Introduction

The study of early Greek epic was always at the forefront of research activity in the field of Classics. One, and perhaps, the main reason was Homer, a poet who has been an icon of Greek poetry and culture throughout the centuries. It was only to be expected that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* would still attract intense scholarly interest, as they had already done in antiquity. In the last fifty years major developments have taken place, both in the field of Homeric studies and in the rest of early Greek epic. These developments have not only created a more solid basis for studying the Homeric epics, but they have also broadened our horizons with respect to the place of Homeric poetry within a larger cultural milieu. The impressive advances in Hesiodic studies, the more systematic approach to the Epic Cycle, the more nuanced use and re-evaluation of dominant twentieth-century theories like Neoanalysis and Oral Theory, the study of other fragmentary Greek epic, the cognitive turn, narratology, the performance of epic poetry in the ancient and modern world, the fruitful utilization of Indo-European material, and the widely accepted recognition of the close relation between Homer and the mythology and literature of the ancient Near East have virtually shaped anew the way we read and understand Homer. The studies collected in this volume, which represent part of my work during the last twenty years and are informed by most of the aforementioned sub-fields, span four research areas: (i) Homer; (ii) Hesiod; (iii) the Epic Cycle; (d) the performance of epic. They owe a lot to a host of scholars, whose scientific contributions have made me think, re-evaluate, and explore further the fascinating world of early Greek epic. In what follows, I offer a brief presentation of my own research input within the on-going dialogue pertaining to early Greek epic.

(i) In the field of Homeric studies, Neoanalysis and Oral Theory have been injected with new blood. Several scholars have opted for a more nuanced and methodologically consistent version of the theoretical basis on which rests each of these two schools of Homeric criticism. Others have considerably broadened the range of material which can be employed as a backdrop for testing all relevant arguments.

Georg Danek¹ has masterfully applied the neoanalytical *Quellenforschung* to the entire *Odyssey*, while being alert to the impressive advances of the Oral Theory concerning traditionality and performance. On a methodological level, his main contribution is the notion of Zitat (‘citation’). Danek argues that the

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Odyssey consistently ‘cites’ its sources by recourse to a system of references embedded into the text. Another principal contribution of Danek is his systematic and thorough exploration of alternative versions of Odysseus’ return that the Homeric Odyssey regularly employs as cues for its audience. In the English-speaking world, the main contributions are those by Jonathan Burgess and Bruno Currie. Both scholars have had a significant input with respect to several methodological issues, which an earlier form of neoanalytical criticism ignored. They have addressed crucial matters pertaining to the function of allusion in early Greek epic and discussed the controversial issues of text-fixity and symptomatic versus intentional thematic and phraseological repetition. Currie has also extended the scope of neoanalytical research by bringing into the discussion Greek hymnic and ancient Near Eastern poetry. Another strong voice is that of Margalit Finkelberg who has both enlarged the neoanalytical source-pool and offered refined and subtle arguments as regards the metacyclic nature of Homeric epic and the relation between oral-formulaic theory and the individual poet. Michael Reichel has meticulously studied the intratextual references in the Iliad, which display a remarkable precision and cohesion which he explained as the work of a single poet who used writing in the composition of the poem. Reichel has also debated the orality of Homeric poetry favoring the neoanalytical method. A special place is occupied by Ernst Heitsch who stands between Analysis and Neoanalysis. Heitsch claimed that a short poem on Aeneas is a source on which draw both the Iliad and the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite. He also accepts the basic neoanalytical view about the influence of the Aethiopis on the Iliad. For him Homer is the last poet of the Iliad who gave the epic its final shaping in seventh-century Athens.

As regards the Oral Theory, Gregory Nagy has been the principal driving force behind its application to technical matters, interpretation, and the shaping of Homeric epic. His evolutionary model, which involves five periods corresponding to degrees of gradually increasing crystallization has given to the Oral Theory a depth that was lacking from its first stages. The evolutionary model amounts to a ‘response’ to criticism pertaining to the question of fixity and the process of fixation of Homeric poetry and is against the dictation theory that aimed at finding a middle ground between an oral and a writing Homer. A welcome ‘turn’ to the dictation theory has recently been suggested by Jonathan Ready, who draws on the testimony of folklorists and ethnographers engaged with the study of modern instances of the textualization of oral traditional works, and opts for a textualization of Homeric epic by means of a process involving a collector who had a poet dictate his version of the Iliad and the Odyssey to a scribe. For Ready, the Homeric text should be seen as the co-creation of the performer, collector, and scribe. Further boost to the Oral Theory

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12 This evolutionary model postulates the existence of the following five phases: (a) a fluid period with no written texts from the 2nd millennium to ca. 750 BC; (b) a more formative period from 750 to 550 BC, during which the Homeric poems acquire Panhellenic status (still without written texts) and begin to be performed in Athens; (c) a more definite period (550–300 BC), centralized in Athens, during which the Homeric poems are used as transcripts accompanying (not substituting) performance; (d) a standardizing period (300–150 BC) marked by the reform of performance traditions and the creation of an official Athenian state script of Homer by Demetrius of Phalerum; (e) a last phase (after 150 BC) marked by the philological activity of Aristarchus that leads to an even more standardized text.
14 B. Powell (‘Homer and Writing, in A New Companion to Homer, 1997, 3–32) linked the invention of the Greek alphabet with the pressing need to record the dactylic hexameter, which is the meter used in epic composition.
has been given by John Miles Foley whose methodical, meticulous, and exceptionally erudite studies have substantially enlarged the reach of the oral theory and improved our knowledge of oral poetry across the globe.\footnote{Oral-Formulaic Theory and Research. An Introduction and Annotated Bibliography, 1985; The Theory of Oral Composition: History and Methodology, 1988; Traditional Oral Epic: The Odyssey, Beowulf, and the Serbo-Croatian Return Song, 1990; Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic, 1991; The Singer of Tales in Performance, 1995; Homer’s Traditional Art, 1999.} A special place among oralists is occupied by Oliver Taplin,\footnote{Homeric Soundings: The Shaping of the Iliad, 1992.} who envisages an oral Homer, trained in oral traditional epic and composing the \textit{Iliad} by employing the techniques of oral composition. Taplin explains the cohesion, interaction between scenes separated by thousands of verses, and structural unity of the \textit{Iliad} by suggesting that Homer performed different parts of his epic at different venues throughout his life and continued to work on it, implementing changes, omissions, and adaptations. Taplin’s theory of an oral poet working over an extended period of many years is analogous to M.L. West’s theory of two poets who are also trained in oral traditional epic but compose the \textit{Iliad} and the \textit{Odyssey} respectively by recourse to writing over an extended period of his life.\footnote{The Making of the Iliad. Disquisition and Analytical Commentary, 2011; The Making of the Odyssey, 2014.} Oral Theory has also gained a great deal both by its creative use of linguistics and by using formulaic material in a more nuanced and interpretively meaningful way. In the field of linguistics, the contribution of Egbert Bakker is of special merit. By applying linguistic theory to the study of Homeric style, Bakker argued that formulas should be studied within the framework of spoken speech.\footnote{Poetry in Speech: Orality and Homeric Discourse, 1997.} For him, epic language contains devices which allow the performer of epic song to bring the past to the present. By employing discourse analysis, he has demonstrated that epic employs an entire deictic system that creates vividness, which lies at the heart of the performance of Homeric poetry.\footnote{Pointing at the Past: From Formula to Performance in Homeric Poetics, 2005.} A chief representative of the study of the inspired and resourceful use of diction in Homeric epic is Richard Martin,\footnote{The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the Iliad, 1989.} who has studied direct speech in the \textit{Iliad}. Being alert to the advances made in ethnography, sociolinguistics, literary theory and folklore studies, Martin treats speeches as authoritative speech-acts, where traditionality and spontaneity coexist. The surprising ways speakers combine, alter, adapt, and even misuse traditional diction results in the creation of individual idiolects that
mark each character’s voice as unique. Significant are also the contributions of Pietro Pucci and Ruth Scodel. Pucci showed how the interaction between the two Homeric epics on the level of phraseology creates meaning. His intertextual approach is bidirectional: from the *Iliad* to the *Odyssey* and from the *Odyssey* to the *Iliad*.22 Scodel has studied how oral poets tailored individual nuances to their audiences, while dealing with traditional material that they had learned from earlier poets. She has argued that the oral poet, while pretending that the content of his song is familiar to his audience, makes sure that all kinds of listeners can follow and enjoy it. Innovation and originality could hardly be identified by the audience, since Homeric epic tends to traditionalize what is new with respect to the performance and, at the same time, present it as authoritative.23

These are some of the studies which have played a key role in the fields of Neoanalysis and Oral Theory. Furthermore, progress in Homeric research has been also made possible by new textual editions and commentaries. The publication of the scholia vetera (Hartmut Erbse)24 and the D-scholia (Helmut van Thiel)25 to the *Iliad*, the ongoing publication of the scholia to the *Odyssey* (Filippomaria Pontani)26 the completion of the authoritative *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos*,27 the new Teubner editions of the *Iliad*28 and the *Odyssey*29 by M.L. West (accompanied by his *Studies on the Text of the Iliad*30 and his two commentaries),31 the extensive and detailed commentaries on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by Cambridge32 and the Fondazione Valla33 respectively, as well as the ongoing publication of the Basler Kommentar34 on the *Iliad* have put at our disposal impressive and trustworthy research tools for the study of Homer.

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25 Scholia D in Iliadem (proecdosis aucta et correctior), 2014.
26 Scholia Graeca in Odysseam, 4 vols. (I: α-β; II: γ-δ; III: ε-ζ; IV: η-θ), 2007–.
31 See p. XVIII, n. 18 (this volume).
34 Edited by J. Latacz, 2000–.
The aim of my contribution has been to combine the insights of oral-formulaic theory and Neoanalysis. I have argued that intertextual references operate between oral epic traditions and that a level of fixity, which is required for varying levels of allusion, can be achieved by a stable pool and established order of events, a consistent anchoring of characters to specific episodes, the success and subsequent wide diffusion of an authoritative version. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have been composed orally and have been shaped during a long process by generations of singers. They draw not only on pre-Homeric oral cyclic epics as master-manifestations of cyclic myth pertaining to the Theban and Trojan War sagas, but also on a variety of other epic traditions, which involve an epic version of the story of Meleager, pre-Homeric poetry about Heracles, oral epics on the Pylian wars, pre-Homeric hymnic poetry on Aphrodite, a pre-Homeric *Argonautica*, alternative versions of Odysseus’ return, and Near-Eastern poetry (the Dumuzi-Inanna Sumerian Songs, the Royal Hymns of the Sumerians, the epic of *Gilgamesh* in its standard Babylonian version). I have also maintained that phraseological transference beyond typical verbal reiteration is also possible between oral epic traditions, provided that the range of the repetition is extremely limited or that repetition is employed in a highly distinctive manner. Homeric poetry is deeply meta-poetic since it is characterized by a constant penchant to delineate its own identity. Its self-awareness is achieved by its systematic thematizing of both a large range of events falling outside its plot and various alternative versions of a potential deployment of the plot which are mentioned and rejected as poetically inferior, so that the audience realizes the poem’s claim to originality and success. Allusion is not a side-effect or secondary feature of Homeric storytelling. It lies at the heart of Homeric compositional technique and defines it pervasively. It is the trademark of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

In treating specific interpretive issues I have made ample use of various theoretical tools, ranging from traditional philology to historical linguistics, from meter and formulas to cognitive theory and narratology. It is my firm belief that as scholars we should use all means available to shed light on a problem that has not been treated adequately. To defend a transmitted verse of the *Iliad* (11.662) or unlock the function of a given distich (11.609–610) I have resorted to traditional philology, narratology, and the comparative method. Likewise, to study the use of Helen’s name I combine metrical observations, word localization, and verse-structure, showing how the traditional diction of Homeric epic has shaped epic action. Tackling complex semantical conundrums like the formula ἀπ’/κατ’ αἰγίλπος πέτρης requires the joint use of different methodological tools: lexicography, historical linguistics, and the utilization of Indo-European
and Near Eastern mythology and ritual. It is only then that a dictional fossil comes back to life and allows us to comprehend and appreciate the multifarious and convoluted but fascinating process of shaping of Homeric diction. To explore lists and catalogues in Homeric epic, I resort to cognitive theory that allows us to investigate the mental process behind the organization of dictional and thematic material. I interpret the friendly outcome of the famous encounter between Diomedes and Glaucus in *Iliad* 6 by revisiting the complex use of space: simple story space designating the setting of the episode, embedded story space pertaining to the places mentioned in the inset narratives of the speeches of the two protagonists of the scene, and another form of extratextual space which concerns the Greek and Lycian epic tradition. These different forms of space are effectively merged to bring the ancestors of the Greek hero Diomedes and the Lycian hero Glaucus close, thus turning the potential duel between them into a friendly encounter sealed by the exchange of gifts.

(ii) The considerable progress made in the field of Hesiodic studies is observable in two areas: the interpretation of the two genuine works of Hesiod, the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, and the important advances in the exploration of the *Catalogue of Women*. The two monumental commentaries of M.L. West on the *Theogony* (1966) and the *Works and Days* (1978) have laid down the necessary groundwork for more nuanced interpretive studies, which would restore Hesiod to his proper status. Special attention was paid to the relation between these two poems and to various narratological issues concerning the persona of the narrator, the function of the *Dichterweihe* in the *Theogony*, the role of Perses as an internal addressee in the *Works and Days*, the different types of narrative employed in various passages of these two epics, and the poetic voice. Jenny Strauss Clay has argued for a complementary reading of the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days* which share a symbiotic relation embracing the divine and human worlds. This approach brings to the limelight the unity of the two major Hesiodic works and sees the *Catalogue of Women* as a work feeding not only on earlier catalogue poetry but also on the genuine Hesiodic epics.  

With respect to the *Catalogue of Women*, there has been impressive progress. On the basis of the work he had done together with Merkelbach with respect to determining the order of the news papyrus fragments pertaining to the *Catalogue*, M.L. West cut new ground in the study of catalogue poetry. Following suit, several scholars attempted to study the *Catalogue* as a work of art in its own right and explored new topics, such as the presentation of women in com-

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parison to the *Theogony* and the *Megalai Ehoiai*, as well as generic issues concerning the nature of this poem and the place it occupies within catalogue poetry as a whole. One of the most stimulating studies was carried out by Ian Rutherford who focused on the thorny issue of the generic classification of the *Catalogue*.³⁷ According to Rutherford, at a certain point during the Archaic Period non-genealogical *ehoiai* that employed catalogue-like principles for organizing their subject-matter underwent the influence of a Panhellenic tendency for organizing the Greek mythical past by recourse to genealogical schemata. The direct result was that narrations belonging to independent *ehoiai* were attached to a genealogical super-structure. At a later stage, *ehoiai*-narratives evolved into a secondary feature of this novel, generic amalgam through the process of automatization. Rutherford’s theory is a type of generic archaeology. By disclosing the existence of an early phase in the evolution of *ehoiai*-poetry Rutherford shed light to the generic identity of this new sub-genre. The Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* is an epic hybrid, which marks the generic crossing of narratives of the *ehoiai* type with a catalogue-based genealogical structure. His work is paired up with a detailed commentary by Hirschberger (2004) on the *Catalogue of Women* and the *Megalai Ehoiai*. The establishment of the *Catalogue* as an indispensable part of Hesiodic poetry is reflected in the publication of a volume of collected essays, with the telling title *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women: Constructions and Reconstructions*.³⁸ This volume had a significant impact on the study of the *Catalogue*, especially in view of the wealth of its relevant approaches. The *Catalogue* was studied as a poetic work exhibiting a special kind of plot (R. Osborne), as part of a trilogy, next to the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days* (J. Strauss Clay), as well as an epic associated with sympotic culture and ideology (E. Irwin). It was also explored through the study of individual characters (Heracles: J. Haubold) and episodes (Mestra: I. Rutherford, Helen’s suitors: E. Cingano), by means of the relation between the *Catalogue* and other Hesiodic works (*Aspis*: R. Martin; *Megalai Ehoiai*: G.-B. D’Alessio), Greek Lyric (Pindar and Bacchylides: G.-B. D’Alessio), as well as with respect to the reception and influence of this epic in Greek (R. Hunter, H. Asquith) and Roman literature (Ph. Hardie; R. Fletcher). The tendency for a re-evaluation of the order of the fragments of the *Catalogue* marks the new Loeb edition of Hesiod by Glenn Most which replaced the earlier edition (1914) by H. Evelyn-White. This rich interpretive harvest created the need for an updated presentation and critical assess-

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³⁸  The volume was edited by R. Hunter in 2005.
ment of the progress made so far, especially since 33 years had passed after the
publication of the relevant volume in the series *Wege der Forschung*. The *Brill’s Companion to Hesiod* published by F. Montanari, A. Rengakos, and C. Tsagalis (2009) offered a balanced exposition of the *status quaestionis* of various aspects of Hesiodic poetry. Interest in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* has continued ever since. Kirk Ormand³⁹ has examined the intertextual relation between this epic and Homer, Hesiod (*Theogony* and *Works and Days*) and Cyclic epic.⁴⁰ The *Catalogue*’s rich literary background is interpreted by Ormand against the backdrop of political and social changes in archaic Greece. The author argues that the poem’s emphasis on the importance of noble birth throughout the Greek world, as mapped by the various catalogues of the Greek gene, amounts to a reaction against the new political realities of the sixth-century *polis* and in favor of the old aristocratic values.

It is against this background that I have been interested in exploring the poetry and poetics of the three major Hesiodic works. The generic variety observed when one compares the *Theogony* with the *Works and Days* and the *Catalogue* offers a unique opportunity for exploring matters pertaining to the role of the poet, the tradition, and the creative interaction by means of intertextual association between them. Whereas previous scholarship has focused on the relation between Homeric and Hesiodic epic, especially with respect to matters pertaining to ideology, divine presentation, and phraseology, my research focuses on issues of generic identity and poetic distinctiveness. I argue that each of the three main Hesiodic epics is an idiosyncratic poetic experiment that deviates in stunning manner from the generic orthodoxy of its relevant sub-genre. The Hesiodic *Theogony* is not a typical example of theogonic epic, the *Works and Days* is anything but a regular wisdom epic, and the *Catalogue* is an innovative epic hybrid of catalog-based genealogies cross-fertilized by *ehoiai* poetry. What matters more is that their generic hybridity is not an issue detected by modern hyper-interpretation but is observable in their structure, themes, and plot. It reflects their effort to find a place within their proper sub-genre of epic as well as within archaic Greek epic at large. The study of the hybrid nature of the *Catalogue of Women* has crucial interpretive consequences. It requires a special poetics, which reveals the inner mechanics of catalogue-based poetry that is enriched with narrative snapshots, the *ehoiai*, which have been transferred to

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⁴⁰ Throughout this book I capitalize the first letter of the word Cyclic when it refers to the poems of the Epic Cycle, whereas I write ‘cyclic’ when I designate oral epic traditions reflecting the poems of the Epic Cycle, as well as when I refer to cyclic myth.
its complex structure. To this end, I have also been interested in studying one important feature of catalogue-based poetry, i.e. names. In contrast to widely held views about the purely ornamental and impressionistic aspect of lists of names, I have explored how names of every sort (proper, geographical etc.) are selected and deployed to achieve specific poetic goals. In this name-based poetic universe sound-effects are deftly exploited to highlight associations, prepare the presentation of a certain theme, conjure up an image, give vividness, enforce an idea, enhance parallelism, underscore an etymological link, draw attention, facilitate the unlocking of analogy on the part of the audience.

(iii) Another field of intensive research activity concerns the Epic Cycle and fragmentary Greek epic of the Archaic and Classical Periods. Jasper Griffin⁴¹ and Malcolm Davies⁴² have shown the quantitative and qualitative differences between Homeric and Cyclic Epic. Burgess has trodden new ground with a thorough reconsideration of the way cyclic epic traditions interact with Homeric epic.⁴³ The study of the Epic Cycle has been particularly promoted by the learned commentary of M.L. West,⁴⁴ the series of commentaries that are being published by Malcolm Davies on individual poems of the Cycle,⁴⁵ and the Companion to the Epic Cycle⁴⁶ that has been edited by Marco Fantuzzi and me and covers a wide range of material pertaining to the notion and origin of the Cycle, the individual epics, language, narrative, aesthetics, artistic record on cyclic myth, and reception from Stesichorus and Ibycus to Imperial epic. In the field of fragmentary Greek epic, a major advance has been made possible after the publication of three standard editions of early Greek epic fragments by Alberto Bernabé,⁴⁷ Malcolm Davies,⁴⁸ and M.L. West,⁴⁹ which have replaced Kinkel’s long outdated edition of epic fragments (1877). In the light of these editions, I have started a long-term project to provide fully-fledged commentaries on the extant remains of early Greek fragmentary epic, apart from the Epic Cycle, about which we are well served by the commentaries of M.L. West and M. Davies mentioned above. Two volumes have been published until now, one on Antiquarian

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⁴² The Greek Epic Cycle, 1989.
⁴⁹ Greek Epic Fragments from the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC, 2003.
and Genealogical Epic\textsuperscript{50} and another one on Creophylus’ \textit{Oechalia Halosis} and Pisander’s \textit{Heraclea}.\textsuperscript{51} Two more (one on Panyassis’ \textit{Heraclea} and the \textit{Theseis}, and one on Choerilus’ \textit{Persica}) are in the pipeline.

Apart from these commentaries, my personal contribution to the study of Cyclic epic concerns theoretical, technical, and interpretive issues. In a joint study with Marco Fantuzzi, we have explored the evolution of the meaning and function of the Epic Cycle, tracing a process beginning with a notional Epic Cycle, continuing with a Panathenaic Cycle in sixth-century Athens, the actual invention of the Epic Cycle in the Classical Period, the limitation of the Cycle to a prose summary, and the final phase in which the Cycle is reduced to an excerpt accompanying the \textit{Iliad}. On a technical level, I have studied the \textit{Cypria} and the \textit{Telegony}, showing how cautious we should be with respect to assigning a given fragment to a poem or author, the more so since we are faced with various problems originating by the diverse citation practice of different sources. As regards interpretive issues, I have explored both phraseological repetition in early Greek epic and the role of gods in the Epic Cycle. By investigating transferred phraseology and transferred motifs from the Theban and Trojan oral cyclic epic traditions to the \textit{Odyssey}, I have argued that interformularity and intetraditionality operated between oral epic traditions of the Archaic Period which had achieved considerable stability in terms of diction and theme. Recognizing that the Epic Cycle is a powerhouse for exploring the function of the gods in early Greek epic, I have studied several topics pertaining to the role of the divine in Cyclic epic. The emerging picture concerns a dichotomy not only between typical (wrath, rivalry, counseling, prophecies and signs, love, parentage of immortal and mortal children, joint intervention, messengers) and untypical epic themes (divine metamorphoses, conferring immortalization to humans) in the framework of which operate gods and mortals alike, but also between ‘un-marked’ and ‘marked’ forms of divine activity, the former being instrumental for the narrative, the latter playing no role in the unraveling of the plot. If these results are placed next to the neoanalytical theory that Cyclic epic reflects pre-Homeric oral epic traditions which functioned as sources for the Homeric epics, then we can see that the typical role of gods in oral cyclic epic was put in use by the \textit{Iliad} and the \textit{Odyssey}, whereas part of the untypical function of gods (im-

\textsuperscript{50} Early Greek Epic Fragments I: Antiquarian and Genealogical Epic, 2017.
\textsuperscript{51} Early Greek Epic Fragments II: Kreophylus and Peisandros, 2022.
mortalization of humans)⁵² was transformed into heroic experience in Homeric epic.⁵³

(iv) In the wake of the Oral Theory, the ‘word’ performance has become a buzz word in Homeric criticism. José M. González’s imposing monograph The Epic Rhapsode and his Craft: Homeric Performance in a Diachronic Perspective (2013) studies the performance of Homeric poetry across an impressive time span. It also calls attention to the ways mantic discourse, drama, and rhetorical practice help us understand how epic rhapsodes worked. Another important contribution that may be singled out is the volume Homer in Performance: Rhapsodes, Narrators, and Characters (2018), edited by Jonathan L. Ready and myself, with important contributions both about the history of rhapsodic performance and the function of Homeric narrators and characters as speakers. My own work, which consists in two chapters in the aforementioned edited volume and the monograph Τέχνη ραψωδική: η απαγγελία της επικής ποίησης από την αρχαϊκή έως την αυτοκρατορική εποχή (2018), focuses on the investigation of the performative context of epic poetry, and the historical and epigraphical study of rhapsodic performances of epic poetry from the Archaic to the Imperial Period. I lay special stress on the creative use of various elements of Homeric epic, which have been regularly employed as stylistic features, and treat them as performative pretexts, i.e. as cues that allow us to comprehend why they were used as props by rhapsodes while performing epic poetry. By surveying rhapsodic performances of epic poetry throughout the Greek world, I have argued for the wide geographical diffusion of performance venues of epic, a fact that testifies to the prestige of epic in the Archaic and Classical Period, as well as its use for the promotion of political aspirations. Following the spread and form of rhapsodic performance during the Hellenistic period, we see the process of creation of the rhapsodic profession. Rhapsodes no longer operate as individual performers of epic but belong to guilds of artists. New forms of epic are introduced and performed, and new epics are composed and performed next to Homer. The line drawn between the traditional rhapsode and the poet becomes gradually blurred, as the latter may perform his own poetry. The rise of the Homeristae who perform epic poetry in the theater is also a new development. This is a period of increase mobility, of multiple big festivals across the Greek world featuring rhapsodic contests, in which separate prizes are awarded for the best new

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⁵² A special case is presented by divine metamorphosis, which though narratively inactive in Cyclic epic became narratively significant in Homeric epic.

epic poem and the best rhapsodic performance. This stunning diffusion of rhapsodic performance of epic poetry is turned on its head during the Imperial Period, when the geographical range of venues where rhapsodic performances are held dwindles, being mainly limited to areas associated with Homer and Hesiod, the two emblematic forefathers of Greek epic. Rhapsodic contests are now held only in a few places, and rhapsodes gradually lose their status, being restricted only to the performance of new epics or being subsumed by the Homericists whose histrionics are better appreciated.

The four parts of this volume (Homer, Hesiodic poetry, the Epic Cycle, and the performance of epic) delineate the framework of my research activity for the last twenty years. They reflect my belief in a balanced, multifarious, and nuanced study of early Greek epic that has not ceased to fascinate me.