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2015

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,  
IRVINE

Inventing Meta-Epic: Self-Consciousness in *Odyssey* 8-12

THESIS

submitted in partial satisfaction for the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in Classics

by

Darby Cameron Vickers

Thesis Committee:  
Professor Zina Giannopoulou, Chair  
Professor James Porter  
Professor Anthony Edwards

2015



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I have been playing with the ideas that took full shape in my Master's Thesis for over a year, there are many people I must thank.

My gratitude to Professor Zina Giannopoulou is immense. It was her seminar in Winter 2013 that sparked my interest in the *Odyssey* and in Homer more generally. This seminar was one of the most collaborative and productive in my graduate school experience. Zina and the participants were immensely encouraging that provided the feedback that turned my ideas about bardic self-consciousness from amorphous musings in a fifteen minute presentation into the seminar paper that was the seed that germinated into this project. Zina tirelessly shepherded this paper through many machinations from the seminar paper into the thesis presented here. Her Herculean efforts in the project have helped me grow immensely as a writer and as a scholar. From reading and commenting on eight drafts of the initial abstract for the first conference where I presented a nascent version of this work to making time in three successive quarters to do independent studies with me to guide my ideas, Zina has gone above and beyond anything I could have expected from an advisor and mentor.

I also had the great fortune to present earlier versions of this paper at two different conferences. I would like to thank the audience at the "Time is Out of Joint" conference at University of British Columbia in 2014 who provided feedback on a version of the seminar paper I wrote on this topic. I would also like to acknowledge the great help that provided by the audience at the Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World Conference (XI: Voices). This conference made me think critically about some of my assumptions about epic and some of the insights from the audience at this conference have been incorporated into the final version.

Professors James Porter and Athony Edwards also read the final draft of this thesis. I sincerely appreciate their feedback.

I would like to thank Kilian for all of his encouragement and support while I wrote this manuscript, as well as helping with editing. He also spent an afternoon helping me design and create the final version of the chart that appears on page 31 of this manuscript.

My parents, Judith and Darrell, have also provided support during the process of writing this. They have always encouraged me in my academic endeavors and my gratitude to them goes beyond words. I would like to thank my mother in particular, for reading some of the earlier drafts of this and helping me to clarify the language.

## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Inventing Meta-Epic: Self-Consciousness in *Odyssey* 8-12

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Master of Arts in Classics

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Self-consciousness in the Homeric poems has been a subject of much scholarly attention over the past three decades. Much of this scholarship has focused on scenes of storytelling that take place within the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Much of that work analyzes the *Odyssey* as a literary text. Since the *Odyssey* is the extant textual byproduct of an oral tradition, I use Jan Vansina's model of speech types in oral societies to analyze the different types of oral traditions that appear within the text. I focus on *Odyssey* 8-12, which take place during a day of athletic contests and feasting on the island of Skheria. Storytelling is the central to these books. In *Odyssey* 8, Demodokos, a blind bard, sings three songs. Books 9-12 are Odysseus's first person recitation of his own adventures. Interspersed with bardic songs and personal narrative, there are also moments where characters give anecdotes about the past, a type of speech I term historical gossip. Each of these types of speech has two distinct audiences, an internal audience and an external audience. In conjunction with the analysis of audiences and Vansina's model of speech types, I utilize Jonas Grethlein's model of temporal divisions that appear in representations of the past in the speech of Homeric characters. Employing this combined methodology, I argue that there is sufficient evidence in *Odyssey* 8-12 to show that the oral society that produced it was conscious of the process through which these oral traditions were created.



## Introduction

*Odyssey* 8-12 recounts a day of feasting on the island of Skheria and Odysseus's recitation of his post-Troy exploits; this section of the *Odyssey* incorporates various types of speech, including bardic song. In *Odyssey* 8, Demodokos, a blind bard, sings three songs during a day of athletic contests and feasting on Skheria.<sup>1</sup> Two of Demodokos's songs—the first and the last—recount stories from the Trojan War.<sup>2</sup> Upon hearing these Trojan tales, Odysseus weeps. This tearful reaction prompts Alkinoos, king of the Phaiakians who inhabit Skheria, to request that Odysseus introduce himself. In response, Odysseus discloses his name and embarks on an extended personal narrative detailing his adventures between his departure from Troy and his arrival on Skheria.<sup>3</sup> Odysseus's speech constitutes almost the entirety of *Odyssey* 9-12.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the narrative of *Odyssey* 8-12 juxtaposes Demodokos's songs with Odysseus's account of his adventures.

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<sup>1</sup> The first song tells the story of the quarrel between Odysseus and Akhilleus, which the oracle at Delphi prophesized to Agamemnon would mark a turning point in the Trojan War (*Od.* 8.73-82). The second song recounts the affair of Ares and Aphrodite. After Helios tells Hephaistos, Aphrodite's husband, of the adulterous liaison, and Hephaistos sets a trap for them. When they are caught in the golden net, Hephaistos threatens to send Aphrodite back to her father, Zeus, but Poseidon argues that Ares should pay a penalty and offers to stand as Ares's surety (*Od.* 8.266-366). The final song narrates the events that happen at the very end of the Trojan War, when the Trojans bring the Trojan Horse inside their city walls and the Greek soldiers pour out of it to sack the city (*Od.* 8.499-520).

<sup>2</sup> I exclude the second song, the affair of Ares and Aphrodite, from my analysis because it accompanies a dance. Oswyn Murray concurs, arguing that it represents some form of choral poetry, rather than epic: "the only other occasion of performance mentioned in the *Odyssey* is the lay of Ares and Aphrodite, sung in public by Demodocus, together with a dance by a chorus of young men (8.256-366). It is not clear whether these are two separate entertainments, followed by a third ball dance, or a single 'narrative dance'; if the latter, this would surely suggest that Demodocus' song was (like that of the Muses in the *Iliad*) in some sense choral rather than in epic metre" (Murray 166). While the choral nature of the dance is not apparent in the text—certainly Demodokos is singing in contrast to the boys who are dancing—but, nonetheless, it is clear that this is not an epic song whether or not it can strictly be considered choral.

<sup>3</sup> Odysseus's story in *Odyssey* 9-12 is in chronological order of the events as they happened, but he does leave off the final portion of the story (travelling from Kalypso's island), because he has already recounted that part of the voyage (*Od.* 7.240-297).

<sup>4</sup> This section is also known as the Apologoi.

Despite the close proximity between Demodokos's songs and Odysseus's story within the overall narrative,<sup>5</sup> these two performances constitute two different types of speech concerning the past: Demodokos sings epic songs accompanied by a lyre, while Odysseus gives an impromptu prose account of his personal experience.<sup>6</sup> Both of these performances engage two distinct types of audiences—internal and external. The internal audience is “audience...consisting of characters in the poem itself” (Doherty, “Internal” 161). Thus, the audience for Demodokos' songs is Odysseus and the Phaiakians, while the audience for Odysseus's stories is the Phaiakians and their bard, Demodokos.<sup>7</sup> The external audience for both performers is the audience of the *Odyssey*, whether ancient or modern.

The distinction between the internal and the external audience aids in differentiating the varieties of verbal communication that appear in *Odyssey* 8-12. To the external audience, both Demodokos's songs and Odysseus's speech are portions of epic discourse marked linguistically by Homeric diction and dactylic meter.<sup>8</sup> However, to the internal audience, there is a sharp distinction between the two performers. In particular, Demodokos's songs are inspired by the Muse, a convention commonly taken to stand in euphemistically for the source of oral tradition.<sup>9</sup> Conversely, Odysseus tells his stories based on his own personal experience.

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<sup>5</sup> i.e. both stories are told on a single day of contests and feasting and Demodokos's stories prompt Odysseus to share his own tales.

<sup>6</sup> Odysseus's account, however, is particularly polished; Alkinoos compares Odysseus's speech to a bardic song (see, e.g. *Od.* 11.366-369).

<sup>7</sup> This distinction has been applied to the *Odyssey* and to *Odyssey* 8 in particular, cp. Doherty 1992, Doherty 1995, and Loudon 1999.

<sup>8</sup> While Demodokos's songs are summaries they represent songs that would, presumably, have been in Homeric dialect and meter as well because it is epic.

<sup>9</sup> See Ford 1992: 58-59; Nagy 1999: 15-16; Scodel 2005: 31.

Alongside personal narrative another type of prose account of the past appears in these two books: historical gossip.<sup>10</sup> Historical gossip is the recitation of stories that are not inspired by the Muse (i.e. are not or not yet part of the accepted oral corpus of the society), but are at least second-hand stories about the past. Alkinoos and Odysseus relate historical gossip at various points throughout the day of athletic contests and feasting when they refer to the words and deeds of previous generations.<sup>11</sup>

In this paper, I argue that the interaction between bardic song, historical gossip, and personal narrative in *Odyssey* 8-12 demonstrates the poet's self-consciousness concerning the manner in which historical events are incorporated into oral tradition. My use of the term poet here is purely heuristic and does not refer to any specific poet. By referring to "the poet" instead of Homer or some other moniker that would imply a specific individual, I am attempting to focus on the oral tradition that generated the extant epics and avoid wading into the murky and contentious waters of when and how the *Odyssey* fossilized into the work which we have today. However, whether some creative genius, on the basis of a long oral tradition composed the *Odyssey* or whether the current text simply "results...from the lengthy evolution of myriad previous compositions...into a final composition" (Nagy, *Best* 41), there is some kind of narrative consciousness born out of this unity whose presence can be felt. This consciousness is what I refer to as "the poet." I employ the feminine pronoun to refer to "the poet" as a means of being deliberately provocative—alongside attempting to do my part in balancing the near-ubiquity of male inflections on gender neutral language—since most, if not all, bards and rhapsodes in the ancient world were male. The feminine pronoun serves to remind the reader that

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<sup>10</sup> I take this term from Jan Vansina's book *Oral Tradition as History*, which continues to be hailed as one of the primary works for understanding the process by which historical events become incorporated into historical narrative, see especially Vansina 1985: 17-18. I expand upon the way that I employ Vansina's work below.

<sup>11</sup> *Od.* 8.219-225, 555-571

“the poet” does not refer to an individual but a narrative consciousness in the text and that the text itself is a product of a set of oral narratives over a long span of time.

This consciousness behind the text, which I refer to as “the poet,” differs from the Homeric narrator.<sup>12</sup> Scott Richardson defines the narrator as “a quasi-fictional projection whose relationship to the other creations in the epics is not one between equals but one resembling that between ‘an omnipotent god’ and the mortals subject to him...he is nonetheless a fictional character of sorts, a metacharacter, who plays his role not on the level of the story, but on the level of discourse, the telling of the story” (2).<sup>13</sup> Generally, I agree with Richardson’s definition of the Homeric narrator, and I think this statement accurately characterizes the narrator of the *Iliad*. However, the position of the narrator in the *Odyssey* is more complicated, since, for the majority of *Odyssey* 9-12, Odysseus himself supplants the narrator in an extremely long section of direct discourse. Yet, when Odysseus becomes the narrator, his first-person account takes on the same tone and characterization as the third person narrator in the rest of the *Odyssey*, although the “metacharacter” narrator fades into the background. There is, in Richardson’s terminology, a consciousness that acts upon the story at the level of discourse as an omnipotent god among mortals, but it is no longer the narrator. Nor is this omnipotent god Odysseus-as-narrator, since Odysseus still functions as a character within *Odyssey* 9-12 and the narrator interrupts Odysseus’s discourse at points to disclose the internal audience’s reaction. It is this consciousness, which I term “the poet,” who directs and manipulates both the Homeric narrator

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<sup>12</sup> Scott Richardson provides a fascinating treatment of the Homeric narrator.

<sup>13</sup> Note Richardson uses the masculine pronoun to refer to the narrator. While there is no need particularly to assign the narrator of the *Odyssey* this gender, it helps to distinguish the poet (for which I use the female pronoun) and the narrator to adhere to Richardson’s convention.

and Odysseus-as-narrator but ensures that audience will distinguish the metacharacter (the Homeric narrator) from character (Odysseus).<sup>14</sup>

Other scholars, too, have commented on this pervasive consciousness in the *Odyssey*. Douglas Stewart notes that “the *Odyssey* seems to know itself as a structure, a creation, a thing presenting itself as evidence that human craft executed it, taking glory in showing the seams and joints where the toolmarks still show” (151). I believe that the consciousness is a relic of the oral tradition which generated the *Odyssey*. Before a set text of the *Odyssey* appeared, this consciousness would have been the individual bard singing the stories of Odysseus.<sup>15</sup> In oral societies, even though the stories may share the exact same plot, each bard lends them a different tone and character, just as a different director can change the feeling of a play, even using an identical script.<sup>16</sup> Thus the poet is the directing consciousness which permeates the extant *Odyssey*, whether it is the product of the voice of a single historical bard or an amalgamation of many.

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<sup>14</sup> Richardson does not make this argument in so many words, but he does say, when referring to *Od.* 23.310-341, that “this indirect summary appears out of place in Homer’s narrative. We are unprepared for a recapitulation by Odysseus that is not in Odysseus’s words...When we hear the tale for the first time, Odysseus takes over the role of the bard from Homer and, in a sense, merges with the narrator no less than Demodokos does shortly before; the words summarized in this passage belong to Odysseus *qua* narrator and are therefore fair game for the extradiagetic narrator to quote indirectly as he does with the songs of *Odyssey* 8” (88). Thus, Richardson shows that the narrator is allowed to indirectly quote Odysseus at length because Odysseus plays the double role of being a character distinct from the narrator but taking on a quasibardic role.

<sup>15</sup> Murray points out that in scenes in which a bard performs, there are three levels of performance in the text: the internal bard, the narrator, and the external bard that sings the *Odyssey* (166).

<sup>16</sup> The scholarship on this topic is extensive but see, for example, Lord 2000 and Scodel 2005.

## Chapter 1: Theory and Method

### 1.1: Defining Self-Consciousness

In *Odyssey* 8-12, the epic becomes what Linda Hutcheon refers to as “diegetically self-conscious...[i.e.] the text presents itself as narrative” (7).<sup>17</sup> What Hutcheon terms diegetic self-consciousness, scholars generally refer to as self-reflexivity; a self-reflexive text is one that “openly reflect[s] upon its own process of artful composition” (Baldick, “self-reflexive”). Hutcheon creates this definition for the sake of what she refers to as the emergence of “narcissistic narrative” in post-modern novels. However, as Karl Kao points out, this type of self-reflexivity appears much earlier in the Western canon than in the post-modern tradition (59). Kao cites *Don Quixote*, *Tristram Shandy*, and *Jacques le fataliste*, but he also argues that “examples of such meta-fictional auto-references in Western literature, in fact, have been traced even further back to the Greek tradition, to works of mock-epics and the parodic writings such as that of Hegemon of Thason mentioned in Aristotle's *poetics*” (59). However, Hutcheon references *Odyssey* 9-12 when she gives examples of auto-referentiality, arguing that Odysseus tells his narration of the Apologoi reflects upon the work's fictionality and art form (40).

Andrew Ford, in *Poetry of the Past*, uses the word self-conscious more narrowly than it is used by either Hutcheon or Kao. Ford never defines the term self-consciousness explicitly; his examples of self-consciousness employ the term both as mere self-reflexivity or self-referentiality in the style of Hutcheon and Kao (35-39), but also beyond this where the work

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<sup>17</sup> Hutcheon specifically refers only to *Odyssey* 9-12 (40), but one can easily extend her definition to *Odyssey* 8 as well because Demodokos's performance is also self-referential by her definition (although she does not specifically include it).

reflects upon its functionality and on the status of the *Odyssey* as song specifically, and as song as opposed to text (Ford 127-129, 161-164, 170-171). Ford utilizes evidence in the Homeric corpus to establish that the reflections of the poet as an artist or on the transmission of tradition are not absent but rather hidden in Greek epic (36-37, 128). He argues that commentary on poetic artistry is not part of epic as a genre (Ford 37), while “historical, diachronic process of transmission, with all its hazards and losses, is represented by the synchronic conflicts of poetic competition, and both are denied or disguised by the poets” (128). This transmission is hidden through invocation to the Muse (39, 129). Ford acknowledges that the *Odyssey* “sees a longer history of singing behind it and portrays itself consciously as the last in a long line of song...It’s own characters, both the living and the recently dead, are already enshrined in Trojan songs whose fame has reached heaven” (128). Yet, since Ford bases his assertions of self-consciousness purely on an analysis of the texts and does not reference whether the oral culture is capable of such consciousness, he hedges in his analysis of the more radical moments of self-consciousness within the text (163, 170-171).

Hutcheon, Kao, and Ford do not differentiate explicitly between self-reflexivity and self-consciousness. Despite the fact that both Hutcheon and Kao employ the word “consciousness” somewhere within their phrasing or definitions, they are both ultimately discussing self-reflexivity rather than self-consciousness. Ford moves slightly beyond the definition of self-reflexivity by detailing the references in the *Odyssey* to song and text. Self-consciousness implies not only that the work references its own status as a creative piece, but also that there is some consciousness within the text that is aware of its own existence as a product of a specific genre.<sup>18</sup> Richardson defines self-consciousness in terms of this narrator: “self-conscious narration is the

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<sup>18</sup> Louden implicitly defines self-consciousness the same way (Louden 50).

furthest extreme of narrator-prominence. Not only does the narrator come out into the open, but he also exposes something of the creative process, of which we normally see only in the final product without reflecting on its genesis” (Richardson 169-170). Furthermore, the narrator does not speak “innocently from within the story; he is now directing our attention to his autocratic control over the fabrication of the narration” (168). This involves the narrator as a metacharacter having not only a kind of self-awareness but also an awareness of his own power within the narrative. Richardson argues that this is especially striking because the Homeric narrator has

However, there are two distinct narrators within *Odyssey* 8-12, the Homeric narrator and Odysseus, and so Richardson’s definition does not provide the necessary framework for analyzing self-consciousness in the *Odyssey* as a whole, and in these five books in particular. Richardson admits as much; he is concerned with the heterodiegetic narrator in the Homeric poems—the one who stands outside the narrative action—and not the homodiegetic narrator, Odysseus, who is a character within the narrative (4-5, 168-169). To examine of self-consciousness throughout the *Odyssey*, and in particular in *Odyssey* 8-12, which contains both the heterodiegetic narrator, on whom Richardson focuses, and the homodiegetic narrator, whom Richardson barely discusses, Richardson’s narrator-specific definition of self-consciousness is insufficient.

The uniting consciousness in *Odyssey* 8-12 is the poet rather than the narrator. Based on Richardson’s definition of narrator self-consciousness, I define the poet’s self-consciousness as a combination of self-reflexivity—the poet drawing the external audience’s attention to the nature of the epic as both a story and an oral performance—and an awareness of her own position and the overall work’s position as part of a tradition—in this case the oral tradition—of which the extant Homeric texts are a part. Thus, I agree with Richardson that self-consciousness must



“undercut the fabric of the fiction” (169) and that the self-conscious voice must direct the attention of the external audience to her ultimate control over the creation of the narrative (169), but I locate the autocratic director in the poet instead of in the heterodiegetic narrator. Since the *Odyssey* was not written by an individual but is instead the product of an oral tradition, the poet exposes not the creative process of an individual but rather the process through which stories transform into epics in oral society.<sup>19</sup> Part of this process involves bards singing versions of the *Odyssey* to freely compose within the restrictions of the Homeric dialect and storylines (187-188), and the depiction of a bard within the *Odyssey* serves to remind the external audience of this process.<sup>20</sup> This exposure of the process inherently suggests the *Odyssey*’s relationship “to the greater context and continuum of poetry” (Louden 50).

*Odyssey* 8-12 fulfills both parts of this definition of self-consciousness. First, the poet focuses the external audience’s attention on the form of the epic; this exhibits self-reflexivity which is the first part of the definition. In the *Odyssey*, which is an epic detailing Odysseus’s return home from Troy, the poet presents the bard Demodokos singing an epic about Troy. This appearance of a bardic epic within a bardic epic reorients the external audience’s focus from the narrative itself to the nature of the poetry they are hearing or reading. When Demodokos and Phemios perform within the narrative, they remind the modern external audience, even one

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<sup>19</sup> This definition of self-consciousness might seem narrow or perhaps to only apply to the *Odyssey*. However, the idea of defining self-consciousness by the poet (whether that is in the form of a narrator or some other poetic consciousness) is not unique. Jonathan Mayhew, in *Poetics of Self-Consciousness: Twentieth Century Spanish Poetry*, employs a similar definition of self-consciousness. He states that “the chief focus of the *novísimos*’ self-consciousness is the literary tradition itself. Their characteristic form of self-consciousness is ‘culturalism’ the obsessive citation of literary and artistic intertext that has dominated Spanish poetry for the last twenty years” (17). For Mayhew, their self-consciousness stems from their concern with “their own relation to the artistic past” (17). I attempt to bring this idea of self-consciousness as a relation to the past to bear in my definition. In this case, instead of it being a relation to the artistic past, what self-consciousness involves is a relation to the story’s past (i.e. how the story came to be epic).

<sup>20</sup> Although Richardson is referring to the actual bard singing the Homeric poems, he oddly attributes this to the Homeric narrator instead of the bard.

which might be reading a translated copy of the text, that “the original narrating of the poem was done by a flesh-and-blood singer before a live audience” (Richardson 82). These appearances of the bards, as Richardson puts it, undercuts the fabric of the fiction by reminding the external audience of the form which the epic poetry takes.

A similar self-reflexivity occurs when Odysseus narrates *Odyssey* 9-12 with limited interruptions and replaces the *Odyssey*'s third-person narrator. This extended change in perspective from the third person narration to first person narration invites the external audience to compare the perspective and styles of the two narrators. In the Apologoi, the poet, “by allowing the hero to take over, in effect, the narration of the poem and by then dramatizing an audience reaction to this narration, the epic narrator sets up an implied double comparison: on the one hand, a comparison between himself and Odysseus in the narrator's role; on the other hand, a complementary comparison between the Phaeacians as internal audience of the epic as a whole” (Doherty, *Siren* 89). Yet, as Richardson notes, the narrator identifies himself with Odysseus by paraphrasing the Apologoi in indirect discourse, as he did with Demodokos's songs (Richardson 86, 88). This identification between singers, storytellers, and the narrator is a mark of the self-reflexivity of *Odyssey* 9-12.

The second part of the definition of self-consciousness requires that the poet's awareness of her own and the work's position as part of an oral culture; *Odyssey* 8-12 underscores the place of bardic song within the framework of oral tradition. The poet specifically highlights that in oral cultures, over time stories move from one oral genre to another, even though a narrative may remain substantially unchanged. Each of the three genres of speech—personal narrative, historical gossip, and bardic song—“are different manifestations of the same process in different stages” (Vansina, *History* 23). Stories begin as a first-person account by a participant or an eye-

witness of an event, and then they are transmitted by hearers as gossip. Gossip about interesting events lasts long enough to become historical gossip. These more interesting stories eventually become part of a bard's repertoire.<sup>21</sup> The poet emphasizes this by inserting Demodokos's series of bardic songs that reference Troy directly before Odysseus launches into his own personal narratives about the events that have taken place since the Trojan War.

Not only do all three of these components of oral tradition concerning the past appear in dialogue with one another during this single day of feasting and contests, but the poet also exploits the differences between the representation of these genres of speech to the internal and external audiences. For the internal audience, the difference between epic and personal narrative is significant; these two types of performance are differentiated by the fact that the bard sings meter, plays on a lyre, and performs from a limited repertoire of culturally acknowledged stories, while a personal narrative is expounded in prose, unaccompanied, and unrestricted by a culturally determined canon of plots and characters.<sup>22</sup> However, for the external audience these two modes of performance are the same. During a performance of the *Odyssey* (or *Odyssey* 8-12), both of the stories were sung in dactylic hexameter, were presented with musical accompaniment, and were part of a cultural corpus of heroic literature.<sup>23</sup> Odysseus's tale is thus simultaneously a personal narrative and a bardic song; it is a personal narrative for the internal audience who hear it as a first person account from a participant and it is bardic song for the external audience who hear it (or read it) as 2,233 lines of epic poetry.

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<sup>21</sup> I explain this trajectory in detail in the following pages.

<sup>22</sup> Historical gossip falls somewhere between the two: the stories are generally limited to memorable events or people of past generation but within living memory, but they are told in prose and are not necessarily part of a culturally relevant corpus of stories (Vansina, *History* 17-18).

<sup>23</sup> *Mutatis mutandis* for a modern reader or an audience of another era in another format.

The poet places the stories of Odysseus's adventures into the mouth of Odysseus himself instead of as a version retold by the Homeric narrator's voice. This lends an extra vividness to Odysseus's adventures; the stories, told in direct speech of the first person *are* Odysseus's personal narrative, but, at the same time, they are told at least third or fourth hand in dactylic hexameter by a bard, and so they are bardic song. Thus, although in oral societies, stories develop from personal narratives into bardic song over time, the poet artistically manipulates Odysseus's stories so they exist in two parts of the process at once. In contrast, the poet merely renders Demodokos's bardic songs as summaries told by the Homeric narrator, reducing their vividness and denying Demodokos a voice of his own. Thus, the poet juxtaposes Odysseus's personal narratives with both historical gossip and bardic song. Odysseus's first person narration of his adventures is situated within the *Odyssey*, which is, in turn, a larger third person narration of a more complete version of Odysseus's wanderings; this implies that the poet is conscious of and self-consciously directing the external audience's attention to an oral trajectory that begins with Odysseus's own account of his wanderings and eventually becomes the bardic song to which the external audience listens. The juxtaposition and interaction of each of these types of speech in such close proximity within the *Odyssey* signifies the poet's awareness of the process of creation of oral tradition.

Since I discuss the self-consciousness of oral tradition within the *Odyssey*, it is important to establish that it is at least possible for pre-literate societies to create self-conscious poetry. Most Homeric and literary scholars implicitly assume that oral societies cannot produce self-conscious verbal art. Some of this assumption, I argue, stems from the fact that some anthropologists, who study modern oral societies, value analyzing oral tradition from the perspective of an outside observer that they ignore the society's viewpoint on its own oral

tradition.<sup>24</sup> For example, Albert Lord's work never mentions self-consciousness, and it appears that Lord and Milman Perry did not ask the Yugoslavian bards how they classified their own speech types.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Jan Vansina, who, over the last 50 years, has been one of the primary proponents of taking oral tradition seriously as a source of history, completely ignores oral societies' perspectives on their own speech types. Unlike many previous anthropologists and scholars, he does not view oral societies as primitive or simplistic; he instead considers oral tradition to be a different way of preserving history than written records. However, Vansina's methodological framework, as presented in *Oral Tradition as History*, does not at any point involve asking members of a given oral society how they evaluate their own traditions; he assumes that all assessments of how far back accurate oral records go, how traditions are formed and transmitted, and all other similar questions are gauged by the anthropologist and the historian alone rather than subjected to scrutiny by members of the oral culture. Although he never dismisses oral self-consciousness explicitly, he fails to enumerate this as an avenue for evidence-gathering for those historians and anthropologists who wish to utilize the methodology laid out in his work.

Some of these views that oral societies cannot produce self-conscious artistry have influenced scholars who believe that the Homeric texts were originally oral. Instead, they argue that the self-conscious features that appear in the text are products of later additions to the Homeric corpus. Keith Stanley carefully demonstrates that the Homeric epics are not bound by

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<sup>24</sup> This is particularly true of anthropologists working in the first three quarters of the twentieth century, including those I mention by name. However, there are certainly anthropologists who cultivate a more internal view of oral cultures, such as Ruth Finnegan (see below).

<sup>25</sup> They did, however, ask the bards whether they could repeat the songs of another bard word-for-word and discovered that the bards had neither the same conception of verbal exactitude that appears in modern literate societies (Lord 26-29) nor the conception of the uniqueness of a song based on its wording rather than on its plot (99-102).

Walter Ong's "distinctive features of oral thought and expression" (Stanley 268). He even cites self-conscious moments from the *Iliad* (Stanley 273-274). However, Stanley does not ultimately conclude that Ong's parameters are too narrow to define the possibilities for oral expression, but rather argues that "this recreative, inventive, and ironic use of traditional language supports the impression created by adjustments we observed in the book-divisions of our text, in expression and form, is to be located at some remove from its roots in oral tradition" (Stanley 278). As such, Stanley views these moments of self-consciousness as a later, literate addition to the Homeric corpus and concludes that Homer can only be conceived of as partially oral.

However, I do not believe that it is necessary to question the orality of the Homeric epics merely because some scholars assert that they are too sophisticated to be oral poetry. I contend that there is enough evidence, at least, to afford the possibility that the poet in *Odyssey* 8-12 is self-conscious. Ruth Finnegan notes that many scholars are drawn to an "external" approach, so they categorize speech types in oral cultures without reference to the way that members of the societies view their own practices (235-236). However, she argues that local views on oral poetry are important for understanding oral poetry, especially because every oral society has a way of characterizing their own speech types, although the particular perspective on oral tradition differs radically from culture to culture (Finnegan 236). From the differences in an oral culture's response to its own oral traditions, she asserts that "non-literate people can reflect self-consciously on the nature and purpose of poetry" (236).<sup>26</sup> Finnegan's assertion, from field experience, that self-conscious reflection on oral tradition is possible, leaves space for this sort of reflection even though she does not explicitly include it. Most importantly, she repudiates the

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<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, none of Finnegan's examples deal with the process of oral tradition; most of the examples deal with cultures that connect the genesis of a song with its social function. Nor do any of the examples relate to the methods by which songs evolve or are preserved. However, she never rules out that cultures might consider these processes or methods.

claims of scholars, like Walter Ong, that self-consciousness and critical self-reflection in art are born with literacy.<sup>27</sup>

My attempt is to argue for the same type of self-conscious moments within the *Odyssey* as Ford and Stanley, without having to resort to hedging the assertions for the sake of plausibility like Ford or attributing them to post-oral adaptation, like Stanley. Finnegan's analysis of cultures' understanding of their own tradition presents a strong case that the Greeks reflected critically upon their oral tradition. Ford's incisive reading of Homer provides a plausible model for both how rhapsodes thought about their craft and how they represented it to their audiences through the medium of epic. I blend the anthropological perspective with the Homerist perspective by demonstrating that a close reading of *Odyssey* 8-12 reveals the presence and interaction of the various types of speech which, according to Vansina, make up the parts of the process by which an event becomes integrated into oral tradition.

## 1.2: Oral Culture as Reflected in the *Odyssey*

Differentiating the various types of speech about the past that regularly appear in the Homeric epics provides greater insight into the way that external audiences contemporary with the creation of these poems may have viewed representations of oral tradition. Ancient external audiences would have been sharply attuned to contextual clues about what genre of speech or poetry appeared in the *Odyssey* because they would have experienced these oral media first hand in their daily lives. However, because modern external audiences can no longer use their

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<sup>27</sup> For Finnegan's critique, see Finnegan 1992: 236. She does not explicitly mention Ong, but Ong (173-174) is an example of the phenomenon which she critiques. Ong also provides the attitude and framework which Stanley (268-279) critiques.

contemporary experience of genre to inform their reading of the Homeric poems, some of these generic markers tend to intermingle in modern Homeric scholarship. As Ruth Scodel states, “much recent Homeric scholarship...minimizes the differences between bardic and other narratives treating Odysseus as an epic poet and Demodokos...as [a] narrator like Odysseus” (Scodel, “Bardic” 171). While the similarities between Demodokos’s bardic songs and Odysseus’s speech are both notable and useful for narratological analysis, focusing on these similarities obfuscates striking differences between the two types of speech (171-172). *Odyssey* 8 in particular depicts a complex web of different types of speech and song.

Since I argue that the poet self-consciously depicts personal narrative, historical gossip, and bardic song, it is vital to demonstrate not only that these types of speech were marked within the epic, but also that the poet draws attention to those distinctions and thereby exposes the narrative as a narrative (so as to meet the first self-reflexive component of self-consciousness). The most obvious self-conscious feature that draws attention to the nature of the narrative is the depiction of bardic song. Demodokos’s scene is the most extended *mise en abyme*—self-reflexive embedding of epic performance within epic—in extant archaic poetry. *Mise en abyme* appears once in the *Iliad* and several times throughout the *Odyssey*. Although no bards appear in the *Iliad*, while waiting by his ship with Patrokles, Akhilleus acts as a surrogate bard singing “κλέα ἀνδρῶν” (the *kleos* of men: *Il.* 9.185) and accompanying himself with a phorminx (*Il.* 9.186, 195).<sup>28</sup> The *Odyssey* depicts three performing bards:<sup>29</sup> Phemios, Demodokos, and the unnamed bard at Menelaos’s palace. Only three of the songs sung truly serve as instances of *mise en abyme* (Phemios’ song, *Od.* 1.325-327) and Demodokos’s first (*Od.* 8.72-82) and third (*Od.*

<sup>28</sup> Nagy 2013: 94. However, Martin argues convincingly that this is not an instance of bardic song (Martin 2005: 11). All translations are my own.

<sup>29</sup> There are four bards in total. The one that does not perform is the bard that Nestor says that Agamemnon left a bard in charge of Klytaimestra while Agamemnon sailed away to Troy (*Od.* 3.265-272)



8.499-520) songs, while the rest accompany dances so they are not epic but rather some other genre.<sup>30</sup>

I consider the instances of *mise en abyme* for the information that they provide about the representations of oral genres in the *Odyssey* and not as a historical or anthropological depiction of bardic song. It is essentially impossible to reconstruct the historical world surrounding Greek oral tradition even from its depictions in surviving epic (Martin 1989: 9-10). There is no way to tell whether the depictions accurately represent any particular time and format in which Homeric epics may have been performed. However, the Homeric and Hesiodic corpora—and specifically the Demodokos scene—still provide information on the nature of oral epic in Greece and specifically how these oral corpora represented oral performance within them.<sup>31</sup> Most of the scholarly work that, while avoiding the pitfalls of assuming historical accuracy, attempts to reconstruct aspects of bardic performances from the *Odyssey*, relies upon generic cues from the text.<sup>32</sup> For example, Scodel and Ford both consider the markers of bardic authority within the text in order to sharpen understanding of the relationship between a Greek bard and his audience.<sup>33</sup> The juxtaposition of bardic song with personal narrative provides a window onto the way that each type of discourse functions within the *Odyssey* (Scodel, “Bardic” 172). The self-reflexive character of the *mise en abyme* also illustrates that the poet’s self-consciously deploys certain generic markers to differentiate Demodokos’s songs from Odysseus’s speech for the external audience.

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<sup>30</sup> Dances appear sung by the unnamed singer (*Od.* 4.17-19), Demodokos (the affair of Ares and Aphrodite: *Od.* 8.266-366), and Phemios (*Od.* 23.133-136).

<sup>31</sup> Cp. Ford 1992, Scodel 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Murray’s argument is an interesting twist on evaluating these generic cues from the text. He argues that there are cues within the *Odyssey* that it was not supposed to be sung as epic, but rather broken up into 200-400 line chunks and performed at meals. He argues that this explains the obsessions with singing and feasting that pervade the *Odyssey*. The text, he argues, self-reflexively references its own performance setting, cp. Murray 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Cp. Ford 1992; Scodel 1998.

In order to understand the oral culture that produced the *Odyssey* and is reflected in it, it is necessary to provide a framework for examining oral cultures. Only on this basis will I be able to demonstrate the poet's awareness of the interaction of different speech types. Many different scholars discuss the products of oral cultures, particularly the epics and other types of performances that result from oral tradition.<sup>34</sup> In Homeric studies, the most famous of these studies, Lord's *The Singer of Tales*, compares the Homeric poems with the songs of bards from the former Yugoslavia. Unlike Lord's work, my focus is on the process of oral creation rather than on its end product; I argue that the poet is conscious of the process by which oral poetry comes into existence.

Ideally, there would be enough information to reconstruct a picture of the culture that produced these epics and employ that picture to establish how events eventually became incorporated into epic.<sup>35</sup> However, since oral poetry leaves almost no discernible trace in the archaeological record, evidence for oral tradition must stem from either literary or comparative sources.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, the evidence for oral culture in Homer and Hesiod is scarce. As Richard Martin argues, scholars can discern little about the nature of oral performance and creation of the epics from *mise en abyme* (Martin, *Language* 9-10). More recently, scholars have reconstructed different aspects of the oral culture which produced the Homeric epics. Ford considers the ways in which genre manifests in the Homeric epics to draw conclusions about the

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<sup>34</sup> By "result from epic performance," I mean that this is how stories are performed after they are already incorporated into oral tradition.

<sup>35</sup> Ross tries to use Vansina's model do precisely this (21-57). His portrayal is compelling, but his article is primarily methodological, boasting a single case study. Moreover, the claims he makes require much guesswork and are ultimately unverifiable.

<sup>36</sup> There are some art historical traces on geometric vases of the oral poetry because there are depictions of bards with lyres or other instruments, but little else remains. Orality does leave some trace in the oral records: non-literate and pre-literate societies passed on the techniques used for building or manufacturing objects orally and some of those remain in the archaeological record. However, the oral methods used for passing along these techniques leave no material trace.

oral culture that produced the Homeric poems.<sup>37</sup> Scodel embraces a different approach and employs a combination of literary analysis and selected anthropological analogues to determine what listening to the Homeric poems might have been like and what the composition of the external audience might have looked like.<sup>38</sup>

### 1.3: Methodology for Understanding Oral Tradition in the *Odyssey*

When analyzing the genres of speech, it is necessary to combine the literary sources with modern analogues from anthropology in order to discern how oral culture may have functioned. This combined approach is somewhat similar to Scodel's use of both literary and comparative evidence to establish how Homeric oral tradition functioned and how its audiences might have reacted to it.<sup>39</sup> Vansina's work is particularly appealing because Vansina does not describe orality in a single culture but instead brings together fieldwork from a variety of cultures to explain the creation of oral tradition. *Oral Tradition as History*, written in 1985, remains the standard text for anthropologists and historians on the process by which events become incorporated into oral tradition. In this work, Vansina provides both an ontology of the types of speech that oral cultures utilize and a temporal framework for the process by which an event becomes a part of the oral corpus. Although scholars of Homer and other types of literature have often cited Vansina to build models in an attempt to account for traces of orality on extant literature, Vansina's speech typology has not been utilized to account for the manner in which different types of speech interact within a text. Vansina's speech types provide the best method

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<sup>37</sup> Cp. Ford 1992.

<sup>38</sup> See Scodel 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Cp. Scodel 2005.

for someone outside of the oral culture and unable to question members of the oral culture first hand to analyze how that oral culture functions.

Vansina's categorization of the various speech types emerges from his attempt to provide a rigorous methodology for understanding the way that oral societies represent historical events. In *Oral Tradition as History*, he describes the process by which an event that occurs transfers through the spreading of tales of this event (historical gossip), eventually to the event's representation in some sort of a formalized oral corpus. In the case of Greek culture of the Bronze Age<sup>40</sup> through the early Archaic Period, this formalization appears in the form of bardic song.<sup>41</sup> As such, I will refer to this final stage interchangeably as bardic song or part of the oral corpus.

Vansina bases his work on studying oral cultures, particularly in Africa. The original premise for this work came from his dissertation which created a theoretical model for oral tradition as history.<sup>42</sup> After many years of field research, he developed his original theories and the product was *Oral Tradition as History* (Vansina, *History* xii-xiii). Although it was originally published in 1985, this work remains the seminal text in the study of oral history in non-literate societies utilized both by anthropologists and by historians. Since the publication of *Oral*

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<sup>40</sup> Whether or not Homeric tradition originates in the Bronze Age or reflects some aspects of the Bronze Age is a hotly debated topic. Some works that discuss this debate include Finkelberg 2009 and Grethlein (15-16).

<sup>41</sup> Vansina refers to this point in the process as a "group account" (Vansina 1985: 19-21), which can take a variety of different forms. For the sake of ease, I will refer to it as bardic song or epic, because that is the type of group account extant from early Greece. It may have been possible for historical events to be enshrined in other forms of poetry such as choral dances or praise poetry. However, no record of this happening appears within the *Odyssey* itself or within epic contemporary to it. Instead, the only performance of other poetry where we hear about the content of the song is Demodokos's second song about the affair of Ares and Aphrodite. This, obviously, does not represent some historical event as it is a story of the gods. It could of course be part of the oral corpus from the times of gods and founders (which I will get to when I talk about temporality). However, the typical marker used to mark it's inclusion in the oral corpus, which is typically marked by the invocation of the Muse or a reference to the Muse at the beginning of the piece (Ford 58-59; Nagy, *Best* 15-16; 1§2).

<sup>42</sup> Originally published in 1959 and published in English in 1965 as *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*.

*Tradition as History*, several scholars writing on Homer have referenced his work.<sup>43</sup> Although few, if any, of these scholars have taken full advantage of Vansina's model, Vansina also provides a lens to view ancient texts which arose from oral tradition, such as the Homeric epics because he provides a general set of rules for analyzing oral tradition that applies to any oral culture (Vansina, *History* xiii). While most of his examples are contemporary, Vansina himself cites the work of Lord and Parry, who were attempting to demonstrate that the Homeric epics were the products of an oral tradition. Vansina also cites Homer independently (Vansina 1985: 89) in order to talk about Homeric formulae generally formulaic phrases in oral culture and specifically to kennings in *Beowulf* (Vansina, *History* 89). Vansina thus provides a useful model for the Homeric epics as well as for modern oral traditions.

Vansina presents the following chronology of the process through which the oral corpus incorporates historical events. First an event happens at  $t_1$ . Shortly after  $t_1$ —there are no precise time parameters— the participants in the event (or witnesses to it) spread stories about the event. I term these stories personal narratives.<sup>44</sup> The point at which someone recounts the event as a personal narrative is  $t_2$ . At  $t_3$ , as individuals tell their personal narratives, others transmit these stories second and third hand as gossip.  $T_1$ ,  $t_2$ , and  $t_3$  occur within a single generation. If the story is exciting or impactful,  $t_1$ ,  $t_2$ , and  $t_3$  might be chronologically close together; as Vansina notes, “the more sensational it is, the more likely it will be repeated” (4). If the events were, for example, only experienced and witnessed by a single person,  $t_1$ ,  $t_2$ , and  $t_3$  might be much farther

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<sup>43</sup> Some of the scholars include Grethlein (15n6), Ross (26-33), etc. Scodel argues that Vansina cannot be applied to Homer (Scodel 6).

<sup>44</sup> Vansina sometimes uses the term personal accounts (e.g. Vansina, *History* 23), but also refers to this as subcategories under news (e.g. Vansina, *History* 4-10). Vansina appears to mean the same thing (different from what he terms personal tradition: Vansina, *History* 18), but he refers to personal accounts as being part of the trajectory toward oral tradition. As Vansina sometimes blurs his meaning by changing terms, I will use personal narratives to encompass both the personal stories that are part of the trajectory into oral tradition (personal accounts) as well as those which disappear quickly.

apart. By  $t_4$ , up to a generation later, the stories have become historical gossip, meaning that they appear as a stabilized version the original second or third hand gossip that appeared at  $t_3$  (17-18).<sup>45</sup> Pieces of historical gossip, however, are not part of the song culture of the oral society, but simply stories about the past which are passed from one person to another within an oral culture.

At  $t_5$ , usually one generation or so after  $t_1$ , the stories become part of an oral corpus (19-21). The events may continue to appear as historical gossip at  $t_5$ ; e.g. old people might tell stories they heard in their youth even when those stories have already become songs, or children or grandchildren of participants or witnesses might sometimes give accounts passed on by their progenitors.<sup>46</sup> By  $t_5$ , however, the narratives have changed in both form and content from  $t_2$ . In form, the stories generally take on the typical storytelling methods for that society, in the case of Homeric Greece, this is bardic song.<sup>47</sup> The content changes as well over time. Different versions of the story remain, but they become interdependent (21, 159). Stories also accumulate cultural clichés (21).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> This is a slight simplification of Vansina's framework. Historical gossip is one of the different types of remembered tradition that can be passed down (Vansina 1985: 17-21). However, Vansina blurs the lines between these different types, e.g. Vansina 1985: 18, 23. Essentially, I use the term "historical gossip" to denote those stories about the past which were remembered and repeated by members of the oral culture, but were not yet become part of epic.

<sup>46</sup> For an example of personal narrative prolonged by long life, Nestor has lived with three generations of heroes and can tell personal narratives from all of those times. In rare cases, historical gossip can last much longer as well: see Vansina 1985: 18.

<sup>47</sup> Vansina actually deals with epic, very briefly, separately from other types of oral tradition, since epic remains more stable than other oral poetry and oral traditions (25). However, the Homeric poems use bardic song as the primary method by which oral memories were preserved, so it must stand in for, at least, the depiction of the oral corpus in Homeric poetry, even if this is taking some artistic license concerning the various ways in which the oral society that produced the Homeric poems might have preserved their memories.

<sup>48</sup> Beyond  $t_5$  is a period that Vansina terms the "floating gap" (23). This is a period of time past the generations that a society remembers as history, but before the time of origins and founders. The floating gap generally appears as a blank space in the cultural memory. After the floating gap, there are to traditions of origin and genesis (21-24). These are stories that remained in memory after the period in which they were part of the oral history, but have lost their temporal reference frame and have become mythic accounts of the distant past. These are not a distinct type of speech; however, they are instead a part of the oral corpus that represents a much more distant time. Thus, I discuss these in the following section on temporal distinctions within the Homeric epics.

Vansina's categorization of speech types provides the model to distinguish types of speech within the *Odyssey*. In order to determine how the audience would react to the various types of speech within Homer, it is important to identify the various types of speech that appear within *Odyssey* 8-12. Vansina's categorization of the different types of speech within oral cultures provides a perfectly adapted groundwork for this. Although Vansina only references Homer in passing (89), the extant of his comparative work across different oral cultures provides the best possible evidence for what the oral culture in Homeric Greece might have been like.<sup>49</sup> These categories of speech type allow a modern external audience to view the speech types in the text the way the ancient external audience would have viewed the speech types. Only once we can comprehend the speech types an ancient audience would have seen can we understand the way in which the poet chooses to highlight and manipulate those different speech types within *Odyssey* 8-12.

One limitation on the usefulness of Vansina's work is that it engages with oral culture entirely from an external perspective. Since he writes with the goal of discerning accurate historical material within oral cultures, he does not need to consider whether the members of the oral culture themselves agree with the same categories of speech that he imposes upon them. His concern is to create a usable framework for these anthropologists and historians who study cultures from the outside. However, since I am considering how a figure internal to this culture, the poet, represents these types of speech, it is necessary to distinguish how the types of speech might manifest themselves within the narrative of the *Odyssey*.

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<sup>49</sup> I term "Homeric Greece" the Greece of the Iron Age that produced Homer, rather than the Greece depicted in Homer.

Another complication with employing Vansina's model stems from applying his speech categories to the textual representation of a once-living oral tradition. Scodel illustrates this difficulty; she argues that Greek tradition does not adhere to Vansina's model (Scodel, *Listening* 6). I believe Scodel's skepticism about utilizing Vansina's work as an accurate model for time and generation for Homeric poems derives from a difficulty in aligning the speech types with the past as Homeric epics represent it. Scodel dismisses Vansina's model as being representative of Greek tradition because she considers the outcome (rather than the process) of oral tradition; thus she summarizes Vansina's model, as "three generations accurately remembered, a telescoped extended past, and a mythic time of ancestors" (Scodel, *Listening* 6). She asserts that "Greek saga, with its roughly three generations of heroes placed between the recent past and its beginning, does not fit this pattern" (6). Yet, Vansina does not stipulate that three is necessarily a standard for accurate history but states that oral cultures remember as few as one or as many as four generations worth of deeds with a good grasp of their chronology (Vansina, *History*). Moreover, it is not that the deeds of the generations themselves continue to be told accurately even throughout this early period; the stories coalesce into a single body that can only be verified by an external source and add clichés or exclude details during this period (21). The "telescoped extended past," as Scodel puts it, is simply the time during which chronological ordering is lost and the stories begin to blend, but more importantly, for Vansina, it appears almost as a gap in oral memory: the stories that survive move quickly into the mythical realm (24).<sup>50</sup> The Homeric

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<sup>50</sup> Ross as a different way of connecting Vansina with Homer. He argues that all events within Homer are part of Vansina's time of origins and founders (Ross 2009: 27). What Ross means is that the stories in the Homeric epics are part of Vansina's time of origins and founders for the external audience. However, within the epics, a memory is preserved of an oral society that has a group of heroes, as well as several generations in historical memory before the floating gap and then traditions of origin. For example, Kirke tells Odysseus about Hera helping Jason navigate the clashing rocks (*Od.* 12.65-72), which is an event from the previous generation and still part of historical memory. Nestor demonstrates that there are at least two generations of the historical past, both of which he remembers



corpus essentially follows Vansina's model: characters vividly report stories about their fathers and grandfathers, but rarely tell stories beyond these generations.

In order to more accurately align Vansina's speech typology with the way that the *Odyssey* represents the Homeric past, I employ Jonas Grethlein's study of the way that past time is represented in speech in the *Iliad* (Grethlein 14-36). I believe Grethlein's model of the way that speeches represent the past applies to the *Odyssey* as well. Grethlein's work deals with the way in which these types of speech from Vansina function within the Homeric narrative. Grethlein develops his account using Homer, but he draws theoretically from examinations of historiography as well as information from Vansina about how oral cultures represented the past. Grethlein considers Homer to contain some amount of historical information, but the methodology he creates to analyze this provides a framework for analyzing the artistic elements of *Odyssey* 8-12.<sup>51</sup> His framework is significant because it distinguishes the way in which temporal markers within the Homeric narrative signal that the Greeks recognized their own speech types. Grethlein never references self-consciousness in his work, but implies that the Greeks recognized the analogy between the external audience and the characters of epic reflected in the relationship between the internal audience and the characters in speeches or songs about the past that are represented in epic and historical gossip.<sup>52</sup>

Grethlein employed Vansina's schema to explicate speech about the past in the *Iliad*. Then, Grethlein demonstrates that various speeches in the *Iliad* conform to Vansina's model:

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personally, when he tells the story of the fight between the Lapiths and the Centaurs (*Il.* 1.262-268). Poseidon talks about a time in the mythic past where he built the walls of Troy, and in the *Iliad* he complains that this story might be forgotten because the Akhaioi are building a huge bulwark around their own camp (*Il.* 7.452-453, 21.441-457). Interfacing Vansina's model with Grethlein's helps solve this problem (see below).

<sup>51</sup> More traditionally the literary elements, but using the term literary implies some sort of literacy. I choose "artistic" because I am speaking about an oral phenomenon.

<sup>52</sup> A similar idea of the parallelism between internal audience and external audience appears in Loudon (51).

speeches which depict events of the past generally involve the past few generations and then a gulf to a mythic past (Grethlein 15). Grethlein remarks that Homer's scheme corresponds well to Vansina's scheme and he appropriates terminology from historiography to clarify the layers of time in Homeric epic to clarify the correlation between Homer and Vansina.<sup>53</sup> Combining Vansina's typology with Grethlein's temporal model, which is taken from the perspective of the way the texts are structured for an audience inside the oral culture, provides a simultaneous external and internal viewpoint. This perspective simulates the type of critical reflection that Finnegan argues appear in oral societies about their own tradition.

Grethlein's model uses three divisions of time, all of which appear in the *Iliad*. Since Grethlein is interested primarily in discourse about history, he leaves aside speeches that deal with mythical times which are far beyond the reach of accurate history. Since this type of speech appears in *Odyssey* 8-12, I add a fourth category to Grethlein's schema, which is implied by Grethlein but not specifically stated (15).<sup>54</sup> I base this fourth category on Vansina's model for understanding of time in oral history, where he argues that any memorable event prior to about four generations becomes incorporated into a mythical time of gods and founders.<sup>55</sup> These four levels are important for understanding the temporal relationship and temporal referents of various utterances in *Odyssey* 8-12.

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<sup>53</sup> Or in the case of *Odyssey* 8, not time per se, but rather spacio-temporal distance from the events that happened.

<sup>54</sup> Specifically in Demodokos's second song.

<sup>55</sup> Grethlein specifically bases his work on Vansina (Grethlein 15n6), so I feel adding this is not doing violence to his scheme. The temporal barrier that Vansina describes can appear after as few as one generation or as many as four generations. This is dependent upon the individual oral culture. It is difficult to determine where this barrier might be in Homer, because there is a moment where Achilles tells a story from six generations back in his family (*Il.* 20.213-41, Grethlein 15), but it is probably after three to four generations (Grethlein 14-20). Vansina (22-24) deals specifically with the gap between stories in bardic song and mythic time. In reference to my preceding explanation of Vansina's speech types in relationship to time, events move into mythic time at  $t_5$ , which occurs 3-4 generations after  $t_4$ . Very few stories make it to mythic time—most fade in the cultural memory. However, epic as a form of oral tradition can preserve stories much longer than other types of group accounts.

I will distinguish the levels and temporal terminology as follows: (1) Grethlein's present refers to the present time of the reader or hearer of the Homeric epic. The absolute time of the present makes no difference—a modern schoolchild reading Homer in translation or a fifth-century Athenian audience listening to Ion perform Homer at the Panathanaia are equally able to inhabit Grethlein's present—what matters is the relative time; the events of the epic must predate the present by a considerable temporal distance.<sup>56</sup> (2) The epic past, according to Grethlein's terminology, is the present of the primary narrative within the *Odyssey*. In the case of Book 8, the epic past is the day of feasting and athletic competition during which Odysseus and the Phaiakians sit and listen to Demodokos's songs. Although Demodokos telling the stories is part of the epic past, the *content* of the stories is drawn from times before the epic past.

(3) Grethlein's epic plupast is past time from the point of view of the characters in the main timeframe of the epic. Thus, the epic plupast contains those stories which took place in the three generations before the events of the epic past. For example, in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus and his voyages home are stories from the epic past, while Jason and the voyages of the Argonauts are stories from the epic plupast. The stories contained in the epic plupast are made distant both by time and by what Grethlein calls quantity—meaning things are bigger and more heroic—from the characters in the epic past. The quantity marker appears in clichés such as men of the epic plupast were always stronger and more massive than men of the epic past. For example, Odysseus refers to Herakles and his companions as insurmountably better bowmen than Odysseus and Philoktetes (*Od.* 8.219-229).

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<sup>56</sup> I borrow the terminology of “absolute” time from archaeology. Absolute time, then, is a precise calendar date. Relational time, by extension, is a time not based on a particular date but on its relation to some other point in time.

And finally, I introduce (4) the mythic past, an atemporal era of gods and founders contained within a collective corpus of oral tradition.<sup>57</sup> These stories took place beyond the boundaries of the temporal memory of the society. For example, the story of the affair of Ares and Aphrodite would be part of the mythic past because it involves only the gods and takes place at an unspecified moment in the time.

Grethlein's model provides an understanding of the way in which time functions within the Homeric epics. This is particularly important for *Odyssey* 8-12, because it contains a vast amount of discourse about past events. Moreover, while Grethlein does not invoke a distinction between internal and external audiences, I employ his model and terminology precisely because they aid in clarifying this distinction. The present is the world of the external audience reading or listening to Homer. The epic past represents the internal audience to any stories told within the epic itself while the epic plupast constitutes the content of a story told to the internal audience of the epic past i.e. events in a story being told to an internal audience, for whom that story relates the past. Mythic time contains the stories that characters in the epic relate about gods or other types of founder traditions.

Interfacing Grethlein's model of time in epic with Vansina's speech types and Doherty's classification of internal and external audience<sup>58</sup> provides an extremely complex system for analyzing representation of time in *Odyssey* 8-12 for which none of these systems on their own can adequately or exclusively account. For example, for the internal audience, stories about the epic past correspond with both Vansina's events at  $t_1$  as well as the personal narratives about those events which appear at  $t_2$ . For the internal audience who inhabit the epic past, events from

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<sup>57</sup> Note that this body of mythic stories also exists for the imagined Greek audience of the classical or archaic era listening to Homer. These people shared with the characters of epic the same gods and founder myths.

<sup>58</sup> See pages 1-2 of this thesis..

the epic plupast correspond either with  $t_3$  or  $t_4$ . Under the rare circumstance that someone lives a very long time they may recount as personal narratives events which occur in the epic plupast and which others tell as historical gossip or bardic song, for example Nestor in the *Iliad* who is two generations older than the other Greeks and. From the perspective of the external audience who inhabit the present, however, both the epic past and the epic plupast represent  $t_5$  (if the epic was being told to an audience three generations or less removed from the historical events on which the epic was based) or, more likely,  $t_6$  (in the time of gods and founders), because the epics continued to be told long after the events on which they were based had passed the floating gap. Since the poet subverts some of these correspondences at moments within *Odyssey* 8-12, it is vital to create such a chart so it is clear where she deviates from the typical places where Doherty, Grethlein, and Vansina should correspond.

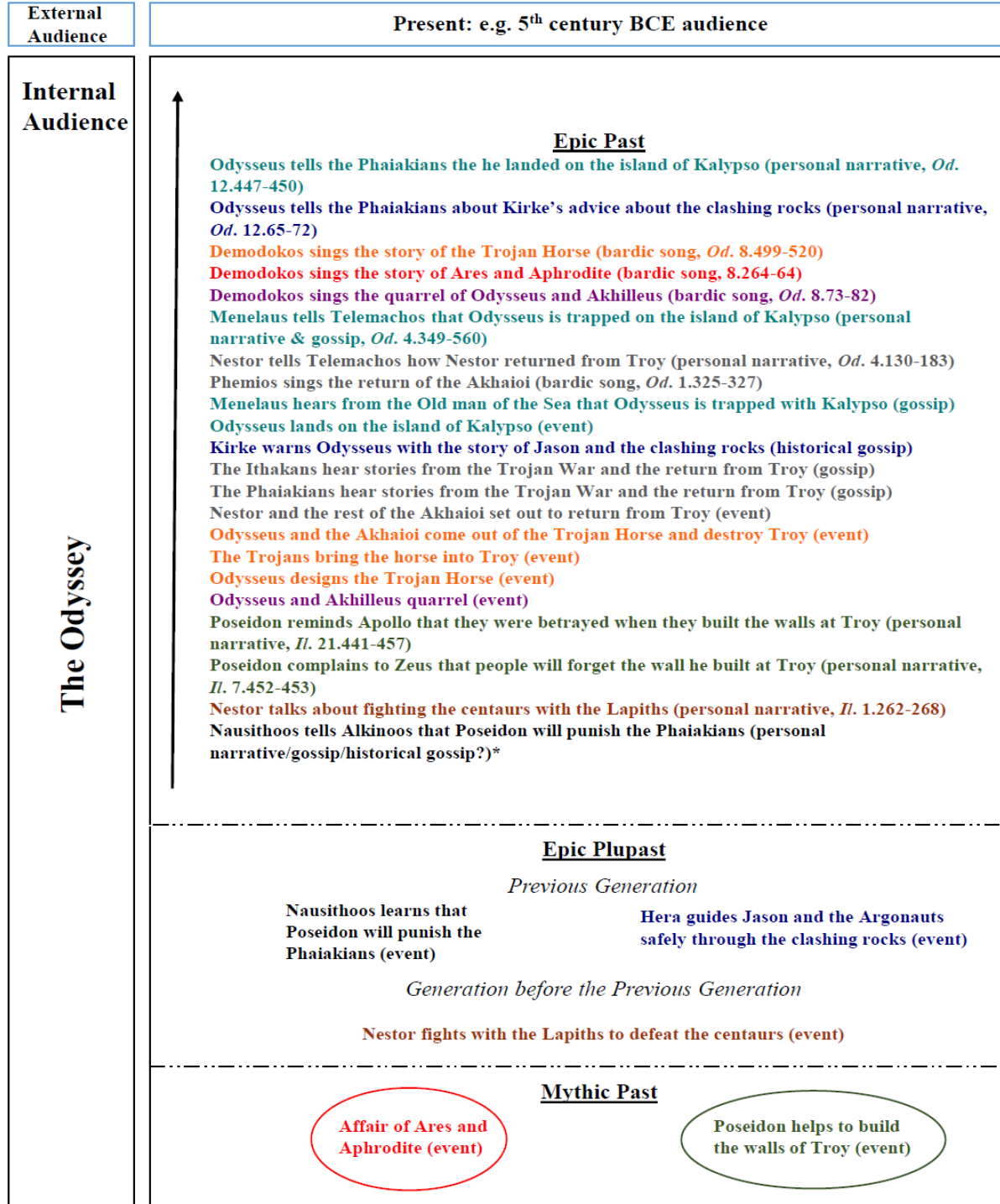
Scodel's critique of Vansina, in fact, demonstrates that it is necessary to combine Doherty, Grethlein, and Vansina in order to understand the nuances of time in Homer. Scodel's analysis blends the external and internal audiences, i.e. the hypothesized Dark Age or Archaic era audience of Greeks, with the internal audience when she explains the generations. In Scodel's scheme, the audience of Homer believed the three generations which preceded them (i.e. preceded the external audience) were the generations of heroes, and then there was a mythic past beyond that. This is not the case. As Grethlein's model shows, the external audience conceives of the present generation of heroes in the epic (that of Odysseus and Achilles) to be members of an epic past indeterminately distant from the external audience. This present generation of heroes believes the three generations preceding them to be the generations of heroes and considers these three generations to be part of the epic plupast. The present generations of heroes—heroes of the epic past—serve as internal audiences for stories about the previous generations of heroes (from

the epic plupast) such as stories about Herakles. Beyond these generations looms a mythic past of gods and founders. Thus, by the time that the Homeric poems were in the forms to which they come down to us, presumably, the epic past corresponded to  $t_5$ , which constituted about three generations of heroes (and a gap before a mythic past) for the Dark Age or Archaic period Greek audience.

The chart on the following page demonstrates the interfacing of these three systems. The complexity of the interaction between different speech types in the *Odyssey* is clearer in a visual format. The examples from the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* from this paper appear on the chart. The chart is divided into external audience and internal audience and subdivided by Grethlein's four realms of time. Each example is given a particular color. The example is then split into the various parts of the process of incorporation into the oral corpus, e.g. the event when Hera guided Jason through the clashing rocks is in the epic plupast, Kirke tells Odysseus the story of that event, in the form of historical gossip, in the mythic past, and the Odysseus tells the Phaiakians that Kirke gave him this advice as part of his personal narrative about his adventures. The event and the two versions of this story appear in dark blue to signify that they are all part of the same trajectory. Thus, the chart demonstrates how Vansina's speech types interface with Grethlein's temporal divisions and Doherty's internal and external audiences.

Figure 1.

*Chart of the intersection of Vansina and Grethlein's terminology*



\* Since the source of Nausithoos's knowledge about Poseidon's threat is unclear, his speech could fall into any of these three categories.

## Chapter 2: Self-Consciousness in *Odyssey* 8-12

The poet demonstrates her self-consciousness in *Odyssey* 8-12 by creating a complex interaction in *Odyssey* 8-12 between the various speech types that Vansina enumerates: bardic song, historical gossip, and personal narrative. This means that the poet both draws the audience's attention to the nature of the epic as a story and oral performance, but also demonstrates an awareness of her own position as part of that tradition, specifically, as part of the final stage of bardic song. In 2.1, I show that the poet marks each of the speech types she depicts as distinct from one another through conventions of presentation and context. Simultaneously, however, the poet flouts the conventions that she establishes for depicting the speech types. In 2.2, I analyze Odysseus's description of his adventures as an example of this violation of speech types; Odysseus's story is personal narrative, but it takes on many of the characteristics of bardic song. Moreover, in *Odyssey* 8, the poet breaks down parts of the temporal framework that Vansina and Grethlein lay out. In 2.3, I demonstrate that some of the examples of speech types in *Odyssey* 8-12 fail to follow the relative chronology with respect to the events they represent and the poet begins to use conventions from the epic plupast in the epic past. The poet draws the external audience's attention to each time she breaks the generic and temporal conventions, demonstrating an awareness of the process by which personal narratives become bardic songs and the time frame over which this incorporation should take place.



## 2.1: Types of Speech in *Odyssey* 8-12

In order to demonstrate that the types of speech I enumerate in the first section, based on Vansina's model, are not purely an external classification system imposed on the *Odyssey*, I show that the three types of speech are marked within the text. There are several generic markers that the poet deploys to differentiate Demodokos's songs from Odysseus's personal narrative and both of these from historical gossip. The genres of speech cannot be differentiated by formal features such as meter or dialect because they appear within *Odyssey* which maintains a dactylic hexameter and Homeric dialect throughout. However, there are consistent features of context and character that mark the three types of speech as different from one another.

Among personal narrative, historical gossip, and bardic song, the most clearly marked speech type is bardic song. There are certain consistent features within sections in which bards sing that mark out such song. In determining these features, it is necessary to consider the setting and ethos of the scenes in which bardic performance appears to distinguish the ways the poet marks different speech types. Ford argues (Ford 17):

Evidently, to recover the ideas of what singing was and was not we must turn to the texts with a cold eye toward too-familiar literary categories. In defining epic, it is necessary to avoid reductions of formalism and its appealingly 'objective' way of defining genres in terms of meter, diction, figures of speech, and so on. There is little warrant in Homer for making formal considerations so significant in defining kinds of poetry. It is more fruitful to be attentive, as the first Greek critics were, to the 'ethos,' or persona, presented by the poet as a way of announcing and constituting his genre...it was a combination of certain subject matter, the past, presented with a certain ethos.

Although the traditional literary theoretical approaches to epic have no bearing on the way that epic might be presented or marked within the work, there are still certain ways to determine the way that the original audience of the Homeric poems might have viewed epic as differentiated

from other genres. Martin argues that “any concept of genre that underwrites the specific classification of ‘epic’ should stress, above all, two communicative functions” (Martin, “Epic” 10). First, “a shared genre acts as an agreement concerning the horizon of expectation” (10) between performer and audience. Thus, a genre is not simply an artificial set of formal structures stipulated by some outside group (such as literary critics) but instead is a set of more general guidelines that the audience expects the performer to follow; the performer may adhere, manipulate, or violate these assumptions the audience has about the rules that will govern his/her performance. Second, “genre forms an essential cultural piece of information” (10). To determine the genre of a work, one must interpret it within its native system and “its network of associations” (10). This has two implications: (a) that a cross-cultural set of formal aspects of genre can never adequately provide an understanding of the way in which the audience views the work and (b) that the genre system of the work must be defined by the work itself (and other works within the cultural system). As such, all of the markings of bardic song should emanate from the *Odyssey* itself; it is not possible to assume that the Hesiodic and Homeric corpora were exactly contemporary and no later standards will match exactly those which the ancient audiences would hold.<sup>59</sup> However, since the texts are roughly contemporary and demonstrate at least some of the same generic constraints, one can use these texts to help confirm those standards which exist in the *Odyssey* itself, just not to impose standards from the outside that do not appear in the *Odyssey*.

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<sup>59</sup> For example, Murray argues that, although the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* seem very similar, the *Iliad* was composed to be sung in long sections at festivals, while the *Odyssey* was intended to be recited in 200-400 line segments at feasts, see Murray 2008. Although I am not convinced, I believe Murray presents a strong enough case that it would be unwise to simply argue that the generic constraints on epic that appear in the *Iliad* can be directly applied to the *Odyssey*.

Since it would be circular to define the things that mark out bardic song as a type of speech as those things which characterize it in the scene on Skheria, I gather these markings from elsewhere in the epic. In the scene of epic performance in the audience, namely the scene with Phemios in Book 1, a series of guidelines that appear confirmed by other archaic epics (namely the *Iliad* and the works of Hesiod). The conventions that I describe are illustrative of epic. Since they are purely descriptive based on the evidence at hand and do not proscribe what epic should be, they cannot be an exhaustive list of all generic indicators of epic. All of these conventions have been cited by other scholars, but none that I know of have compiled all of them in a single list. The conventions for heroic epic that are set out in the *Odyssey* appear to be as follows: (1) epic is inspired by the Muses (*Od.* 1.1, 10)<sup>60</sup>; (2) it is sung by a bard recognized in the community (*Od.* 1.325-326, 337-338, 346; 3.265-272; 17.383-385);<sup>61</sup> (3) its content—which is at least second hand—is also recognized in the community and often repeated (*Od.* 1.337-344);<sup>62</sup> (4) it tells of important or great actions of both mortals and gods, most often serious in nature (*Od.* 1.1-10, 326-327, 337-339, 351-352);<sup>63</sup> (5) it accompanies or follows a meal or

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<sup>60</sup> Cp. *Il.* 1.1, 2.484-493; Hes. *Theog.* 1-52, *Op.* 1-9. Also, Phemios is referred to as θεῖον (“divine”; *Od.* 1.336) and his song is θέσπις (“befitting of a god”; *Od.* 1.328). According to Egbert Bakker, “The poet himself, on the other hand, is in his remembering presented as drawing directly on the divine μένος of the muses as they themselves remember the epic past...indeed, the Muses’ very name marks them as agents of μένος; the word Μοῦσα probably contains an o-grade of μένος, so that it could be an erstwhile agent noun. The Muse can set a singer in motion, breathing μένος into him...The Muse can also allow the singer to reach for divine energy himself, as in the opening of the Apollo Hymn, which we can now read as ‘Let me now draw μένος from Apollo’” (Bakker 75-76). Ford argues that one of the things which defines a singer as opposed to others who sing is the singer’s relationship with the Muses: “In addition, a singer was set apart by having his own patron deities, the Muses” (Ford 16). Harden and Kelly argue that the invocation of the Muse is structural convention of Greek epic poetry (Harden & Kelly 1-16).

<sup>61</sup> Telemakhos also argues to spare the singer (*Od.* 22.356), Phemios, and Phemios argues for his own life based on his profession (*Od.* 22.345-6). Cf. Hes. *Theog.* 81-104. Martin argues that “the performer is a professional” (Martin, “Epic” 11). Ford also articulates the professional nature tied up in the term *aioidos* and argues that even when others, like Akhilleus in Book 9 of the *Iliad* sing (*Il.* 9.189), they do not get the title *aiodos*.

<sup>62</sup> Andrew Ford argues that “epic is poetry of the *past* in the obvious but significant sense that it defines itself by its heroic subject matter” (Ford 6). Italics in original.

<sup>63</sup> Cp. *Il.* 1.1-7. Ford explains that “invocations tell us obvious things about epic tales—that they are large, that they are about sorrowful deeds of heroes, that the gods’ plans work through them” (Ford 40).

drinking (*Od.* 1.340; 17.356-360),<sup>64</sup> and (6) despite its often serious topics, it is enchanting and entertaining (1.337-339, 353; 17.385, 518-521).<sup>65</sup>

The two Trojan tales, which Demodokos sings fit each of the conventions that the poet lays out for epic: (1) they are inspired by a divine figure;<sup>66</sup> (2) performed a bard, who is an authoritative figure in the community;<sup>67</sup> (3) they tell of events that the bard knows from at least second hand information; both stories are noted as being famous;<sup>68</sup> (4) the stories tell of the greatest war in living memory;<sup>69</sup> (5) the stories are sung during periods of feasting on the day of games that Phaiakians hold for Odysseus;<sup>70</sup> (6) and the stories entertain the Phaiakians, although they speak of the arguments of commanders and the grim nature of battle.<sup>71</sup> The external audience would be attuned to each of these and thus distinguish Demodokos's tales from other types of speech. Scholars have long categorized these stories as recitations of epic, although usually without citing these specific indicators. However, it is important to note how striking these features might be.

Perhaps the best demonstration that these markers identify a specific type of oral genre is to contrast the representation of epic with another genre of song that appears in *Odyssey* 8: the choral or lyric story of Ares and Aphrodite. Similar to the Trojan Tales, the second song is sung

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<sup>64</sup> The suitors “οἱ δὲ σιωπῇ ἦατ’ ἀκούοντες” (listening to him sat in silence; *Od.* 1.3325-326 cf. 1.336-341). As opposed to say, accompanying a dance (e.g. *Od.* 4.17-19). Cp. Scodel, “Bardic” 172.

<sup>65</sup> Cp. Hes. *Theog.* 53-55, 97-103; Ford 52-54; Scodel, “Bardic” 172.

<sup>66</sup> Μοῦσ’ (*Od.* 8.73) inspires the first Trojan tale and θεοῦ (*Od.* 8.499) inspires the story of the Trojan horse. Noticeably, the story of the affair between Ares and Aphrodite is not inspired by a divine figure of any kind.

<sup>67</sup> *Od.* 8.62-70, 470-499; 13.26-27.

<sup>68</sup> The first story is “οἴμης τῆς τότ’ ἄρα κλέος οὐρανὸν εὐρὸν ἴκανε” (a song whose *kleos* went up to wide heaven; *Od.* 8.74). Odysseus asks for the second Trojan tale by name and Demodokos knows it without needing to ask further questions and then complies demonstrating that it is a story which he has told repeatedly.

<sup>69</sup> This is not said explicitly, but the narrator references it because both the actions and the men involved are extremely famous (*Od.* 8.73-74, 502).

<sup>70</sup> The song about Ares and Aphrodite notably accompanies the dance performance that Alkinoos orders to smooth over the incident with Odysseus and the discus (*Od.* 8.235ff). The other two instances of song both occur after meals (*Od.* 8.71-73, 484-500).

<sup>71</sup> Arguments of commanders: *Od.* 8.75-78; Grim nature of battle: *Od.* 8.519-520. The Phaiakian's are entertained: *Od.* 8.90-91, 538.

by Demodokos, and is certainly not from some kind of first-hand experience.<sup>72</sup> In contrast to the Trojan tales that precede and succeed it, the story of the affair of Ares and Aphrodite this song is noticeably not inspired by a Muse or goddess.<sup>73</sup> Ford argues that the Muses stand in for a bardic tradition from which the bard singing a tale learned his craft (Ford 58-59),<sup>74</sup> thus the invocation marks them as part of a collective oral corpus. By the absence of divine inspiration, the poet signifies that this song does not belong to the epic tradition. Notably, although bards may be referred to with adjectives such as divine or divinely inspired, none of the dances which appear in the *Odyssey* have direct inspiration from the Muse. Moreover, the song accompanies a display of dancing ordered by Alkinoos to smooth over the quarrel between Odysseus and Euryalos (*Od.* 8.235ff.). Demodokos sings the story of Ares and Aphrodite while “ἀμφὶ δὲ κοῦροι / πρῶθῆβαι ἴσταντο, δαήμονες ὀρχηθμοῖο, / πέπληγον δὲ χορὸν θεῖον ποσίν” (young men, in the prime of their youth, experienced in dancing, were standing around, and beat the divine earth with their feet: *Od.* 8.262-264). The internal audiences sit and listen quietly to the Trojan tales of Demodokos and the tale of Phemios; the listeners do not dance. Dactylic hexameter is not a meter of dance, although it is the meter of epic. As such, since the songs accompanied a dance, they must have been in some form of lyric meter.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Thus it fulfills the second and third conventions of epic.

<sup>73</sup> Μοῦσ’ (*Od.* 8.73) inspires the first Trojan tale and θεοῦ (*Od.* 8.499) inspires the story of the Trojan horse.

<sup>74</sup> cp. Nagy, *Best* 15-16.

<sup>75</sup> Murray (qv. 1n2) argues that it is not clear whether the song and the dance are separate entertainments, although he admits that if the song accompanied the dance, it would have to be some form of choral meter (Murray 166). However, the language is less ambiguous than Murray suggests. The lines in question are as follows: “κῆρυξ δ’ ἐγγύθεν ἦλθε φέρων φόρμιγγα λίγειαν / Δημοδόκῳ· ὁ δ’ ἔπειτα κί’ ἐς μέσον· ἀμφὶ δὲ κοῦροι πρῶθῆβαι ἴσταντο, δαήμονες ὀρχηθμοῖο, / πέπληγον δὲ χορὸν θεῖον ποσίν. αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς μαρμαρυγὰς θηεῖτο ποδῶν, θαύμαζε δὲ θυμῷ. / αὐτὰρ ὁ φορμίζων ἀνεβάλλετο καλὸν ἀεΐδεν / ἀμφ’ Ἄρεος φιλότιτος ἔϋστεφάνου τ’ Ἀφροδίτης, / ὡς τὰ πρῶτ’ ἐμίγησαν ἐν Ἥφαιστοιο δόμοισι / λάθρη· “And the herald came from nearby carrying the resonant phorminx for Demodokos; and then he went to the middle; and young men in the prime of youth were standing around skilled at dancing, and they struck the ground with their divine feet. And Odysseus watched at their sparkling feet, and was amazed in his heart. And he struck the phorminx to sing well about the love of Ares and well-crowned Aphrodite, how they first mingled secretly in the house of Hephaistos: *Od.* 8.261-269). The δὲ in line 261 shows a change of subject and κί’ is singular, so it must be Demodokos who moves to

One other thing that distinguishes Odysseus's quasibardic narrative from actual bardic song is that it has a purpose. While bardic song entertains its audience, personal narrative answers a request for information or seeks to manipulate the audience (Scodel, "Bardic" 172). Odysseus's narrative does both: he answers Alkinoos's question about who Odysseus is and he establishes himself as a hero. The internal audience heaps praise upon Odysseus for his amazing exploits and storytelling prowess. Odysseus's story not only, then, manipulates the internal audience, but also manipulates the external audience. Just as the internal audience sees Odysseus's heroism in his tale, so too does the external audience. In combination with Demodokos's tales which present Odysseus's most heroic moments in the Trojan War, Odysseus's adventures remind the external audience why Odysseus is a Greek Hero par excellence.

The poet also signifies the difference between the two Trojan Tales and the Affair of Ares and Aphrodite by their representation to the external audience. While the Trojan tales were probably told at great length to the internal audience,<sup>76</sup> they comprise merely 31 lines in total for the external audience. Yet, the length of the poet's summary of the second song is radically different from the other two songs; at 100 lines, it is more than three times the length of the other two stories combined. This may have been pure indulgence in a seductive tale or a moment for the poet to return the story to a more lighthearted tone between the much more serious Trojan Tales. The length further serves to distinguish this middle tale as unlike the Trojan Tales that

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the center of the floor. Since the boys stand around him as they begin to dance, one can infer that he accompanies them. Furthermore, the line where Demodokos commences his song, line 266, begins with *αὐτὰρ*. While *αὐτὰρ* can be adversative, it makes little sense in this context to read it that way. Instead, *αὐτὰρ* is more likely purely progressive. This reading is especially fitting since the previous line also begins with *αὐτὰρ*, suggesting that these particles are denoting successive stages in a narrative (Denniston 55).

<sup>76</sup> There are several references to the length of the recitations, e.g. *Od.* 8.83-92.

precede and succeed it and perhaps underscores even more strongly to the external audience that this story is a different genre of speech from the other two.

Just as generic markers distinguish epic from lyric or choral song, the poet uses similar techniques to distinguish these genres from historical gossip. Although both epic and historical gossip concern the past—and often the distant past—the form of historical gossip is radically different from that of epic. Historical gossip is not tied to a particular profession, unlike epic which is traditionally sung by a bard. Instead, any member of a community may recite historical gossip. Traditionally, however, authority figures recite historical gossip in the Homeric epics. The two pieces of historical gossip that appear in *Odyssey* 8-12 also carry their own set generic markers. Like Odysseus's personal narrative, they are not inspired by a Muse or goddess. Anyone can relate historical gossip, but because the speaker makes a pronouncement about the past, authority figures often deliver historical gossip in the Homeric poems. Historical gossip means that the speaker has acquired the story at least second or third hand. These anecdotes are generally well known by the society at large because they have been circulating enough that they are told second or third hand. Generally the historical gossip in the *Odyssey* appears as references to the previous generation, as it does in both cases in *Odyssey* 8. Historical gossip can appear at any time, but generally some event brings it to mind. In the case of *Odyssey* 8, these two anecdotes are extremely short. However, historical gossip from the *Iliad* can constitute extended speeches, e.g. Phoenix's recitation of the story of Meleagros.<sup>77</sup>

Characters in the Homeric poems recount historical gossip for a purpose. In both cases in *Odyssey* 8 the historical gossip serves to provide the internal audience with information about the identity of the speaker. In the first instance, Odysseus uses historical gossip to characterize his

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<sup>77</sup> The story of Meleagros: *Il.* 9.529-599.

own skills. When Euryalos challenges Odysseus, sneering that Odysseus does not resemble an athlete (*Od.* 8.164), Odysseus responds by using the skills of others as a rubric to gauge his own athleticism for the crowd of Phaiakians (*Od.* 8.214-228):

πάντα γὰρ οὐ κακός εἰμι, μετ' ἀνδράσιν ὅσσοι ἄεθλοι·  
εἴ μὲν τόξον οἶδα ἐϋξοον ἀμφαφάσθαι·  
πρῶτός κ' ἄνδρα βάλοιμι οἷστεύσας ἐν ὁμίλῳ  
ἀνδρῶν δυσμενέων, εἰ καὶ μάλα πολλοὶ ἐταῖροι  
ἄγχι παρασταῖεν καὶ τοξαζοίατο φωτῶν.  
οἷος δὴ με Φιλοκτῆτης ἀπεκαίνυτο τόξῳ  
δήμῳ ἐνὶ Τρώων, ὅτε τοξαζοίμεθ' Ἀχαιοί·  
τῶν δ' ἄλλων ἐμέ φημι πολὺ προφερέστερον εἶναι,  
ὅσσοι νῦν βροτοὶ εἰσὶν ἐπὶ χθονὶ σῖτον ἔδοντες.  
ἀνδράσι δὲ προτέροισιν ἐρίζεμεν οὐκ ἐθελήσω,  
οὔθ' Ἡρακλῆϊ οὔτ' Εὐρύτῳ Οἰχαλιῆϊ,  
οἳ ῥα καὶ ἀθανάτοισιν ἐρίζεσκον περὶ τόξων.  
τῷ ῥα καὶ αἴψ' ἔθανεν μέγας Εὐρυτος οὐδ' ἐπὶ γῆρας  
ἵκετ' ἐνὶ μεγάροισι· χολωσάμενος γὰρ Ἀπόλλων  
ἔκτανεν, οὐνεκά μιν προκαλίζετο τοξαζέσθαι.  
δοῦρι δ' ἀκοντίζῳ ὅσον οὐκ ἄλλος τις οἶστῳ.

For I am not at all bad in the contests there are among men. I know well how to handle a well-polished bow. And I, shooting arrows, would be the first to strike a man among the host of hostile men, even though many companions stood very close around me and would shoot men with their bows. Philoktetes alone surpassed me with a bow in the country of the Trojans, whenever the Akhaians shot their bows. And I say that I stood out from the others by far, which sort are mortals and eat grain upon the earth. But I will not contend against the men who came before, neither Herakles nor Oikhalian Eurytos, who indeed contended with a bow against the immortals. And because of which Eurytos died suddenly, not reaching great age in his house; for Apollo, being angry with him, killed him, because he (Eurytos) challenged him (Apollo) to shoot a bow.

In his boast, Odysseus uses both recent gossip—the achievements of Philoktetes—and historical gossip—the feats of Heracles and Eurytos—to measure his own athletic prowess. The modern gossip demonstrates that he is an archery champion and a great warrior, because he pits himself against the famous Philoktetes. He employs the historical gossip for a twofold purpose. Since he mentions the great champions of the previous generation, he reminds his internal audience how



high he might aspire with regard to his skill. However, he also states that he could not measure up to these great men who challenged even the gods, demonstrating that he is not boasting excessively; he knows that he cannot measure up to these fantastic athletes. His character is revealed; this recitation of historical gossip communicates to the internal audience that he is gifted but not hubristic or vain.<sup>78</sup>

Alkinoos's historical gossip also serves to establish identity; specifically, he illustrates that the Phaiakians are good hosts who convey their guests homeward. Alkinoos describes the supernatural powers of the Phaiakian ships (*Od.* 8.555-563). He then explains that they were so well known for ferrying anyone to a chosen destination that they would someday excite the wrath of Poseidon himself (*Od.* 8.564-570):

ἀλλὰ τόδ' ὣς ποτε πατρὸς ἐγὼν εἰπόντος ἄκουσα  
Ναυσιθόου, ὃς ἔφασκε Ποσειδάων' ἀγάσασθαι  
ἡμῖν, οὐνεκα πομποὶ ἀπήμονές εἰμεν ἀπάντων·  
φῆ ποτε Φαιήκων ἀνδρῶν περικαλλέα νῆα  
ἐκ πομπῆς ἀνιοῦσαν ἐν ἠεροειδέϊ πόντῳ  
ῥαισέμεναι, μέγα δ' ἦμιν ὄρος πόλει ἀμφικαλύψειν.  
ὣς ἀγόρευ' ὁ γέρων·

But once I heard my father, Nausithoos, saying this, he used to said that Poseidon would be angry with us, because we are safe escorts for everyone; he (Nausithoos) said that at some point the well-made ships of the Phaiakian men, returning from a voyage on the misty sea, will be shipwrecked and a big mountain would be raised around our city. Thus the old man used to say.

Alkinoos cites this anecdote that he heard from his father as a method of demonstrating the kindness of the Phaiakians to their guests. The story from his father lends authority to his claim because he provides a witness to the character of the Phaiakians other than himself, and a witness who, no less, was able to provide information about the mind of a god on the subject. Alkinoos,

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<sup>78</sup> The Apologoi may, however, challenge the view that Odysseus is not hubristic or vain.

thus, attempts to employ this historical gossip as definitive proof that the Phaiakians will return Odysseus safely to his homeland on the following day.

Personal narrative within the *Odyssey* also has its own set of markers. Characters speak of their own adventures in the first person, which easily distinguishes the stories from both epic and historical gossip. Typically, these narratives also answer to a particular question posed to the speaker. Menelaos and Nestor both expound at length after Telemachos asks them for information about Odysseus.<sup>79</sup> Eumaios recites the tale of his abduction and servitude when Odysseus asks him how he came to be a servant in the house of Laertes.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, Odysseus relates his adventures to the Phaiakians after they ask for his name, homeland, parentage, and connection to the Trojan War. Alkinoos asks this question in an extended form at the end of *Odyssey* 8 (*Od.* 8.572-585). Odysseus replies with an equally loquacious answer, where he provides all three pieces of information (*Od.* 9.14-38):

νῦν δ' ὄνομα πρῶτον μυθήσομαι, ὄφρα καὶ ὑμεῖς  
εἶδετ', ἐγὼ δ' ἂν ἔπειτα φυγῶν ὑπο νηλεῆς ἦμαρ  
ὑμῖν ξεῖνος ἔω καὶ ἀπόπροθι δῶματα ναίων.  
εἶμ' Ὀδυσσεὺς Λαερτιάδης, ὃς πᾶσι δόλοισιν  
ἀνθρώποισι μέλω, καὶ μεν κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει.  
ναιετάω δ' Ἰθάκην εὐδείελον· ἐν δ' ὄρος αὐτῆ,  
Νήριτον εἰνοσίφυλλον, ἀριπρεπές· ἀμφὶ δὲ νῆσοι  
πολλαὶ ναιετάουσι μάλα σχεδὸν ἀλλήλησι,  
Δουλίχιόν τε Σάμη τε καὶ ὑλήεσσα Ζάκυνθος.  
αὐτὴ δὲ χθαμαλὴ πανυπερτάτη εἰν ἀλί κεῖται  
πρὸς ζόφον, αἰ δέ τ' ἀνευθε πρὸς ἠῶ τ' ἠέλιόν τε,  
τρηχεῖ', ἀλλ' ἀγαθὴ κουροτρόφος· οὐ τι ἐγὼ γε  
ἤς γαίης δύναιμι γλυκερώτερον ἄλλο ιδέσθαι.  
ἦ μὲν μ' αὐτόθ' ἔρυκε Καλυψώ, δῖα θεάων,  
[ἐν σπέεσι γλαφυροῖσι, λιλαιομένη πόσιν εἶναι.]  
ὣς δ' αὐτῶς Κίρκη κατερήτυεν ἐν μεγάροισιν  
Αἰαίη δολόεσσα, λιλαιομένη πόσιν εἶναι·

<sup>79</sup> Telemachos asks (*Od.* 3.79-101) and Nestor responds (*Od.* 3.102-192). Telemachos asks (*Od.* 4.315-331) and Menelaos responds (*Od.* 4.332-586).

<sup>80</sup> Odysseus asks Eumaios (*Od.* 15.380-388) and Eumaios responds (*Od.* 15.389-484). Louden discusses this scene with Eumaios at length and compares it with the similar scene with Alkinoos (Louden 50-68).

ἀλλ' ἐμὸν οὐ ποτε θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ἔπειθεν.  
ὡς οὐδὲν γλύκιον ἤς πατρίδος οὐδὲ τοκῆων  
γίνεται, εἴ περ καὶ τις ἀπόπροθι πίονα οἶκον  
γαίῃ ἐν ἀλλοδαπῇ ναίει ἀπάνευθε τοκῆων.  
εἰ δ' ἄγε τοι καὶ νόστον ἐμὸν πολυκηδέ' ἐνίσπω,  
ὄν μοι Ζεὺς ἐφέηκεν ἀπὸ Τροίηθεν ἰόντι.

And now first I will tell you my name, so that you may know me, and then I, escaping the ruthless day, may your guest-friend although I dwell in a far away home. I am Odysseus son of Laertes, who is known to all men because of my cunning and my *kleos* reaches the skies. And I inhabit sunny Ithaka. And on it is a mountain stately, shaking-leaved Neritos. And all the islands lie around it very close to one another, Doulikhion and Same and wooded Zakunthos. And Ithaka, low-lying, furthest out at sea, faces the darkness, while the others far away facing the dawn and the sun, rocky, but a good nourisher of men. Indeed, I cannot think of anything sweeter than one's own land. Kalypso, shinning among goddesses, tried to keep me there in her hollow cave desiring me for her husband. And in the same way, cunning Aiaian Kirke restrained me in her hall, but not at any time did she persuade my heart in my chest. So nothing is sweeter than one's fatherland and than one's own parents, even if someone lives in a fertile place in another land far away from one's parents. But if you wish, come and let me tell my sorrowful journey, which Zeus sent for me coming from Troy.

Immediately after Odysseus provides his name and patronymic, he emphasizes where he is from. This certainly partially in response to the question, but he particularly describes Ithaka is by its geography (*Od.* 9.21-27). Thus, the purpose of the story is not only to answer the question, but also to ensure his passage home. Moreover, Odysseus continues by comparing Ithaka favorably to the house of Kirke, a goddess, hinting his intense desire to return to his homeland (*Od.* 9.29-36).

## 2.2: Violation of Conventions for Speech Types

Although Odysseus does extensively respond to Alkinoos's questions and provides the long narrative of his adventures to explain how he arrived on Phaiakia, he does not commence

his personal narrative with these answers. Instead, he opens with a long commentary on the context in which he finds himself answering Alkinoos's questions. Odysseus specifically references the day's entertainment (*Od.* 9.2-13):

Ἀλκίνοε κρεῖον, πάντων ἀριδείκετε λαῶν,  
ἧ τοι μὲν τόδε καλὸν ἀκουέμεν ἐστὶν ἀοιδοῦ  
τοιοῦδ', οἷος ὄδ' ἐστί, θεοῖσ' ἐναλίγκιος αὐδήν.  
οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ γέ τί φημι τέλος χαριέστερον εἶναι  
ἢ ὅτ' εὐφροσύνη μὲν ἔχη κάτα δῆμον ἅπαντα,  
δαιτυμόνες δ' ἀνά δώματ' ἀκουάζονται ἀοιδοῦ  
ἡμενοὶ ἐξείης, παρὰ δὲ πλήθωσι τράπεζαι  
σίτου καὶ κρειῶν, μέθυ δ' ἐκ κρητῆρος ἀφύσσω  
οἰνοχόος φορέησι καὶ ἐγχείη δεπάεσσι·  
τοῦτό τί μοι κάλλιστον ἐνὶ φρεσὶν εἶδεται εἶναι.  
σοὶ δ' ἐμὰ κήδεα θυμὸς ἐπετράπετο στονόεντα  
εἴρεσθ', ὄφρ' ἔτι μᾶλλον ὀδυρόμενος στεναχίζω.

Lord Alkinoos, renowned among all people, truly it is a fine thing to listen to a bard such as this, a voice resembling the gods. For I deny that there is any more pleasant fulfillment than when joy takes hold of all the people and guests sitting throughout the house in rows listen to the bard, and beside them the tables are filled with food and meat, and a cup bearer drawing off wine from the mixing-bowl carries it and pours it into the drinking cups. It seems to me in my mind that this is the best thing. But your heart was inclined to ask about my grievous troubles.

Here, Odysseus reminds the external audience that his song is not only in response to a question, but takes the place of bardic entertainment. Although his song is a personal narrative, it is also quasibardic in form since the internal audience still remains seated and feasting as they listen to him.<sup>81</sup> Odysseus alone imitates bardic storytelling with his personal narrative.

Since Odysseus's personal narrative is quasibardic, it follows some of these guidelines for epic set out in the *Odyssey*, while violating others. He tells his adventures following a meal,<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Nestor and Menelaos both recite personal narratives at times connected with eating and drinking, but no bardic allusions are ever made about their stories.

<sup>82</sup> Odysseus's tales follow directly after those of Demodokos, who sings directly after a meal (*Od.* 8.482-484). This fulfills condition 5 for epic.

his performance is both enchanting and entertaining, despite its serious topic,<sup>83</sup> and his internal audience listens in silence.<sup>84</sup> However, Odysseus violates each of the other necessary indicators for epic. His stories are not inspired by a Muse or a goddess. Odysseus's performs his personal narrative himself, unlike bards who perform at least third-hand accounts of the events they describe. Odysseus performs the stories of his adventures in order to establish his identity and authority among the Phaiakians, rather than performing them because he is a valued member of the community. In fact, Alkinoos reminds the internal audience that a man in Odysseus's position is often a liar (*Od.* 11.363-366):

ὦ Ὀδυσσεῦ, τὸ μὲν οὐ τί σ' εἴσκομεν εισορόωντες  
ἠπεροπῆά τ' ἔμεν καὶ ἐπικλοπον, οἷά τε πολλοὺς  
βόσκει γαῖα μέλαινα πολυσπερέας ἀνθρώπους  
ψεύδεά τ' ἀρτύνοντας, ὅθεν κέ τις οὐδὲ ἴδοιτο.

O Odysseus, looking at you, not at all do we suppose this, that you are a deceiver and a thievish man, many of which sort the black earth pastures, widespread men, preparing lies from which no one could know anything.

In contrast to the men whom Alkinoos mentions, it is Odysseus's prowess a storyteller which makes him sound like an expert bard and gives him the air of truthfulness. Alkinoos compliments Odysseus (*Od.* 11.367-369):

σοὶ δ' ἔπι μὲν μορφή ἐπέων, ἔνι δὲ φρένες ἐσθλαί,  
μῦθον δ' ὡς ὅτ' ἀοιδὸς ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας,  
πάντων Ἀργείων σέο τ' αὐτοῦ κήδεα λυγρά.

And upon you there is such grace of words, and in your mind, having recounted the story expertly as a bard would do, the painful sorrows of all the Argives and yourself.

The entire interruption of Odysseus's recitation of his adventures more generally (*Od.* 11.333-385), and the above passage in particular, serves to focus the external audience on speech types.

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<sup>83</sup> *Od.* 11.364-369, 375-376, 380-384. This fulfills condition six for epic.

<sup>84</sup> *Od.* 11.333-334.

This passage reminds the external audience that Odysseus is not in fact a bard—this is a personal narrative—but some of the features are similar to bardic song. Alkinoos also highlights the privileged position of bardic performers; this oral society considers the singer’s words to be true, so a person who sounds like a singer speaks the truth as well.

Odysseus’s eloquence must vouch for the truth of the stories also because, unlike bardic songs, the stories are not famous. In fact, Odysseus recounts them in *Odyssey* 9-12 from his own personal experience, presumably, for the first or nearly the first time. The poet uses this interlude in *Odyssey* 11 to emphasize the newness of Odysseus’s tales. Alkinoos, when he urges Odysseus to continue, reminds the external audience that he has never heard Odysseus’s story before by asking about the other people that Odysseus met in the underworld (*Od.* 11.370-372):

ἀλλ’ ἄγε μοι τόδε εἰπὲ καὶ ἀτρεκέως κατάλεξον,  
εἴ τινας ἀντιθέων ἐτάρων ἴδες, οἳ τοι ἄμ’ αὐτῶ  
Ἴλιον εἰς ἄμ’ ἔποντο καὶ αὐτοῦ πότμον ἐπέσπον.

But come now, tell me this and recite truly, if you saw anyone of your godlike comrades, who went along with you yourself to Ilion and succumbed to their fate there.

This question stimulates anticipation in the external audience as well; even though the journeys of Odysseus would have become famous by the time that a bard or rhapsode sang them, Alkinoos’s excitement reminds the external audience that the poet is quoting Odysseus directly and thus creating the illusion that the stories are being told again for the first time.

The markers of epic which appear on Odysseus’s personal narrative and the markers which contrast Odysseus’s stories with epic highlight, for the external audience, that the entire *Odyssey*, or whatever portion of it they are listening to or reading, was once a set of personal narratives (Louden 50). Over time, the tales transformed from personal narratives into gossip, then historical gossip, and finally became the epic that exists today. Thus the poet self-

consciously crafts Odysseus's adventures as both a personal narrative for the internal audience and an epic tale for the external audience with moments of slippage between the two genres reminding the external audience of the process that fashioned the *Odyssey*.

It is also particularly important that Demodokos sits in the audience for Odysseus's tales. Odysseus and Demodokos have a reciprocal relationship (Louden 50) since they listen to each other's stories. Moreover, Odysseus reciting his adventures to a singer implies that Demodokos will tell these tales in the future, but in the form of bardic song. Louden argues: "Odysseus' narration of his exploits to an audience which includes a gifted singer thus depicts the tradition in action. That is, this is the *Odyssey*'s only portrayal of a singer being informed in his craft, hearing new instances of the subject matter of epic poetry" (Louden 61). This is not the only time in oral literature that has become text that the subject of a story looks at the singer that will eventually repeat his tales; it also appears in *Beowulf* (Creed 44-52; Louden 61). This reminds the external audience of the way in which stories become bardic songs. The poet marks Odysseus's recitation to Demodokos and the Phaiakians as particularly special. Although Odysseus tells the same stories to Penelope (*Od.* 23.310-341), this is the last narrative that the Phaiakians will hear from the outside world. Louden explains that "they will never again enjoy such narrative interaction, since Poseidon prevents any further access to Skheria (13.125-65)" (Louden 61), by turning the ship into rock and raising mountains around the sea port.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> There is some scholarly controversy over whether or not Poseidon does actually create the mountains, but he discusses his plans to do so with Zeus (*Od.* 13.147-158).

### 2.3: Violations of the Temporal Conventions for Speech Types

The poet not only plays with the conventions that mark speech types, but she also distorts the temporal framework in which these speech types appear. Generally, stories begin as personal narratives and are spread through gossip. Within a generation, the gossip that people continue to spread becomes historical gossip. If that historical gossip is sufficiently engaging, it makes its way into the corpus of epic song. Usually, stories do not become epic songs for at least a generation. Thus, the content of epic stories and historical gossip should generally be from the epic plupast. The pieces of historical gossip that Odysseus and Alkinoos relate conform to this model; Alkinoos references his father, Nausithoos, and Odysseus mentions Herakles and Eurytos, all of whom were among characters from the preceding generation and were thus part of the epic plupast. Traditionally, stories move through a period of historical gossip before they become bardic songs, thus bardic songs usually speak of moments farther in the past than historical gossip. However, Demodokos's songs tell stories from the epic past.

The unusually early incorporation of the Trojan tales into bardic song is somewhat plausible for an oral culture. Since stories that are exciting tend to spread extremely quickly and are constantly retold, it makes sense that the gossip would coalesce into a standardized form more quickly. The vast scale of the deeds performed during the Trojan War would have accounted for the almost immediate reverence with which it is treated. Much as the Marathonomachoi became legends in their own time and very quickly earned the status of characters from the mythic past in artistic representations, the poet represents those who fought



in the Trojan War as almost instantaneous heroes.<sup>86</sup> The Phaiakians were not involved in the Trojan War themselves, so the brave deeds of the Akhaioi might seem even more extraordinary since no Phaiakian brought back first person account. From there the stories would quickly become fodder for industrious bards looking to please their audiences. Since the Phaiakian ships travel supernaturally fast, they could have heard the famous stories from the Trojan War almost immediately, and ten years might be sufficient time for the tales to become part of the oral corpus and bardic repertoire.<sup>87</sup>

Although the temporal oddity of the bardic songs is plausible, the poet heightens the oddity of this swift incorporation of stories into epic by placing Odysseus in the internal audience for these performances. Odysseus is the main character within the songs he hears and his reactions to the songs showcase the unusual aspects of bardic songs which describe recent events. Odysseus praises Demodokos on the accuracy of his retelling, telling Demodokos that his account was “ὥς τέ που ἢ αὐτὸς παρεὼν ἢ ἄλλου ἀκούσας” (as if somehow either you yourself were present or you heard from another [who was]: *Od.* 8.489-490). Even the way that Odysseus phrases his compliment signifies the unusual situation. Bards learned their stories from a culturally determined tradition—as Nagy points out, Demodokos’s name means “received by the *demos*” (Nagy 1999: 17), which further underscores Demodokos’s position as a representative of the Phaiakian oral tradition. Although oral tradition is the method that non-literate cultures use to preserve historical stories, Vansina argues that over time, stories inevitably acquire cultural clichés. By the time that stories have become part of historical gossip,

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<sup>86</sup> The Marathonomachoi appeared on the Stoa of Poikile and on the South Frieze of the Temple of Athene Nike (Hurwit 228).

<sup>87</sup> Phemios’s song of the return of the Akhaian commanders is less plausible. Ithakan ships are not supernaturally fast and the returns of the great men are more recent stories than those of the Trojan War. However, the poet acknowledges this by having Telemakhos say that men enjoy whatever song is newest (νεωτάτη; *Od.* 1.352), suggesting that this song might be a recent addition to the bardic repertoire.

they have formed into a standardized version or versions. At this point, the oral culture can no longer provide a verification of the veracity of the stories and they can only be confirmed by an external source (Vansina, *History* 159). Thus, Odysseus serves as an outsider with first hand knowledge of the events and is able to compliment the accuracy of the telling.

Odysseus's tearful reaction to the Trojan Tales further highlights the unusual temporal situation of Demodokos's songs. The Phaiakians thoroughly enjoy both of the Demodokos's songs.<sup>88</sup> Conversely, Odysseus weeps, covering his head (*Od.* 83-93).<sup>89</sup> Odysseus's reaction to the second song is so strong that the poet describes it with a simile (*Od.* 8.521-531):

αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς  
τήκετο, δάκρυ δ' ἔδευεν ὑπὸ βλεφάροισι παρειάς.  
ὡς δὲ γυνὴ κλαίῃσι φίλον πόσιν ἀμφιπεσοῦσα,  
ὅς τε εἴς πρόσθεν πόλιος λαῶν τε πέσησιν,  
ἄστει καὶ τεκέεσσιν ἀμύνων νηλεὲς ἦμαρ·  
ἢ μὲν τὸν θνήσκοντα καὶ ἀσπαίροντα ἰδοῦσα  
ἀμφ' αὐτῷ χυμένη λίγα κωκύει· οἱ δὲ τ' ὀπίσθε  
κόπτοντες δούρεσσι μετάφρενον ἠδὲ καὶ ὄμους  
εἴρπερον εἰσανάγουσι, πόνον τ' ἐχέμεν καὶ οἴζύν·  
τῆς δ' ἐλεεινοτάτῳ ἄχει φθινύθουσι παρειαί·  
ὡς Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐλεεινὸν ὑπ' ὄφρυσι δάκρυον εἶβεν.

But Odysseus melted, and tears from under his eyelids drenched his cheeks. As a woman weeps, falling to embrace her dear husband who fell on behalf of her city and people, warding off the pitiless day from the his city and children; she seeing him dying and gasping, wrapping herself around him she cries out loudly; but the men behind her poking her back and shoulders with their spears lead her into slavery, to engage in labor and misery. His cheeks are ravaged by pitiful sorrow. Such were the pitiful tears Odysseus let fall from under his brows.

Odysseus's devastation is palpable. Upon hearing a retelling of the story of the Trojan Horse, arguably Odysseus's crowning moment in the Trojan War,<sup>90</sup> Odysseus moves from the position

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<sup>88</sup> After the first one, the narrator says that “ὄτρύνειαν αἰεῖδεν / Φαιήκων οἱ ἄριστοι, ἐπεὶ τέρποντ' ἐπέεσσιν,” (the best of the Phaiakians roused him to sing, since they delighted in his words: *Od.* 8.90-91).

<sup>89</sup> Penelope has a comparable reaction to Phemios's songs (*Od.* 1.336-344).

<sup>90</sup> Menelaos relates a different section of the story of the Trojan Horse at length (*Od.* 4.265-289), which emphasizes the importance of this for the portrayal of Odysseus as a hero.

of conqueror to that of the vanquished. Moreover, in the simile, Odysseus is not a defeated soldier, but instead a woman dragged away into a life of painful and miserable slavery, completely unable to defend herself from her fate. While the external audience might be moved by a bard or a rhapsode's performance of a sad scene, the deep emotion Odysseus exhibits implies a personal connection to the story.<sup>91</sup> Alkinoos, noticing Odysseus's lamentations, asks Odysseus whom Odysseus knows that died at Troy (*Od.* 8.581-586). Odysseus's tearful reaction stands in marked contrast to the Phaiakians, who are pleased by Demodokos's song (*Od.* 8.538), and so absorbed that they fail to notice Odysseus's wailing (*Od.* 8.532). Odysseus's extreme reaction thus reminds the external audience how quickly the stories of the Trojan War have become bardic song.

Many scholars have discussed the contrast between Odysseus's and the Phaiakian's reactions to Demodokos's songs. Hilary Mackie argues that grief upon hearing sufferings retold in epic is unique to the *Odyssey*; Mackie argues that emotional response is connected specifically to the songs being part of a living memory for internal audience—namely, in these cases, Odysseus and Penelope—and instances of personal involvement (Mackie 82).<sup>92</sup> Nagy argues that “personal involvement or non-involvement determines whether or not the situation calls for *penthos* or *kleos*” (Nagy, *Best* 98). But the problem with Nagy's model is that the situation calls for both *penthos* and *kleos*: it calls for *penthos* from Odysseus who suffered through the war

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<sup>91</sup> In Plato's *Ion*, Ion tells Socrates that his success is contingent upon the emotional response of his audience: “Καὶ μάλα καλῶς οἶδα· καθορῶ γὰρ ἐκάστοτε αὐτοὺς ἄνωθεν ἀπὸ τοῦ βήματος κλάοντάς τε καὶ δεινὸν ἐμβλέποντας καὶ συνθαμβοῦντας τοῖς λεγομένοις. δεῖ γὰρ με καὶ σφόδρ' αὐτοῖς τὸν νοῦν προσέχειν· ὡς ἐὰν μὲν κλάοντας αὐτοὺς καθίσω, αὐτὸς γελάσομαι ἀργύριον λαμβάνων, ἐὰν δὲ γελῶντας, αὐτὸς κλαύσομαι ἀργύριον ἀπολλύς” (I know it very well. For when I look down from the speakers' platform on those ones crying and looking terrified and being astounded keeping up with the stories. For it is necessary that I pay very close attention to them. Because if I set them crying, I will laugh taking their silver, but if I set them laughing, I will cry losing money myself: Pl. *Ion*. 535e). I thank Mike Tueller, who mentioned referenced this passage to me when he read a nascent draft of this paper and Ruth Scodel who mentioned this passage in a question she asked at the *Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World XI* conference.

<sup>92</sup> Mackie here is citing Nagy, *Best* 98.

himself and *kleos* from the Phaiakians who consider Odysseus as one of the heroes of the Trojan War. Instead, I would argue that Odysseus's emotional reaction to Demodokos' songs is a symptom of a hyper-compressed amount of time between an event and its incorporation into epic. Moreover, the poet describes Odysseus's reaction with such a beautiful simile as though to direct the external audience's attention to Odysseus's personal connection to Demodokos's songs.

The recent subjects of bardic song are not the only temporal incongruity in *Odyssey* 8. The most obvious place where the poet toys with the temporal distinctions comes in the discus scene. After Laodamos invites Odysseus to participate in the contests (*Od.* 8.143-151) and Euryalos taunts Odysseus (*Od.* 8.158-164), Odysseus becomes angry and decides to demonstrate his strength to the Phaiakians (*Od.* 8.186-198):

ἦ ῥα, καὶ αὐτῷ φάρει ἀναΐξας λάβε δίσκον  
μείζονα καὶ πάχετον, στιβαρώτερον οὐκ ὀλίγον περ  
ἢ οἴῳ Φαίηκες ἐδίσκεον ἀλλήλοισι.  
τόν ῥα περιστρέψας ἦκε στιβαρῆς ἀπὸ χειρός·  
βόμβησεν δὲ λίθος· κατὰ δ' ἔπτηξαν ποτὶ γαίῃ  
Φαίηκες δολιχῆρετμοὶ, ναυσικλυτοὶ ἄνδρες,  
λαὸς ὑπὸ ῥιπῆς· ὁ δ' ὑπέρπτατο σήματα πάντων,  
ρίμφα θεῶν ἀπὸ χειρός· ἔθηκε δὲ τέρματ' Ἀθήνη  
ἀνδρὶ δέμας εἰκυῖα, ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἕκ τ' ὀνόμαζε·  
“καὶ κ' ἀλαός τοι, ξεῖνε, διακρίνειε τὸ σῆμα  
ἀμφαφόων, ἐπεὶ οὐ τι μεμιγμένον ἐστὶν ὀμίλῳ,  
ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρῶτον. σὺ δὲ θάρσει τόνδε γ' ἄεθλον·  
οὐ τις Φαίηκων τόν γ' ἵξεται οὐδ' ὑπερήσει.”

And springing up, still in his cloak, he took a discus, larger and thicker, more than a little bigger than the Phaiakians threw among themselves. Whirling it around, he threw from his strong hand, and the stone hummed. And the long-oared Phaiakians, famed for ships, crouched down on the ground, on account of the force of the stone. And, from his hand, it flew quickly over the markers of all the others. And Athene, resembling a man in build, marked the endpoint, and spoke a word and called out by name: “Indeed, stranger, a blind man, putting his hands around it, could discern your maker, since it is not mixed among the crowd, but much further forward. Take heart about this contest. No one of the Phaiakians will either reach it or surpass it.”

Although Odysseus has been travelling or trapped with Kalypso for the last seven years, and spent the previous ten years encamped in hostile territory, he still manages to surpass the young and athletic Phaiakians during a competition. Even more surprising, the narrator does not mention Athene aiding his throw; in fact, Athene intercedes a moment later to vaunt his superiority (*Od.* 8.193-198), which emphasizes her absence in the actual hurling of the discus. His athletic prowess is such that Athena remarks that “οὐ τις Φαιήκων τόν γ’ ἴξεται οὐδ’ ὑπερήσει” (no one among the Phaiakians will reach it or surpass it: *Od.* 8.198). This is a demonstration of Odysseus’s personal strength.

It is possible that Odysseus is simply bigger and stronger than the Phaiakians who are lithe and particularly skilled in sailing, running, and dancing (*Od.* 8.246-249). Yet, it is clear that the Phaiakians who are participating in the contests are athletic and much younger than the aging Odysseus. Without the gods’ help, his magnificent victory seems a little unusual. However, Odysseus’s strength in comparison to the Phaiakians may stem not from bodily strength per se but from a physical manifestation of a cliché in stories about the past. The text marks this difference in the dividing line for generations in the epic plupast through quantitative difference: i.e. those heroic things from bygone ages are bigger and more intense than things of the current age (Grethlein 17). Odysseus’s historical gossip about Herakles and Eurytos demonstrates this point effectively: Odysseus will match himself with any member of his own generation, but he could not imagine vying with members of the previous generation who were strong enough to test their strength against the gods (*Od.* 8.223-228). For the Phaiakians, Odysseus has already become a hero of the status of Herakles and others since he is remembered in their favorite bardic songs. Thus, the Phaiakians competing against Odysseus is equivalent to Odysseus

competing against Herakles: mortals of the current generation cannot compete against the heroes of the previous generation. It is as though the cliché of quantitative difference leaks from oral tradition into reality. As a comparandum, Nestor, in the *Iliad* represents a similar anomaly. Nestor is old and too fragile to be in the forefront of the battle in the *Iliad*, yet, he is the only one with the strength to hold his cup when it is full of liquid (*Il.* 11.632-637). The strength that his ability to lift the cup demonstrates is not the actual strength that Nestor has as an old man, but instead is the strength with which the stories about his youth might endow him.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, Odysseus, as a living person who also exists in the stories, takes on some of the cultural clichés that would have adorned his narrative representations within Demodokos's story. Like his representation in epic, Odysseus is stronger than the current generation even though they are younger than he.

Odysseus's boast directly following his feat with the discus, draws the connection himself between heroes of the past represented in story and the cliché of things being bigger in the heroes of story by comparing his feat to heroes of the past: this is where he relates the anecdote about Herakles and Eurytos (*Od.* 8.223-228). Thus the poet points to the leakage of quantitative difference from stories about the epic plupast into the reality of the epic past.

## Conclusion

The representation of the various parts of the formation of oral tradition in *Odyssey* 8-12 demonstrates a self-conscious reflection on a complicated and sophisticated interplay of speech types. It is clear that the poet of the *Odyssey* was aware that the tradition came from

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<sup>93</sup> Nestor says that he grew up with the strongest of all generations of men and fought with them (*Il.* 1.260-272).

somewhere—some kind of stories that were brought back from actual events and then transformed over the course of a generation or two into part of oral tradition. Moreover, these speech types are marked so that the external audience may understand the type of speech even in the absence of linguistic and metrical differentiation. The poet, likewise, seems to know that the traditional length of time for stories to become part of an oral tradition either for prose retelling or epic performance is about one generation; the epic plupast is always one generation or more removed from those telling the stories in both the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. However, the poet also self-consciously breaks this temporal pattern with the stories that are performed by Demodokos and Phemios in the *Odyssey* and by manifesting quantitative difference in the epic past. This provides greater insight onto how the ancients viewed their own traditions.

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