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978-0-521-03565-1 - Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns: Diachronic Development in Epic Diction

Richard Janko

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Apart from Hesiod and the poems attributed to his 'school', the Homeric Hymns are our sole fully extant source of information about how the rich tradition of Greek epic poetry that culminated in Homer developed in time and space. It is not our purpose here to discuss the definition of the genre;¹ technically the beginning of the *Theogony* (1–105) and *Erga* 1–10 are hymns, but we are concerned with the corpus of *Hymns* that have been transmitted to us by manuscript tradition, independently of any poems they may have introduced. Of these there are twenty-eight shorter specimens (excluding *Hy* 8, which is incontestably out of place and probably the work of the late writer Proclus),² none more than sixty lines long, and five of greater length, counting the *Hymn to Apollo* as two; the fragmentary *Hy* 1 to Dionysus was probably long too.

Although previous scholarship has sometimes done so, it is dangerous to treat the *Hymns* as a single corpus for linguistic purposes, as they may differ considerably in their dates and places of origin. The use of the short hymns is particularly hazardous, as they offer so little evidence: on these grounds it seems best to exclude them from the inquiry, although it may eventually be practicable to offer a few conclusions about *Hymns* 7 and 19, each about fifty lines long. Thus we are left with five Hymns as follows: *Dem*, 495 lines; *Ap*, divided into *DAP*, 181 lines, and *PAP*, 365 lines (including 325a); *Herm*, 580 lines; and *Aphr*, 293 lines, giving a total corpus of 1914 lines: the abbreviations used in referring to the various hymns are given on p. xiv. The shorter hymns amount to 395 lines.

The text of the *Hymns* is preserved in twenty-nine late Byzantine manuscripts; as Allen and Sikes³ remarked, this indicates how little they were read compared with other early hexameter verse. Discoveries of papyri suggest that this was

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also true of earlier times; only three scraps relating to the *Hymns* have been found,⁴ in contrast to many fragments of Homer and Hesiod, including the *Ehoiai* (*Cat*). The rarity of citations and allusions in classical literature confirms the diagnosis, although there is some imitation in the learned Hellenistic poets,⁵ especially of course by Callimachus. In general, Alexandrian and later scholarship appears to have paid scant attention to the *Hymns*, and excluded them from the Homeric canon:⁶ nonetheless there are two occasions when the text of the *Hymns* influenced that of Homer – a second-century B.C. text of A 484ff., and Strabo's text at ο 295⁷ – and a reciprocal influence seems an inevitable supposition. The absence of scholia and the general neglect appear to have led to considerable corruption, greatest of course in the difficult *Herm*. Furthermore, there is evidence for substantial fluctuations in the text's early history. Apart from the vexed problem of duplicate lines,⁸ a quotation in Thucydides (III 104) presents a number of variants that amount to far more than straightforward corruptions or failures of memory.⁹ These become particularly significant when it is noticed that these variants are just what we might expect to find in a recasting of the song by an oral singer or reciter. Note particularly the following:

DAp 146 ἐπιτέρπειαι ἦτορ / *ξ 228 ἐπιτέρπεται, *PAp* 204 / οἱ δ' ἐπιτέρπονται θυμόν

Thuc. θυμόν ἐτέρφθης / I 189 θ. ἔτερπεν, ~ -ον *α 107, ~ ἔτερφθεν *Hy 19.45

DAp 148 / αὐτοῖς σὺν παιδεσσι ≅ γ 381 αὐτῶι καὶ παιδεσσι καὶ αἰδοίηι παρακοίτι

Thuc. / σὺν σφοῖσω τεκέεσσι ≅ Δ 162 σὺν σφηῖσω κεφαλῆισι, γυναιξί τε καὶ τεκέεσσω, *Th 398 σὺν σφοῖσω παιδεσσι

DAp 148 καὶ αἰδοίηις ἀλόχοισω / *α. ἀ. Z 250, Φ 460 κτλ. (σὺν παισὶ καὶ ~, cf. σὺν παιδεσσι sup.)

Thuc. γυναιξί τε σὴν ἐς ἄγνιαν / *γ. τ. Δ 162 sup., μέσσην ἐς ἄγνιαν Υ 254

DAp 149 ὄρχηθμῶι καὶ ἀοιδῆι / *Aspis 282, *Theognis 791

Thuc. ὄρχηστῶι καὶ ἀοιδῆι / *θ 253, *ρ 605

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DAp 150 *στήσωνται ἀγῶνα* / cf. *φυλόπιδα στήσει* λ 314, *ἔρω*
~ π 292

Thuc. *καθέσωσι ἀγῶνα* / cf. Ψ 258 *ἴξανεν εὐρὸν ἀγῶνα* / (but
in sense of ‘assembly’: ‘contest’ first *Th* 435 (?), *Hy* 6.19)

DAp 168 *ξεῖνος ταλαπείριος ἐλθῶν* / ξ. τ. η 24, nom. pl. τ
379, acc. sing. ρ 84.

Thuc. *ταλαπείριος ἄλλος ἐπελθῶν* / *ἀ. ἐ. Δ 334, *τ. η 24 κτλ.

Thucydides’ text of line 148 is close to Δ 162, despite the interesting *σὴν ἐς ἄγυιαν*, while ours resembles γ 381. It is difficult to say which is better. These fluctuations strongly suggest oral transmission and recomposition: the manuscript text offers only the illusion of solidity, at least here: but it is all we possess, and we must make the best of it. Further examples of independently transmitted variants due to similar causes are found in two versions of the *Hymn to Hermes*, *Hy* 4.1–9 and *Hy* 18.1–9, where we can explain the variants:

Hy 4.1–2 *Ἐρμῆν ὕμνει Μοῦσα Διὸς καὶ Μαΐαδος υἱὸν*
Κυλλήνης μεδέοντα . . .

Hy 18.1–2 *Ἐρμῆν ἀείδω Κυλλήνιον Ἀργειφόντην* / ~ . . .

Depending on which is earlier, the alterations are due to the desire to avoid mentioning Cyllene twice, or by an accidental anticipation of the name; thus *Hy* 4 is better here.

Hy 4.3–4 *Μαῖα / νύμφη εὐπλόκαμος* . . .

Hy 18.3–4 *Μαῖα / Ἄτλαντος θυγάτηρ* . . .

The alteration here has an identical cause: *νύμφη εὐπλόκαμω* (the more frequently attested case-form) occurs three lines below in both versions. So here *Hy* 18 is better.¹⁰ Cf. η 245–7.

These cases show that versions of what is essentially the same poem could undergo substantial change, apparently by oral transmission involving some recomposition: these versions appear to be different recordings of the same underlying *Gestalt*. But there is also good evidence that similar ‘oral’ variants were recorded in some branches of the manuscript tradition of the *Hymns*. In *Herm* we have the benefit of the marginalia termed *y*: thus at 212 *y* (and also M) gives *μῦθον ἀκούσας* for *Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων* (the name is soon to be repeated, but this does not suffice to condemn the reading, cf. *Herm* 4); at 288

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γ has ἀντης βουκολίοισι καὶ εἰροπόκοις ὀίεσσι for ἀντήσης ἀγέλησι βοῶν καὶ πώεσι μῆλων. For the first cf. εἰροπόκοις ὀίεσσι *E 137, for the second ἀγέλην τε βοῶν καὶ πῶν μέγ' οἴων Λ 696, πώεσι μῆλων *δ 413. Other examples, usually with good formular parallels for both readings, are found at 322, 326, 366 and 563. Elsewhere (where extant) the celebrated Mosquensis sometimes affords lections of a similar type, e.g. (here with *γ*) *Aphr* 214 ἴσα θεοῖσι for ἡματα πάντα. Compare its readings at *Aphr* 18, 67, *Hy* 10.4f. and *Hy* 15.5–6.¹¹

This evidence for the oral transmission of *DAP*, *Herm*, *Aphr* and some shorter pieces does not of course solve the problem of whether they were orally composed. Pieces composed in writing can undergo oral transmission, like many English ballads.¹² The question of oral composition (as distinct from transmission) will be examined in the next chapter.

Although we know nothing of when or where the *Hymns* were committed to writing, it may be possible to make some conjectures about the orthography that was used. All epichoric Greek scripts except Ionic had no separate signs for inherited $\bar{\epsilon}$ and \bar{o} , and most, including Attic and Boeotian, did not mark $\bar{\epsilon}$ and \bar{o} caused by compensatory lengthening. Many early inscriptions wrote out elided vowels, and still more did not mark geminated sounds: it is impossible on the present evidence to establish any regional or chronological tendencies. For texts transmitted in manuscripts two sources of evidence exist: ancient errors in transcription and manuscript variations. The former is of course rare: a good example is the variant reading ἐπλετο, ἐνθεν for ἐπλητ', ἐνθεν at *Th* 193; the original text may have read ΕΠΛΕΤΟΕΝΘΕΝ – or again *Th* 74 διέταξεν ὁμῶς corrected by van Lennep to διέταξε νόμους from ΔΙΕΤΑΞΕΝΟΜΟΣ.¹³ In the *Hymns* note the following:

DAP 54 εὔβων (εὔβουν *p*) from ΕΤΒΟΝ, cf. βῶν *H* 238.¹⁴

PAP 487 (cf. 503) λύσαντε βοείας. Apollonius Rhodius read this, as at *III* 206 he has the certain echo¹⁵ κατειλύσαντε βοείαις, where βοεία is used in the usual sense of 'oxhide'; here it means 'thongs, halyards', for which the Homeric word is βοεύς, β 426 = ο 291, *PAP* 407. The inconsistency is intoler-

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able in the same poem, so we must accept Buttman's βoῆας from BOEΑΣ. βoεύς is not found elsewhere in Greek, which might account for the false transcription.

Here there is the reinforcing factor that the sense of the mistaken form is incorrect. Other examples are less clear; e.g. is ἡαρινο- in the sole ms. M at *Dem* 401 a genuine form or an etacistic error of the later tradition? It is fluctuations of this sort that Herzog uses as his second type of evidence for metagrammatism in the *Hymns*: he is easily criticised. Errors over gemination, and the confusions εἰ/η/ηι and ο/ω (but not *scriptio plena*, false elision or the confusions ε/η (ē), ο/ου (ō) or ου/ω) could well be attributed to the effects of later Greek pronunciation. Moreover the number of errors will increase as the manuscripts become more numerous: hence Herzog is able to produce far more 'evidence' for Hesiod than for the *Hymns*. The *Hymns* of Callimachus seem a sound yardstick, as they must have been in Ionic script from the start, and also share seven mss. with our *Hymns*. In Cahen's apparatus to I–IV (803 vv.) I counted ten mistakes over gemination, and seven confusions attributable to later pronunciation. But he gives at least one confusion of η/ε (IV 266), and two of ου/ω (III 154, IV 271). Thus we should reject cases of these types in the *Hymns*; even so there is a residue, almost all from *Ap*:

- (a) Elision: *scriptio plena*, *DAP* 163 / μμείσθαι ἴσασιν; false elision, *Dem* 122 / Δωσ(ώ?) ἐμοί M, 332 ἐπιβήσεσθ' (αι) M.
- (b) E-confusions: *DAP* 93 'Ἐῆ codd. = 'Ῐείη.
- (c) O-confusions: *DAP* 120 λουῶν unmetrical for λούον, unless for λούον.

DAP therefore passed through manuscripts without signs for H or Ω and without elision: likewise *PAP* and perhaps *Dem*. The case of *DAP* is especially interesting in view of its Ionic origins: although the epichoric script involved could be Euboian or Boeotian, both traditional and internal evidence for Homer's text suggests that Attic is most likely. However, this cannot have been the original form of the text, but only an intervening phase; and it would be hazardous to argue *e silentio* that *Herm* and *Aphr* were never thus transmitted, although

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one explanation for the beautifully preserved text of the latter might be that it was always transmitted in Ionic script.¹⁶ Nor does evidence for metagrammatism prove that any two texts had a similar history. Thus knowledge of the early history of our texts is scant, nor do we know when the corpus of *Hymns* was assembled.

The story of Renaissance and subsequent study of the *Hymns*, particularly of the establishment of their texts, is well told elsewhere.¹⁷ The nineteenth-century editors made many perceptive comments about the language and metre of the *Hymns*, but it was not until the 1860s that systematic studies of these aspects appeared – A. Koehn on grammar and metre, Fietkau on non-homeric vocabulary, and E. Windisch on parallel phrases in Homer and Hesiod. Each of these had enviably industrious followers: to name only the most important, E. Eberhard, Rzach and La Roche on metre and prosody; various studies on individual *Hymns* cover vocabulary and non-Homeric forms and usages – on *Dem*, Francke and Dittmar; on *DAP*, note Priem; on *Aphr*, Suhle. A number of scholars have followed Windisch in compiling Homeric and Hesiodic parallels, e.g. Sterrett, Teske and also Richardson's edition for *Dem*, Boettcher for *Herm*, Preziosi for *Aphr*.

From our viewpoint the most important editions of the *Hymns* are those of Gemoll and Allen and Sikes. The second edition by Allen and Halliday is often far less useful, and the contribution of Humbert's Budé edition is mainly literary. Most recent is Càssola's edition, which is good in some respects, but contributes little on diction. Three hymns have editions of their own – Radermacher's of *Herm*, Forderer's of *DAP* (mainly useful for its full apparatus), and Richardson's of *Dem*, containing a thorough treatment of the diction. More detailed views on the diction, dates and origins of individual hymns will be examined in later chapters.

Some useful aids to scholarship deserve mention. The *Hymns* are included in Gehring, in Ebeling and in Dunbar's Concordance, revised by Marzullo; their vocabulary is treated in the still incomplete *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos* of

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Snell and others: for the *Hymns* must be studied in the context of Homer, but Hesiod and the other remnants of early Greek hexameter poetry must also be taken into account. To this end, using machine-readable texts of Homer, Hesiod and the *Hymns* based on the Oxford Classical Texts, to which I have added the Cyclic and Hesiodic fragments from Allen, Kinkel, and Merkelbach and West, I have compiled a concordance to early Greek epic. This differs from those of Dunbar and Prendergast in that all examples of the same cases or inflectional forms are together, and the forms are entered according to the word following, so that all formulae appear together: there is more context, and even the most common words are listed (this is also true of Minton's concordance to Hesiod). I have found this Key-Word-in-context concordance a valuable tool for the study of the epic tradition.¹⁸

Most of the problems to be tackled in this work have already been recognised by modern scholarship. The relationship of the poems to Homer and Hesiod was scrutinised long before the work of Milman Parry, who gave it a new dimension, that of oral poetry. If the question of the extent to which the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are the product of a long tradition of oral poetry cannot be answered conclusively on the basis of twenty-eight thousand lines of verse, it is hardly likely to be soluble in a shorter and more heterogeneous corpus. Perhaps the best we can do is to determine whether the *Hymns* or some of them differ from Homer (and Hesiod) in any vital respect; we will examine this further in the next chapter. But there are other dimensions to the comparison with Homer and Hesiod – their dates relative to each other, their geographical relationship, and the positions they occupy in the development of the tradition. How much truth is there in the ancient claims for 'Homeric' and 'Hesiodic' schools of poetry outside Homer and Hesiod themselves? Where do individual hymns belong? How do they relate to the dialects spoken in the areas of their origins, as far as these can be established? A coherent history of the Greek epic tradition is still lacking.

Several methods have been tried in attempts to resolve the

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extensive chronological uncertainties that persist. In the discussion that follows, we will consider the use made of them by their various exponents.

(i) *Historical*. The only case where external evidence exists is *DAP*, about which the scholiast on Pindar's Second *Nemean* 1 gives plenty of information; but most scholars have wished to alter the date. Allusions and quotations provide a *terminus ante quem* within the fifth century for *DAP* and perhaps *PAP*, both of which are certainly imitated in Alexandrian poetry, and *Herm* is referred to then.¹⁹ Although the first reference to *Dem* is in Philodemus, Richardson thinks that its influence is possible as early as Ibycus and Pindar, and certain in Apollonius Rhodius.²⁰ *Aphr* is never mentioned or quoted: the clearest imitation of it appears to be Vergil *Aeneid* I 314–35, 402ff.

(ii) *Internal* evidence is more plentiful and more controversial. There are several types – alleged reference to known events (or lack of such reference), topographical and archaeological arguments about the foundation dates of temples which might be the one referred to by the poet, the continuity of festivals, use of myth for political purposes, etc. These must be assessed individually on their merits: among the weakest are those based on the spread of religious ideas, and supported only by our ignorance; such an idea is first in Hesiod, therefore it must have been borrowed from him. Unless we are sure on other grounds that Hesiod is earlier, this is a risky argument.²¹

In some cases it is possible to obtain accurate dating in this way: the best example is the historical work of Guillon on the *Aspis* and *PAP*, which he associates with the First Sacred War. We may also be told or be able to guess the origins of the poet and the occasion of the poem: the poet of *DAP* says he was a Chian composing for a festival on Delos: Guillon shows that the author of *PAP* was probably Boeotian but not Theban: *Dem* was probably composed at Eleusis, *Aphr* in the Troad.²²

(iii) Another form of internal evidence is literary imitation and influence. Until Parry, a great deal of scholarly effort was

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devoted to determining the interrelationships of early epic on these grounds, with inevitable dangers of subjective judgments which mar most of the work on the *Hymns*; and even since then similar efforts have continued, for example by Schröder on the *Hymn to Delian Apollo*. Parry's work should make us very cautious of the principles of *exemplum* and *imitatio* when little more than single formulae are involved. Should we regard passages several lines in length repeated almost verbatim as better or worse evidence than a more remote verbal association? Even if we feel that coincidence is remote, and think we know which is the *exemplum*, how can the existence of a third passage from which both are derived be excluded?

Consider how much epic poetry has been lost of which we have a record: from notices of the Trojan Cycle²³ alone, excluding the lost works outside it and those ascribed to Hesiod, we learn of at least twenty-nine books. Assuming that each book contained 500 lines on average as in the *Odyssey* (the *Iliad* has c. 650), the total is 14,500 lines, of which about 120 survive – less than one in a hundred! However we know that the *Oedipodia*, *Thebais* and *Epigoni* contained 20,600 verses in all, of which but 23 survive, about one in 900! At least as much epic poetry has been lost as has survived, leaving aside oral poetry there may have been which was never recorded.²⁴

Despite these losses this approach is still useful if used with due caution.²⁵ There is certainly no denying the relationships between *DAP* and *PAP* or between *Dem* and *Aphr*, although which is the prior in each pair is not securely determined. Hoekstra²⁶ has detected an imitation of an Iliadic passage in *Aphr* which owing to an alteration may be an important indicator of the poem's date.

(iv) Determination of priority in such cases may be eased by considering the exact language as well as the thought. A passage may display not merely *etwas unorganisches* but a more developed linguistic form or usage. Leumann's application of the principles of *imitatio* to the traditional language itself is worthwhile, but his conclusions cannot be used to support Analytic hypotheses or other chronological investigations

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(as Heitsch claimed), for the simple reason that the *exemplum* may survive in use long after it had given rise to the secondary usage through misunderstanding.²⁷

(v) Linguistic studies now fall into two categories: the first, a continuation of the nineteenth-century philology, is represented by Zumbach. Zumbach studied isolated forms and usages in the *Hymns*, commenting on phonology, morphology and word-formation, but avoiding the discussion of frequent forms and its statistical implications. Chronology is taken for granted; Homer is earlier, and anything not in Homer is an innovation. Thus the archaism χρυσάορα (*Dap* 123) is borrowed from Hesiod, while κατάκειαι (*Herm* 254) is emended away: yet the 'Atticism' θάρτρον (*Herm* 255) is kept despite θᾶσσον elsewhere in the same hymn (212). Zumbach does not seem to have realised that he was dealing with a *Kunstsprache* composed of forms of diverse age and origin rather than a homogeneous prose treatise.

There is a frequent tendency to derive chronological arguments from a few isolated forms or usages, when scholars are attempting to date a particular hymn, or eject a passage from the text. Considering the paucity of our evidence for the Greek tongue until the late fifth century in Attica and even later in most regions, we should not be surprised to find a certain number of forms, usages and lexemes otherwise unattested until later: some of the usages noted as *Neuerungen* in last-century dissertations have since appeared in discoveries of Archaic poetry, and some non-Homeric lexemes (e.g. ἄκτιρος, *Aphr* 123) are Mycenaean. Another hazard is that if the forms are not in some way guaranteed, e.g. by metre, they are liable to have been altered in transmission. There is also the risk that a particular line might conceivably have been added after the composition of the bulk of the work, although most scholars now agree that with the doubtful exception of *Ap* none of the hymns contain substantial interpolations. Despite these dangers, this approach can produce interesting results, if used cautiously and alongside other methods.

(vi) During the past decades scholars have realised that Parry's proper-name-epithet systems are the most formalised