern-posts") and ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα ("strengthless heads"). κόρυμβος (plural both κόρυμβοι and κόρυμβα) is a *hapax* in Homer (*Il.* 9.241), and occurs once in Aeschylus (Aesch. *Pers.* 411) and once in Euripides (Eur. *IA* 258). The formula ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα (the full form is νεκύων ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα) is found only four times in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 10.521; 10.536; 11.29; 11.49) before it occurs in the *Daitales*. It is therefore reasonable that this Aristophanic character should ask what this "Homeric gloss" means. Instead of explaining Homeric words, the son requires his brother to explain some archaic judicial and forensic terms from Solon's wooden tablets (the obscure ἰδύους for "witnesses" and the archaic ὀπύειν for "to wed").[6]

The use of the syntagma Ὁμήρου γλώττας is crucial, as the term γλῶττα must have been first used in this sense at around the time of the performance of the *Daitales*.[7] Homeric-Attic dictionaries looked like lists and were used by school

6 The meaning of ὀπύειν remains open, as the text is corrupt. In some lexica it is quoted as a Homeric word, but it may have been employed as a juridical term with a sexual double entendre (cf. Hsch. β 466, βινεῖν· παρὰ Σόλωνι τὸ βίᾳ μίγνυσθαι. τὸ δὲ κατὰ νόμον ὀπύειν, "in Solon 'to rape', but when according to law, it is called ὀπύειν"; Apion Grammaticus, *Glossai Homerikai* fr. 88 Neitzel; Apollonius Sophista, *Lexicon Homericum* 122.9 Bekker). On ὀπύειν, see Henderson 1991, 157 and Olson 2002, 145: "Archaic language, attested elsewhere before the late Classical period only in high poetry [...], in a marriage law of Solon (*ap.* Plut. *Sol.* 20.2), and repeatedly in the Cretan Gortyn law code (IC iv. 72. col. Vii. i, 16, 20–1 etc.)". On the use of the authority of Solon in comedy, see Martin 2015 (on this fragment, see especially p. 80).

7 Democritus is also credited with the word; Diogenes Laertius mentions a title of a treatise by Democritus, the Περὶ Ὁμήρου ἢ Ὀρθοεπείης καὶ γλωσσέων (DK 68 A 33.11). The title suggests a distinction between correct language usage and archaic vocabulary, and this requires explanation. If the title is correct, and Democritus did in fact write this treatise, this must have been a kind of a Homeric-Attic dictionary, perhaps one of the proto-dictionaries dating back to the fifth century BCE, which served as a source for *scholia minora*, or the so-called D[idymus]-scholia. Thus, for example, Democritus read as *scriptio continua* the adjective μελανόστου instead of μέλανος τοῦ in *Il.* 21.252 and interpreted the "gloss" (Δημόκριτον ἱστορεῖν ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀετοῦ τὰ ὀστᾶ μέλανα εἶναι, DK 68 B 22 = Porph. *Quaest. Hom.* I 274.9 Schrader on *Il.* 21.252). See Fronmüller 1901 and Philippson 1929, 167–175. See also Ford 2002, 165–172 and Janko 2011, 208–215. Almost

children. They explained Homeric expressions, translating them into contemporary Attic.[8]

We have other examples of discourses on Homeric criticism finding their place on the Athenian comic stage. According to a short unattributed fragment, Cratinus seems to "have ridiculed Homer" (Ὁμήρου κωμῳδηθέντος ὑπὸ Κρατίνου) for his repeated use (διὰ τὸ πλεονάσαι) of the reply-formula τὸν/τὴν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος ("and he answered him/her", Cratinus fr. 355 = Porphyry *ap.* Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 10.3.21).[9] This formula in fact appears fifty-two times in the *Iliad* and fifty-eight times in the *Odyssey*, in all cases at the beginning of the verse. It is unclear from the quotation context whether Homer was mentioned explicitly by name, or whether Cratinus made one of his characters (mis)use the formula so that the audience would recognise the Homeric expression. In either case, fr. 355 suggests that discourses on Homeric criticism were so popular that an audience should have understood a joke on Homeric pleonasm.

Epic formulas and other metric units were in fact used by many comic playwrights, sometimes intact, sometimes transferred to Attic, but with the construction remaining epically marked. Some clear epic formulas are found at the beginning of hexameter verses, such as ἔστι δέ τις ("there is a") used by Hermippus (fr. 77.6) and Eupolis (fr. 249), and ναυσὶν ἐπὶ γλαφυραῖς ("with hollow ships") in Hermippus for νηυσὶν ἔπι γλαφυρῇσι(ν) (fr. 63.11).[10]

Formulas found at the end of hexameter verse are more frequent. Hermippus, in his hexametric catalogue of goods in fr. 63, used various epic *clausulae* (Homeric, Hesiodic, and others), such as Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι ("having home on Olympus", fr. 63.1), ἐπ' οἴνοπα πόντον ("to the wine-coloured sea", fr. 63.2), νηῖ

a hundred years afterwards, the use of the term γλῶττα is discussed by Aristotle; see Lucas 1968, 204. For Aristotle, who relied on a tradition that must have existed before him, γλῶττα belongs to the tools of a poet and is one of the main lexical and stylistic criteria of epic (heroic) poetry, alongside compound words typical for the dithyramb and metaphors for iambics. Aristotle prefers the words typical of the heroic style, γλῶτται, to current words, κύρια (Arist. *Poet.* 1459a 9–10, 1461a 10; *Rh.* 3.1406b 3, 1404b 28). On the fragment in the context of the glossographic tradition, see Pontani 2011, 32, 117–126.

8 Pfeiffer 1968, 41–42, 78–79; Latacz 2000, 3–4. There are several examples of such Homeric-Attic studies in which Homer is quoted and interpreted and Homeric words are systematically replaced by Attic ones (Pl. *Grg.* 485d; Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.58–59; Aeschin. 1 (*Timarchus*) *passim*; Ford 1999). Cf. Pl. *Resp.* 393d–394e: a summary paraphrase of *Il.* 1.12–42.

9 Olson/Seaberg 2018, 151. On the marked meaning of ἀμείβεσθαι in performative Archaic poetry as "to take turns", see Collins 2004, 169–175. On the spatial dimension of formulaic lines introducing and concluding speeches, see Zanker 2019, 105–106.

10 See also Cratinus fr. 355. On linguistic epic markers in Old Comedy, see Novokhatko 2018. On the hexameter fragments of the Old Attic Comedy, see Marcucci 2020.

μελαίνῃ ("on a black ship", fr. 63.3), δίχα θυμὸν ἔχουσι ("they have divided hearts", fr. 63.11), ἴφια μῆλα ("plump apples", fr. 63.17), σιγαλόεντα ("glittering", fr. 63.20), τὰ γάρ τ' ἀναθήματα δαιτός ("for these are the ornaments of a feast", fr. 63.21). Cratinus used ἐρίηρας ἑταίρους ("faithful companions", fr. 150.1) and ῥοδοδάκτυλος οὖσα ("her being rosy-fingered", fr. 351) recalling Homeric ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἠώς. Pherectrates wrote ἐπὶ δαῖτα θάλειαν ("to a rich feast", fr. 162.1). Hermippus used ἐν δαιτὶ θαλείῃ ("at a rich feast", fr. 77.11). Hermippus used also θεοὶ αὐτοί ("the gods themselves", fr. 77.1) and ὑψερεφὲς δῶ ("high-roofed house", fr. 77.9). Plato Comicus wrote πολλὸν γὰρ ἄμεινον ("for it is much better", fr. 189.16). Metagenes used αἵ τε τάχιστα ("who very quickly", fr. 4.3) and ὑπὸ γούνατα μισθοῦ ἔλυσαν ("loosened the knees for a fee", fr. 4.4). Theopompus has υἷας Ἀχαιῶν ("the sons of the Achaeans", fr. 31.1).

The following cases are not exact formulas but metric units found at the beginning or at the end of hexameter verse, thus signaling epic register: ἀλλὰ μάλ' ("but very", Pherecrates fr. 162.3),[11] ἀκούετε Σειρηνάων ("listen to the Sirens", Epicharmus fr. 121),[12] Σιδονίους καὶ Ἐρεμβούς ("to the Sidonians and the Eremboi", Cratinus fr. 223 and *Od.* 4.84), καὶ πλευρὰ βόεια ("and sides of beef", Hermippus fr. 63.6, cf. καὶ νεῦρα βόεια, *Il.* 4.122), ἀγορεύω ("I inform", Metagenes fr. 4.2).

Some hexameter lines are marked because of metrical and rhythmic resemblance, without an exact correspondence in vocabulary, such as: ὄζει ἴων, ὄζει δὲ ῥόδων, ὄζει δ' ὑακίνθου ("it smells of violets, it smells of roses, it smells of hyacinth", Hermippus fr. 77.8). This resembles the structure of the verse πρόσθε λέων, ὄπιθεν δὲ δράκων, μέσση δὲ χίμαιρα (*Il.* 6.181).

Epic syntactic constructions within a sentence can also serve as an epic marker. Thus, ἧσθε … πυὸν δαινύμενοι ("you (pl.) sat there … dining the first afterbirth milk", fr. 149) in Cratinus includes the use of the Homeric participle δαινύμενοι. Furthermore, δαινύμενοι is used six times in Homer together with the verbal form ἥμεθα (ἥμεθα δαινύμενοι).[13] Similarly, the participle of the verb κυλίνδεσθαι is used mainly in epic texts: ἐν τοῖς ἀχύροισι κυλινδομένην ("rolling

11 The dactylic foot ἀλλὰ μάλ' occurs twenty-eight times in Homer before it appears in Pherecrates, seventeen times as the first foot and eleven times as the fifth. Pherecrates quotes here the beginning of the verse *Il.* 1.554, ἀλλὰ μάλ' εὔκηλος.

12 Cf. ἀκούσῃς Σειρήνοιϊν (*Od.* 12.52) and see Cassio 2002, 71–72 and Bellocchi 2008, 268–269.

13 The verse ἥμεθα δαινύμενοι κρέα τ' ἄσπετα καὶ μέθυ ἡδύ is repeated six times in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 9.162, 557; 10.184, 468, 477; 12.30).

in the husks", Hermippus fr. 48.6).[14] And Hermippus also used a marked relative clause, οὗ καὶ ἀπὸ στόματος ("and from whose mouth", fr. 77.7), for which three epic parallels are found: τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης (*Il.* 1.249), τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ ῥίζης (*Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 12), and τῆς καὶ ἀπὸ κρῆθεν βλεφάρων τ' ἄπο κυανεάων ([Hes.] *Sc.* 7).

Metagenes, at one point in his hexameter fragment, employed a typically Homeric syntactic feature, the progressive enjambement (fr. 4.1–2):[15]

< — ⏑ ⏑ — > ὑμῖν ὀρχηστρίδας εἶπον ἑταίρας
ὡραίας πρότερον, νῦν αὖθ' ὑμῖν ἀγορεύω

... I told you before about dancing girls, beautiful
hetaeras; now, however, I am telling you of...

Sometimes syntactic structure is marked contextually. The use of the same form within the same syntactic structure makes the context recognisable: πίννῃσι καὶ ὀστρείοισιν ὁμοίη ("she like mussels and oysters", Cratinus fr. 8; cf. ἀθανάτῃσι φυὴν καὶ εἶδος ὁμοίη, *Od.* 6.16; παρθένῳ ἀδμήτῃ μέγεθος καὶ εἶδος ὁμοίη, *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 82); στρώμασιν ἐν μαλακοῖς ("on soft bed-clothes", Hermippus fr. 77.2, cf. κώεσιν ἐν μαλακοῖσιν, *Od.* 3.38); εὐδαίμον' ἔτικτέ σε μήτηρ ("happy bore you your mother", Cratinus fr. 360.3).

Apart from quotations and formulas, elevated heroic or cosmological words can appear within Attic usage and thus create dissonance. Epic epithets are used whilst mocking contemporary politicians, such as πρεσβυγενής ("first-born, primeval", Cratinus fr. 258.1) and αἴθων ("fiery", Hermippus fr. 47.7). Further examples could be the Homeric Ὀδυσσῆος θείοιο changed by Cratinus into Ὀδυσσέι θείῳ ("with divine Odysseus", fr. 151.4), κλέος θεῖον ("divine glory", Epicharmus fr. 97.13), δίοις τ' Ἀχαιοῖς ("divine Achaeans", Epicharmus fr. 97.15), παιδί τ' Ἀτρέος φί[λωι ("dear son of Atreus", Epicharmus fr. 97.15), δέρμα βόειον ("ox hide", Hermippus fr. 63.4), δίχα θυμὸν ἔχουσι ("they have divided hearts", Hermippus fr. 63.11), ἄλλυδις ἄλλος ("one hither, another thither", Eupolis fr. 172.11), ἀσάμινθος ("bathing tub", Cratinus fr. 234), ἀγάννιφα ("much snowed on", Epicharmus fr. 128), σιγαλόεις ("glittering", Hermippus fr. 63.20), πανημέριοι ("all day long", Cratinus fr. 149), ἐριβώλακος ("with large clods", Cratinus fr. 61.2), πολύτρητος ("much-pierced", Cratinus fr. 226), ἄναλτος ("insatiate", Crates fr. 47 and Cratinus fr. 410), δαιδάλεον ("cunningly wrought", Theopompus fr. 34.2), the

14 Before Hermippus, the participle is found eleven times in epic texts and three times in Pindar. Cf. Ar. *Nub.* 375. See especially the use of κυλινδόμενος with κατὰ κόπρον, "in dirt", *Il.* 22.414 and 24.640. See Silk 2000, 307–308.

15 See Orth 2014, 403 with further bibliography.

wordplay ἴφια μῆλα ("plump apples", Hermippus fr. 63.17), ὑψερεφής ("high-roofed", Hermippus fr. 77.9), the epic syntagma ἀμβροσία καὶ νέκταρ ("ambrosia with nectar", Hermippus fr. 77.10), βοῶπις ("cow-eyed", Eupolis fr. 438), κυνῶπις ("dog-eyed", Cratinus fr. 259), Ἰθακησία ("Ithacan", Cratinus fr. 264), εἰλίπους ("having a rolling gait", Eupolis fr. 174.3), the epic verbs ἀμφηγάπαζες ("you used to embrace with love", Cantharus fr. 7), παραλέχομαι in τυρῷ καὶ μίνθῃ παραλεξάμενος καὶ ἐλαίῳ ("having slept with cheese, mint, and oil", Cratinus fr. 136), ἐρέεινεν ("he asked for", Theopompus fr. 31.2), the (conjectural) epic adverb ἄψ ("backwards", Epicharmus fr. 97.16 and Matron fr. 534.32 SH), the mainly epic particles αὐτάρ ("but, nevertheless", Hermippus fr. 63.17) and ἠΰτε ("like as", Ar. fr. 29.1), the dative sing. form χήτει ("out of lack of", Eupolis fr. 491), the interjection τῆ followed by imperative ("there!", Cratinus fr. 145 and Eupolis fr. 378).

Comic playwrights also created "new" epic words out of recognisable morphemes or atticised Homeric words using Homeric vocabulary but Attic morphology for them. To such epicising coinages belong τερπότραμις ("perineum-delight", Telecleides fr. 72), κεφαληγερέτης ("head-gatherer", Cratinus fr. 258.4), πυροπίπης ("wheat-ogler", Cratinus fr. 484), ἀχρειόγελως ("untimely-laughing", Cratinus fr. 360), αἱμασιολογεῖν ("lay walls", Theopompus fr. 73), χλανίδες δ' οὖλαι ("wollen cloaks", Hermippus fr. 48), ὀπτότατος ("the best baked", Cratinus fr. 150.4) recalling epic ὀπλότατος, συκοπέδιλε ("you fig-sandaled", Cratinus fr. 70); cf. also γυναικάνδρεσσι ("for woman-men") in Epicharmus fr. 224.[16]

All this material, gathered from (sometimes short) fragments, does not allow us to hypothesise whether the authors of the comedies were parodying old-fashioned orthodoxy, Homeric criticism itself, or whether they were making their own observations on Homeric style. Even if we assume that these were their own jokes, the playwrights were nevertheless writing in a culture that was interested in such an issue and for an audience that would appreciate it. Homeric criticism and Homeric textual transmission were clearly the focus of interest in Athens in the late fifth century BCE. On the other hand, the engagement with the Homeric text in comedy is only one level in the overall framework of the comic plot and the comic machinery, which is preoccupied with several other issues in parallel, and here lies a crucial difference with Homeric parody, where the genre itself is exclusively dedicated to and fastened on the Homeric text.

16 On a list of "epic-lyric" compound coinages found in Epicharmus, see Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 2012, 84.

2 Homeric text and epic parody

Another important form of Homeric reception and criticism, and at the same time of the interaction and blending of serious epic and laughter, was parody. Parody as a literary genre presupposes a dual nature in the use of material: it creates a text at the expense of another text. Parody has been more generally defined as "any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice".[17] In epic parodies, a diachronic factor also plays an important role, as parodists signal both continuity and differentiation by using material from the (very distant) past, with a few consequences arising from both. Text parody plays a special and complicated role in text transmission and is coded in a twofold way: it elevates and legitimises the parodied text and undermines it at the same time.

Homeric parody commenced considerably early, with travesties of Homeric style dating to the sixth century BCE mock epic *Margites*, and was also performed by poets such as Hipponax (sixth century BCE) and Hegemon of Thasos (fifth century BCE), though surviving textual evidence is not sufficient for further analysis.[18]

Archestratus of Gela (from the first half of the fourth century BCE) composed a humorous didactic poem entitled *The Life of Luxury* (Ἡδυπάθεια) in hexameters which parodied epic poetry. The poem narrates a kind of gastronomic quest for the discovery of the best food in the Mediterranean world.[19] The text contains distorted verses from the Homeric text or from other epic poets. See for example Archestratus fr. 30.2 Olson/Sens:

> ἐν δὲ Θάσῳ τὸν σκορπίον ὠνοῦ, ἐὰν ᾖ
> μὴ μείζων πυγόνος· μεγάλου δ' ἀπὸ χεῖρας ἴαλλε
>
> Buy the sculpin in Thasus, unless it is
> bigger than a pygon (elbow); keep your hands off the big (fish)

The parodic point here is the inversion of a common Homeric formula ἐπὶ χεῖρας ἰάλλειν ("to lay hands upon") into ἀπὸ χεῖρας ἴαλλε.[20]

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17 Dentith 2000, 9.

18 On the history of epic parody, see Olson/Sens 1999, 5–12; Olson/Sens 2000, xxxi–xxxv; Bertolín Cebrián 2008, 23–58. See also Schröter 1967, 10–14, with earlier bibliography.

19 Olson/Sens 2000; Wilkins/Hill 2011.

20 Cf. *Il.* 9.91; 9.221; 24.627; *Od.* 1.149; 4.67; 4.218; 5.200; 8.71; 8.484; 9.288; 10.376; 14.453; 15.142; 16.54; 17.98.

At some point Archestratus comes to talk about cooking the bonito, a member of the mackerel family that resembles tuna:

> τὴν δ' ἀμίαν φθινοπώρου, ὅταν πλειὰς καταδύνῃ,
> πάντα τρόπον σκεύαζε. τί σοι τάδε μυθολογεύω;
>
> SH fr. 166.1–2 = fr. 36.1–2 Olson/Sens

> As for the bonito in autumn, when the Pleiades set, prepare it in any way you wish. Why should I make a long story for you out of this?

The phrase τί σοι τάδε μυθολογεύω; in v. 2 might be an evocation of *Od.* 12.450, where Odysseus refuses to repeat the story of his treatment by Calypso:

> ἥ μ' ἐφίλει τ' ἐκόμει τε. τί τοι τάδε μυθολογεύω;

> … who loved and cared for me. Why should I make a long story for you out of this?

Homeric τοι may perhaps also have been written by Archestratus, although Archestratus uses σοι elsewhere, and in any case we cannot know what form of the pronoun he knew from his Homeric text, i.e. the version of the Homeric epics he had in mind, whether written or memorised.[21]

A few decades later, Euboeus of Paros (fl. second third of the fourth century BCE) is said to have written perhaps four books of parodies, two fragments of which survive from the *Battle of the Bathmen* (Ἡ τῶν βαλανέων μάχη).[22] Both fragments contain Homeric verses. The first quotes Homer literally:

> βάλλον δ' ἀλλήλους χαλκήρεσιν ἐγχείῃσιν (*Il.* 18.534 = *Od.* 9.55 = Euboeus fr. 411 SH)

> they hurled bronze-edged spears at each other

Most likely, the parody was introduced in a transformed context, in the fight of the bathers, and so the clash of registers created the humorous effect. The other fragment contains a distorted version of Homeric text (fr. 412 SH):

> μήτε σὺ τόνδ' ἀγαθός περ ἐὼν ἀποαίρεο, κουρεῦ,
> μήτε σύ, Πηλείδη

> Neither do you, great man though you are, rob this fellow, barber, nor do you, son of Mud

21 Olson/Sens 2000, 148.
22 Frr. 411–412 SH. See also Ath. 15.698a–b = SH 410.

In the *Iliad*, book 1, Nestor interferes in the argument between Agamemnon and Achilles over Briseis, appealing to them both (*Il.* 1.275–277):

> μήτε σὺ τόνδ' ἀγαθός περ ἐὼν ἀποαίρεο κούρην,
> ἀλλ' ἔα ὥς οἱ πρῶτα δόσαν γέρας υἷες Ἀχαιῶν·
> μήτε σὺ Πηλείδη 'θελ' ἐριζέμεναι βασιλῆϊ
>
> Neither do you, great man though you are, rob him of his maiden, leave her instead as the prize that the sons of Achaeans first gave him; nor do you Peleus' son, desire to contend with the king

The transformation of the Homeric ἀποαίρεο κούρην into the invocation ἀποαίρεο, κουρεῦ belongs to Euboeus' technique which Athenaeus praises with the phrase "many witty elements" (πολλὰ ... χαρίεντα, Ath. 15.699a–b). Euboeus parodied the elevated tone of the epic in Homeric hexameters, taking verses from Homer and incorporating them, with modifications, into unheroic situations.

The fragments of Matron of Pitane (second half of the fourth century BCE), which belong to his poem *Attic Dinner* (Δεῖπνον Ἀττικόν), contribute to the Homeric tradition, for the poet masterfully adapted Homer in the cento technique. A running list of dishes provided the feast, including many fish dishes, the whole effectively enlivened by the interweaving of epic military imagery. The poem depicts a gluttonous hero wandering over a huge buffet. The texts of Matron's poems are the versions of the Homeric epics that he had in mind, either in written or in memorised form. He knows Homeric verses and whole passages by heart, but it is unclear whether he occasionally consulted the written text when composing his parodies. Matron's verses seem to deviate from the Hellenistic vulgate in a number of minor details and may indicate his access to an earlier version of the Homeric epics.[23]

Some of his readings correspond to alternative ancient readings from the Homeric tradition, such as the following (fr. 534.18–21 SH = fr. 1.18–21 Olson/Sens):

> αὐτὰρ ἐχίνους ῥῖψα καρηκομόωντας ἀκάνθαις,
> οἱ δὲ κυλινδόμενοι καναχὴν ἔχον ἐν ποσὶ παίδων
> ἐν καθαρῷ, ὅθι κύματ' ἐπ' ἠιόνος κλύζεσκε·
> πολλὰς δ' ἐκ κεφαλῆς προθελύμνους εἷλκον ἀκάνθας.
>
> However, I threw away the sea-urchins with their long spiny hair, and they produced a sharp sound as they were rolling about among the slaves' feet in an open space, where the

23 Olson/Sens 1999, 19.

sea's waves splashed over the seashore; and they pulled from their head many spines out by the roots.

The syntagma καρηκομόωντας ἀκάνθαις (v. 18) is used in the same formulaic way at the end of the verse in Matron fr. 536.2 SH (= fr. 3.2 Olson/Sens). This is a humorous adaptation of Homeric "long-haired Achaeans"; the phrase is taken to mean "with hair growing over the whole head", as opposed to tribes like the Thracians, who elsewhere are described as ἀκρόκομοι (*Il.* 4.533, "with topknots"). Cf. e.g. *Il.* 2.11–12:

θωρῆξαί ἑ κέλευε κάρη κομόωντας Ἀχαιοὺς
πανσυδίῃ

bid him to arm for the battle the long-haired Achaeans, acting in haste

Here in Homer κάρη is printed as accusative of respect with κομόωντας. The text of Matron is traditionally transmitted as a single adjective καρηκομόωντας, written together as one word, although it is clear that word distinction is conventional in the fourth century BCE. In Matron, καρηκομόωντας refers to the sea-urchins' long spines.

To this initial verse Matron, using a kind of puzzle-technique, sticks three other different verses from the *Iliad*, concerning the death of Patroclus, Achilles' grief at Patroclus' death, and Agamemnon's lamentation, thus creating a novel composition out of old material. In the scene of the death of Patroclus, the famous *Il.* 16.794 reads:

ἣ δὲ κυλινδομένη καναχὴν ἔχε ποσσὶν ὑφ' ἵππων

and it (the helmet) produced a sharp sound as it was rolling under the feet of the horses

Achilles' grief at Patroclus' death is thus described in *Il.* 23.61:

ἐν καθαρῷ, ὅθι κύματ' ἐπ' ἠϊόνος κλύζεσκον

in an open space, where the sea's waves splashed over the seashore

Finally, this is Agamemnon's lamentation when he realises that there is no obvious way to bring the war to a successful end in *Il.* 10.15:

πολλὰς ἐκ κεφαλῆς προθελύμνους ἕλκετο χαίτας

and he pulled from his head many hairs out by the roots.

The markedness of the participle κυλινδόμενοι, attested in comedy as well, has been discussed above.[24] Apart from the evidence that Matron had access to the *Iliad* as a whole, jangling with various parts of it, the form κλύζεσκε in v. 20 deserves particular attention. Matron's κλύζεσκε (v. 20) corresponds to the Scholia reading (Schol. A), whilst the vulgate reads κλύζεσκον. In fact, some ancient texts of Homer had κλύζεσκε (the reading of ACE[25] here) in place of κλύζεσκον at *Il.* 23.61, on which v. 20 is patterned.[26] Matron is probably reproducing his exemplar. If that is the case, then the verse constitutes a rare example of literal quotation of Homer. Since the words can scarcely be taken as a description of any actual feature of the dinner-party or its surroundings, they must be intended to be ridiculous.[27]

Importantly for the history of Homeric text transmission, there are several cases where Matron seems to follow his exemplar of Homeric epics against the vulgate. For example, Matron fr. 534.3 SH = fr. 1.3 Olson/Sens:

> ἦλθον γὰρ κἀκεῖσε, πολὺς δέ μοι ἕσπετο λιμός
>
> for I went there as well, and a great hunger followed with me

The verse is modelled on *Od.* 6.164:

> ἦλθον γὰρ καὶ κεῖσε, πολὺς δέ μοι ἕσπετο λαός
>
> for I went there as well, and many people followed with me

The form κἀκεῖσε in Matron is the only example of crasis in the fragments. κἀκεῖσε instead of the usual καὶ κεῖσε appears in some manuscripts at *Od.* 1.260 and *Od.* 6.164 and was probably the reading in the text of Homer available to Matron, though Aristarchus later forbade this and other similar forms.[28] See furthermore Matron fr. 534.12 SH = fr. 1.12 Olson/Sens:

> οἷς ἐπιτετράφαται μέγας οὐρανὸς ὀπτανιάων
>
> to them has been entrusted the great vault of the cookhouses

24 See Hermippus fr. 48.6 and fr. 14 above.
25 A= Venet. Marc. 822 (10th c.); C= Laur. 32, 2 (11th c.); E= Scorial. Y I. 1 (291) (11th c.).
26 Olson/Sens 1999, 89.
27 On further examples of making pastiches out of Homeric lines, see Olson/Sens 1999, 20–22.
28 Olson/Sens 1999, 77.

Here is a deliberately farcical adaptation of the description of the Homeric Horae controlling the cloud gates of the sky.[29] Most of the manuscripts containing the verse (*Il.* 5.750 = *Il.* 8.394) τῇς ἐπιτέτραπται μέγας οὐρανὸς Οὔλυμπός τε ("to whose care the great sky has been entrusted, as well as Olympus") have ἐπιτέτραπται, whilst the ACE had ἐπιτετράφαται. Third person singular medio-passive forms in -ατα and -ατο occur occasionally, however, in early epic and its Hellenistic adaptors, and it seems better to assume that this is what Matron read in his text of Homer, retaining the tradition. The form ἐπιτετράφαται occurs at *Il.* 2.25 = 2.62, ᾧ λαοί τ' ἐπιτετράφαται καὶ τόσσα μέμηλε ("to whom the troops have been entrusted, and he has so much to concern him"). ἐπιτετράφαται is third pl. here and has the sense "have been bequeathed/entrusted". A third case is Matron fr. 534.31 SH = fr. 1.31 Olson/Sens:

> τρίγλης ἱπποδάμοιο κάρη μετὰ χερσὶν ἔχοντα
>
> embracing the head of the horse-mastering red mullet in his arms

The verse is constructed as an adaptation of the Homeric description of Andromache's grieving for the dead Hector at *Il.* 24.724:

> Ἕκτορος ἀνδροφόνοιο κάρη μετὰ χερσὶν ἔχουσα
>
> embracing the head of man-slaughtering Hector in her arms

Matron's ἱπποδάμοιο occurs in various (also ancient) manuscripts and has been printed in Martin West's edition at *Il.* 24.724, although ἀνδροφόνοιο had been considerably better attested later.[30] ἱπποδάμοιο was in all probability the reading found in Matron's text of the poem.

There are some other indications of Matron's use of an earlier variant of the *Iliad*. The following three verses are composed on the basis of two Homeric ones (Matron fr. 534.95–97 SH = fr. 1.95–97 Olson/Sens):

> παῖς δέ τις ἐκ Σαλαμῖνος ἄγεν τρισκαίδεκα νήσσας,
> λίμνης ἐξ ἱερῆς, μάλα πίονας, ἃς ὁ μάγειρος
> θῆκε φέρων ἵν' Ἀθηναίων κατέκειντο φάλαγγες.
>
> A slave brought thirteen ducks from Salamis, from the sacred sea, very fat ones, which the cook served where the ranks of Athenians were reclining.

29 Olson/Sens 1999, 83–84.
30 West 2000, 365–366. See Olson/Sens 1999, 95.

Cf. *Il.* 2.557–558:

> Αἴας δ' ἐκ Σαλαμῖνος ἄγεν δυοκαίδεκα νῆας,
> στῆσε δ' ἄγων ἵν' Ἀθηναίων ἵσταντο φάλαγγες.
>
> Ajax brought from the island of Salamis twelve ships, led them and placed them where the ranks of Athenians were stationed.

Il. 2.558, on which v. 97 is patterned, was occasionally said to have been added to the text of Homer by Solon in order to lend support to Athens' claim to Salamis in a dispute with the Megarians (Plut. *Sol.* 10.1; Strab. 9.1.10). This is one of the two earliest witnesses for the verse, referred but not quoted at Arist. *Rh.* 1375b 29–30, which was apparently so poorly attested in the manuscripts known to the Alexandrians that they expelled it from the text.[31] Verse 96 interrupts the adaptation of two lines that were originally contiguous in Homer and is in fact clearly Matron's own creation. It serves the specific purpose of producing a contextually appropriate link between vv. 95 and 97. The Homeric vulgate has δυοκαίδεκα νῆας, but Pamphilus apparently read τρία καὶ δέκα (Schol. A), and Matron probably had τρισκαίδεκα rather than δυοκαίδεκα in his text of the poem.

Matron is the earliest attestation for the much-discussed verse *Il.* 2.558, στῆσε δ' ἄγων ἵν' Ἀθηναίων ἵσταντο φάλαγγες ("and leading (Ajax) stationed them where the battle-lines of the Athenians stood"). This is attributed by the later tradition to Solon as a favour made to the Athenians. Matron's variant reads: θῆκε φέρων, ἵν' Ἀθηναίων κατέκειντο φάλαγγες ("the cook served where the battle-lines of the Athenians reclined", v. 97 Olson/Sens). In all probability Matron altered the Homeric text (κατέκειντο for Homeric ἵσταντο) as he knew it.[32] The Homeric original at *Il.* 2.558 has ἵσταντο, but Greek diners reclined to eat and Matron — while retaining φάλαγγες — has adapted the verse to reflect this fact.

Matron's parody can thus contribute in a significant way both to our understanding of sophisticated humour in the educated fourth-century circles and of the history of the Homeric text. Importantly, it contributes also to knowledge of the reception of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in the pre-Alexandrian period.

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31 The verses *Il.* 2.557–558 were transmitted in various ways, whilst the verse *Il.* 2.558 was regarded as an interpolation, ascribed to Solon already by the ancient sources starting with Arist. *Rh.* 1375b. As a consequence of this verse, among other arguments, Cassio (2002, 115) dates the fixed text of the *Iliad* to some decades before 560 BCE; cf. Merkelbach 1952. Cf. further Strab. 9.1.10; Plut. *Sol.* 10.1–2; Quint. *Inst.* 5.11.39–40; Diog. Laert. 1.48; Allen 1913, 38–39. For discussion and other versions of this account, see Higbie 1997, 284–287; cf. also Boyd 1995.

32 Olson/Sens 1999, 19–20.

We cannot know to what extent Archestratus', Euboeus', and Matron's readers were capable of solving the sophisticated puzzles created by the poets. Undoubtedly, these represent those authors' literary-aesthetic points of view. They must also be based on ideas that were familiar to their contemporaries and thus fit into the corresponding discourses of the time. However, the very fact of such an adaptation of the Homeric text gives important clues as to the way the text was heard and read by its recipients in late Classical times.

3 Homeric criticism and later comedy

At the same time as the parodists mentioned above, the playwrights of later Greek comedy reflected on the Homeric textual tradition. The longest passage (fifty verses) attesting to the interaction of Greek comedy with Homeric epics and the studies of epics is perhaps fr. 1 from Straton's *Phoenicides*. This depicts a cook who is a talented rhetorician and speaks in Homeric verses and vocabulary. The fragment is a monologue spoken by a householder who is complaining about his new cook. "Frankly he does not understand a word" of what his cook is saying (ἁπλῶς γὰρ οὐδὲ ἓν μὰ τοὺς θεοὺς ὧν ἂν λέγῃ συνίημι, vv. 2–3). The householder inserts an alleged dialogue into his monologue. At some point, says the householder, he became exhausted through the long quotations and complicated words employed by his cook. These he could not understand, and he did not know anything of the Homeric sacrificial rites the cook referred to either.[33] "I am a rather rustic man, thus converse simply with me" (ἀγροικότερός εἰμ', ὥσθ' ἁπλῶς μοι διαλέγου, v. 25), states the master, all in a manner rather reminiscent of Aristophanes' Strepsiades. This implies a difference in social registers, with uneducated people unable to follow obsolete Homeric language, which was anything but "simple" (ἁπλῶς μοι διαλέγου), ἁπλῶς being emphatically repeated in the passage (vv. 2, 25). The master then asks the cook to speak more clearly (ἐρεῖς σαφέστερον, v. 37), and becomes desperate: "Do you intend to ruin me in a Homeric way?" (Ὁμηρικῶς γὰρ διανοεῖ μ' ἀπολλύναι, v. 30). The ability of texts, books, or intellectuals to "ruin" people was already notoriously emphasised by Aristophanes. An Aristophanic character in his *Tagenistai* claimed similarly: this man here (τοῦτον τὸν ἄνδρ') it was either a book that destroyed him (ἢ βυβλίον

33 On the literary analysis of this fragment, see Dohm 1964, 198–201; Revermann 2013, 102. Cf. also Perrone 2020, 347.

διέφθορεν), or Prodicus, or one of those idle chatterers (ἢ τῶν ἀδολεσχῶν εἷς γέ τις, Ar. fr. 506).

Homeric glosses such as μέροπες (v. 6), δαιτυμόνες (v. 11), μῆλον (v. 21), οὐλοχύται (v. 34), and πηγός (v. 36) are brought onto the stage as material for jokes.[34] Morphological forms are confused; the stupid master cannot recognise the Homeric imperfect μίστυλλον and builds a plural μίστυλλα out of it. On the other hand, the cook applies the standard technique mentioned above for the Old Attic Comedy and coins some words, or at least utters on stage words that have never been witnessed before (ἐρυσίχθων, "earth-breaker", for ox, v. 19; θυσιάζεις instead of θύω, v. 21).[35] The cook makes a noteworthy admonition which sounds like the pompous paraphrase of a school teacher: "Watch that you do it in this way in the future" (κατ' ἐκεῖνον ἤδη πρόσεχε καὶ τὰ λοιπά μοι, v. 29). This sounds odd in the context of a cook speaking to his master, but would sound natural in a school context, with the grammar teacher lecturing his student — an early version of the Jeeves and Wooster paradigm.

A further important piece of evidence for contemporary Homeric scholarship is provided by the following passage (Straton fr. 1.42–44):

> ... ὥστ' ἔδει
> τῶν τοῦ Φιλητᾶ λαμβάνοντα βυβλίων
> σκοπεῖν ἕκαστα τί δύναται τῶν ῥημάτων...
>
> so one would have had to get the books of Philitas to look up what each of the phrases means

We do not know exactly which "books" of Philitas are meant here. Philitas, a tutor of Ptolemy I Soter in Alexandria and a teacher of Zenodotus of Ephesus, probably returned to Cos prior to the foundation of the Alexandrian library.[36] From the surviving fragments it is hard to reconstruct Philitas' methodology, but the exegetical works Ἄτακτοι γλῶσσαι and Ἑρμηνεία are important for his studies of Homer (frr. 29–58 Kuchenmüller). Philitas' Homeric treatment was still considered significant in Aristarchus' time, as revealed by Aristarchus writing the treatise *Against Philitas*. Philitas seems to have exercised early scholarly practice and for the most part explained rare and obsolete Homeric words, examples including πέλλα, "(wooden) bowl" (*hapax Il.* 16.642, Philitas fr. 33 Kuchenmüller = fr. 5

34 On the glosses μέροπες and πηγός, see Spanoudakis 2002, 401–402. Cf. also Di Marco 2010.
35 Revermann 2013, 103.
36 Pfeiffer 1968, 88–92; Dettori 2000a; Dettori 2000b; Spanoudakis 2002, 347–403; Montana 2015, 70–72; Montana 2020, 142–143, 176–177.

Dettori), which Philitas explained as a Boeotian designation for a cup (Φιλητᾶς δ' ἐν Ἀτάκτοις τὴν κύλικα Βοιωτούς).[37]

On some occasions, Philitas' evidence is important for the status of earlier Homeric text transmission (Philitas fr. 49 Kuchenmüller = fr. 21 Dettori = Hsch. σ 893):

> σκῖρος· ῥύπος καὶ ὁ δριμὺς τυρός. καὶ ἄλσος καὶ δρυμός. Φιλητᾶς δὲ τὴν ῥυπώδη γῆν.
>
> "hard (perhaps chalk) land overgrown with bushes, scrub" (LSJ): filth and bitter cheese. Also grove and copse. But Philitas designates filthy earth in this way.

According to the Homeric scholia, Aristarchus is said to have shortened two verses, *Il.* 23.332–333, ἢ τό γε νύσσα τέτυκτο ἐπὶ προτέρων ἀνθρώπων, / καὶ νῦν τέρματ' ἔθηκε ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς ("or it was made as a turning-post in the time of earlier men; and now swift-footed divine Achilles appointed it to his end-marker"), into one, ἠὲ σκῖρος ἔην, νῦν αὖ θέτο τέρματ' Ἀχιλλεύς ("or it was hard/filthy land, but now Achilles appointed it to his end-marker", Schol. T ex., V 422 Erbse). Philitas' explanation of the obscure word σκῖρος might imply that this was the Homeric reading available to him (and perhaps Aristarchus) at the time. If so, this was not a conjecture by Aristarchus but received transmission.[38] The scholarship of Aristotle's time thus reveals a general interest in classifying authors and genres as well as employing close reading techniques to focus on disputed verses and obsolete words. Philitas' Homeric work was, we may thus posit, popular. In the comic fragment under discussion, a kind of reference book, perhaps a lexicon or encyclopaedia, is implied, in which the meanings (τί δύναται, v. 44) of Homeric words might have been explained.

Kassel and Austin added three "Homeric" lines that were preserved only in papyri to the fragment of Straton, for in the previous editions only 47 verses were presented (Straton fr. 1.48–50):

> καί μοι δοκεῖ ῥαψῳδοτοιούτου τινὸς
> δοῦλος γεγονὼς ἐκ παιδὸς ἁλιτήριος
> εἶτ' ἀναπεπλῆσθαι τῶν Ὁμήρου ῥημάτων.
>
> And it seems to me that this scoundrel was a slave of some sort of rhapsode from his childhood, so that he has been then filled to the full with Homeric expressions.

37 Dettori 2000a, 69–77; Spanoudakis 2002, 359–361. For the list of Homeric glosses in Philitas' grammatical fragments, see Spanoudakis 2002, 387–388.

38 Dettori 2000a, 147–152; Spanoudakis 2002, 374–375.

The embodied verb ἀναπίμπλημι ("fill up") is used with the genitive case in Classical Greek to mean metaphorically "to infect with", as some parallel passages suggest.[39] The housemaster thus ascribes the erudition of his cook to his close relationship with a rhapsode using a (derogative) comic *hapax* ῥαψῳδοτοιούτου. The rhapsode "infected" the cook with Homeric phrases (τῶν Ὁμήρου ῥημάτων). Straton's fragment, along with epic parody generally, serves as important evidence for the narrative of epic text transmission, reception, and interpretation in the late fourth century BCE.

Growing scholarly discourse elicited a comic reaction, as has been shown in all the examples cited above as well, and this was a reaction both to Homeric criticism and to comic creation of Homeric criticism. Straton's fragment constitutes an example of this category, with the allusion to Philitas and emphasised metatextual "Homeric" connotations such as "don't you know that Homer uses these words?" (Ὅμηρον οὐκ οἶδας λέγοντα, v. 26), "do you intend to ruin me in a Homeric way?" (Ὁμηρικῶς γὰρ διανοεῖ μ' ἀπολλύναι, v. 30), and "he has been infected with Homeric expressions" (ἀναπεπλῆσθαι τῶν Ὁμήρου ῥημάτων, v. 50). The issues of Homeric studies were clearly recognisable to the audiences of comedy.

A fragment from a comedy by Philemon, in which Homeric studies are similarly reflected, falls into the same period. A speaker gives advice to his addressee, perhaps in a broader context of rhetorical debates, as to which speech should be considered too long and drawn out and which should not, pointing to Homeric texts as examples (Philemon fr. 99.5–7):

> τεκμήριον δὲ τοῦδε τὸν Ὅμηρον λαβέ·
> οὗτος γὰρ ἡμῖν μυριάδας ἐπῶν γράφει,
> ἀλλ' οὐδὲ εἷς Ὅμηρον εἴρηκεν μακρόν

> Take Homer as a proof of this: for he writes us thousands of verses, but nobody has ever called Homer tedious.

Here, not only is the case of Homer taken as an attest (τεκμήριον) to illustrate a stylistic point, but, more importantly, the literary quality of the Homeric text is discussed and evaluated. The metonymy of the poet for the poetic work has been known since Archaic poetry, and Homer stands by default for the Homeric epics, both oral and written.[40] Here in Philemon, the audience should expect the evaluation of written Homeric epics, something that is part of the current discourse in

39 Cf. Ar. *Ach.* 847; *Nub.* 1023; Theognetus fr. 1.1–2; Pl. *Phdr.* 67a; Aeschin. 2.88; Xen. *Cyr.* 2.2.27; Dem. 24.205. See Dover 1968, 220 and Olson 2002, 283.
40 See the discussion in Zanker 2016, 146–163.

the late fourth century BCE.[41] The pattern of Homer serving as evidence for an argument (τεκμήριον δὲ τοῦδε τὸν Ὅμηρον λαβέ) is otherwise familiar in classical literature. Thucydides uses Homeric text to prove historical facts (τοσαῦτα μὲν Ὅμηρος ἐτεκμηρίωσεν), e.g. that there was a great assembly and feast on Delos in ancient times (ὅτι ἦν καὶ τὸ πάλαι μεγάλη ξύνοδος καὶ ἑορτὴ ἐν τῇ Δήλῳ, Thuc. 3.104.6). The Homeric epic as a testimony to stylistic and literary criticism is part of the interaction process between comedy and the current scholarly discourse in Athens.[42]

Later Greek comedy, just as Old Comedy used to do, continues to deal with the Homeric epics, exploiting the inconsistencies between the linguistic registers and the new contextualisation of characters and plots. Interest in the controversial nature of laughter, as well as in the physical and ritual components of laughter, was approached differently by Sigmund Freud and Mikhail Bakhtin in the twentieth century. Freud claimed that in all laughing situations we store a certain amount of physical energy that is normally used for a psychic purpose. Freud distinguished three laughing situations: in joking (*der Witz*), this energy is used to suppress aggressive and sexual feelings; in the comic (*die Komik*), it is saved for a cognitive processing; in humour (*der Humor*), the energy is that of an emotion that we believe is no longer needed.[43] Bakhtin examined carnival as a social institution and the carnivalesque parts of medieval comedy, which involved particular forms of free and familiar interaction between people, when people do not see a spectacle but live in it, with laughter having a unifying and universal function.[44]

The dual nature of comedy, involving the comic and the serious, is crucial. "Old Comedy plays dangerously on the border of two worlds, the older world of folklore and rural festival and what might be called the Middle Ages of ancient Greece, and the newer world of the fifth-century Athenian Renaissance, with its encyclopaedic learning, its wandering sophists (they might be called *umanistai*), and its new historical and artistic self-consciousness", wrote Kenneth Reckford.[45]

The parodic and comic Homer is not so different from ours that it could be conceived as the product of a living oral heritage, not determined by the availability of a written text. Indeed, there is no indication anywhere of extensive additions of events or of occasional random changes of plot in the late Classical text

41 On the use and the context of γράφει in this fragment, see Mastellari 2022.

42 Cf. comic poets quoting Homer who "made clever remarks": Ar. *Pax* 1096 (ὁ σοφός τοι νὴ Δί' Ὅμηρος δεξιὸν εἶπεν) and Ar. *Av*. 575 (Ὅμηρος ἔφασκ').

43 Freud 1905. See Morreall 1986, 111–116; Billig 2005, 139–172.

44 Bakhtin 1968. For an overview of theoretical approaches to humour from antiquity to the twentieth century, see Morreall 1986 and Silk 2000, 73–95.

45 Reckford 1987, 386.

of the poems, as one would expect if they were still quintessentially oral. The comic variants, however, are all part of the same formulaic system that produced the epics in the first instance, and their provenance is therefore of some importance. In our sources for the late Classical text of the poems, there are so many minor variants of an essentially oral nature that this seems an inadequate explanation for their existence, and many are probably better explained as products of a living tradition of rhapsodic performances that were somehow put into literary mould (this topic has been much discussed in the last twenty years).[46]

Epic parody and comedy's engagement with Homeric text can only be understood against a background of constant public performance of the Homeric epics, and the impression created by what survives of the fourth century parody suggests that parodic poets favoured the clever reworking of strings of specific lines borrowed from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* over the use of vaguely epicising language attested in earlier writers such as Hegemon. The second half of the fourth century BCE is a time of decisive significance for the text of Homer itself and for other performance traditions.

I confronted two aspects of the interaction of Homeric epic with the genres of parody and comedy. The verses are comically distorted, but also discussed and clarified, which brings us to the level of literary criticism and textual criticism. More importantly for the textual tradition, this persistent treatment of the Homeric text, which specifically characterises epic parody but also comedy, allows us to open a door to the state of the text in the pre-Hellenistic period, before the Alexandrian scholars made the decision to collate and revise it, and one result of this purge is that some ancient readings — as we have seen — have disappeared forever. Parody and comedy preserved and handed down the treasure chest of the earliest layers of the Homeric textual heritage.

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