

SONDERDRUCK AUS:

# EUPHROSYNE

STUDIES IN ANCIENT EPIC  
AND ITS LEGACY  
IN HONOR OF  
DIMITRIS N. MARONITIS

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## Stesichorus, Homer, and the Forms of Early Greek Epic

Recent decades have seen the recovery of Stesichorus from the limbo of the largely "lost" ancient authors and the inclusion of hundreds of lines of his poetry in new editions of the Greek lyric poets. But his exact location within the canon of "lyric" has become problematic. The ancient critical tradition had no problem classifying him as one of the λυρικοί and the member of that group most similar to Homer; and modern criticism has, for most of this century, considered him as unquestionably a choral lyric poet. But in recent decades authoritative scholars have cast doubt on whether Stesichorus really was, as his significant name ("establisher of the chorus") might imply, primarily a choral poet, suggesting instead that he was a citharodist whose performance modality was solo song. And others have proposed an intermediate interpretation, that Stesichorus—at least in some of his compositions—sang monody to the cithara or lyre while mute choruses danced some sort of mime accompaniment. In support of this position, scholars have noted a possible parallel in the performance situation of Demodocus described in *Odyssey* viii. This intriguing possibility merits further consideration. I believe that the parallel may be strengthened by emphasizing certain considerations of meter and genre in addition to suggestions already made by others. I shall offer these in the closing section of my paper.<sup>1</sup>

Let me prepare the way to such considerations by noting that the accumulation of recent research requires us to do some serious re-thinking about Stesichorus. If this early lyric poet was no longer clearly and simply a forerunner of the choral tradition of Bacchylides and Pindar, but also performed significantly as a solo reciter of epic and mythological stories, then his connection to Homer, already emphasized in antiquity, may be closer and more complex than we thought.

A central issue in recent discussions has been the question of genre and its defining features. I propose to develop further the recently accepted idea that Stesichorus, at least in some of his poems, performed in a genre intermediate between lyric and epic. To do so I must focus on Stesichorus' "Homeric" nature and review the two main factors that contribute to this assessment: the epic contents and expansive dimensions of his songs, and the language and metrical forms in which they were cast.

1 The case for citharoidic monody, first given strong voice by West 1971 and Pavese 1972:243ff., and emphatically re-affirmed by M. Davies 1988, seems to have acquired orthodox status. It has entered the current generation of "handbooks" with its endorsement by C. Segal 1985:187. The possibility of monody with silent choral accompaniment is recently argued by Gentili 1995:172 n.11. West—who considers it at least plausible—reminds us (309) that this interpretation, based on the Demodocus scene in *Odyssey* viii, was first suggested by Wilamowitz 1913:238. Davies is intent on showing that "choral lyric" as a formal genre is not an ancient but a modern conception. While this seems true enough, it does not change the fact that several ancient poets evidently could choose to present some of their compositions as monody, others as choral songs, and perhaps still others in the third mode mentioned above, citharody with silent dance. A useful summary of these varied judgments, and further bibliography, is given by Cingano 1993:347 n.3, in an article that sees the several uses of *molpê* and its compounds in Stesichorus' texts as signs of choral dance performance. Cingano 1990:209-11 sensibly warns that the current trend toward "monodizing" this poet should not keep us from seeing considerable diversity in Stesichorus' poetic output.

Epic contents are manifest, as critics have well observed. Despite his fragmentary survival, the list of Stesichorus' titles itself reflects subject matter that would naturally have been part of epic song, including *Geryoneis*, *Helen*, *Eriphyle*, *Iliou Persis*, *Nostoi*, *Oresteia*, and a poem on the Theban legend whose title is unknown.<sup>2</sup> Stesichorus also parallels Homer in his treatment of specific epic narrative motifs, although where we have enough to make comparisons we find his approach and emphasis is quite different. For example, the fragments of the *Geryoneis* (P. Oxy.2617 fr.4+5, col. 2; 14-17) contain a simile that makes the same comparison to one in *Iliad* viii.306-8, comparing the head of a victim just slain to the head of a drooping poppy. The conventional introductory phrases μήκων δ' ὥς and ὥς ὄκα μάκων suggest, as A. D. Maingon has argued, that the simile was traditional and known as Homeric to Stesichorus, and that the later poet's method of borrowing from his predecessor with significant alteration is consistent practice that can be observed elsewhere in the newly expanded Stesichorean corpus.<sup>3</sup>

Other similarities to Homeric epic are seen in Stesichorus' propensity to lengthy treatment, already a commonplace in ancient criticism. D. L. Page's estimate that the *Geryoneis* papyrus contained at least 52 columns, and that each column contained 30 lines, suggests that Stesichorus' rendering of this Herakles adventure would have run to as many as 1560 verses, the proportions of a small epic.<sup>4</sup> The case for epic scale and epic contents, then, would seem to need no further comment. And the same is true of Stesichorus' language, universally agreed to be a Doricized epic literary dialect.

It is Stesichorus' metrical forms that, I would propose, offer material for further discussion of this poet's relationship to Homeric epic. Stesichorean metrics has benefited from many excellent studies done since the publication of extensive new papyrus finds.<sup>5</sup> Speaking in very general terms we may say that the salient technical features of Stesichorean composition are its triadic organization and its use of meters that rely heavily on dactylic components. These meters divide into two broad types, either dactylo-trochaics that appear to be forerunners of Pindaric and Bacchylidean dactylo-epitrites (combinations of D and e, in Maas's notation), or largely dactylic runs of hemiepes (D) combined with opening and closing sequences variously identifiable as prosodiac, enoplian or paroemiac, a meter we may summarily call dactylo-anapaestic.<sup>6</sup>

Dactylic hexameters sometimes appear, but in close conjunction with verses of near-hexameter form that are composed of hemiepes plus a version of paroemiac/ enoplian. In fact these dactylic hexameters are sometimes found in precise metrical corresponsion with near-hexameters, the difference being of one short syllable: thus D<sub>2</sub>D- will correspond metrically to the perfect hexameter D u D-, seen for example in fr. 222a in the pairings 207 / 228, 209 / 230, 213 / 220. In other words, pairs like 213 / 220:

αὐτίκα μοι θανάτου τέλος στυγεροῖο γένοιτο  
τὸν μὲν ἔχοντα δόμους ναίειν παρὰ νόμασι Δίρκας

2 Lille papyrus 76 + 73 = PMGF 222(b), containing a long comment spoken by Jocasta.

3 Maingon 1980.

4 Page 1973:146f.

5 Of particular importance are: Page 1973; West 1969; Führer 1970; Haslam 1974, 1978; Gentili 1977; Tsitsibakou-Vasalos 1987.

6 The term is Haslam's 1974:10. He also identifies a third meter intermediate between these two, found in the *Iliou Persis*, which may be a nascent form of dactylo-epitrite (51-53).

are used as metrically equivalent. In metrical parlance, the hexameters in such contexts are merely "apparent" or "lyric" hexameters, because they are not conceived by the poet as hexameters as such, but as one of several possible realizations of Stesichorus' metrically two-fold hemiepes + anapaestic unit.<sup>7</sup>

The above distinction notwithstanding, Stesichorus' use of lyric dactylic hexameter, in a context of near-hexameter verse-forms, makes it clear that much of this poet's Homeric quality derives from his language and specifically from the metrical form in which he casts it. His language, allowing for dialect difference, is essentially epic. But perhaps there is still more to be made of his metrical proximity to Homer.<sup>8</sup> It is already clear that much of Stesichorus is not really lyric but epico-lyric. Might we not re-name this epico-lyric as simply another kind of epic, alternative to Homer's? One could go still further and ask whether epic poetry itself did not have, at an early stage of formation, more than one meter; that is, whether the verse-forms of Stesichorus do not perhaps continue, at a relatively late date, a genre of epic poetry that existed at a very early time but was eventually replaced by that seen in Homer and Hesiod, who used a perfectly formed and regularly (i.e., stichically) repeated dactylic hexameter.<sup>9</sup> This view has been proposed by Gentili but has not yet been argued in fully developed form.<sup>10</sup> Any such argument must begin with a review of our current understanding of the structure and evolution of the dactylic hexameter. To anticipate the point of the following discussion, let me say that to the degree that we strengthen the case that this metrical form grew out of the combination of two units, the hemiepes opening and the anapaestic closing, we also strengthen the hypothesis of a genetic kinship between Stesichorean verse and a less "finished" dactylic verse that was ancestor to the Homeric hexameter.

The hexameter we know as Homeric or Hesiodic represents a final product of considerable finesse. It is the outcome of habits of metrical "phrase architecture" developed by *aoidoi* between the Mycenaean and archaic periods, practitioners who were continually expressing traditional thematic contents through the metrical and formulaic structures provided by tradition and also through whatever innovations in formula and meter they (and their audiences) thought acceptable. It is tempting to search for connections between the hexameter's structure and its origins, since a satisfactory evolutionary model could explain internal structure in terms of development through historical stages. And so while an ultimately Indo-European origin is possible and even likely, the stages of evolution most significant for explaining the meter's internal architecture would be developments indigenous to early Greek poetics.

7 See Cingano-Gentili 1984 for a clear metrical demonstration of this point.

8 Haslam 1978:41-47 sees great significance in the close similarities between the "inner metric" of Stesichorus' verse and Homer's, specifically the similar handling of caesura and bridges.

9 This absence of stichic regularity sounds like what West 1982:35 has in mind when he notes that a few Homeric hexameters are metrically flawed, with irregularities "at the join between the cola" yielding the forms DUD- or DU-D-. Such verse forms are effectively Stesichorean dactylo-anapaestic. When West suggests that "at an earlier stage of the hexameter's development these may have been regular alternatives", he is close to the hypothesis I am suggesting, although he does not conceive it in terms of alternative epic genres.

10 Gentili 1995:175f., finding support in Aristotle's statement (*Poetics* 1448b 25) that there were many epic poets before Homer, which Gentili understands as referring to different *kinds* of epic poetry, presumably different sub-genres.

In imagining how the finished "Homeric" hexameter evolved out of earlier, less polished forms, two basic models have been offered: expansion from essentially aeolic (choriambic) units (Nagy, Berg), and combination of two already developed metrical entities, the hemiepes and paroemiac/enoplian (Gentili, West)

The choice between the West-Gentili model and its rival is impossible to make on grounds of theory or of argumentation through the drawing up of analytic schemata. It must come from a simpler and more empirical common-sense source, the experience of reading thousands of early epic hexameters. Such experience suggests that their most common and archaic structure<sup>11</sup> is either (a) strongly bipartite, where word-end combined with semantic boundary marks a clear division, or (b) moderately bipartite, where the semantic boundary grows ambiguous as the verbal idea runs beyond the third-foot caesura, although the word-boundary at the caesural point is still observed (I make no distinction here between masculine and feminine hemiepes, D and D<sub>U</sub>). If we keep solely to the domain of speech-introduction formulas—undoubtedly one of the most traditional parts of epic diction—we can illustrate these two patterns by the following familiar verse-types.<sup>12</sup>

- a. τὸν δ' αὖτε προσέειπε                      πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς  
τὸν (τὴν) δ' ἡμείβετ' ἔπειτα              Γερήνιος ἱππότα Νέστωρ  
τοῖς ἄρα μύθων ἤρχε                      περίφρων Πηνελόπεια
- b. τὸν δ' }                      ἀπαμειβόμενος              προσέφη { πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς  
τὴν }                      }                      }                      } πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς  
τοὺς }                      }                      }                      } νεφεληγερέτα Ζεὺς, etc. etc.

If we look to other areas of Homeric diction, we can easily identify a third category, c, where an established bipartite pattern has been extended with a word that runs to the hepthemimeral caesura, the third-foot caesura still being observed formally but having lost all force as a semantic divider. I would designate this category "minimally bipartite but rhetorically tripartite." Thus from traditional phrases identifying a hero as "son of Atreus (Tydeus)"

ζῶγρει, Ἀτρεὺς υἱέ, | σὺ δ' ἄξια δέξαι ἄποινα      Z 46, Λ 131  
ἔγρεο, Τυδέος υἱέ | τί πάννυχον ὕπνον ἄωτεῖς;      K 159

the poet will develop lines more nearly tripartite in structure:

- c. ὦ μοι, | Τυδέος υἱέ δαίφρονος | ἵπποδάμοιο      Δ 370  
ὦ μοι, | Τυδέος υἱέ δαίφρονος, | οἷον ἔειπες      Θ 152  
ὦ μοι, | Πηλέος υἱέ δαίφρονος, | ἧ μάλα λυγρῆς<sup>13</sup> Σ 18

11 It is important to note that I do not mean to claim greater antiquity, literally, for all the "strongly bipartite" verses I cite compared to the types b, c, and d. I claim they are the among the most traditional verses in the sense that they are staples of the diction for expressing its most fundamental repeated themes. For such fundamentals the most aesthetically appropriate form is that which is the most archaic.

12 These examples are selected from a great range of examples given by M. Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse*, ed. A. Parry, Oxford 1971, pp. 10-16, illustrating "The General Character of Formulaic Diction."

13 These examples are taken from Parry, *ibid.* 75.

To these models we may add **d**, the verse that is tripartite both structurally and semantically, where hepthemimeral caesura has fully replaced penthemimeral. This uncommon verse-form (perhaps an inevitable development from **c**) is nonetheless familiar and traditional, as seen in

**d.** διογενές, | Λαερτιάδη, | πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ

and the familiar two-line sequence

μίστυλλον δ' ἄρ' | ἐπισταμένως | πείραν τ' ὀβέλοισιν,  
ᾠπησάν τε | περιφραδέως, | ἐρύσαντό τε πάντα

If a bipartite or two-colon structure does indeed provide the origins of hexameter form,<sup>14</sup> it would follow that the earliest verses established as traditional—not those necessarily older linguistically, but those most fundamental to the oldest habits of narration in hexameter—are composed of two cola that are both structurally and semantically distinct (type **a**); and that generations of performing *aidoi* developed an increasing capacity for varying this fundamental structure with a more subtle one, in which the third-foot caesura was bridged over semantically while preserving the archaic division only in the formal sense of observed word-end (types **b** and **c**). Eventually they devised the more anomalous verse-type **d** to accommodate special long words near the center of the line. Such semantic bridging and structural anomaly were employed for effect in playing against the norm; although since poetic process is as much instinctive and unconscious as it is deliberate, I am not claiming that the *aidoi* were fully conscious of pursuing this aesthetic-structural goal. Their purpose was the same one, aesthetically, that an English poet seeks—again not always consciously but to some extent intuitively—when composing in the iambic pentameter that is the classic meter for his tradition. If every verse of a Shakespeare sonnet were regularly iambic in its stress pattern, the result would be tediously repetitive. Instead, the gifted poet shows a mastery of the possibilities of variation. Iamb is sometimes replaced with trochee, and occasionally by dactyl or anapest adding an extra syllable. Such departures are always followed by immediate return to the perfect iambic norm, so that the listener is kept secure in perceiving what is normal and what is licensed departure.

Consider the first four lines of Shakespeare's Sonnet xxix. Line 1 features two departures from strict iambic, compensated immediately by the perfectly regular line 2; line 3 again dislocates the meter strongly, even introducing a dactyl ("Heaven with") followed by the regular line 4.

When, in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes,  
I all alone beweep my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself, and curse my fate...

Similarly, hexameter verses, once the capacity for "enjambment" between cola was developed (I would imagine at a fairly early stage), often show the poet moving back and forth between verses that use the more stereotypic two-colon structure and verses that give some feeling of colometric "plasticity" through caesura that is semantically bridged. The effect is wonderfully pleasing, as the poet exploits the aesthetic principle of variation

14 So Gentili-Giannini 1977 *passim*; West 1982:35; 1997:236.

within sameness. We might even say that one important aspect of his verse-making artistry is his ability to stretch the limits of "sameness," showing how differently verse-structures may be realized within the same meter. Any sample of Homeric hexameter will demonstrate this principle, just as will any sample of Shakespeare. We might consider the following, Telemachos' short address to his father during the fight with the suitors, *Odyssey* xxii.99-104. I have employed special spacing to illustrate, in very rough fashion, the effect of colometric plasticity and the semantic units they create.

βῆ δὲ θέειν, <sup>1</sup> μάλα δ' ὦκα <sup>1</sup> φίλον πατέρ' εἰσαφίκανεν,  
 ἀγχοῦ δ' ἰστάμενος | ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·  
 ὦ πάτερ, <sup>1</sup> ἦδη τοι <sup>1</sup> σάκος οἶσω καὶ δύο δοῦρε  
 καὶ κυνέην πάγχυαλκον, | ἐπὶ κροτάφοις ἀραρυῖαν,  
 αὐτός τ' <sup>1</sup> ἀμφιβαλεῦμαι ἰών, <sup>1</sup> δώσω δὲ συβώτῃ  
 καὶ τῷ βουκόλῳ ἄλλα | τετευχῆσθαι γὰρ ἄμεινον.

The second, fourth, and sixth lines offer the conventional third foot caesura with coinciding semantic break. The first, third and fifth bridge this caesura semantically with varying degrees of emphasis on the overrun, the fifth line being the most emphatic.

The argument presented above runs directly counter to that developed in some detail by A. Hoekstra, who strongly objected to West's suggestion of a two-colon origin for the hexameter. One of his objections derives simply from the mistaken inference that West's theory requires us to imagine that the hemiepes originally functioned as an independent verse.<sup>15</sup> A seemingly more cogent objection to the "coalescence-hypothesis" is argued by collecting formulas that Hoekstra believes go back to "the earliest stages of epic narrative," "the oldest stage which can be traced, viz. the pre-Ionic stage,"<sup>16</sup> and showing that their structure does not fit into the two-colon pattern, but instead straddles the midline caesura semantically (i.e. belong to my type c) Hoekstra notes correctly that the two-colon structure would have made it impossible to construct a verse of such archaic content as Ἐκτῶρ δὲ Πριάμοιο πάις καὶ δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς, whose key formula Πριάμοιο πάις occurs twice elsewhere, and is part of a caesura-bridging system that includes τῶν δ' ἦρχ' Ἀγχαιοῖο πάις, Γλαῦκος δ', Ἴππολόχοιο πάις, αὐτὰρ ὁ, Ἴφικλοῖο πάις, Εὐρυσθεύς, Σθενελοῖο πάις, etc. His error, however, is in being confident he can assign such verses to the earliest stage of epic composition simply because they use the uncontracted form πάις, as if the poet were not capable of resorting to older forms at any time. Thus when he asserts that "the coalescence hypothesis can only be valid if not a single one of these expressions...was ever used in this position by the earliest singers to whom the Homeric tradition goes back. Is this really believable?"<sup>17</sup> I see no difficulty in answering with a simple "Yes." Given the skill with which professional poets can construct new verses as new forms become available to them, it is easy to imagine that the development from type a to b to c verses proceeded fairly rapidly within an early period of hexameter verse-making.

My own hypothesis is based not on claims of what are the "oldest" verses, but on the observation that the most clichéd of the stock formulas normally fill either a form of the

15 1981:46f.

16 1981:33-53; quotations from 40, 42.

17 1981:48.

hemiepes (regular or extended, D or D $\cup$ ) or of the paroemiac-enoplian, ( $\cup$ )D $\cup$ . Thus it is easy to imagine a poetics of early narrative verse construction based on a metric in which the core element D was used twice and a single or double anceps<sup>18</sup> (depending on whether the hemiepes was masculine or feminine) was used as "mortar" around this fundamental masonry. This may seem an evident truth, and is set forth as such in West's 1982 metrical handbook; but its implications are in fact momentous for the argument I am pursuing. Let me elaborate in detail, some of which may seem familiar, but all of which is relevant to the cumulative case I am making.

The argument for epic hexameter evolving out of the joining of these two half-line units is strengthened by the history of Greek poetic form. Hemiepes and paroemiac/enoplian can be shown to have some independent status as building blocks in several forms of early lyric, a fact well-documented by both Gentili<sup>19</sup> and West.<sup>20</sup> One poem of Bacchylides, as West points out,<sup>21</sup> consists entirely of hemiepes + anceps. The widespread use of paroemiac rhythms for expressions of proverbial wisdom is already familiar from Homer—e.g., the familiar τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ γερόντων / θανόντων, and μάλιστα δέ κ' αὐτὸς ἀνέγνω *Il.* xiii.734 with μάλιστα δέ τ' ἔκλυον αὐτοί, *Odyssey* vi.185—and Hesiod, e.g., δίκη δ' ὑπὲρ ὕβριος ἴσχει, παθὼν δέ τε νήπιος ἔγνων.<sup>22</sup> The common use of the paroemiac for proverbial expression independently of hexameter poetry is documented in the collections of von Leutsch-Schneidewin<sup>23</sup> and Strömberg,<sup>24</sup> reflecting a distinct independent status, as an oral folk genre, for statements of conventional wisdom framed in this form. Still other evidence might be adduced from the verse forms of archaic Greek inscriptions, whose highly traditional—in fact clichéd—phraseology was regularly created within the boundaries of the two metrical units hemiepes and paroemiac/enoplian.<sup>25</sup> The cumulative weight of all these observations taken together makes it abundantly clear that these two units enjoyed some degree of independence as distinct semantic and metrical entities that could be manipulated and re-combined in various ways within a poetic *koinê* based on fundamentally dactylic rhythm and widely diffused throughout early Greece.

If this hypothesis is correct, then it is at least plausible to maintain that Stesichorean poetry represents the late survival—with continuing development into a variety of new metrical combinations—of a kind of early and pre-Homeric epic that was based on dactylo-paroemiac runs not tightly constrained by stichic recurrence. If we grant, for the sake of argument, that this hypothesis is plausible, then what would the consequence be for our understanding of the nature and history of the early epic genre(s)?

18 For detailed consideration of the question of "double anceps" see Haslam 1974, 1978.

19 1977:27-29.

20 1982:35, 1997:236.

21 West 1997:236, notes that Bacchylides 20 S.-M. consists entirely of xD and xDx.

22 Ample documentation for Hesiod in Fernández-Delgado 1978, 1982, and Hoekstra 1950. These studies, together with Ahrens 1937, make clear to how great an extent the hexameter measure itself is a traditional metrical vehicle for proverbial and gnomic expression, regularly articulated in terms of two-colon structure.

23 E.g. ἐπιχώριοι οὐρον ἴσασι, *CPG* II:417.

24 E.g., the weather proverb φιλεῖ δὲ νότος μετὰ πάχνην, p. 90, cited from Theophrastus *De Ventis* 50.

25 Gentili 1967:65-81; 1977:19-24.



We can begin to answer this question by returning to the ancient testimonia that describe Stesichorus as a solo singer on the cithara. The most suggestive of these (ps-Plutarch, *De Musica* 1132b-c) identifies him as a practitioner similar to the Homeric figures of Demodocus and Phemius: these poets' compositions are said to be "like those of Stesichorus and the ancient melopoioi, who made ἔπη and set music to them." Translators commonly render ἔπη as "hexameters," but it follows from my argument that "lyrical dactyls" is a more accurate equivalent to ἔπη in this context, since it suits the realities of Stesichorus' metrical forms.

It is the parallel to Demodocus that has drawn considerable notice and comment, because he is portrayed as reciting three distinct songs, two clearly epic and one perhaps a form of choral lyric. The first and third of Demodocus' songs are clearly epic recitations from something like an early "Trojan cycle" (pseudo-Plutarch credits him, on the basis of Homer's text, with composing a "Sack of Troy"). The central and the only highly elaborated song, however, is the tale of Ares and Aphrodite, an amorous adventure and gentle satire on social relations within Olympus. Here we have not heroic epic (*klea andrôn*) but something we might call mythological melodrama. Demodocus has switched to a different narrative genre, and one sign of it is the role of the Phaeacian dancers. They offer a prelude to Demodocus' second recitation with their whirling choreography, follow it with another dance exhibition, and apparently have been performing while the poet was reciting his Ares-Aphrodite song. Their participation makes Demodocus' performance modality identical to that of the later choral lyric poets who play the cithara in conjunction with dancers who in some form act out a story. In one model the dancers also sing the poets' words (the traditional understanding of Pindaric performance). In another model the poet is a solo singer and the dance reflects the actions or perhaps only the emotional tone of his story.<sup>26</sup> Whatever Demodocus' relation to the dancers, this ancient equation of Demodocus with Stesichorus suggests that Stesichorus too was a performer in various genres, that he could do something close to Homeric epic and something more like lyric, the former meaning sung narration and the latter meaning solo singing with some form of accompanying dance.

Such an interpretation flies in the face of the conventional assumption that Homer intended his fictional blind bard Demodocus as a self-portrait, mirroring Homer's own role as a specialist in epic hexameter and *klea andrôn*. (Indeed, the traditional image of "blind" Homer owes much to this equation, combined with the other supposed self-portrait, the "blind man who dwells in Chios" of *Hymn to Apollo* 172). Instead, I argue that what Homer is describing in the figure of Demodocus is not contemporary aoidic practice but that of ages past. Homer created Demodocus as his conception of an *earlier* poet who commands not just heroic epic material in hexameter verse-form, but is also able to recite in an "alternative" epic mode, seen in the song of Ares and Aphrodite. Just as Homer elsewhere describes the performance of genres like the *thrênos*, the *paeon*, and the *hymenaios*, so here he may be describing a genre ancestral to that eventually inherited by the historical Stesichorus.

If this is so, might not the metrical form in which Demodocus is represented as singing the story of Ares and Aphrodite be similarly meant to be imagined as Stesichorean?<sup>27</sup>

26 Lefkowitz-Heath 1991; see also Davies 1988.

27 Gostoli 110-111 argues that such was the view of the ancient peripatetic school of literary criticism as represented by Demetrius of Phalerum and Heraclides Ponticus. Both believed Demodocus to be a

Why must we assume, after all, that the song of Ares and Aphrodite was envisioned by Homer as hexameter recitation? Of course Homer must represent Demodocus' verses as hexameters, because that is the only metrical form in which Homer may "quote" them. But when the priest Chryses prays to Apollo in *Iliad* i, or Hecuba and Andromache and Helen perform formal lamentation over the dead Hector in xxiv, we do not assume that these existing conventional genres, prayer (*arê*) and lament (*goos*), are represented as if actually chanted in hexameters! Similarly, Homer's audience would have been meant to understand that Demodocus' recitation, accompanied by the dance, was in a metrical form that suited the dance, i.e., dactylo-lyric and strophic.

The argument offered above is, of course, speculative, intended as a hypothetical re-configuration of the evidence we currently possess. I offer it as an extension of the intriguing suggestion made by Wilamowitz in 1913 and recently revived by others, and as part of the ongoing attempt to re-draw the lines that define the genres of early Greek poetry.

Let me close by summarizing the main points of my argument and their connection.

Our recently acquired texts of Stesichorus show him as an epico-lyric composer, whose Homeric qualities include, in the realm of verse-form, the use of dactylo-anapaestic verse whose components are very close to the two distinct units from which the hexameter originally coalesced. The widespread use of these two distinct units in the "demotic" traditions of proverbial metrical expression and archaic verse inscriptions, as well as in the more elite literary traditions of lyric verse, further testifies to their importance as early metrical and semantic "blocks" for verse construction. At a pre-Homeric stage of epic narration, more loosely structured verses based on these two "building blocks" would have provided an alternative form for diverse genres of epic—a tradition to which Stesichorus is the ultimate surviving heir. One such genre is seen in Demodocus' song of Ares and Aphrodite. Although represented by Homer as if in hexameters, the dancing attendant upon Demodocus' song points to an epico-lyric genre; and so the ancient association of Stesichorus with Demodocus may in fact be more specifically based than scholars have realized.

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real historical person, an early citharodic poet whose story-telling and specific genre Homer is incorporating into this scene. Gostoli's purpose is to document an ancient belief in a real Demodocus, while mine is to use Homer's fictional Demodocus to shed light on performance possibilities for Stesichorus. But we interpret the Ares-Aphrodite performance similarly, and my interpretation is indebted to hers.

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