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By

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Professor Christine Hastorf

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Abstract

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In this project, I use textual analysis in combination with theoretical frameworks drawn from anthropology, animal studies, and food studies to analyze the poetic significance of meat and cannibalism in Homer, Hesiod, and the Homeric Hymns. Each chapter examines a different combination of consumer and food in order to challenge the neat opposition between divine self-sufficiency and human hunger proposed by Vernant.

In the first two chapters, I investigate the gods' relationship to animal meat. The first is a reading of the sacrifice at Mecone in Hesiod's *Theogony.* On the basis of verbal echoes of Hesiod's account of the castration of Ouranos, I argue that Prometheus' deception of Zeus functions as a quasi-castration, and that impotence, rather than self-sufficiency, is the implied result of the contest. It leaves the gods unable to consume meat, but does not preclude their craving it. Then, in the second chapter, I explore divine hunger for meat in a post-Mecone world in the *Homeric Hymns* to Apollo and Hermes. In their quests to gain full acceptance as Olympian gods, both gods commit bewildering acts of violence, always seeming disappointed with the results; these actions make more sense, however, when we read them as frustrated attempts to satisfy their longings for both meat and rebellion against a paternal authority figure—longings that are impossible to satisfy under Zeus' rule.

In the third and fourth chapters, I explore the *Odyssey*'s Cattle of Helios episode as a case study of human hunger for meat, applying two different heuristics. The third chapter reads the episode from an animal studies perspective: when Odysseus' crew eat the cattle of Helios, it is because their understanding of the hierarchy of animals, humans, and gods has undergone a gradual dissolution. Their unsettling experiences in the otherworld lead to a disastrous abandonment of alimentary codes with cosmic consequences. Then, in the fourth chapter, I reread the episode in terms of power relationships between humans, applying Maurice Bloch's theory of consumed vitality and rebounding violence and Pierre Bourdieu's ideas about the economics of eating. By analyzing Odysseus' and Eurylochus' persuasive speeches to the crew about why they should or should not land on Thrinacia or eat the cattle, and by comparing them with other Homeric passages that touch on the class politics of meat, I propose that the crew's decision to eat the cattle may not be a mistake at all, but an attempted rebellion against aristocratic privilege.

In my fifth and sixth chapters, I consider the moments in hexameter when men and gods become meat for each other and for other beings. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* contain many

instances of almost-cannibalism—wishes, threats, and similes about cannibalism, or humans being eaten by animals or monsters—but no literal instances of humans eating each other, even in starvation situations. In the fifth chapter, employing anthropological theories of cannibalism from Arens, Harris, and Nyamnjoh, I attempt to explain the absent presence of cannibalism in Homer, finding that warriors and heroes long for the dominant position of the cannibal because their own lives are metaphorically cannibalized by the wars in which they fight and their precarious position in the world. In the sixth chapter, I investigate stories of gods consuming each other or being consumed, mapping patterns of violence in Hesiod's *Theogony* to show how the order of Zeus is founded on his invention of cannibalism, a markedly exploitative form of violence, through the synthesis of more primitive kinds of violence.

For my parents

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Introduction

In *On Abstinence from Animal Food*, a 3rd-century CE treatise urging the philosophically-minded to adopt a vegetarian diet, Porphyry offers an intriguing genealogy of animal sacrifice.[1] Originally, he says, humans only ate and sacrificed fruits of the earth. Then, during a period of famine, they forgot what was holy and began to practice human sacrifice and cannibalism. He explains the logic of this ghastly turn: in their efforts to appease the gods, they offered up the very best of their possessions, but took this principle a step too far, so as to include the flesh of their own species. After that, due to forgetfulness of reverence and greed for new flavors, they substituted the bodies of animals for the bodies of humans and took up animal sacrifice.[2] He asserts that this is how it happens for everyone: they sacrifice animals to the gods, then, believing that what is good for the gods is good for them, they are "induced" to taste the flesh of animals.

This account will appear striking to anyone who is familiar with Hesiod's myth of Prometheus, the episode that is often looked to for an explanation of Greek sacrificial customs.[3] According to this story, humans and gods were "being separated" at Mecone, and the titan Prometheus was in charge of dividing a sacrificial ox between the two groups. Hoping to help humans by getting a better portion for them, he attempted to trick Zeus by creating two deceptive portions: one with the ox's bones, covered in fat to make them look appetizing; the other with all the edible meat, covered with the stomach to make it look repulsive. Zeus chose the bone portion, and as a consequence, humans from then on would sacrifice by burning an animal's bones for the gods, who were nourished by the savory smoke, and cooking the meat for themselves. Zeus, angry at Prometheus for deceiving or trying to deceive him, then denied humans access to fire, making it impossible for them to cook or sacrifice. Prometheus stole a spark of fire from Zeus, hiding it in a fennel-stalk, and gave it to humans. His punishment for this was to be chained and for an eagle to peck out his liver every day, while his liver would regenerate each night, allowing his torture to go on indefinitely. As punishment for humans, on the other hand, Zeus ordered the creation of the first woman.

The story speaks to an obvious problem with Greek sacrifice: that it does not require much in the way of *sacrifice* from humans, allowing them to eat the good parts of a victim while earning the favor of the gods at the same time.[4] As Burkert puts it,

> As soon as reflection found expression among the Greeks, the pious claim attached to this sacred act became ambivalent. Such a sacrifice is performed for a god, and yet the god manifestly receives next to nothing: the good meat serves entirely for the festive feasting of the participants.[5]

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[1] *De Abstinentia* 2.27. Porphyry is here quoting or paraphrasing from Theophrastus; see Clark (2000: 11) and Sorabji (1993: 175) on Porphyry's reliance on Theophrastus, as well as Townsend (2011: 221 n.42) on the problem of discerning between quoted, paraphrased, and original material in Porphyry.

[2] ὑπάλλαγμα πρὸς τὰς θυσίας τῶν ἰδίων ἐποιοῦντο σωμάτων τὰ τῶν λοιπῶν ζῴων σώματα, "They made the bodies of the rest of the animals a substitute for their own bodies in sacrifices" (*De Abstinentia* 2.27).

[3] Hes. *Th.* 535ff. See e.g., Henrichs 2019: 96, Graf 2004: 341, Rundin 1996: 189, and Burkert 1985: 57 on the aitiological importance of this passage.

[4] See Henrichs 2019: 96; Graf 2004: 341; Vernant 1989: 21.

[5] Burkert 1985: 57.

This ambivalence is noticeable in Hesiod's tale, which seems to imply both human guilt (for taking all of the meat for themselves and sharing none with the gods) and human resentment (against the gods who tried to deny them their sustenance). It also implies a time before these customs were established at Mecone, when things were different: humans were not so separate from gods, meat did not need to be cooked, fire did not need to be fed, and marriage with women did not need to be endured.[6] With the establishment of sacrifice, humans enter their current and eternal condition, suspended between gods, who are self-sufficient and unbothered by base urges like hunger, and animals, who unselfconsciously devour each other.[7]

It is this vision of the world that Porphyry's narrative of the origins of sacrifice turns upside-down. He, too, imagines a golden age, defined not by freedom from work, but by purity and piety.[8] Men did not yet eat meat because they had not yet forgotten what was holy or been led astray by their fickle senses. He situates vegetarianism as the oldest, most natural, and most lawful way of life. From this golden age men veer sharply into cannibalism, motivated, on the one hand, by a famine of vegetal foods, and on the other hand, by a misguided desire to please the gods. Porphyry excuses these practitioners of human sacrifice and cannibalism to a degree; while they act wrongly, they do so because they are constrained by necessity and because they have misinterpreted the usually good idea of offering one's best to the gods. He reserves his harsher condemnations for those who take an *additional* step into the aberrant and unnatural by substituting animal bodies for human ones. Whereas the first cannibals acted out of desperation, the switch to animal meat is driven simply by greed for new flavors. The consumption of animal meat does not come about because of an attempt to solve a problem, but because of abject self-indulgence.[9]

Perhaps it is not surprising that Porphyry, hoping to persuade his readers to give up animal meat, makes a pointed departure from the myths that explain and promote animal sacrifice as part of human life. If, as we tend to think, animal sacrifice was viewed as a defining feature of the human condition and the primary means by which humans could communicate with the gods, then he needs to make it the very opposite of this: a corruption of the natural human condition and a repulsive error in the eyes of the gods, who prefer plant-based sacrifices.[10] But at the same time, the ideas he emphasizes here—the continuity between meat-eating and cannibalism and the contemptible hedonism of meat consumption—are not so foreign to the worldview of Hesiod, Homer, and the hymn-poets. In fact, these ideas arise over and over in the myths of archaic hexameter. Meat-eating is surrounded by intense anxiety: men feel guilty for taking the lives of animals, with whom they can easily sympathize; they fear the gods' envy of their delicious portion of the sacrificial animal; and they look upon one another with suspicion and resentment, always in competition for limited shares of meat.

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[6] Vernant 1981: 46. This time before Mecone is related to, but does not map cleanly onto, the age of gold described in Hesiod's account of the races of men in *Works and Days* 109ff.

[7] See especially Vernant 1981 and Vidal-Naquet 1981.

[8] Again, I am not referring specifically to Hesiod's races of men and the age of gold, but to the broad idea of an earlier time when the human condition was better.

[9] "The earliest humans ate, and sacrificed, plant foods, first gathered and then cultivated. Starvation led them to cannibalism, so they sacrificed humans; animal sacrifice was first a substitute for human sacrifice, then a manifestation of greed. The gods prefer simple sacrifices made by worthy people, but (as comparison of different cultures shows) humans sacrifice what they want to eat" (Clark 2000: 11-12); "Even if meat-eating is not, as it is for Empedocles, literally cannibalism, it results from cannibalism and human sacrifice and is equally unnatural" (Sorabji 1996: 177).

[10] *De Abstinentia* 2.13-15.

My object of inquiry in this dissertation is not Porphyry, but the world of archaic hexameter poetry to which he offers such a striking counterpoint. Meat eating is always at issue in this world, and I have attempted to understand how and why that is so. I look for meaning in the stories that cluster around meat: eating it, wanting it, and becoming it. These stories about hunger, pleasure, blood, guts, violence, power, and living or dead flesh have a way of revealing the gaps in the logic of the archaic imagination. Burkert argued that sacrificial ritual "simply does not fit the anthropomorphic mythology of the gods."[11] This blunt formulation gets to the heart of the matter: in epic poetry, an imaginative space opens up where sincere religious ideas and practices interact with the anthropomorphic mythology of the gods, that is, where the elements of myth and culture that "simply do not fit" are allowed to bump into each other, break down, intermingle, and generate strange new problems. The nature of these poems, which are traditional and orally composed, and which were performed for entertainment but were also intimately connected with religious thought and practice, makes it difficult to pin down exactly what they can tell us about ancient life or ancient religion. It is clear, however, that they can tell us much about the obsessions and fantasies of their poets and audiences. The dilemmas that drive their narratives must have been attractive and compelling to many minds across a great deal of time.

This dissertation is a literary reading of meat in Homer, Hesiod, and the *Hymns*: an attempt to understand how the gods and humans who populate the hexameter world were imagined to experience hunger, satiety, and their respective shares of the sacrificial animal, and what this can tell us about the cultural imagination that produced these works. I have sought the answers to these questions through close readings and textual analysis of the poems themselves, as well as the application of interpretive models drawn from texts ranging from anthropological and post-humanist theory to contemporary fiction, nonfiction, and television. What I have found through these methods of analysis is a somewhat bleaker view of the gods and the human condition than these texts have often been thought to espouse. Most interpretations of Hesiod and the *Hymns*, and perhaps to a lesser degree of Homer, tend to accept the idea that the ultimate purpose of these poems was to praise the gods and that the gods must not, therefore, be criticized too harshly in them.[12] I take a slightly different view of hexameter poetry's apparent attitude towards the Olympian gods and the position of humans in the world they rule. I would not suggest that these works are subversive or anti-Olympian; both because of the texts' collaborative nature and because of the religious devotion of the culture that produced them, that would be absurd. But the religious idea of the gods does sit rather uneasily with the anthropomorphic, mythological, literary ones; in addition to their religious significance, these poems were created to entertain people, and at the same time, they provided a venue for human anxieties and resentments to play out. That is not to say that everyone felt awful about killing animals to eat their meat, or worried as much as Porphyry did that doing so felt like cannibalism, or resented the gods for letting humans endure a hard and often hungry life when they could change it if they wanted to; but these ideas do seem to have found enough purchase to work their way into the poems, at least in the places where the anthropomorphic and religious ideas of the gods clash. And just as Burkert proposed, meat is right at the center of that discrepancy.

When it comes to meat, the gods are both hungry and antagonistic. Zeus tries to prevent humans from getting access to meat, first in the contested division of the ox at Mecone, then by

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[11] Burkert 1985: 57.

[12] See, e.g., Lloyd-Jones 1971, Miller 1986, and Clay 1989.

taking away fire so that they cannot cook what they have.[13] Although the results of the sacrifice at Mecone mean that the gods do not *need* meat in the same way that humans do, this does not free them from *wanting* it, and want it they certainly do. Humans, meanwhile, are entitled to eat meat, but in the stories, the act is often fraught: it makes them liable to commit grave errors, such as offending the gods through an improper sacrifice or committing accidental cannibalism, not to mention the envy it stirs up between men. Human life is marked by the taint of mortality, so as much as humans are the eaters of meat, they are also doomed to become dead flesh, whether or not their dead flesh will in the end be devoured by animals, tasted by their enemies, or even serve to satisfy the bloodlust of a god.[14] They regard cannibalism with fear and disgust, but also desire, imagining that consuming their fellow humans as meat might allow them to escape or transcend the food chain in which they are embedded. Perhaps most disturbing of all is the relationship between Zeus and cannibalism that we find in the *Theogony*. Several of his ancestors engage in violence that might be called cannibalistic, but it is Zeus who discovers that violence that destroys the other while also nourishing the self is the key to tremendous power. He stabilizes his reign through the cannibalistic subjugation of both Metis and Prometheus, suggesting that his supremacy among the gods is due less to his justice or wisdom and more to his ability to manipulate violence to his advantage.

This project admittedly does not address all that it might have. I chose to limit my analysis to Homer, Hesiod, and the *Hymns,* both for practical reasons—to keep the amount of material from becoming unmanageable—and because these poems form such a neat unit of myth and meaning that it seemed worth trying to answer the question of what meat means *here*, in this set of texts, rather than complicating the matter with the inclusion of relevant texts from other genres or periods.[15] I have kept my concerns confined to the literary representation of food, sacrifice, and cannibalism rather than involving any inquiries into the real foodways of the ancient Mediterranean. Thematically, too, I have had to exclude questions that would have been interesting to include, but would have taken me too far afield from my goal of explaining the meaning of flesh in these poems. I have not addressed other important categories of human food, such as bread, wine, or fish, nor have I given much space to nectar and ambrosia, except for a short discussion in chapter 2 that is there more for comparison than for its own sake. I hope to work on some of these questions in the future, and that their absence here may spark an interest in them for others. I have also chosen not to make this reading exhaustive; rather than giving surveys of every passage about meat, sacrifice, blood, or whatever it may be, I have pulled out passages that seem particularly representative, compelling, or troubling. I believe that the readings these passages have inspired are generally applicable for these texts, but there is plenty of work left to be done on flesh-related anomalies that remain unaccounted for.

Even within the bounds of archaic epic, I have been somewhat selective in focusing only on the surviving poems of substantial length. I have not tried to address the surviving fragments of the Trojan cycle, the Theban cycle, or many lost Hesiodic poems. I have made these exclusions not due to a belief that the Cyclic poems were later in date or inferior in quality, but

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[13] This claim depends on my argument in chapter I that Zeus is both tricked and not tricked by Prometheus and that his anger upon discovering the bones in his portion shows that his selection cannot have been entirely deliberate.
[14] See my discussion of Ares' satisfaction with blood in chapter V.
[15] To name just a few, Empedocles, Attic tragedy and comedy, Herodotus (beyond the short discussion in chapter V), Aristotle, and the Derveni Papyrus are all texts which have much to tell us about ideas about food, animals, and cannibalism, but which are beyond the scope of this project.

because my methods of interpretation rely on textual analysis that works best with whole texts.[16] Meanwhile, the poems that do survive are considered to have dates of composition ranging from the eighth to the sixth centuries BCE.[17] Still, because they all seem to draw upon traditional material, I believe it is defensible to approach them as a coherent system, or as the surviving bits and pieces of a coherent system.[18] I will not here summarize the many important studies on archaic epic of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with which I am not in direct conversation; suffice to say that I accept the premises of oral formulaic theory and do not find them incompatible with the possibility of artful composition.[19] I will, however, point out the works of interpretation of hexameter poetry that have particularly influenced my ways of reading it.

The influence of French structuralists including Jean-Pierre Vernant, Marcel Detienne, and Pierre Vidal-Naquet on this project will be evident. These scholars articulated the system within which Greek myths, especially the hexameter myths, seem to take place. In this system, humans are suspended between gods and animals, and the human condition is defined most of all by the civilizing institutions of marriage, agriculture, and sacrifice. Humans are similar to the gods in terms of appearance, language, and intelligence, and to animals in terms of mortality and embodiment, but they are set apart from both by the necessity of hard labor in their lives. While gods and animals may enjoy random and even incestuous couplings, humans must bind themselves into monogamous pairs to ensure the continued stability of their family lines. Gods eat magically abundant nectar and ambrosia, and animals are nourished by the bounty of the earth, but humans have to plough the land to get the grain they need to survive. When it comes to meat, the gods are satisfied by the smoke of sacrifices, while also engaging in cannibalism from time to time; animals unselfconsciously kill and eat each other raw, sometimes even devouring their own kind; and humans kill, cook, and distribute their meat according to a complex ritual. The gods lead a life of ease, as do the animals, in their willy-nilly way, while human life is marked by work and hunger. And as Vernant points out, "the fabric of human life is cut from the same material that forms the food that sustains it."[20] I mean to build upon this system more than to dismantle it; it is plainly operative "on a larger scale," but the structuralist interpretations leave much unexplained about why the system breaks down in particular cases, such as the irrepressible hunger of the gods.[21]

James Redfield's *Nature and Culture in the Iliad*, with its directives to "assume that the poem is a success," to "read the Homeric story from the surface down: from social relations to the individual acts they condition, from social situations to the individual consciousness they

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[16] On the view that Cyclic poems were later in date and inferior in quality to the Homeric poems, see Griffin 1977. I am more persuaded by Burgess' argument of greater nuance: that the Cyclic poems were stylistically distinct from the Homeric ones, but that both developed out of the same mythological tradition in parallel, and that the Cyclic poems were initially much more influential (Burgess 2001: 158 and *passim*). Still, the distinctness of the Cycle and the fact that it only survives in summaries and fragments are both good reasons not to attempt to understand it using the same methods I have applied to the surviving complete hexameter poems.

[17] Clay 1989: 5.

[18] Cf. Clay (1989: 7) on the performance context of the *Hymns*: "What I am suggesting is that the hymns should not be linked to cults or specific religious festivals so much as to the ambit of *epos*."

[19] See Bakker 2013: 157-169.

[20] Vernant 1989: 37.

[21] I borrow this phrasing from Heath (2005: 46), who asserts that "Homer carefully maintains the basic animal-human distinction on the larger scale" while blurring it in individual similes. I would argue something similar about the structuralist idea of the alimentary code: it works on the larger scale, but its distinctions become very blurry upon closer inspection.

inform and provoke" in pursuit of "an understanding of Homeric social psychology," and to "attempt… to read the *Iliad* on its own terms," has been an indispensable guide.[22] I admire and hope to emulate Redfield's devotion to understanding the world inside the poem as a coherent and beautiful whole. His analysis of purity and pollution in heroic culture, and especially his insight that the desire to see one's foes devoured by scavengers stands in for cannibalistic longings, shaped my ways of thinking about animals, violence, and the body in the Homeric epics.[23]

Jenny Strauss Clay's *The Politics of Olympus* gives a wonderfully clear, complete, and satisfying reading of the surviving long Homeric Hymns. Clay respects the integrity of the individual hymns, rejecting the tendency to view these texts as potential sources of information about cult practices and instead searching out internally consistent meanings in the poems themselves. At the same time, her broader vision of how each of these texts fits into the greater literary and ideological project of hexameter poetry is highly persuasive and helpful, generating insights that reach well beyond the hymns themselves. She proposes that all of the surviving hexameter poems tell pieces of an overarching narrative beginning with the birth of the universe and ending with a world ruled by Zeus where the gods no longer interact with humans: the *Theogony* narrates the births of the gods and Zeus' rise to power; the *Hymns* explain how other Olympian gods become integrated into Zeus' reign, how feminine power is controlled, and how the gods cease to procreate with humans; the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* portray the deaths of the last generation of demigods; and *Works and Days* presents the world in its contemporary, post-heroic state.[24] This idea underpins many of my arguments in this dissertation; much of my work here has been to show how food materially situates the lesser gods and humans in relation to the power of Zeus, how all stories that come after the sacrifice at Mecone are inscribed within Zeus' material control of the world, and how meat and cannibalism are both key in Zeus' seizure and maintenance of power. All of these are elaborations on Clay's articulation of hexameter poetry as a coherent, pro-Olympian, panhellenic project. In places I have diverged from Clay in interpreting these poems as critical of the Olympian gods, believing that stories that illustrate the awesome power of Zeus do not necessarily need to praise that power, and may even express ambivalence or resentment.

I have also been influenced by the metonymic approach of Leonard Muellner in *The Anger of Achilles* and the concepts of "resonance of mythological variants" and "traditionality as an instrument of meaning" proposed by Laura Slatkin in *The Power of Thetis.*[25] Muellner demonstrates how meaning accumulates across the generations of succession struggle in the *Theogony*, with conquest of Metis and the birth of Athena standing as the final, most complex and concentrated iteration; Slatkin shows through the example of Thetis that poet(s) of the *Iliad* refer to traditional myths in order to develop the central themes of the poem—in the case of Thetis, the "emphatic use of her attributes as a nurturing mother… makes possible one of the poem's central ideas: the vulnerability of even the greatest of the heroes."[26] These readings are both brilliant in their particulars and exemplary in their commitment to accepting the texts as we find them and searching out artfulness and coherence in them.

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[22] Redfield 1975: 20, 24.
[23] Redfield 1975: 169.
[24] Clay 1989: 11-15.
[25] Muellner 1996: 52-93 and Slatkin 1991: 5.
[26] Slatkin 1991: 7.

Egbert Bakker's *The Meaning of Meat and the Structure of the Odyssey* has been an important influence on this dissertation. Bakker elevated meat to a serious topic of literary interpretation in its own right. His narratological and folkloric approaches elucidated the centrality of meat as a structuring principle in the *Odyssey*, with each major episode exploring variations on the motif of master of animals and stories about quests for meat. His insights about how meat functions as an unlimited resource in the *Iliad* and a limited one in the *Odyssey* have helped form my understanding of the differences in worldview between the two poems.[27] His epilogue on the concept of interformularity—that is, the ways in which traditional formulae can be artfully arranged by oral poets to create parallels and contrasts through their echoes—offers a commendable solution to the problems of trying to read orally-composed epic as literature, allowing for both the efficiency of tradition and the creativity of individual performers.

Charles Stocking's *The Politics of Sacrifice in Early Greek Myth and Poetry* is another recent contribution to the growing field of meat studies that helped pave the way for this dissertation by drawing attention to the productivity of meat as an interpretive lens for archaic hexameter poetry. Stocking searches for the "concealed cultural logic of Greek sacrifice" and proposes an "understanding of sacrifice in Greek culture as a *politics of the belly*, where 'belly' signifies both the male stomach and the female womb."[28] He grounds his interpretation in the linguistic metaphors for anger that appear in these texts: anger is something that is both burned and digested, like an animal sacrifice, and so all sacrifices reenact Zeus' anger at Prometheus.[29] Stocking is interested in many of the same questions I attempt to answer, such as (in the context of the *Theogony*) "Why is Zeus angry?" and (in the context of the *Hymn to Hermes*) "Why does Hermes desire meat and yet abstain from consuming it?"[30] While my interpretations go in a different and overall more pessimistic direction, Stocking's work has provided a helpful model for ways of thinking and talking about meat and hunger in an interlocking set of hexameter poems.[31]

This project also intersects with several fields of study that are relevant to my inquiry about meat and cannibalism in archaic epic, from which I have gleaned important insights, but on which I am not working for their own sake or attempting to make new claims of my own. These include the study of food, the study of Greek sacrificial practices, and the study of animals (and humans as animals). It will be helpful to give a brief survey of the landscape of each of these fields of study and how each relates to this dissertation.

I. Food

Much has been written about the relationships between food, humans, and culture. Perhaps the most influential work in this vein is that of Claude Lévi-Strauss, particularly his 1964 *The Raw and the Cooked*. In this intriguing work of structuralism, Lévi-Strauss proposes a far-reaching theory of food and culture via a granular analysis of a trove of myths, mostly from South America. By tracking the oppositions and associations in these myths, and layering together many versions of each myth, he "claim[s] to show, not how men think in myths, but

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[27] Bakker 2013: 51-52.
[28] Stocking 2017: 3; 4.
[29] Stocking 2017: 23.
[30] Stocking 2017: 22; 24.
[31] Stocking 2017: 3.

how myths operate in men's minds without their being aware of the fact."[32] He breaks all of the myths down into their "codes," which correspond to the five senses and operate through "contrasts between tangible qualities," arguing that many myths which address the same theme also "transmit the same message and can only be distinguished one from another by the code they use."[33] But the codes are not equal:

> … one of the codes occupies a privileged position; this is the one connected with eating habits, the gustatory code, whose message is more often transmitted by the others than it is used to translate theirs, since it is through myths explaining the origin of fire, and thus of cooking, that we gain access to myths about man's loss of immortality… We thus begin to understand the truly essential place occupied by cooking in native thought: not only does cooking mark the transition from nature to culture, but through it and by means of it, the human state can be defined with all its attributes, even those that, like mortality, might seem to be the most unquestionably natural.[34]

This privileged gustatory code organizes the world in relation to three poles: raw, cooked, and rotten. These categories can be mapped onto many others: animals, natural forces and phenomena, cultural developments, and family relationships. The work is representative of both the pitfalls and advantages of structuralism: the myths are taken out of context and flattened, and the connections made are sometimes tenuous or forced, but the process yields remarkable insights about the patterns that tend to crop up in myths, including, for example, the strong links between the origins of fire, the loss of immortality, and the beginnings of copulation and reproduction.[35] Lévi-Strauss continued to develop these ideas in the multiple additional volumes of *Mythologiques*, and they have had a tremendous influence on the ways that we think and talk about food and culture.

Mary Douglas added to the discourse around food and culture with *Purity and Danger* (1966), which is framed as an analysis of purity, pollution, and ritual, but which also contains important and influential work about food categories. Her thesis is "that rituals of purity and impurity create unity in experience."[36] She proposes to

> [interpret] rules of uncleanness by placing them in the full context of the range of dangers possible in any given universe. Everything that can happen to a man in the way of disaster should be catalogued according to the active principles involved in the universe of his particular culture… I believe that ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, above and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created.[37]

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[32] Lévi-Strauss 1975: 12.
[33] Lévi-Strauss 1975: 164.
[34] Lévi-Strauss 1975: 164.
[35] Lévi-Strauss 1975: 152, 155.
[36] Douglas 1966: 2.
[37] Douglas 1966: 4.

This ordering of the chaotic world through categories turns out to have a lot to do with food, as demonstrated in her chapter on the dietary restrictions prescribed in Leviticus.[38] Earlier interpretations of this complex dietary code concluded that it was physiologically based, forbidding foods which were perceived as medically harmful; that it was purely irrational and arbitrary; that it was an allegory for virtues, vices, or different kinds of people; or that it forbade foods and customs that were associated with neighboring foreign peoples. Douglas argues instead that the code is a way of ordering the world and avoiding "hybrids and other confusions."[39] She explains that the root of the word for "holiness" means "set apart," and this concept is embedded in the restrictions.[40] "To be holy is to be whole, to be one; holiness is unity, integrity, perfection of the individual and of the kind. The dietary rules merely develop the metaphor of holiness on the same lines."[41] The forbidden foods are the ones that do not fit their categories well: the hare and hyrax are perceived to be ruminants, but do not have cloven hooves, while pigs and camels are cloven-hooved but not ruminant. Similarly, the world is divided into the three spheres of earth, water, and sky, and animals that move unusually in their sphere, such as four-footed creatures that fly or sea creatures that do not swim with fins, are deemed unclean.[42] The importance of purity and pollution as a way of ordering the world in relation to food, animals, and death is, as Redfield showed, also of great importance in the *Iliad.*[43]

Another work that championed the importance of food in relation to culture, but in a much more literal and direct way, is Marvin Harris' *Cannibals and Kings* (1977). Harris is a proponent of cultural determinism, arguing that regional ecologies dictate how people obtain their food, and that this in turn dictates all aspects of culture. He traces the interplay of population growth, intensification of food production, and environmental depletion across many cultures and periods. According to his theory, the presence or absence of large ruminant animals—which can be used as a significant source of protein, but eat grass, rather than competing with humans for grain—is the key factor that determines the characteristics of a culture. The Aztecs, he argues, developed a system of human sacrifice and cannibalism not for religious reasons, but nutritional ones. Because many large mammals of the Americas became extinct due to excessive hunting and environmental changes at the end of the ice age, the Aztecs did not have access to animals that provided sufficient protein, and for this reason, "there developed a state-sponsored religion whose art, architecture, and ritual were… thoroughly dominated by violence, decay, death, and disease… The Aztec gods ate people. They ate human hearts and drank human blood."[44] Meanwhile, in the old world, where ruminants were domesticated early, "the flesh of the ruminants tamed the appetites of the gods and made the 'great providers' merciful."[45] He also points to this as the reason that old world cultures attained the imperial phase of politics when the Aztecs did not: "Cannibalism and empire don't mix."[46] Curiously enough, his theory leads him to certain conclusions that resemble ideas we find in ancient texts. Like Porphyry and Theophrastus, he believes that human sacrifice preceded animal

[38] Douglas 1966: 42-58.
[39] Douglas 1966: 54.
[40] Douglas 1966: 51.
[41] Douglas 1966: 55.
[42] Douglas 1966: 56-57.
[43] Redfield 1975.
[44] Harris 1977: 31-33; 147.
[45] Harris 1977: 189.
[46] Harris 1977: 185.

sacrifice;[47] like Herodotus and many others, he sees a sort of identity between vegetarianism and cannibalism, arguing that the same factors—population density and environmental depletion—turned the Aztecs into cannibals and the Hindus into vegetarians.[48]

A prominent opponent of Harris' approach was Marshall Sahlins, who criticized the reduction of cultural phenomena to biological impulses. Already in 1976, Sahlins had published *The Use and Abuse of Biology*, a response to Edward O. Wilson's *Sociobiology* (1975), which he calls "the latest phase" of

> a reciprocal dialectic between the folk conceptions of culture and nature. Conceived in the image of the market system, the nature thus culturally figured has been in turn used to explain the human social order, and vice versa, in an endless reciprocal interchange between social Darwinism and natural capitalism.[49]

Sahlins is similarly scathing in his 1978 review of *Cannibals and Kings*, which he sees as another attempt to map the logic of free-market capitalism onto the development of human culture. He points out that Harris' theory assumes that "human action is motivated by utility and ordered by rationality" and that "the book relies heavily on [the] neo-Malthusian proposition" that population pressure has always been the determining factor in human history.[50] He picks apart Harris' account of Aztec cannibalism as nutritionally necessary, contending that there were actually many sources of protein available to the Aztecs and that "there really could be no significant human meat supply per capita… the meat would come to substantially less than one pound per person per year."[51] Thus, while Harris drew attention to the ecological and material constraints that could have profound effects on culture, Sahlins highlighted the failure of these models of interpretation to explain cultural complexities or differences, insisting upon the continued need to study culture in its own right.

A different angle on the cultural importance of food was illuminated by Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1979), a sociological work exploring the interrelations of taste and class in French society. Whereas most of the authors discussed above take a cross-cultural approach, which runs the risk of flattening individual cultures into single perspectives, Bourdieu sets out to explain the habits of different social groups within a single (his own) culture. He demonstrates how taste in food, music, and art are often determined by and reinforce social positions. While differing, of course, in the particulars, Bourdieu's insights about the interplay between class position and diet are helpful for understanding similar processes and dynamics in archaic Greek epic. The poems present aristocrats rubbing shoulders with common men, fighting, working, and eating together, and food is one of the venues where their privileges, inequities, and resentments are expressed.[52] At the same time, the gods are imagined to act like aristocrats in relation to humans.[53] In both

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[47] Harris 1977: 180.
[48] Harris 1977: 229.
[49] Sahlins 1976: xv.
[50] Sahlins 1978.
[51] Sahlins 1978.
[52] See discussion of class and food in the *Odyssey* in chapter IV. Rundin suggests that common meals, both in Homer and in historical Sparta, "addressed the deep anxieties of many of the diverse communities that made up the Greek world" and "were thought to foster solidarity and prevent social strife among those with a claim on political power" (1996: 211). See also Rose 1975 and Thalmann 1988 and 1998.
[53] Morris (1986: 125) argues that the Homeric gods are analogous to aristocrats and that their representation in the poems serves to "legitimize a desired structure of social dominance in the eighth-century world"; I would suggest

cases, those with more "cultural capital"—the aristocrats or gods—experience food in ways that are more distanced or symbolic, while the peasant/humans are conceived of as more physically dependent, driven by baser urges, and satisfied with greater hedonism, much as Bourdieu observed among the French social strata he studied.[54]

As has become evident in the above discussion of Harris and Sahlins, the study of food and culture overlaps with and includes the study of cannibalism, another point of interest for me in this dissertation. Some of this work comes in the form of collected data and incisive analysis, as in the case of Peggy Sanday's *Divine Hunger*, which argues that cannibalism often functions as a mythical charter for a culture because it is a way of controlling and dominating the sources of life and death.[55] Others are helpful in a more metacognitive way, as in the case of William Arens' *The Man-Eating Myth*, a provocative work contending that cannibalism has never actually been practiced regularly in any culture. While Arens is widely considered to have overstated his case, he raised important points about ethnographic methodology, showing the need for greater rigor and resistance to uncritical acceptance of anecdotal evidence that confirms Western expectations of other cultures.[56] At the same time, his argument is itself a brilliant illustration of the great difficulty of thinking and talking clearly about cannibalism, a phenomenon that provokes such intense fascination and such visceral disgust that it tempts scholars to see it where it does not exist and to deny it where it does. The idea of this double impulse, to see and not to see cannibalism, has informed my thinking about the epic poets' tendency to alternately approach and recoil from cannibalism, keeping it always just out of frame.

The model of cannibalism that has had the greatest impact on this project comes from Cameroonian anthropologist Francis Nyamnjoh's introduction to his 2018 edited volume, *Eating and Being Eaten*. Nyamnjoh seeks to unsettle squeamish and ethnocentric ways of thinking about cannibalism by broadening its definition. He points out that practices that are considered perfectly acceptable in polite Western society, such as blood transfusions and organ transplants, are technically cannibalistic in terms of consuming parts of human bodies;[57] he pushes this idea further, questioning the difference between devouring someone's body and profiting from their death or from destroying their chances at a dignified life.[58] He encourages us to see cannibalism in all kinds of exploitation and in ourselves. Rather than condemning it as repulsive and always locating it in a cultural other, we may in this way be able to understand it more fully. The continuity between literal cannibalism and other kinds of exploitative or cannibalistic violence turns out to be operative in hexameter poetry as well, where warriors whose lives are treated as disposable by their leaders fantasize about eating each other's flesh.

II. Sacrifice

In addition to ideas about food and eating, this project deals in large part with more specific issues relating to Greek sacrificial ritual. To be clear, I am not making new claims about real sacrificial practices, but investigating the implications of how they were represented in epic

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something similar, but I think that the analogy can at times serve to comment on, or even criticize, the structure of social dominance that it reflects.

[54] Bourdieu 1984: 176-80.

[55] Sanday 1986: 32.

[56] Sanday 1986: 9; Lindenbaum 2004: 475-476.

[57] Nyamnjoh 2018: 23.

[58] Nyamnjoh 2018: 5-6.

poetry, especially the dimensions of the practice that could only be explored in imaginative venues, e.g., the gods' reactions to receiving or not receiving sacrifices. Still, the realities of sacrificial practices are important to keep in mind if we are to understand their literary representation. There is a vast body of scholarship on the subject, but for our purposes here, a relatively brief survey of the basic facts and theories will suffice.

Animal sacrifice was a common feature of many of the religions of the ancient Mediterranean.[59] While each religion was its own system with its own terms, all involved offerings based on the principle of reciprocity.[60] Offerings could consist of various gifts including food, incense, and luxury goods, but

> The offering of animals is a special case. Animals are part of food offerings, normally the most valuable type of food, but there is more to it than that. To offer animals means to deal with life, blood, and death. This is not transfer, but transformation… The reactions to these problems are not uniform. We find expressions of "guilt," rituals of remorse and recompensation, limitations of use: the bones shall not be destroyed, the blood belongs to the Lord of Life; or else the license to kill comes directly from the gods, as it is done for the gods and with the gods.[61]

So we find different approaches to animal sacrifice among different peoples: in Mesopotamia, meat was the "most highly valued product that could be given to the gods," but there was no special ritual for the slaughter of sacrificial animals;[62] in Israel, there were many restrictions on the kinds and conditions of animals that could be sacrificed, meat might be burned up entirely for the gods, saved for the priests, or distributed among worshippers, and sacrifice functioned as "taxation in kind to support the cultic establishment";[63] and most intriguingly, in Egypt, the sacrificial animal was imagined as an enemy, such as a hostile god, who was punished and vanquished through the act of sacrifice.[64]

As for Greece, sacrifice was "the core ritual of Greek religious practice," and "its most typical form was the offering of a farm animal… to an Olympian deity, during which some, mostly inedible, parts of the animal were burned for the gods, while most of the meat was consumed by humans."[65] In an "ordinary sacrifice," participants led the animal, often adorned, to an altar. Scholarly opinion is divided regarding the importance or existence of the "comedy of innocence," where after the procession, the animal was induced to shake its head by sprinkling it with water in order to simulate its consent to be sacrificed.[66] Participants then prayed to the recipient divinity, cut some hairs from the animal's head to make it no longer inviolate, stunned it, cut its throat, and allowed it to bleed out, collecting its blood and sprinkling it on the altar.[67] The animal's death is marked by a shrill cry from the women, the "emotional climax" of the ritual.[68] After the slaughter,

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[59] See Johnston 2004: 326-348.
[60] Burkert 2004: 326.
[61] Burkert 2004: 326.
[62] Sigrist 2004: 330.
[63] Olyan 2004: 334-335.
[64] Willems 2004: 328.
[65] Graf 2004: 340; Burkert 1985: 56.
[66] See, e.g., in favor: Graf 2004: 340, Burkert 1985: 56; against: Naiden 2007, Henrichs 2019: 111.
[67] Graf 2004: 240.
[68] Burkert 1985: 56.

> The animal was opened, a seer examined the entrails (a ritual absent in the Homeric descriptions), the innards (*splanchna*) were taken out, cut up, roasted on spits, and eaten on the spot by the core group of the participants. The animal was cut apart; bones, especially the thigh bones, and fat were burned on the altar, while the meat was cooked for the ensuing common meal.[69]

The meat left over from the common meal could then be sold, though sometimes it was required for it all to be consumed on site.[70] Thus the "sacrifice" works out to the benefit of the participants; "already early, Greeks were puzzled by the paradox that the gods were given mainly the inedible parts of the animal, portions that in fact constituted the refuse from slaughtering."[71]

The phenomenon of Greek sacrificial practice has elicited a variety of interpretations and theoretical approaches. The most influential interpretation has been that of Walter Burkert, who takes an evolutionary and psychological approach, arguing that sacrificial rituals originated in prehistoric hunting rituals; hunters sympathized with their game and were disturbed to watch their human-like deaths, and religious ritual helped them overcome their inhibitions by heightening tensions.[72]

> It [the world outside the human group] is surrounded by barriers to be broken down in a complicated, set way, corresponding to the ambivalence of the event: sacralization and desacralization around a central point where weapons, blood, and death establish a sense of human community. The irreversible event becomes a formative experience for all participants, provoking feelings of fear and guilt and increasing desire to make reparation, the groping attempt at restoration. For the barriers that had been broken before are now all the more willingly recognized… As an order embracing its opposite, always endangered yet capable of adaptation and development, this fluctuating balance entered the tradition of human culture. The power to kill and respect for life illuminate each other.[73]

Burkert's theory is that sacrificial ritual arises in response to the human need to mitigate the guilt of taking animals' lives. It relies heavily on sacrificial imagery in tragedy;[74] his critics have complained that he applies this kind of literary evidence, which is particular to its genre, to the rituals themselves, and that the negativity he makes much of is a feature of tragedy, not sacrifice.[75]

In *The Cuisine of Sacrifice*, Vernant and Detienne offered a structuralist interpretation of sacrifice that has been similarly influential.[76] They approached the phenomenon more sociologically, emphasizing the sacrificial meal as an experience of solidarity and a way of binding communities together in the act of eating meat. In their view, the human condition is

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[69] Graf 2004: 340-341.
[70] Burkert 1985: 58; Graf 2004: 341.
[71] Graf 2004: 341.
[72] Burkert 1983: 20-21.
[73] Burkert 1983: 21.
[74] Burkert 1985: 58.
[75] E.g., Naiden 2007: 61; Naiden 2013: 9-12; Henrichs 2019: 92 and 110-112.
[76] For Burkert and Vernant/Detienne as the two most influential schools of thought about sacrifice, see e.g., Graf 2004: 341; Naiden 2013: 4; Henrichs 2019: 96-97.

always defined in opposition to gods and to beasts, and food is central to it: the grain they must labor to grow, and the meat they must cook, both to raise themselves above animals who would eat it raw, and to share it with the gods via its savory smoke.[77] This interpretation has been one of the greatest influences on this project, and I admire the structuralists' ability to reveal the vast thematic patterns that underlie Greek myth and literature. At the same time, we should be cautious about the temptation to decontextualize and generalize these patterns, whose persistence in myth and literature does not necessarily translate into being applicable to rituals, customs, or entire cultures across wide ranges of time.

An important critic of these approaches is Albert Henrichs, a scholar of Greek religion who was less committed to a theoretical school of thought, but deeply interested in ritual practices.[78] Henrichs points out that although Greek cult practices left ubiquitous traces in art and literature, there is an "acute shortage" of explicit sacred literature recording and explaining these practices, such as we find for Mesopotamia, Egypt, Anatolia, India, or Rome.[79] He divides ancient writings about Greek ritual into aitiologies, symbolic interpretations, and criticisms, all of which need to be interpreted with an awareness that they are not straightforward explanations with the goal of making the rituals understood.[80] He also cautions us against seeing too much of ourselves in the Greeks, when in fact we understand them better when they are most foreign to us.[81] Especially in Burkert's interpretations, he notes projections of the author's own personal feelings about animals.[82]

Another challenge to the approaches of Burkert, Vernant, and Detienne comes in F. S. Naiden's *Smoke Signals for the Gods*, a book that aims to take apart earlier interpretations of sacrifice that are grounded in accumulated layers of scholarly assumptions and that ignore the evidence of inscriptions and visual representations.[83] Naiden argues that these earlier interpretations unduly privilege animal sacrifice as *the* most important ritual of Greek religion, when it should be situated as one among a number of ways of communicating with the gods, including vegetal offerings and prayer.[84] He challenges the guilt of participants and the centrality of the sacrificial meal, arguing instead that sacrificial rituals were sincere attempts to please the gods and that their characteristic mood was not guilt, but religious joy at the prospect of positive interactions with the gods.[85]

It is true that the theories of Burkert, Vernant, and Detienne draw primarily on literary evidence, and that this approach is flawed if the goal is to understand how real sacrifices were conducted and how real participants felt on feast days. At the same time, the emotional, psychological, and sociological importance of both the death of the sacrificial victim and the sharing of the sacrificial meal are plainly evident in the literature of the archaic and classical periods. I would argue that the insights of these scholars of sacrifice are more helpful for understanding myths and literary representations of sacrifice than the ritual itself. We ought not to expect the feelings of the ancients, especially about an issue as fraught as animal killing and consumption, to be any simpler than our own. Many contemporary meat-eaters feel deep

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[77] See Vernant 1981.
[78] Bremmer 2020.
[79] Henrichs 2019: 89.
[80] Henrichs 2019: 96 and 89.
[81] Henrichs 2019: 118-119.
[82] Henrichs 2019: 115-116.
[83] Naiden 2013: 4-12.
[84] Naiden 2013: 33.
[85] Naiden 2013: 23.

ambivalence about our diet: unwilling to forego our favorite flavors, we wring our hands about the cruelty of the factory farming system in which we find ourselves complicit. Why deny the Greeks this kind of ambivalence? A story about sacrifice gone awry in an epic poem is not good evidence that real sacrificial ritual was defined by guilt and sadness, but then again, a joyful sacrificial ritual does not render the story meaningless. Stories can be a place to ponder troublesome ideas and worries that are too unsettling to fit into daily life.[86]

III. Animals

Animals are also important to this project, and not only in the forms of edible meat or willing sacrificial victims. Animals are subjects too: they can be companions and co-workers to humans, they can be transformed humans, and they can be devourers of humans, especially of unburied human corpses. Hesiod tells us that animals' lot from Zeus is to devour one another, while the lot of humans is justice.[87] This seems to refer to multiple overlapping ideas about animals: first, and most simply, if we take all animals as a single class, then indeed, all carnivorous and omnivorous animals eat other kinds of animals. This does not set them dramatically apart from humans, who also eat other animals, but who like to imagine themselves to be separate and above the fray, always eaters, never eaten. The statement can be taken more specifically to refer to predation within subsets of the category of animals: fish eat smaller fish, birds of prey eat smaller birds, corvids eat the eggs of other birds, and so forth. But beyond that, many animals are unbothered about eating members of their own species, or even their own young, especially under stress.[88] Hesiod draws attention to a perceived difference between animals and humans, which is essentially that animals are generally unconstrained in relation to eating, while humans are highly constrained. Animals eat their food raw, and they are both more vulnerable to being devoured and more inclined to devour than humans. For these reasons, in archaic epic, animal imagery is often used to express human fears and desires about eating.

The question of how humans ought to relate to animals, and whether or not it is defensible for humans to use and kill animals, has given rise to many philosophical and theoretical writings. For a helpful survey of the development of animal studies and an explanation of the diversity of approaches within it, I turn to Matthew Calarco's *Thinking Through Animals*. Calarco gives a concise account of the philosophical traditions from which ideas about animal rights arise and divides modern conceptual approaches into three categories which I find clarifying: *identity, difference*, and *indistinction*. He begins by laying out the ideas about animals that have been dominant in Western philosophy, finding continuity between Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant, all of whom make a sharp distinction between humans and animals on the grounds that animals lack some essential feature of humanity such as rationality, mind, or self-consciousness. This sharp distinction makes it easy for humans to rationalize their instrumentalization of animals.[89]

One approach to dismantling the sharp distinction between humans and animals is what Calarco calls *identity.* This tradition begins with Darwin, who showed that humans are not so

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[86] As Henrichs puts it, "Die Göttermythen waren, wie alle Legomena, nicht denselben Restriktionen unterworfen wie der Kult" ("The myths of the gods, like all *legomena*, were not subject to the same restrictions as cult," 2019: 91).
[87] Hes. *WD* 276-280.
[88] See e.g., Thompson 2007.
[89] Calarco 2015: 7-11.

separate from animals, but evolved together with them, and that "differences between humans and animals are best explained as differences of degree rather than of kind."[90] Thinkers in this tradition have tried to prove that animals do, in fact, possess what have been thought of as uniquely human qualities, and therefore that they deserve moral consideration. These thinkers include Peter Singer, who expands utilitarianism to include animal welfare; Tom Regan, who argues that humans and animals share subjectivity; and Paola Cavalieri, who extends human rights to animals on the grounds that animals also have intentional agency. This school of thought is associated with activism such as the Great Ape Project, which seeks to establish basic legal rights for apes.[91] The problem with this approach, Calarco argues, is its logocentrism. It continues to accept the premise that animals need to meet some threshold of intelligence to deserve rights, a premise that would exclude many animals and also, as it happens, many humans.[92]

Rather than looking for human qualities in animals, the approach which Calarco calls *difference* seeks to explode the categories of human and animal by appreciating the differences between individuals of any category. This includes theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, and Cary Wolfe, who reject the idea of a unified human nature as well as the broad category of "the animal."[93] There are many kinds of humans with different abilities and subjectivities, and many species of animals as well; seeking the differences between individuals rather than the sameness of categories can help us "relate both to animals and humans in less violent and less hierarchical ways."[94]

Calarco's final category is *indistinction*, in which he places such thinkers as Gilles Deleuze, Giorgio Agamben, Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, and Val Plumwood. Indistinction is related to the other two approaches, but rather than looking for human qualities in animals, as do the identity theorists, or multiplying differences among humans and animals in order to undermine the binary opposition between them, "the indistinction approach aims to think about human beings and animals in deeply relational terms that permit new groupings and new differences to emerge, such that 'the human' is no longer the center or chief point of reference."[95] This requires "[inhabiting] zones of indistinction";

> To be human typically means to disavow the fact that we, too, are flesh—that we, too, are meat. But to acknowledge oneself as inhabiting a shared zone of exposed embodiment with animals is to recognize that we are in deep and fundamental ways *like animals*.[96]

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[90] Calarco 2015: 12.
[91] Calarco 2015: 22.
[92] Calarco 2015: 22-24. Sorabji, interestingly, finds continuity between ancient and modern identity approaches to animal ethics: "It all sounded rather grand, when Aristotle said that we have reason and they don't. But under pressure, the Stoics retreated to the position that at least they don't have syntax. The moral conclusion was meant to be 'They don't have syntax, so we can eat them.' My embarrassment increased when I noticed that the modern debate, among the followers of Chomsky and the critics of the language abilities of chimpanzees, had reached exactly the same point. It has become crucial whether animals have syntax. This, of course, is a question of great scientific interest, but of no moral relevance whatsoever" (1993: 2).
[93] Calarco 2015: 37-38.
[94] Calarco 2015: 35.
[95] Calarco 2015: 56.
[96] Calarco 2015: 58.

This "zone of exposed embodiment" can mean the "reduction" of human flesh to meat, as in Plumwood's essay about her experience of being attacked and nearly killed by a crocodile.[97] But it can also move in the other direction: "inasmuch as we share embodiment with animals, we know that their bodies and our bodies can become something more, something beyond the 'mere' meat to which the dominant culture tries to reduce them."[98]

Certain texts within and around animal studies have particularly affected my thinking about animals in the course of writing this dissertation. One of these is Donna Haraway's *When Species Meet*, which provides clearly articulated frameworks and terminology for thinking about human-animal relationships and for beginning to decenter humans in our approach. Haraway is interested in the messiness and entanglements of creatures depending on each other and growing together. She explores these ideas through the concept of "companion species," including her own experiences with agility training her dog, as well as "instrumental relations" between humans and the animals they make use of, drawing a distinction between this and the usually but not necessarily connected tendency for humans to make other animals "killable," rendering their deaths and suffering inconsequential.[99] These formulations have provided a way for me to break apart the monolithic category of animals in hexameter poetry, especially the *Odyssey*, where the indistinct boundary between humans and animals is a central concern of the poem. Animals are not always appropriate victims of sacrifice or objects of hunger; they may be treasured companions, like Odysseus' dog or Polyphemus' ram; they may be humans in disguise, posing the threat of innocent cannibalism; they may even be immortal, superior beings, like the cattle of Helios. Many of the problems faced by Odysseus and his crew arise from confusion about these categories and an inability or unwillingness to recognize that some animals are not "killable."

Another important work that has helped me think about animals and humans in epic is Maurice Bloch's *Prey into Hunter*, which argues that all kinds of rituals across all cultures are rooted in the same construct: a process where ritual death or violence—the pretended deaths of participants as well as real violent domination of animals—bring about an inversion of daily life and entry into the spirit world, followed by a return to the real world after gaining a lasting transcendence and mastery of the "vitality" of daily life. The violence of the ritual transforms ordinary vitality into a "conquered" or "consumed" vitality that is subject to the participant's new transcendence. In this way, humans are able to move through the natural processes and phases of life with a feeling of control, raising themselves above their fellow animals by mastering the animality within themselves. While Bloch's application of this scheme to every kind of ritual may be a bit too sweeping, it is certainly a useful matrix to apply to literary representations of human attempts to master the natural world and to endure their awareness of their own mortality through acts of violence and the consumption of meat.

An exciting work within the field of Classics that decenters humans in thinking about ancient poetry is Mark Payne's *The Animal Part*, a book that explores the idea of animal consciousness in literature, bringing an eclectic set of ancient Mediterranean works into productive dialogue with modern ones. While Payne does not discuss Greek hexameter poetry in particular, his analysis of animal aggression and abjection in the iambic poets has proven relevant to my discussions of animals and violence in Homer. Payne argues that poetic representations of undignified or antisocial animal behaviors can tell us about the animal otherness that we perceive in ourselves. At the same time, he is interested in texts that imagine

[97] Calarco 2015: 59-61.
[98] Calarco 2015: 59.
[99] Haraway 2008: 80.

escapes from the human condition into animal bodies or animal societies, including Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Aristophanes' *Birds*. These discussions have informed my thinking about the longing for cannibalism as a fantasy of escaping the unbearable human condition in epic poetry.

I have also drawn inspiration from less self-consciously theoretical or academic and more personal or literary works. David Foster Wallace's celebrated essay "Consider the Lobster" takes the Maine Lobster Festival as an occasion to contemplate the ways in which people rationalize the pain and deaths of the animals they eat. Wallace's sharp, observational writing gives a revealing glimpse into the fabrications and obfuscations that are necessary for people, especially modern Americans, to cope with eating meat. Lobster makes an interesting test case because it is usually cooked live, bringing the cook and the consumer into confrontation with the uncomfortable realities of the crustacean's painful death. Wallace makes a convincing case that the killing and eating of lobster is only tolerable through distancing. Lobsters are like big bugs, so we can get by without the abattoir system that shields us from the deaths of the mammals we consume.[100] The Maine Lobster Council produces informational materials for the festival that claim that lobsters do not feel pain, a claim for which Wallace points out there is no real evidence.[101] This kind of willful ignorance enables home cooks to boil a creature alive, an act that would be unthinkable for a chicken or a pig. And yet we do eat chickens and pigs, doing all that we can to avoid thinking about their moments of death, let alone their living conditions. In this I find an analogy for the myth-making that occurs around Greek animal sacrifice and meat consumption; it is a vivid and modern illustration of the same kind of guilt that Burkert argued for.

Another work of popular nonfiction that has helped me think through issues of emotion and rationality around meat-eating is Jonathan Safran Foer's *Eating Animals*, which explores the ethical implications of eating meat through the author's own decision to raise his child as a vegetarian. Foer considers various dimensions of the problem: the simple question of whether humans should kill animals to eat them; the cruelty of the meat production industry to both animals and humans, as well as the secrecy that protects these practices; the environmental impact and public health risks of meat production; and the near impossibility of producing meat more ethically under the current system. He argues relentlessly, contending that even if readers can make their peace with one aspect of these problems, the rest remain pressing. These arguments are interwoven with more personal anecdotes, both about the importance of food in Foer's family, and about the people he meets in the course of his research for the book, from animal rights activists to slaughterhouse owners. Foer is interested in the little lies and blind spots of people who work in meat production, as well as the euphemistic language that allows meat-eaters in our society to ignore what we do not want to know. His perceptive commentary offers useful insights about the anxieties and rationalizations that tend to crop up about meat in various contexts, ancient and modern.

IV. Outline of the Project

I have organized the project into three pairs of chapters: one pair addressing the gods' relationship with animal meat, a second pair that investigates human attitudes towards animal sacrifice through the exemplum of the Cattle of Helios episode, and a third pair that examines

[100] Wallace 2006: 237.
[101] Wallace 2006: 245.

cannibalism among humans and gods. The project is unified by an effort to pick apart and complicate the idea of these poems as pro-Olympian. My readings draw out an antagonistic view of Zeus, whose rule is founded and stabilized at the expense of humans and even of the other gods.

In the first chapter, I examine Hesiod's narrative of the sacrifice at Mecone. The narrative is spare and cryptic, but the moment it describes is of vital importance as the point of origin for the alimentary system in which humans eat meat and gods do not. Prometheus seems to trick Zeus into taking the worse share of the sacrifice, but the poet claims that Zeus is not tricked. Through textual analysis, I show how Prometheus' trick is imagined as a quasi-castration; the battle of wits (*medea*) hints at a battle over genitals (*medea*) reminiscent of Kronos' castration of Ouranos. Since the story explains a state of affairs which is, for humans, both good (they are allowed to eat meat) and bad (they need to eat meat to survive), and which is imagined, for the gods, also to be good (they do not need to eat meat to survive) and bad (they are not allowed to eat meat), it exhibits a doubleness whereby Zeus is both tricked and not tricked, where he has both wronged and been wronged by humans. Humans are guilty for benefitting from Prometheus' trick and for consuming all of the meat for themselves, while, at the same time, resenting the gods' jealous attempt to keep meat from them and the hunger that will always plague them.

In the second chapter, I consider the consequences of the sacrifice at Mecone for the rest of the gods, particularly Apollo and Hermes as they appear in their respective hymns. These hymns unravel the idea that gods are self-sufficient and satisfied with nectar, ambrosia, and sacrificial smoke. Instead, they portray young, up-and-coming gods with nowhere to go. The sons of Zeus are presented as limited and frustrated in their attempts to establish themselves in the world. They have the same ambitions as their male ancestors—to overthrow their father and rule in their own right—but unlike their ancestors, they are born into a static world where they can only ever be their father's lieutenants. They feel hunger for meat, each pursuing it in his own odd way—Apollo through assertions of authority and demands for hecatombs, Hermes with mischief and experimentation—but their access to meat has already been gambled away at Mecone. Instead of fighting in civilizing battles of cosmic proportion, they lash out in violence at local monsters, nymphs, and animals; their opponents are of a smaller order than the ones Zeus defeated. I argue that they commit acts of violence as a way of grasping at the things that are denied to them under their father's rule: the right to eat meat and the opportunity to wield power for themselves.

In the third chapter, I turn to humanity's troubled place in the alimentary system, focusing on the Cattle of Helios episode in the *Odyssey* as a focal point of problematic meat-eating. I trace Odysseus and his crew's gradual loss of an alimentary code and of the ability to distinguish between edible and inedible categories of animals. First, their experience in Polyphemus' cave leads them to cross the first boundary of acceptable eating by consuming his favorite ram, a pet. This scene forms a clear parallel with Odysseus' moment of recognition with his dog Argos, showing that Polyphemus' bond with his ram is legible to Odysseus and that stealing and eating the ram is therefore transgressive. Then, on Aeaea, several textual hints indicate that the animals they eat during their yearlong stay on the island are really transformed humans. By the time they reach Thrinacia, their strange experiences with animals, monsters, eating, and being eaten have fully unsettled their sense of what is edible, leading them to make the cosmically disastrous error of eating divine cattle, who outrank them in the hierarchy of beings.

In the fourth chapter, I take a second look at the Cattle of Helios episode, offering a complementary reading that focuses on power dynamics between humans. In this chapter, I first examine the class politics of meat through readings of two particularly resonant episodes, Sarpedon's speech to Glaucus in *Iliad* 12 about how good aristocrats receive the best meat as a reward for their excellence in battle, and Odysseus' fist fight with the beggar Irus in *Odyssey* 18 with a blood pudding as the prize. Applying the ideas of Bloch and Bourdieu discussed above, I formulate how meat works as a token of prestige and violence in Homer, and how rich and poor men approach food differently because of their different relationships to temporality. I then trace the power struggle between Odysseus and his first mate, Eurylochus, who persuades the crew to break their oath and eat the cattle of the Sun. I show that Eurylochus' disregard for Odysseus' warnings against eating the cattle is not so much a mistake as it is an act of rebellion against Odysseus' aristocratic privilege; the pair can even be read as a doublet of Prometheus and Zeus. Eurylochus claims for himself and the rest of the crew the right to sustenance, but at the same time, he hopes to entangle Odysseus in the consequences of their actions. Odysseus has proven himself more likely than his crew to survive a prolonged famine, but Eurylochus believes that if they are shipwrecked as a result of their disobedience, Odysseus will not be able to escape drowning with them. The crew's actions, which appear almost nonsensical when we read sympathetically with Odysseus, gain meaning if we approach the episode with attention to class and food.

In the fifth chapter, I investigate the recurring fantasy of cannibalism in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad*, it shows up obliquely in wishes and threats, in the goal of feeding one's dead enemies to animals, and in the similes that map human violence onto the carnivorous hunger of animals. This, I argue, is because of an intuitive connection between literal cannibalism and other forms of exploitative violence recognized by Nyamnjoh, as discussed above. The warriors of the *Iliad* are always, at some level, aware that they are in the process of being cannibalized, their lives consumed to benefit agents and forces beyond their understanding. For this reason, they long to enter the subject position of the cannibal, and this longing comes through in their frequently expressed desire to eat their foes or to feed them to animals. In the *Odyssey*, cannibalism is even closer at hand without being fully realized: Odysseus and his men never quite eat or are eaten by another human like themselves, but they are eaten by humanoid monsters and they eat humans who have been transformed into animals. I would suggest that this is because the poem's hero, Odysseus, is much more in control of his destiny than the warriors at Troy, and even does something like cannibalizing his own men, whose lives are used up in the service of his quest to reach home.

In my final chapter, I analyze cannibalism among the gods in Hesiod's *Theogony*. The gods, unlike Homeric heroes, do eat each other. This is both a facet of their existence at the top of the cosmic food chain—they control the world, so they have access to the most potent forms of violence—and a consequence of their immortality. They cannot kill each other, so they must dominate each other in other ways. I develop terminology for discussing the kinds of violence that the gods deploy against each other: sometimes they break each other's bodies down into pieces, which I call mutilation, and sometimes they absorb other divine bodies into their own, which I call incorporation. These are the components of cannibalism—consuming and destroying the body, to one's own benefit—but neither constitutes "true" cannibalism on its own. The narrative of the *Theogony*, I argue, shows a distinct alternation between these two kinds of violence, with incorporation associated with oppressive father figures, and mutilation associated with rebellious mother-child alliances. This alternation leads to a synthesis achieved by Zeus: the

invention of true cannibalism, the most exploitative form of violence that allows him to achieve supremacy among the gods. He deploys different mixtures of mutilation and incorporation against two threatening figures: Metis, who poses the threat of bearing a rebellious son, and whom he not only swallows but also "digests" by taking on her advantageous attributes as his own; and Prometheus, who, although he is not Zeus' son, is positioned in the text as a youngest son figure, and whom Zeus punishes by placing him in a state of eternal cannibalization. The punishment he devises for Prometheus not only turns the body's own immortality against it, but makes use of that immortality to nourish the eagle, the instrument and agent of his torture. This chapter responds to chapter I, where I argued that Zeus is duped and figuratively castrated by Prometheus' meat trick. Zeus' rule, I contend, is not founded on his cleverness, but on his superior understanding of violence and how to use it to hold power.

Chapter One
Fat and Bones: Divine Cravings and Folly in the *Theogony*

Hesiod's *Theogony* is a poem about the origins of the world and of the gods who preside over it. It mentions humans only incidentally, and yet it is a poem composed by and for humans that attempts to explain the nature of the world in which humans live. This makes it a good place to look for insights into how its poet(s) and audience thought about their gods. When they imagined the recipients on the other end of a sacrifice, what did they think of? How much were these beings like them? Could their will be understood? And why were they so often, as the case seemed to be, displeased with the earth-dwelling humans who put so much effort into honoring them? While these questions will never have simple or precise answers, archaic hexameter poetry preserves many exercises of imagination that can bring us closer to understanding the archaic worldview.

The particular aspect of the archaic worldview that will be at issue in this chapter is animal sacrifice. One of the few appearances of humans in the Theogony is in the narrative digression that tells of Prometheus and the sacrifice at Mecone. This story contains the *aition* for the Greek practice of burning the fat and bones of the sacrificial animal for the gods and cooking the meat for human consumption. The practice is rather tidy in that it makes it pious and good to eat the edible parts of an animal while "giving" the inedible parts to the gods. And yet the tale of the establishment of this custom betrays a degree of anxiety: it began with a trick played on the king of the gods, so how pious or good can it be?

Indeed, scholars have interpreted Greek sacrificial practices as, on the one hand, a way to channel human violence into an acceptable form and to assuage guilt over killing animals to eat, or, on the other hand, a way to bind communities together through the shared act of killing and eating.[102] Surely both of these ideas are part of the answer. Meat eating generates interesting patterns of thought because it inspires anxiety in *many* ways. Taking the life of an animal for sustenance does not feel good, because animals are similar to ourselves and easy to sympathize with. Meanwhile, dividing up limited resources in a community is fraught with the potential for inequality and envy. But at the same time, these interpretations leave out something important. In his book on sacrifice, fittingly entitled *Smoke Signals for the Gods*, F.S. Naiden accuses these earlier scholars of "[writing] the gods out of sacrifice."[103] As Naiden rightly points out, these two theories of sacrifice, while they may seem to be in opposition, both stem from the same basic assumption: that sacrifice is for humans, not for gods. His approach is to read sacrifice in terms of the efforts made to please the gods, with attention to the more positive element of prayer rather than the negative elements of human guilt or competition.[104] My approach, instead, is to try to understand how the gods themselves were imagined to experience their share of the sacrificial meal by analyzing the story that was told about where the custom came from.

The bare elements of the story are these: Prometheus is in charge of dividing a slaughtered cow between the gods and the humans. He creates two deceptive portions, one with the edible meat covered in the unappetizing stomach, the other with the bones covered in the enticing fat. Zeus, whether because he is tricked or because he is not, chooses the portion with bones, then gets very angry at Prometheus and at humans. He denies humans access to fire, but Prometheus steals it for them; finally, he punishes Prometheus by chaining him to a pillar and

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[102] Burkert 1983; Vernant and Detienne 1989.
[103] 2013: 4.
[104] 2013: 15-25.

sending an eagle to devour his liver every day, and punishes humans by creating the first woman. Although Prometheus is punished, the consequence of his apportionment still stands: humans burn the fat and bones for the gods and eat the meat themselves. The gods are denied meat but are sustained by sacrificial smoke, while humans are entitled to meat but also bound to it by unending hunger.

Hesiod's narrative is spare and cryptic, leading to many interpretive difficulties. Chief among them is whether or not Zeus is tricked.[105] The poet insists that he is not tricked, but does not explain why he chooses the ostensibly worse portion.[106] Does he choose the bone portion by mistake because he does not know what is inside, or does he choose it on purpose because he knows that it is actually the better portion, the one that will exempt the gods from hunger? If he chooses it on purpose, then why is he said to get very angry when he sees the bones under the fat? Well, we reason, perhaps he is not angry about the result but angry that Prometheus would even attempt to trick him. Again we must wonder, why is Zeus said to become angry at the moment when he sees the bones if he is not surprised by them?[107] Are we to imagine that what the poet *means* is not that he *becomes* angry, but that he *shows* the anger that he has been hiding all along? Perhaps, but that is not what the poet *says*.

These questions are worth grappling with, and they will be central concerns in this chapter. But it may also be worthwhile, rather than seeking in this story a type of logical consistency and transparency that *we* would find reassuring and satisfying, to sit with its contradictions and gaps and to wonder what *they* mean. Maybe these difficulties are here because they need to be, because the story tries to answer a difficult question. Zeus needs both to be tricked and not to be tricked in this story.[108] Prometheus needs to lose and to win. The story needs to explain gods who are both honored and cruel, a human condition that is both tolerable and intolerable, food that nourishes but does not satisfy. It needs to justify a world that is good, but somehow not so good for humans.

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[105] In favor of Zeus being tricked: "It has long been recognized that in the original story Zeus did not see through the trick, but was thoroughly deceived... The statement that he was not deceived (though he acted as if he was) is manifestly inserted to save his omniscience and prestige. This is quite typical of Hesiod" (West 1966: 321). In favor of Zeus seeing through the trick, Nagler argues that he is not because he chooses the actually superior "soul portion" (1974: 39). Clay points to the connotations of ἐτερόζηλος and κερτομέων, arguing that they prove that Zeus already recognizes the portions and wants "to provoke the Titan to invite Zeus to choose between the two portions" (2003: 110-113), but this interpretation does not address Zeus' emphatically sudden anger upon the discovery of the bones. Wecowski instead argues that Zeus is not tricked (he does know which portion is which) but rather trapped into choosing the apparently better portion because not doing so would cause him to lose face with the audience (2012: 51-54).

[106] In favor of Zeus seeing through the trick is the poet's explicit statement that he did (γνῶ ῥ' οὐδ' ἠγνοίησε δόλον); against it is Zeus' reaction when he sees the bones (χώσατο δὲ φρένας ἀμφί, χόλος δέ μιν ἵκετο θυμόν,/ ὡς ἴδεν ὀστέα λευκὰ βοὸς δολίῃ ἐπὶ τέχνῃ).

[107] Stocking identifies Zeus' anger as the most important element of the story and that which is reenacted in every subsequent sacrifice (2017: 39). He explains the anger as a response to being denied a *geras* (prize of honor), i.e., the meat portion, because meat is understood as a *geras* among humans (ibid: 50). While this would help account for Zeus' anger while maintaining that he is not tricked, it does not make much narrative sense to superimpose the human heroic code of honor that makes meat a *geras* onto the gods at this early moment in the history of the world.

[108] "Hesiod's problem was how to continue the creation down to mankind while leaving Zeus as its culmination; in other words, to have at least one more cycle of succession myth without really replacing the present incumbent. Thus the Mecone episode is partly a struggle between Zeus and Prometheus for the succession, which the former must win, and partly a wresting from him of some of the life force needed to continue creation, to which he must accede" (Nagler 1974: 39 n.17). Cf. Muellner: "In fact, the myths portray Zeus's sovereignty as inherently unstable and unbearable, along with the ordered structure of the world itself. Both are in constant need of reinforcement or reassertion or recalibration" (1996: 80).

In this chapter, I will try to discern more of the meaning of this episode by tracing its verbal resonances both in and beyond the *Theogony*. By paying attention to these subtle but striking verbal cues, we may deepen our understanding of the tone and subtext of the story. Certain phrases and patterns of diction connect this episode to Kronos' castration of Ouranos, suggesting that Zeus and Prometheus correspond to Ouranos and Kronos, and that the story is overshadowed by the specter of castration. Meanwhile, the untimely appearance of Heracles, who eventually rescues Prometheus from the torture imposed by Zeus as punishment for his trickery, brings the passage into dialogue with Heracles' appearances in the *Iliad*, where we find further verbal and thematic reverberations with the Mecone episode. Zeus, it turns out, has a gullible side, a tendency at times to be overtaken by his own desires: lust, hunger, and pride.[109] The poet has deftly laced the episode with nods to Zeus' less canny side, giving us a clue about what exactly is going on in the story. His contradictory state of not being tricked while acting precisely as if he has been tricked makes more sense if we understand how the poet needs to be able to toggle between the powerful Zeus who rules the cosmos and the more oafish Zeus who allowed humans to gain the meager privileges they still retain. The powerful Zeus resurfaces in his ingenious punishment of Prometheus, which will be discussed in my final chapter. For now, let us be concerned only with Zeus' mistake: the fat and bones he chooses and what it means when he does.

I. Mecone

Let us begin by contemplating Hesiod's account of the sacrifice at Mecone, giving some thought to the various questions that the passage implicitly raises but does not answer: Why is Prometheus leading this sacrifice? Why does this sacrifice establish the rules of sacrificial practice forever? Why are the other gods bound by Prometheus' assignments of portions?[110] And when, in relation to the other events narrated in the *Theogony*, does this story take place?

δῆσε δ᾽ ἀλυκτοπέδῃσι Προμηθέα ποικιλόβουλον
δεσμοῖς ἀργαλέοισι μέσον διὰ κίον᾽ ἐλάσσας:
καί οἱ ἐπ᾽ αἰετὸν ὦρσε τανύπτερον: αὐτὰρ ὅ γ᾽ ἦπαρ
ἤσθιεν ἀθάνατον, τὸ δ᾽ ἀέξετο ἶσον ἁπάντη
νυκτός ὅσον πρόπαν ἦμαρ ἔδοι τανυσίπτερος ὄρνις. 525
τὸν μὲν ἄρ᾽ Ἀλκμήνης καλλισφύρου ἄλκιμος υἱὸς
Ἡρακλέης ἔκτεινε, κακὴν δ᾽ ἀπὸ νοῦσον ἄλαλκεν
Ἰαπετιονίδῃ καὶ ἐλύσατο δυσφροσυνάων
οὐκ ἀέκητι Ζηνὸς Ὀλυμπίου ὑψιμέδοντος,
ὄφρ᾽ Ἡρακλῆος Θηβαγενέος κλέος εἴη 530
πλεῖον ἔτ᾽ ἢ τὸ πάροιθεν ἐπὶ χθόνα πουλυβότειραν.
ταῦτ᾽ ἄρα ἁζόμενος τίμα ἀριδείκετον υἱόν:
καί περ χωόμενος παύθη χόλου, ὃν πρὶν ἔχεσκεν,

[109] "Zeus's omniscience fails in the face of his own desire. Invincible and all-knowing, he is nevertheless baffled by eros" (Slatkin 1992: 111).

[110] For the lack of clarity about the contest, cf. Hamilton 1989: 33: "The battle is totally mental and concerned not with the division of *timai* among the gods but with the division of an ox between gods and men... the conflict is not very serious. The concealment in a belly... involves only the innards of an ox; the eating is confined to the bees... and the eagle." Wecowski asks the same question, concluding that the importance of the scene is the gathering of a crowd, forcing Zeus to perform his position of authority in front of them (2012: 50).

οὕνεκ᾽ ἐρίζετο βουλὰς ὑπερμενέι Κρονίωνι.
καὶ γὰρ ὅτ᾽ ἐκρίνοντο θεοὶ θνητοί τ᾽ ἄνθρωποι
Μηκώνῃ, τότ᾽ ἔπειτα μέγαν βοῦν πρόφρονι θυμῷ
δασσάμενος προύθηκε, Διὸς νόον ἐξαπαφίσκων.
τῷ μὲν γὰρ σάρκάς τε καὶ ἔγκατα πίονα δημῷ
ἐν ῥινῷ κατέθηκε, καλύψας γαστρὶ βοείῃ,
τοῖς δ᾽ αὖτ᾽ ὀστέα λευκὰ βοὸς δολίῃ ἐπὶ τέχνῃ
εὐθετίσας κατέθηκε, καλύψας ἀργέτι δημῷ.
δὴ τότε μιν προσέειπε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε·
“Ἰαπετιονίδη, πάντων ἀριδείκετ᾽ ἀνάκτων,
ὦ πέπον, ὡς ἑτεροζήλως διεδάσσαο μοίρας.”
ὣς φάτο κερτομέων Ζεὺς ἄφθιτα μήδεα εἰδώς·
τὸν δ᾽ αὖτε προσέειπε Προμηθεὺς ἀγκυλομήτης,
ἦκ᾽ ἐπιμειδήσας, δολίης δ᾽ οὐ λήθετο τέχνης·
“Ζεῦ κύδιστε μέγιστε θεῶν αἰειγενετάων,
τῶν δ᾽ ἕλευ ὁπποτέρην σε ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θυμὸς ἀνώγει.”
φῆ ῥα δολοφρονέων· Ζεὺς δ᾽ ἄφθιτα μήδεα εἰδὼς
γνῶ ῥ᾽ οὐδ᾽ ἠγνοίησε δόλον· κακὰ δ᾽ ὄσσετο θυμῷ
θνητοῖς ἀνθρώποισι, τὰ καὶ τελέεσθαι ἔμελλε.
χερσὶ δ᾽ ὅ γ᾽ ἀμφοτέρῃσιν ἀνείλετο λευκὸν ἄλειφαρ,
χώσατο δὲ φρένας ἀμφί, χόλος δέ μιν ἵκετο θυμόν,
ὡς ἴδεν ὀστέα λευκὰ βοὸς δολίῃ ἐπὶ τέχνῃ.
ἐκ τοῦ δ᾽ ἀθανάτοισιν ἐπὶ χθονὶ φῦλ᾽ ἀνθρώπων
καίουσ᾽ ὀστέα λευκὰ θυηέντων ἐπὶ βωμῶν.
τὸν δὲ μέγ᾽ ὀχθήσας προσέφη νεφεληγερέτα Ζεύς·
“Ἰαπετιονίδη, πάντων πέρι μήδεα εἰδώς,
ὦ πέπον, οὐκ ἄρα πω δολίης ἐπελήθεο τέχνης.”
ὣς φάτο χωόμενος Ζεὺς ἄφθιτα μήδεα εἰδώς…[111]

And [Zeus] bound Prometheus of varied plans in bonds,
Painful bonds, having driven a pillar through his middle;
And he set a long-winged eagle on him; but it was eating
His immortal liver, and it was growing every way
At night by just as much as the long-winged bird ate during the whole day.
The brave son of lovely-ankled Alcmene, Heracles,
Killed it, and warded off an evil sickness
for the son of Iapetus and released him from cares,
not against the will of Olympian Zeus who rules on high,
in order that the fame of Theban-born Heracles would be
even greater than before on the much-nourishing earth.
Respecting these things, then, he honored his famous son;
Although he was angry, he was stopped from anger, which he was holding before,
because [Prometheus] contended in counsels with the mighty son of Kronos.
And in fact, when gods and mortal men were being separated
at Mecone, at that time, having divided up a great cow

[111] Hes. *Th.* 521-561.

> he (Prometheus) served it up with an eager spirit, [trying to] deceive the mind of Zeus.
> For he served to him the flesh and entrails rich with fat
> in a skin, covering them with the cow's stomach,
> while to them he served the white bones of the cow as a deceitful trick,
> having made them look nice by covering them with shining fat.
> At that moment, the father of both men and gods spoke to him:
> "Son of Iapetus, famous among all lords,
> kind sir, how unfairly you divided the portions!"
> Thus spoke Zeus, provoking, who knows undying counsels.
> And Prometheus of crooked counsels spoke to him in turn,
> smiling a little, but he did not forget his deceitful trick:
> "Noblest Zeus, greatest of the ever-living gods,
> take of them whichever one the heart in your breast commands you to."
> He spoke in this way, playing a trick. But Zeus who knows undying counsels
> recognized and did not miss the trick; and he foresaw evils in his spirit
> for mortal men, and they were going to come about,
> and with both hands he picked up the white fat,
> and he grew angry all around his mind, and the wrath reached his spirit,
> when he saw the white bones of the cow as a deceitful trick.
> And from that time the races of men on earth burn
> the white bones on smoky altars for the immortals.
> And cloud-gathering Zeus, getting very angry, addressed him:
> "Son of Iapetus, knowing counsels beyond everyone,
> kind sir, you did not forget your deceitful trick at all."
> Thus spoke Zeus in anger, who knows undying counsels.

First of all, the passage contains several chronological oddities. It comes as part of the genealogy of the Iapetids, which is told out of sequence; although Iapetus is older than Kronos, his children are listed later, creating the illusion that Prometheus is younger than Zeus and making it possible for this story to resonate with the *Theogony*'s succession narratives.[112] In addition, the story itself is told out of order, beginning with Prometheus' punishment (521-525), describing how he was released from it (526-534), and only then explaining the crime for which he is punished (535-560).[113] The narrative jumps between disparate moments in mythic time. The births of the Iapetids, narrated just before the quoted passage, occur *before* the birth of Zeus, but the poet punctuates them with each of their punishments at Zeus' hands, all of which occur much later, after Zeus has come into power. Heracles' rescue of Prometheus occurs far later—centuries or millennia—in the time of heroes and demigods.[114] The sacrifice at Mecone, where Prometheus

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[112] "First of all, the genealogical line of the sons of Iapetus is not in its expected position. When Hesiod lists the Titan children of Uranus and Gaia, Iapetus is born before Cronus (134-38); accordingly, the offspring of Iapetus should be enumerated *before* the offspring of Cronus, the last son of Uranus. But Hesiod defers the catalogue of the sons of Iapetus (507ff.) and inserts it after the birth of Zeus, the youngest of the Cronides (457), but *before* Zeus' final defeat of the Titans and his accession to supremacy. In delaying the line of Iapetus, Hesiod manages to reverse the expected genealogical order and, in a way, make the Iapetids appear to be the younger sons of the family of Cronus. The significance of this genealogical sleight-of-hand derives from the repeated pattern of the succession myth, where it is always the youngest son who deposes his father" (Clay 2003: 105-106). Cf. Hamilton 1989: 23.

[113] See Mueller 2016a: 2.

[114] See Hamilton 1989: 35.

commits the crime of challenging Zeus' intellectual superiority, is difficult to place. Humans are present, but have not yet come into their eventual condition; Zeus is in charge, but does not seem to be in full control. Athena and Hephaestus participate in the creation of Pandora, one of the immediate consequences of Zeus and Prometheus' conflict, and since they will not be not born until the epilogue of the *Theogony*, the sacrifice at Mecone must happen sometime after that.[115] Still, there are no actual markers to situate the story in time—except that it is ὅτ' ἐκρίνοντο θεοὶ θνητοί τ' ἄνθρωποι, the moment when gods and humans become separated. Perhaps we could even speculate that the episode is introduced so abruptly and oddly *because* a moment like this cannot really be situated in time; the moment at which things changed from *the way they were before* to *the way they are now* does not belong anywhere in real or mythic time, but floats untethered in a void.

To make matters worse, the text is uncertain in a crucial place, making it quite unclear which portion was originally assigned to whom.[116] The MSS has τῷ μέν at 538 and τῷ δ'αὖτ' at 540, which is unclear all around, since both recipients are singular. It is possible to replace either τῷ with τοῖς to refer to the plural humans, and some editors have argued for one or the other of these; another possibility is τῇ μέν... τῇ δ'αὖτ', which eliminates the problem of recipients, allowing Prometheus simply to place the portions "over here" and "over there."[117] Each editor has an interpretive reason for choosing his or her preferred reading of these lines, since the original apportionment of the cow determines the meaning of Zeus' reaction to it.[118] Does Prometheus initially offer the meat-and-stomach portion to Zeus, attempting a "poisoning-his-own-drink"-style trick of reverse psychology? Does he offer it to the humans, for whom he really intends it, and hope that Zeus will be fooled by the shiny fat into accepting the fat-and-bones portion? Or does he present the two portions without comment and wait for Zeus to make the first move? There are convincing arguments to support any of these possibilities, but no solid evidence. While we may not be able to solve this textual puzzle, we can glean at least one insight from it: this section of the text is confusing because Prometheus makes it so. That is to say, whatever Prometheus' precise maneuver, he is attempting some sort of shell game which is meant to confuse. It seems likely that the difficulty in the text arose in the first place because a scribe was unable to keep track of the multivalently deceptive portions and their recipients.

Another point of strangeness here is the vocabulary used for the components of the portions. The first portion contains σάρξ (flesh) and ἔγκατα πίονα δημῷ (entrails rich with fat), while the second is ὀστέα λευκά (white bones) covered in ἀργέτι δημῷ (shining fat).[119] When Zeus makes his choice, he grabs the λευκὸν ἄλειφαρ (white fat) with both hands to reveal the ὀστέα λευκά, which is why humans burn ὀστέα λευκά for the gods. σάρξ usually refers to human flesh; the only other place in hexameter where it means animal meat is the meat of Hermes' sacrificial experiment in his *Hymn*, i.e., also animal meat as perceived by a god.[120] While δημός

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[115] Hamilton 1989: 32-33.

[116] See Clay 2003: 109-110.

[117] Some have suggested τοῖς (referring to humans) instead of τῷ at 538, which assigns the meat portion to humans and the bones to Zeus (Gerhard, Paley, Schoemann, Rzach). West instead leaves τῷ at 538 but adopts τοῖς at 540, switching the recipients, while Guyet suggests τῇ μέν... τῇ δ'αὖτ', eliminating the problem of the recipients altogether (also supported by Kassel). Wecowski supports Guyet's suggestion, arguing that in fact both of the portions are offered to Zeus, and that the trap is his forced choice between them (2012: 54).

[118] Onians even argues that "the gods were not cheated; they were getting the stuff of life," an appealing idea, but hard to square with Zeus' reaction to the distribution of the portions (1951: 279).

[119] Nagler contrasts the "really succulent" meat with the "flashy fat" by which Zeus seems to be taken in (1974: 38).

[120] Human flesh: *Il.* 8.380, 13.832; *Od.* 9.293, 11.219, 18.77, 19.450; Hes.*Sc.* 364, 461. Animal meat: *h.Merc.* 122.

is a common word for sacrificial fat, it is also a common word for human fat, appearing several times in the *Iliad* in threats about animals eating human remains.[121] δημός is also intriguing in its formulaic overlap with δῆμος (populace) in phrases like πίονι δημῷ (hidden in rich fat) and πίονι δήμῳ (amid the flourishing populace).[122] The domains of δημός suggest that human flesh is delicious to dogs, birds, and fish for the same reason that plump domestic animals are delicious to humans and for the same reason that the gods enjoy receiving burnt offerings; this supports Redfield's idea that "to feed one's enemies to the dogs is vicarious cannibalism," but disturbingly brings the gods into the category of beings who enjoy δημός, as dogs do.[123] ἄλειφαρ does not normally refer to animal fat at all, but to ritually significant oils and bright, shining surfaces.[124] Even more disturbing is the repeated use of ὀστέον, which almost always refers to the bones of the dead, dying, or injured humans.[125]

In a passage such as this, which describes the event that establishes sacrificial practices for humans, we might have expected to see κνίση, the usual Homeric word for solid or vaporous animal fat.[126] For the bones, we might have expected μηρία, which appears in *Works and Days* in an injunction to burn thighs for the gods, and always refers to sacrificial thighs in Homer,[127] or μηρός, a more neutral word for "thigh" that can refer either to human thighs or to sacrificial

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[121] δημός appears only these two times in Hesiod (*Th.* 538, 541). It appears fourteen times in Homer: six in the context of sacrifice (*Il.* 8.240, 23.168, 23.243, 23.253; *Od.* 14.428, 17.241), five for the fat of human corpses eaten by animals (*Il.* 8.380, 11.818, 13.832, 21.127, 21.204), two in descriptions of appealingly plump live animals (*Il.* 23.750; *Od.* 9.464), and once for a human eating straight fat: Astyanax, who is fed with bone marrow (*Il.* 22.501; See Onians 1951: 297-280, arguing that the fat and bones are in fact the best and richest parts of the animal and bringing up Astyanax' diet as evidence). It also appears three times in the *Hymns* (*h.Ap.* 59; *h.Merc.* 120, 135), always for sacrificial animal fat.

[122] Nagler 1974: 5. See also Nagler's reading of the death of Sarpedon: "It is Sarpedon's glory as protector of his δῆμος… that now protects his material body (δημός) from disgrace" (ibid. 42).

[123] Redfield 1975: 199.

[124] ἄλειφαρ appears only here in Hesiod (*Th.* 553). It shows up six times in Homer: in the *Iliad*, once for the material used to stop the wounds of Patroclus' corpse, and once for the oil mixed into jars of honey that Achilles places on his funeral pyre; in the *Odyssey*, once for the gleam of the rocks framing Nestor's door, and three times in the story of Achilles' funeral: once for anointing his body, once for the oil and honey that is burned with him, and once for the unguents with which his bones are stored (*Il.* 18.351, 23.170; *Od.* 3.408, 24.45, 24.67, 24.73). It does not appear at all in the Hymns. See also Nagler 1974: 38 on λευκὸν ἄλειφαρ as "equivalent to πίονα δημόν in position, rhythm, and 'essential idea,'" making it an "interesting violation of thrift."

[125] Beyond this passage, ὀστέον appears only one other time in Hesiod, at *Shield* 152, for unburied bones of men frightened to death by the shield. Of its 42 appearances in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, only one refers to the bones of a cow (*Od.* 3.455). All of the others describe the bones of humans: dead humans, whether just at the moment of death (*Il.* 12.386, 16.783, 20.406; *Od.* 11.221, 12.414), disgraced and unburied (*Il.* 4.174, 21.320; *Od.* 1.161, 5.426, 12.45, 14.134, 14.135), in the context of burial (*Il.* 7.334, 23.83, 23.91, 23.222, 23.224, 23.239, 23.252, 24.793; *Od.* 24.72, 24.76), or even the incorporeal bones of a shade in the underworld (*Od.* 11.219); and living humans, always when they are being injured (bones being broken or flesh being cut to the bone: *Il.* 4.460, 4.521, 5.67, 5.662, 6.10, 11.97, 12.185, 12.384, 13.616, 13.652, 16.310, 16.324, 16.347, 16.741, 17.599, 20.399, 23.763; *Od.* 9.293, 12.412, 18.96, 19.451).

[126] Solid: *Il.* 1.460, 2.423, 21.363; *Od.* 3.457, 12.360, 18.45, 18.119, 20.26. Vaporous: *Il.* 1.66, 1.317, 4.49, 8.549, 9.500, 24.70; *Od.* 12.369, 17.270. Also appears at *h.Ap.* 58, but nowhere in Hesiod. It is perhaps surprising that the vaporous form of κνίση—the portion of a sacrifice that is consumable by gods—can also mean the mundane smell of meat experienced by humans (*Od.* 12.369, 17.270). Naiden interprets Odysseus' interception of the κνίση as peculiar to the doomed sacrifice on Thrinacia (and, by implication, to the suitors' failure to sacrifice properly on Ithaca): "In this worst of rejections, the smoke travels sideways" (2013: 112). Still, it would seem to disrupt our understanding of the alimentary system for Odysseus, a human, to consume the vaporous fat intended for the gods.

[127] *WD* 337; *Il.* 1.40, 8.240, 11.773, 15.373, 22.170, 24.34; *Od.* 3.9, 3.273, 3.456, 4.764, 9.553, 17.241, 19.366, 19.397, 21.267, 22.336.

animal thighs.[128] For the meat, κρέας would be more standard.[129] So, while it is perfectly clear what is happening with the meat, fat, and bones of an ox in the passage, the words used are (in the cases of σάρξ, ἄλειφαρ, and ὀστέον) unusual for the context, and (in the cases of σάρξ, δημός, and ὀστέον) overlap with or more usually refer to human bodies rather than animal meat. It seems that from a god's perspective, the distinction between human and animal bodies is less strict and important than it is for humans. Humans may be poised between beasts and gods, but they are nearer to beasts in terms of their mortality and physicality. Beasts, like humans, have blood in their veins, not *ichor*. To a bloodless being, flesh is flesh, fat is fat, and bones are bones. I will discuss cannibalism in my final two chapters, but for now we may notice that the question this episode answers, *who will eat what?*, is closely connected to a more unsettling question, *who will eat whom?*

This is one of only four passages with direct speech in the *Theogony*, and the words that Prometheus and Zeus say to each other are remarkable indeed.[130] Tensions run high, with each heaping insincere praise on the other.[131] Zeus, calling Prometheus famous and an ἄναξ, declares that he has divided the portions unfairly. To whom, according to Zeus, is Prometheus being unfair? This, again, depends on one's interpretation of the text at 538-540 discussed above; Zeus could mean, "Why have you given the humans the better portion?" Or, "why have you given me the better portion?" Or even, "How do you expect me to choose between these unevenly divided portions?" Before Prometheus replies, he "smiles a little" (ἦκ᾽ ἐπιμειδήσας), a striking facial detail in a passage otherwise devoid of descriptions of the characters.[132] Setting out to deceive the king of gods, Prometheus' attitude is cheeky. He does not address Zeus' criticism, but skirts it by telling him to "take of them whichever one the heart in your breast commands you to" (τῶν δ᾽ ἕλευ ὁπποτέρην σε ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θυμὸς ἀνώγει).[133] While this line has intertextual significance and will be discussed in more detail below, it is also an impressive rhetorical flourish in its own right. Prometheus ostensibly defers to Zeus by urging him to follow his heart, but with an implicit challenge: "Choose the best one if you're smart enough to find it!" And Zeus does, in fact, choose the better portion—the bone portion or "soul portion" which entitles the gods to the ineffable essence of the animal's life and dooms humans to gnaw voraciously on the unsatisfying meat forevermore[134]—but it is not clear that he does this deliberately or understands its implications, especially since he gets angry when he sees the contents of the portion. Once Zeus has made his choice and anger has seized him, he points out Prometheus' trick, but still praises him, saying that he "knows counsels beyond everyone" (πάντων πέρι μήδεα εἰδώς). It is noteworthy for Zeus to say this of Prometheus, since the narrator describes Zeus quite similarly

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[128] Sacrificial animal thighs: *Il.* 1.460, 1.464, 2.423, 2.427; *Od.* 3.179, 3.461, 12.360, 12.364, 13.26. Human thighs: *Shield* 363, 460; *Il.* 1.190, 4.146, 5.305, 5.660, 5.666, 5.694, 10.537, 11.583, 11.584, 11.662, 11.810, 11.829, 11.844, 12.162, 15.113, 16.27, 16.125, 16.308, 16.473, 21.173; *Od.* 8.135, 9.300, 10.126, 10.294, 10.321, 10.439, 10.535, 11.24, 11.48, 11.231, 13.198, 18.67; *h.Cer.* 245.

[129] Hes. *WD* 591, frag. 17a 9; Hom. *Il.* 4.345, 8.162, 8.231, 9.217, 11.551, 11.776, 12.300, 12.311, 17.660, 22.347, 24.626; *Od.* 1.112, 1.141, 3.33, 3.65, 3.470, 4.57, 4.88, 8.477, 9.9, 9.162, 9.557, 10.184, 10.468, 10.477, 12.19, 12.30, 12.395, 14.28, 14.109, 14.456, 15.98, 15.140, 15.334, 15.507, 16.49, 16.443, 17.258, 17.31, 17.344, 17.412, 20.279, 20.348, 22.21, 24.364; *h.Merc.* 64, 120, 130, 135, 287. *Od.* 9.297, 9.347 ἀνδρόμεα κρέα for the human flesh eaten by Polyphemus.

[130] As Faulkner points out, these four instances of direct speech make up 34 out of 900-1020 total lines, no more than 4% of the entire poem, compared to 45% of the *Iliad* and 67% of the *Odyssey* (2015: 31-32).

[131] See Muellner 1996: 85.

[132] Hes. *Th.* 547.

[133] Hes. *Th.* 549.

[134] Nagler 1974: 39; Vernant 1981c: 60-61.

as "Zeus who knows undying counsels" (Ζεὺς ἄφθιτα μήδεα εἰδώς) three times in the passage. To be sure, this is a battle of wits, and both participants' intelligence is at issue. But as we will see, there is a reason the poet favors μήδεα as the particular word for intelligence in this particular story.

II. Prometheus and Kronos

Μήδεα, about which Zeus and Prometheus are repeatedly said to know, is a common word for counsels or cunning, appearing six times in Hesiod and nineteen times in Homer.[135] It is morphologically identical to another neuter noun that also appears only in the plural, μήδεα, which means genitals and appears three times in Hesiod and four times in Homer.[136] This other μήδεα is the word used in Hesiod's account of the castration of Ouranos: in order to stop Ouranos from suppressing their children, Gaia gives a sickle to Kronos, and with it he cuts off his father's genitals.

> ὃ δ᾽ ἐκ λοχέοιο πάις ὠρέξατο χειρὶ
> σκαιῇ, δεξιτερῇ δὲ πελώριον ἔλλαβεν ἅρπην
> μακρὴν καρχαρόδοντα, φίλου δ᾽ ἀπὸ μήδεα πατρὸς
> ἐσσυμένως ἤμησε, πάλιν δ᾽ ἔρριψε φέρεσθαι
> ἐξοπίσω…[137]
>
> But the child reached out from his hiding place with his left
> hand, and with his right he seized the mighty great
> saw-toothed sickle, and cut off the genitals
> of his own father eagerly, and in turn he threw them to fall
> behind him…

Several lines describe Kronos' blood falling onto the ground and begetting the Furies, the Giants, and the Ash-Tree Nymphs, before we learn the fate of the genitals themselves:

> μήδεα δ᾽ ὡς τὸ πρῶτον ἀποτμήξας ἀδάμαντι
> κάββαλ᾽ ἀπ᾽ ἠπείροιο πολυκλύστῳ ἐνὶ πόντῳ,
> ὣς φέρετ᾽ ἀμ πέλαγος πουλὺν χρόνον, ἀμφὶ δὲ λευκὸς
> ἀφρὸς ἀπ᾽ ἀθανάτου χροὸς ὥρνυτο: τῷ δ᾽ ἔνι κούρη
> ἐθρέφθη…[138]
>
> And the genitals, as soon as he had cut them off with adamant,
> he threw down away from the land into the much-dashing sea,
> so they were borne on the sea for a long time, and white foam
> arose around from the immortal flesh; and in it a maiden
> was nourished…

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[135] Hes. *Th.* 398, 545, 550, 559, 561; *WD* 54; *Il.* 2.340, 3.202, 3.208, 3.212, 7.278, 15.467, 16.120, 17.325, 18.363, 24.88, 24.282, 24.674; *Od.* 2.38, 6.12, 11.202, 11.445, 13.89, 19.353, 20.46.
[136] Hes. *Th.* 180, 188, 200; *Od.* 6.129, 18.67, 18.87, 22.476.
[137] Hes. *Th.* 178-182.
[138] Hes. *Th.* 188-192.

The genitals of the first father have thus been transformed and inverted into the (feminine) principle of sexuality,[139] and the poet emphasizes this inversion with a rather crass pun that brings together the lovely and the lascivious aspects of Aphrodite:

> ἠδὲ φιλομμηδέα, ὅτι μηδέων ἐξεφαάνθη.[140]
>
> And [gods and men call her] genital-loving, because she appeared out of genitals.

This is a play on φιλομμειδής (smile-loving), a common epithet of Aphrodite. The pointed conjunction of μήδεα (genitals) with φιλομμειδής should make us think of the conjunction of μήδεα (wits) with ἦκ᾽ ἐπιμειδήσας, Prometheus' defiant little smile to Zeus. The goddess' domains are then listed, including love and smiles as well as ἐξαπάτας (deceptions).[141]

So far, we have seen how the emphasis on μήδεα (genitals) in the Ouranos episode prepares the way for listeners and readers to perceive μήδεα (wits) in the Prometheus episode as meaning more than just wits. But there is more than the amusing but tenuous interplay between the two possible meanings of μήδεα to suggest a connection between the two episodes. Prometheus is called ἀγκυλομήτης, "crooked of counsel," usually the epithet of Kronos.[142] Prometheus and Kronos are both figures of cunning, so perhaps it is not surprising for them to share an epithet.[143] But Prometheus also prepares a δολίη τέχνη, a deceitful trick.[144] The phrase appears four times in this episode,[145] but elsewhere in Hesiod, the only other instance of this phrase refers to Gaia's plot to castrate Ouranos.[146] The word δόλος also appears in both episodes, referring to Kronos' and Prometheus' respective tricks.[147] Elsewhere in Hesiod this word is used of the creation of Pandora and of Zeus' outwitting of Metis, both tricks played *by* Zeus.[148] Similarly, ἐξαπαφίσκων of Prometheus' deception in line 537 recalls the ἐξαπάτας named among Aphrodite's domains at 205, just after she is born from Ouranos' severed genitals.[149] All of these verbal echoes push the audience to make a connection between the castration of Ouranos and the deception of Zeus. By the time they reach Mecone, they have already seen the poet punning on μήδεα. They are primed to notice the sonic similarity between μήδεα and forms of μειδάω, and for this set of words to make them think of μήδεα (genitals), especially when they are cut off.

As others have noted, although Prometheus is not literally the youngest son of Zeus, he is positioned by the poet to *seem* like the youngest son of Zeus, and the struggle between them is set up to *seem* like a succession struggle.[150] In the same way, Prometheus does not literally castrate Zeus, but his trick is made to *seem* somewhat like a castration. If Zeus is in the role of

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[139] Muellner 1996: 64.
[140] Hes. *Th.* 200.
[141] Hes. *Th.* 205.
[142] Kronos: *Th.*18, 137, 168, 473, 495. Prometheus: *Th.* 546, *WD* 48.
[143] See Clay 2003: 106.
[144] *Th.* 547.
[145] *Th.* 540, 547, 555, 560.
[146] Hes. *Th.* 160.
[147] *Th.* 175, 551.
[148] Hes. *Th.* 589, 889; *WD* 83.
[149] ἐξαπαφίσκω is also the same verb used at *h.Ven.* 38 for Aphrodite's habit of confusing Zeus with sexual desire, suggesting even more emphatically a connection between Zeus' moments of credulity and his weakness in the face of sensual (sexual or alimentary) temptation.
[150] See again Clay 2003: 105-106 (quoted above), Hamilton 1989: 23.

Ouranos, and Prometheus is in the role of Kronos, and the trick that Prometheus plays on Zeus is somehow a quasi-castration, what will this mean for our interpretation of the episode?[151] First, it suggests that Zeus, like Ouranos, is driven by sensual desires, and that this susceptibility to hedonism is a weakness for his foe to exploit. Kronos is easily able to ambush and castrate Ouranos because of his irrepressible lust, the same lust that causes him to rape Gaia persistently and carelessly, and it is this lust that is taken away from him when he is castrated. In the same way, Zeus' desire to taste the cow's meat and succulent fat means that he is easily taken in by Prometheus' deceptive portions, dazzled by the "flashy fat," and because he chooses the bone portion, his desire to eat food is taken away from him. Second, it helps explain the poet's wishy-washy stance about the deception of Zeus. Was he tricked or wasn't he, and did he want the bone portion or didn't he, and if the final outcome exempts the gods from hunger, then why does it make him angry? If sacrifice as established here "sets aside for the gods' attention the bones that cannot rot… and leaves to men the carcass of a beast from which the life has already departed, a lump of dead flesh, with which they may satisfy momentarily their ever-gnawing hunger,"[152] that is, for gods, a boon but also a loss, not unlike a castrated man's loss of desire.[153] So it may be that Zeus enters into this battle of wits not fully understanding what he stands to lose, but is overcome with anger at the moment of loss. Zeus has "won" the battle of wits in that he stays in power and receives sacrificial honors from humans thenceforth, and Prometheus has "lost" in that his trick results in terrible punishments for himself and for the humans he wanted to help. But at the same time, Prometheus has succeeded in using Zeus' physical urges to take away some of his autonomy, just as Kronos did to Ouranos.[154]

III. Zeus and Heracles

To approach this idea from a slightly different angle, let us revisit Prometheus' command to Zeus at 549: τῶν δ' ἕλευ ὁπποτέρην σε ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θυμὸς ἀνώγει, "choose whichever one of them the heart in your breast bids." Prometheus' strategy of encouraging Zeus to indulge his heart's desire for the taste of meat seems to have proven quite effective. And as it turns out, this is not the only time when Zeus makes a grave error because he listens to his θυμός. While θυμὸς ἀνώγει is a common phrase in Homer that more or less means "want to" or "feel like," the only other time it is applied to Zeus—and in fact, the only other time when Zeus is the object of ἄνωγα at all, since no one but his own heart can give orders to Zeus[155]—it is also in a story about Zeus getting tricked: the account in book 19 of the *Iliad* of the birth of Heracles. When

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[151] Hamilton expands on the parallels between Prometheus and Kronos, reading this episode as parallel to Zeus' defeat of Kronos (1989: 25-26). While these resonances are certainly present, I would insist, given the similarities of language and Prometheus' contrived resemblance to a youngest-son figure, on the greater prominence of this episode's connections to the conflict between Kronos and Ouranos.

[152] Vernant 1981c: 60-61.

[153] Arthur points to a similar conflation of sexual and alimentary matters via the overlap between words for stomach and womb: "The homonymy between *gastêr* and *nêdys* allows the direct representation of the coincidence between the sexual and alimentary codes in the action of this section of the poem..." (1982: 72).

[154] Arthur fits the moment at which Zeus is deceived by a *gaster* into a long series of passages connecting the *gaster* to mortality and the human condition, including the pattern in the *Iliad* of belly wounds always being fatal (1983: 103, 111-112). In this way, Zeus' loss in the contest with Prometheus can be seen to bring the gods into an even more precarious and vulnerable proximity to the human condition.

[155] Cf. Martin (1989: 48): "Zeus takes orders from no one; we know this from the poem's plot. In accord with this, no speaker addresses a muthos of command to him."

Agamemnon reconciles with Achilles, he tells this story in order to excuse his own foolish behavior. In the tale, Zeus unwisely boasts to the other gods about the imminent birth of his son:

> ἤτοι ὅ γ' εὐχόμενος μετέφη πάντεσσι θεοῖσι·
> κέκλυτέ μευ πάντές τε θεοὶ πᾶσαί τε θέαιναι,
> ὄφρ' εἴπω τά με θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ἀνώγει.
> σήμερον ἄνδρα φόως δὲ μογοστόκος Εἰλείθυια
> ἐκφανεῖ, ὃς πάντεσσι περικτιόνεσσιν ἀνάξει,
> τῶν ἀνδρῶν γενεῆς οἵ θ' αἵματος ἐξ ἐμεῦ εἰσί.[156]
>
> Then he boastfully spoke among all the gods:
> "Hear me, all gods and all goddesses,
> so that I may say the things my heart in my breast commands me to.
> Today, Eileithuia, the goddess of birth pangs, will reveal a man
> to the light, who will rule all those dwelling around,
> among the men who are from my stock and blood."

Zeus speaks because his heart bids him to; it is a decision made in excitement, driven by emotion rather than planning. Zeus' careless declaration leaves him vulnerable to Hera's manipulation. She, δολοφρονέουσα ("playing a trick," the same word used of Prometheus at *Theogony* 550), goads him into swearing an oath that the child born that day will be king, then uses her influence over Eileithuia to delay Heracles' birth and rush Eurystheus', making Eurystheus king and dooming Heracles to serve him. Zeus, dismayed at his mistake, turns not on Hera, but Ate (Folly):

> αὐτίκα δ' εἶλ' Ἄτην κεφαλῆς λιπαροπλοκάμοιο
> χωόμενος φρεσὶν ᾗσι, καὶ ὤμοσε καρτερὸν ὅρκον
> μή ποτ' ἐς Οὔλυμπόν τε καὶ οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντα
> αὖτις ἐλεύσεσθαι Ἄτην, ἣ πάντας ἀᾶται.
> ὣς εἰπὼν ἔρριψεν ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος
> χειρὶ περιστρέψας· τάχα δ' ἵκετο ἔργ' ἀνθρώπων.[157]
>
> And right away he grabbed Ate by her head with shining hair
> angry in his heart, and swore a strong oath
> that Ate would never come again to Olympus
> and starry heaven, who leads everyone astray.
> When he had said this, he threw her from starry heaven
> whirling her with his hand; and quickly she reached the realms of men.

Instead of punishing Hera for deceiving him, he punishes and exiles Ate (Folly), the goddess who represents confusion itself. He is aware of and angry about his own confusion and his own mistake, and he expresses his anger by violently punishing a god. The story ends with Zeus groaning whenever he sees Heracles performing his labors.

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[156] Hom. *Il.*19.100-105.
[157] Hom. *Il.*19.126-131.

So far, this story is connected to Mecone by the phenomenon of Zeus' θυμός leading him to make a bad decision and to get angry about it. Another parallel is the involvement of Heracles: recall that before we learn of Prometheus' crimes, we are told of his punishment, and that Heracles was the one to rescue him from it by killing the eagle of Zeus, and that Zeus allowed this to happen for the sake of his son's honor.[158] In both of these stories, Zeus seems to be strongly affected by care for Heracles, motivating him in one case to punish a god, and in the other to stop punishing a god (Prometheus).

The combination of Zeus' affection for Heracles, Zeus as the victim of deception, and Zeus violently punishing other gods recalls another story that is told not once but twice in the *Iliad*: Heracles' shipwreck on Kos. In books 14 and 15, as bookends to Hera's deception of Zeus, Hypnos (Sleep) and Zeus each tell their own version of a story about the last time Hera deceived Zeus with Hypnos' help.[159] In the story, Hera enlists Hypnos to put Zeus to sleep, then recruits the winds to drive Heracles' ship off course when he is returning from his sack of Troy, shipwrecking him in Kos. Sleep's version ends with Zeus beating him and almost throwing him into the ocean, while Zeus' ends with him binding and suspending Hera in the sky as punishment.[160] So once again, in each of these, Zeus is deceived, gets angry on behalf of Heracles, and violently punishes another god for his or her involvement with a wrong done to his son; the binding of Hera must also remind us of the binding of Prometheus. What is more, Zeus refers to each of Hera's tricks with forms of ἀπάτη, connecting them to both Prometheus' deception of Zeus and the birth of Aphrodite, the result of Kronos' deception of Ouranos.[161]

But the real function of this doublet in the text is to emphasize the episode it contains: the more famous deception of Zeus in book 14, where Hera seduces him, Hypnos puts him to sleep, and Poseidon is able openly to help the Greeks against the Trojans until he wakes up. While this episode does not involve Heracles himself, it is marked by the close association of the Kos tale as "that kind of story." In this episode, instead of being motivated by affection for his illegitimate son, Zeus is driven by pure lust. His seductive speech showcases his impatience and lack of wiles; under normal circumstances, his catalogue of women and goddesses with whom he has been unfaithful to Hera (including Hera herself, almost as if he has forgotten whom he addresses) would be anything but enticing to her. Besides its rhetorical ineptitude, the speech is a showcase of Zeus' lack of self-control in the face of sexual temptation.[162] It is this uncontrolled lust that

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[158] Clay suggests that the Prometheus story, with Heracles acting as helper, stands in for the Gigantomachy, in which Heracles assisted the Olympians, and that Zeus' abatement of anger "to show [Heracles] respect in an extraordinary way] is a repayment for his son's help against the Giants (2003: 114). Mueller contends that the *kleos* earned by Heracles for rescuing Prometheus from his quasi-mortal condition represents *kleos* "as a reminder to mortals of the reward that awaits those who earn favor under the patronage of Zeus" (2016a: 13).

[159] *Il.*14.243-262, 15.18-33.

[160] Lang (1983: 160-162) reads these two *paradeigmata* in connection with other Iliadic stories of divine hurling, elucidating the various motivations and outcomes of hurling as punishment and arguing that they are the result of poets exploring a theme. She also discusses this pair as an example of two *paradeigmata* telling one complete story (149). The two allusions to this story certainly fit into a complex network of mythological and structural resonances throughout the poem, but I would argue that in addition, because of their close association (in that they refer explicitly to the same event) and their proximity to Hera's seduction of Zeus, they also serve to frame and highlight this intervening narrative.

[161] *Il.*15.31, 33; Prometheus ἐξαπάτησε(ν) Zeus at *Th.*565 and *WD* 48; Aphrodite's domains are listed as παρθενίους τ' ὀάρους μειδήματά τ' ἐξαπάτας τε at *Th.* 205, recalling the smiling/genitals pun of 200 and in turn the castration itself. Relatedly (and also mentioned above), ἐξαπαφίσκω appears at *Th.* 537 for Prometheus' deception of Zeus and at *h.Ven.* 38 for Aphrodite's ability to beguile him with desire.

[162] *Il.*14.313-328; see Slatkin 1992: 111.

makes Hera's plan so effective and that makes Zeus vulnerable to deception—not unlike Ouranos' vulnerability to Gaia and Kronos' ambush.

From these stories a pattern emerges of a Zeus who is the victim, not the wielder, of cunning. Zeus is often contrasted with Kronos and Ouranos as ruling through intelligence and diplomacy rather than force or repression.[163] He outsmarts Metis; he subjugates gods of older and younger generations through persuasion and political deals.[164] And yet this is clearly not his only side. Perhaps these stories tend to show up in strong association with his role as the father of Heracles because Heracles is a hero so strongly associated with this other set of characteristics: appetite, lust, and force. If this is the case, then it is more plausible that *this* Zeus would get tricked by Prometheus, who makes use of Zeus' desire for the pleasure of consuming food to cause him to gamble away his right to eat.

IV. Consequences

In the above sections, I hope to have shown that Hesiod's narrative of the sacrifice at Mecone is deeply ambiguous, making use of inter- and intra-textual verbal and thematic echoes to tell a story where Zeus is at once the supreme ruler who cannot be tricked and the oppressive king who can and must be tricked. But in the end, how much does it matter if Zeus is tricked or not? The outcome is still that humans are dependent on food and gods are not. The story, after all, is meant to explain a world in which humans are hungry and life is hard. But this raises a further question: how much does sacrifice matter to the gods? Is its value symbolic, representing their honored status, or is their need for it more concrete? If Zeus was not fooled by Prometheus—if the only consequence of the division is that humans are dependent on food—then the gods behave strangely about the smoke of sacrifice. In this final section, we will ponder several passages that speak to the gods' relationship with sacrificial smoke in the post-Mecone age.

In Book 22 of the *Iliad*, for example, when Zeus contemplates intervening and saving Hector from death, he calls him a "dear man" (φίλον ἄνδρα) and declares that his heart (ἦτορ) is mourning (ὀλοφύρεται). Then, in a description that also serves as an explanation, he adds that Hector "burned up many thighs of cows for me" (μοι πολλὰ βοῶν ἐπὶ μηρί' ἔκηεν).[165] Zeus is sad about Hector's impending death, and his emotion is described in a physical way, grounded in his ἦτορ, the seat of passion. Hector's generosity with thighs of cows has created a bond with Zeus, a sense of obligation strong enough to make Zeus consider breaking his word and intervening in the war, a transgression that he also contemplates but declines for the life of Sarpedon, his own son.[166] From this passage we can at least conclude that Zeus values Hector's sacrificial offerings in a social or emotional, not merely a symbolic way.

Other passages come closer to confirming a physical need for sacrificial smoke. In Book 5 of the *Odyssey*, when Hermes arrives on Calypso's island under orders to force her to release Odysseus, she greets him, asks him his purpose in coming, and provides him with a feast of nectar and ambrosia. Once he has eaten, he explains why he is there. The first point that he clarifies is that he is not there of his own will, but because Zeus commanded him to come. He then explains his reluctance to travel to such a remote island:

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[163] See, e.g., Solmsen (1949: 9, 65, 72, and passim) and Lloyd-Jones (1971: 36).
[164] Brown (1953: 19-20).
[165] *Il.*22.168-170.
[166] *Il.*16.433-461.

> Ζεὺς ἐμέ γ' ἠνώγει δεῦρ' ἐλθέμεν οὐκ ἐθέλοντα·
> τίς δ' ἂν ἑκὼν τοσσόνδε διαδράμοι ἁλμυρὸν ὕδωρ
> ἄσπετον; οὐδέ τις ἄγχι βροτῶν πόλις, οἵ τε θεοῖσιν
> ἱερά τε ῥέζουσι καὶ ἐξαίτους ἑκατόμβας.[167]
>
> Zeus ordered me to come here even though I did not want to;
> and who would want to run across so much endless salty water?
> There is no city of mortals nearby, who make sacrifices
> and excellent hecatombs for the gods.

The journey is long, he complains, and made even worse by the absence of humans to make sacrifices. It is strange that he brings up this objection when Calypso has just served him nectar and ambrosia. What need does is the smoke of sacrifice satisfy for the gods that their favorite foods do not? It is clear that what Hermes is missing cannot be a symbolic, social, or emotional nourishment. His complaint is not that people are not honoring the gods through sacrifice, but that there are no people *to* make sacrifices. Since he is only temporarily present on the island, it is clear that this has nothing to do with the honor or prestige gained from sacrifice. It annoys him in a way that is more like a hankering after a snack.[168]

The most striking example comes from the *Hymn to Demeter*. When Demeter causes a famine as a last resort to force Zeus to negotiate, its effect is felt not only by humans, but by gods:

> καί νύ κε πάμπαν ὄλεσσε γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων
> λιμοῦ ὑπ' ἀργαλέης, γεράων τ' ἐρικυδέα τιμὴν
> καὶ θυσιῶν ἤμερσεν Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντας,
> εἰ μὴ Ζεὺς ἐνόησεν ἐῷ τ' ἐφράσσατο θυμῷ.[169]
>
> And she would have really destroyed the race of articulate men entirely
> with the grievous famine, and deprived those who inhabit Olympian houses
> of the glorious honor of prizes and burnt sacrifices,
> if Zeus hadn't realized it and planned in his heart.

This is the mechanism by which the previously obstinate Zeus is convinced to compromise. Why is the absence of burnt offerings so compelling to him? Admittedly, it is the *honor* of sacrifices that Demeter is said to deny the gods here; and yet the lack of burnt offerings for the gods is closely parallel to the famine among humans in the passage. The gods are not called gods or immortals here, just Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντας, suggesting that without sacrifice, that may be all that the gods are: beings who have houses on Olympus. They are not so separate from humans,

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[167] *Od.* 5.99-102.

[168] Stocking argues that this passage implies a *less* physical, *more* symbolic need for smoke because Hermes has just eaten nectar and ambrosia and must be full (2017: 125). I would disagree with this idea on the grounds that Hermes' need for the symbolic satisfaction of smoke makes little sense if he is only visiting Ogygia for a short time. The distinction between this and his already-satisfied need for nectar and ambrosia seems to me more analogous to different food categories, e.g., food vs. drink or meat vs. grain, where an abundance of one does not excuse a lack of the other. As Versnel puts it, Hermes is "hungry again, but in this context quite satisfied with a genuine Olympian repast even though he still does not get his sniff of burnt hekatombs" (2011: 375-376).

[169] *h.Cer.* 310-313.

nor do they transcend the need for food; rather, they are at the top of a food chain that Demeter sets out to destroy from the bottom up. Their needs are of a higher order than human needs, but ultimately they still depend on the same fruits of the earth.

If gods have a physical need for the smoke of sacrifice, then the consequences of Prometheus' trick and Zeus' appetite become clear: gods are not free from hunger. Vernant pointed out that humans are forever dependent on meat, trapped under the sign of the belly.[170] But just as men are doomed to live under the sign of the belly henceforth, we could just as easily say that the gods are now bound to live under the sign of the thigh bone. This would mean that the gods, as they existed in the imaginations of their worshippers, are not so far above humans in every way; they are certainly more powerful, but with respect to bodies and food, their position is parallel, not necessarily far superior, to that of humans. This implies an antagonistic attitude towards the gods, since humans enjoy meat and food only because their benefactor Prometheus wrested these privileges away from Zeus.

[170] Vernant 1981b: 51 and 1981c: 60-61.

Chapter Two
Hungry for Meat: Violence and Longing in the *Hymns* to Apollo and Hermes

In the *Theogony*, Zeus ends the cycle of succession struggle that destabilized the first two generations of gods. He defeats his father, but more importantly, he subjugates his rivals, whether through force, craft, or alliances. He becomes the eternal ruler because of his knack for strategic versatility: he knows when to crush an opponent and when to neutralize a threat by absorbing it into himself or his empire. And in an oddly-placed narrative digression at the very heart of the poem, he defeats a rival (Prometheus) and creates a world order where gods will always be free from hunger, while simultaneously giving up—whether, as discussed in Chapter One, deliberately or by accident—their right to eat meat.

In the *Homeric Hymns*, we find a sequel to the *Theogony*: stories about the gods coming into their roles in the order of Zeus.[171] By the time he has sons of his own, he has nothing to fear from them. His power is broad and stable already, and his children will be content to take their places in his regime, to claim for themselves power that is fully inscribed within and in service of his own power, just as Styx, the Cyclopes, and the Hundred-Handers did.[172] The *Hymns* to Apollo and Hermes show us what life is like for sons of Zeus, who come of age in a post-succession, post-Mecone world. These are sons who cannot and must not ever exceed their father, but who, meanwhile, must be worthy of him. They are born into a world whose nature is already fixed, a world where the taste of meat is already denied to them, a world they will not rule—or rather, a world they will *help* rule, but never on their own behalf.

Whereas Zeus, in the poem that narrates his birth and rise to power, fights in grand battles against giants and monsters who threaten to throw the world into cosmic disarray, Apollo's and Hermes' struggles are small by comparison.[173] In Apollo's hymn, his mother has difficulty finding a place to give birth; once he is born, he searches the world for a location for his temple, abusing a disrespectful land-maiden and slaying a dragon along the way, and finally abducts some sailors and compels them to serve as his priests. In Hermes' hymn, he is born in the humble cave where his mother lives, ventures out into the world looking for food, and finds a tortoise, which he kills to invent the lyre. He then steals some cows from the herds of Apollo and tries to sacrifice and eat some of them, causing Apollo to come after him and to bring him to Mount Olympus to face Zeus' judgement. In the end, Hermes is compelled to show Apollo where he has hidden the cows, and trades the lyre to his brother in exchange for the cows that he stole. Both of these stories center around rather trivial matters: a temple, a slight, an animal, an object, never the whole world. both are tinged with a feeling of belatedness: *What is left for us? Where is there a place for us? What are we to do with ourselves?*[174]

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[171] See Clay 1989: 11-15.

[172] Brown 1953: 20.

[173] The *Hymns* to Apollo and Hermes also stand in contrast to the other two surviving long *Hymns*, Demeter and Aphrodite, which both describe goddesses who already existed before Zeus stabilized his rule coming into conflict with, and ultimately being bested by, his power. The *Hymns* to goddesses are about Zeus finding ways to mitigate feminine forces, while those to young gods are about the distinct but related project of defusing his sons' inherent potential to rival him.

[174] As Clay says of Hermes, "The *timai* of the others have all been divided and distributed. Nothing remains for Hermes, who is thus obliged to acquire his honors by theft or exchange" (1989: 96). While Clay sets this in opposition to Apollo, who claims his *timai* after he is born, I will argue that Apollo and Hermes both struggle with this same problem in different ways, and that Apollo's quest for a site for his temple and devotees are analogous to Hermes' quest for honors.

In their hymns, Apollo and Hermes both use violence in ways that appear unmotivated, misdirected, and frustrated. Apollo is tricked by a spring who does not want to share her location with him, so, although he has already found another location and established a temple, he buries her. He kills a monster that has been harassing the people around his new temple, but once it is dead, he seems only to be able to think of its meat rotting. Hermes kills animals in a cold, analytical manner that seems almost like dissection, always trying to find some means for gain among the slaughtered animals' constituent parts, with mixed results. Neither appears to get what he wants from his violent acts.

In this chapter, I will argue that Apollo's and Hermes' acts of violence are manifestations of the frustrations that come with being sons of Zeus. They have all the ambitions and aggressions of the young gods of earlier generations, but they exist in a system that does not allow them to direct these impulses upwards towards an oppressive father figure, and so they flail and lash out at humans, animals, monsters, and personified places. At the same time, they know or feel that something is missing in their relationship to food. They should not experience hunger for meat, but the lack of hunger is still a lack. It is, then, a phantom hunger for meat, as well as a phantom will to power, that drives their strange actions.

In the first section, I will set up a framework for understanding the differences in characterization between the two gods in their hymns by approaching a separate but related issue: nectar and ambrosia. These are the emblematic foods of divine existence, and so they make a good litmus test to show how each god conceives of his divinity. Apollo follows the rules and tries to be as much like Zeus as possible, but this raises anxiety: will he be *too* much like Zeus? When he eats nectar and ambrosia, it is in normal, expected situations, which are nevertheless marked by tension. Hermes, on the other hand, has no regard for rules or for the symbolic order of Zeus.[175] He always seeks the real, material components lurking behind lofty ideas like fame and power. He does not eat nectar or ambrosia after his birth, remaining a precocious little child throughout his adventures, but it is eventually revealed that his mother Maia has had ambrosia in her cupboard all along, reflecting the god's ambiguous nature.

In the second section, I will apply this understanding of the two gods to their acts of violence and quests for meat to show how each deals with the same problem in his own particular way. Apollo, like Zeus, uses violence to impose his will on the world. He limits himself to doing and wanting only the things he is supposed to. Since meat eating is not allowed, he fixates on the most similar kind of satisfaction that is available to him as a god: the quantity of animal sacrifices that will be devoted to him. Hermes, on the other hand, uses violence to try to understand and outsmart the world. He has the good sense to recognize his hunger for meat as such and to seek the foods and material things that would satisfy his desires, but he is also doomed to be frustrated. He may be a realist and a materialist, but Zeus' choice at Mecone cut the gods off from the real and material satisfactions Hermes longs for. By reading the two hymns with attention to food and violence, I hope to demonstrate the subtle limitations that the hymn-poets imagined for the younger generations of the divine family.

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[175] Cf. Bungard's formulation: "The hymnist has successfully set up a tension between Hermes, who reorients the world so there will be a place for him in the future, and Apollo, who is committed to the way the world has always appeared" (2012: 461).

I. Nectar and Ambrosia

Let us first review what is known about nectar and ambrosia, the proper foods of the gods. These imaginary foods are not clearly or completely described in surviving hexameter poetry. Nectar is sometimes red and ambrosia is often sweet. According to Paul Thieme, who makes use of both Homeric usages and Vedic comparanda to reconstruct the older meanings of the words, nectar and ambrosia are both derived from roots related to negating decay: nectar from **nek* "bodily death, decay," and **tr*, "crossing, traversing, overcoming, overtaking, rescuing from"; ambrosia from a negation of the root **mr*, "to die," used not to mean "immortal" but "containing or granting vitality." He elaborates what this vitality means: essentially, protection from all kinds of fatigue and decay, including hunger, rotting, and aging.[176] It is difficult to pin down their precise properties in epic; they are associated with divine agelessness, but this is only relevant in some cases.[177] The gods occasionally grant humans limited access to them, and in these situations, they protect the recipients from onerous aspects of the human condition such as decay, hunger, and grief.[178] In one instance, Demeter uses them in an attempt to turn a human child immortal, and they cause him to grow quickly like a god.[179] Among the gods, they tend to appear in contexts related to the cohesion of, and inclusion in, the divine community. When Zeus and Hera quarrel in *Iliad* 1, threatening to spoil the divine feast, Hephaestus smooths things over by distributing nectar to the gods.[180] When Zeus recruits the hundred-handers to fight for him, he gives them nectar and ambrosia, of which they have been deprived during their imprisonment, to mark their reintegration into the community; they eat before discussing their agreement with him.[181] We learn more about their associations from Hesiod's description of the consequences for breaking the oath of Styx:

> ὅς κεν τὴν ἐπίορκον ἀπολλείψας ἐπομόσσῃ
> ἀθανάτων οἳ ἔχουσι κάρη νιφόεντος Ὀλύμπου,
> κεῖται νήυτμος τετελεσμένον εἰς ἐνιαυτόν·
> οὐδέ ποτ' ἀμβροσίης καὶ νέκταρος ἔρχεται ἆσσον
> βρώσιος, ἀλλά τε κεῖται ἀνάπνευστος καὶ ἄναυδος
> στρωτοῖς ἐν λεχέεσσι, κακὸν δ' ἐπὶ κῶμα καλύπτει.
> αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν νοῦσον τελέσει μέγαν εἰς ἐνιαυτόν,
> ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται χαλεπώτερος ἆθλος·
> εἰνάετες δὲ θεῶν ἀπαμείρεται αἰὲν ἐόντων,
> οὐδέ ποτ' ἐς βουλὴν ἐπιμίσγεται οὐδ' ἐπὶ δαῖτας
> ἐννέα πάντ' ἔτεα· δεκάτῳ δ' ἐπιμίσγεται αὖτις
> † εἰρέας ἀθανάτων οἳ Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσι.

[176] Thieme 1968: 102-106; 114; 117.
[177] See Clay 1981; although Clay's argument brings much sense and order to the odd and disparate references to nectar and ambrosia in hexameter poetry, it tends to oversimplify examples that do not fit as well. For example, Clay argues that Athena's use of ambrosia to beautify Penelope must mean that it reverses the effects of aging, but in context, it is mourning, not age, that has marred Penelope's face (1981: 116; *Od.* 18.188-196).
[178] Decay: *Il.* 19.38-39, 23.186-187. Hunger: *Il.* 19.352-354. Grief: *Od.* 18.188-196.
[179] *H.Cer.* 237.
[180] *Il.* 1.573-583.
[181] Hes.*Th.* 640-642.

τοῖον ἄρ’ ὅρκον ἔθεντο θεοὶ Στυγὸς ἄφθιτον ὕδωρ, 805
ὠγύγιον· τὸ δ’ ἴησι καταστυφέλου διὰ χώρου.[182]

Whoever, having poured [the water of Styx] in a false oath, swears falsely on it
Of the immortals who hold the peaks of snowy Olympus,
Lies breathless to the completion of a year;
Nor does he ever go near the eating of ambrosia and nectar,
But lies breathless and speechless
On a strewn bed, and an evil sleep covers him.
But when the sickness completes a great year,
Another, more difficult trial comes after this one;
He is bereft of the always-existing gods for nine years,
Nor does he ever mingle in the council or at meals
For nine whole years; but in the tenth he mingles again
In the assembly places of the gods who have Olympian homes.
Such an oath the gods made the undying water of Styx,
Primeval; and she sends it through the rugged land.

The punishment for breaking an oath comes in two parts: first, there is a period of one year where the god is completely incapacitated, unable to eat, breathe, or speak; then, for an additional nine years, the oath-breaker is excluded from the divine community, barred from both councils and feasts. While it is not clear which elements of the punishment are direct *consequences* of not eating nectar and ambrosia, there is at the least a strong association between them. Nectar and ambrosia are among the privileges that are denied to divine oath-breakers, along with participation at the council and at feasts. Their absence is connected with oppressive stillness, silence, and suffocation, conditions quite unsuitable for gods. Let us keep in mind the connections between nectar and ambrosia and inclusion in the divine community as we consider the appearances of these magical foods in the *Hymns* to Apollo and Hermes.

a. Apollo, the Growing Boy

The *Hymn to Apollo* begins unsettlingly. Apollo enters the feast of the gods with his bow drawn, frightening the other Olympians, but the tension is diffused when his father gives him a cup of nectar:

Μνήσομαι οὐδὲ λάθωμαι Ἀπόλλωνος ἑκάτοιο,
ὅν τε θεοὶ κατὰ δῶμα Διὸς τρομέουσιν ἰόντα·
καί ῥά τ’ ἀναΐσσουσιν ἐπὶ σχεδὸν ἐρχομένοιο
πάντες ἀφ’ ἑδράων, ὅτε φαίδιμα τόξα τιταίνει.
Λητὼ δ’ οἴη μίμνε παραὶ Διὶ τερπικεραύνῳ, 5
ἥ ῥα βιόν τ’ ἐχάλασσε καὶ ἐκλήϊσε φαρέτρην,
καί οἱ ἀπ’ ἰφθίμων ὤμων χείρεσσιν ἑλοῦσα
τόξον ἀνεκρέμασε πρὸς κίονα πατρὸς ἑοῖο
πασσάλου ἐκ χρυσέου· τὸν δ’ εἰς θρόνον εἷσεν ἄγουσα.
τῷ δ’ ἄρα νέκταρ ἔδωκε πατὴρ δέπαϊ χρυσείῳ 10

[182] Hes.*Th.* 793-806.

δεικνύμενος φίλον υἱόν, ἔπειτα δὲ δαίμονες ἄλλοι
ἔνθα καθίζουσιν· χαίρει δέ τε πότνια Λητώ,
οὕνεκα τοξοφόρον καὶ καρτερὸν υἱὸν ἔτικτεν.[183]

May I remember and not forget Apollo the farshooter,
At whom the gods in the house of Zeus tremble in fear when he comes;
And they all dart up from their seats
When he comes near, when he stretches out his shining bow.
And Leto alone remains beside Zeus who delights in thunder,
Who unstrings his bow and puts away his quiver,
And taking his bow from his strong shoulders in her hands
Hangs it up on the pillar of his father
From a golden peg; and leading him she puts him in a seat.
And his father gives nectar in a golden cup
Pledging his own son, and then the other gods
Sit down; and mistress Leto rejoices,
Because she bore a bow-bearing and strong son.

In the very first sentence of the hymn, the gods quake with fear at Apollo's approach. He is armed and apparently aggressive, terrifying everyone except for his parents. He stretches his bow with the same verb, τιταίνω, with which Hesiod's Ouranos etymologizes the name of the Titans, suggesting arrogance and violence.[184] Leto calmly disarms him and sits him down, but it is not until Zeus welcomes him with a cup of nectar that the other gods relax and sit back down. The passage ends with Leto rejoicing over her son's "bow-bearing and strong" qualities. These are the same attributes that made his approach so terrifying, but they are now marked as positive by his mother's approval. Leto's pacifying role here makes a marked contrast with the matriarchs of the Theogony, who always encouraged their sons to rebel; the revolutionary potential of mother-son alliances is another feature of the succession cycle that is quite impossible under Zeus' post-succession regime.

Scholars have fretted over both the text and the meaning of this passage. It contains a troubling mixture of incompatible verb tenses; its chaotic mix of presents, imperfects, and aorists can be interpreted to indicate that this is Apollo's first arrival on Olympus, or that the scene described is habitual, but either interpretation requires the acceptance of some anomalous tense usages.[185] Clay proposes that this mixture of tenses is a special feature of the *Homeric Hymns* that

> points beyond a mere confusion of tenses to a characteristic of the gods themselves. Their actions, prerogatives, and epiphanies can be called timeless—not, however, in the sense that they are beyond or outside time, but insofar as their unique manifestations are indistinguishable from their eternal ones.[186]

[183] *h.Ap.* 1-13.
[184] Hes. *Th.* 207-210.
[185] Clay 1989: 23-24.
[186] Clay 1989: 27.

I am persuaded by Clay's suggestion, but this leaves us with an even bigger problem: what is the characteristic of the god himself that is presented in the scene? The passage seems to state that Apollo is acting violent and hostile towards the rest of the divine community, which does not sit well with our idea of the god of light, poetry, and prophecy.[187] Has he simply forgotten to put his bow away? Does he approach in this menacing way because of his raw power, but not mean to direct it at his fellow gods? Or is this moment more symbolic or allegorical, standing for the whole problem of a son of Zeus approaching Olympus and posing a potential threat, which is then happily resolved by Zeus' friendly welcome?

Clay argues that point of the passage is that while Apollo possesses awesome power, he is aligned with Zeus and therefore a defender of order.[188] I would agree but suggest a slightly different framing of Clay's reading that highlights the resonance between this scene and the god's behavior in the hymn's narrative sections. What we are told in the scene is that Apollo is violent in nature, but that his violence *is not a threat to Zeus because it is endorsed by Zeus.* Zeus, by handing Apollo a cup of nectar, folds him into the community of gods feasting together. This does not negate the violence Apollo seemed to be offering when he arrived, but rather, tells the other gods that they need not fear Apollo's violence, because he is one of them. He is part of Zeus' regime: not a defender of order per se, but a defender of the order of Zeus.[189] The presence of nectar in this scene does much of the work to situate Apollo in alignment with his father's order.

The other appearance of nectar and ambrosia in the *Hymn* is just after Apollo's birth. This is another situation fraught with tension in the divine community. Leto has had a difficult time finding a place to give birth, turned away by almost every location she approaches because of rumors that her son will be violent and arrogant. Even after she finds refuge on Delos, her labor is prolonged for ten days because of Hera's antagonism. The community of goddesses who gather to support her have to bribe Eileithuia with a necklace for the birth to move forward. Thus, although the birth of a god is a joyous occasion and will be described as such, it has been set up as a source of strife in the divine community, setting most of the goddesses at odds with the queen of the gods while also eliciting fear in the natural world.

Immediately following the birth, Apollo's nature and existence are defined by the first foods he consumes, emphatically *not* his mother's milk, but nectar and ambrosia:

> οὐδ' ἄρ' Ἀπόλλωνα χρυσάορα θήσατο μήτηρ,
> ἀλλὰ Θέμις νέκταρ τε καὶ ἀμβροσίην ἐρατεινὴν
> ἀθανάτῃσιν χερσὶν ἐπήρξατο· χαῖρε δὲ Λητὼ
> οὕνεκα τοξοφόρον καὶ καρτερὸν υἱὸν ἔτικτεν.
> Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ Φοῖβε κατέβρως ἄμβροτον εἶδαρ,
> οὔ σέ γ' ἔπειτ' ἴσχον χρύσεοι στρόφοι ἀσπαίροντα,
> οὐδ' ἔτι δεσμά σ' ἔρυκε, λύοντο δὲ πείρατα πάντα.
> αὐτίκα δ' ἀθανάτῃσι μετηύδα Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων·

[187] The comparison drawn by AHS is apt: "As Apollo approaches the seated Gods he strings his bow to test it, and produces the same panic that Ulysses did by the same action among the suitors" (1936: 200). See Miller 1986: 14 n.31 for a summary of scholarly anxiety about Apollo's violence in the passage, as well as ibid. 12 n.26 on the possible meanings of the odd combination of tenses.

[188] Clay 1989: 38.

[189] By this distinction I do not mean to imply that the poet denounces or attempts to subvert Zeus or Apollo, but that the scene indicates a combination of awe and ambivalence towards the power of the Olympians that is consistent with Apollo's portrayal in the rest of the hymn.

εἴη μοι κίθαρίς τε φίλη καὶ καμπύλα τόξα,
χρήσω δ' ἀνθρώποισι Διὸς νημερτέα βουλήν.[190]

Nor did his mother nurse Apollo of the golden sword,
But Themis served nectar and lovely ambrosia
With her immortal hands; and Leto rejoiced
Because she bore a bow-bearing and strong son.
But when indeed you, Phoebus, ate up the immortal food,
Then the golden bands did not hold you as you panted,
Nor any longer did the bonds restrain you, but all the ropes were loosened.
And right away Phoebus Apollo addressed the immortal (goddesses):
"Let the cithara be dear to me and the curved bow,
And I will prophesy to men the true counsel of Zeus."

It is Themis, the goddess of order, who administers the foods of divinity to the infant. The foods themselves affirm Apollo's divine status and designate him as a new member of the Olympian community, while the role of Themis as nourisher makes it even clearer that this is the birth of a good, orderly child. And yet even this moment of affirmation is marked with uncertainty and apprehension. As Apollo rapidly grows into a youth, he pants and struggles against his swaddling clothes, which are now called bonds. His breaking of these bonds is repeated three times across two lines, using different diction each time, suggesting that there is more going on here than an emphasis on his rapid growth. The moment is reminiscent of the dreaded condition reserved for monsters and defiant gods: being bound and imprisoned. Recall the hundred-handers, to whom Zeus gives nectar and ambrosia when he releases them from bonds. It is also strange that the baby is ἀσπαίροντα, which LSJ defines as "pant, gasp, struggle, in Hom. Always of the dying," and is used only here with reference to a god. Its only other appearance in the *Hymns* is of Demophoon, the human child whom Demeter attempts to make immortal with ambrosia and fire. At the moment when his mother intervenes, Demeter abandons him, and he falls panting to the floor; whether his fate is to die or to live the disappointing life of a human who could have been more, this is the moment at which he decisively fails to transcend mortality.[191] Rather than this labored resistance to bonds, we might have expected to see Apollo shed them easily, as Dionysus does when the pirates try to bind him in the surviving *Hymn to Dionysus*:

τὸν δ' οὐκ ἴσχανε δεσμά, λύγοι δ' ἀπὸ τηλόσ' ἔπιπτον
χειρῶν ἠδὲ ποδῶν·[192]

But bonds did not hold him, but the withies fell far away
From his hands and feet.

Instead of the easy falling-away of bonds that would befit a divine child, we have Apollo briefly inhabiting the position of a bound god, i.e., an insubordinate or antisocial god.

But Apollo's imprisonment is brief; after all, his bonds are not bonds at all but lovingly wrapped swaddling clothes. He instantly bypasses childhood, foregoing the undignified and

[190] *H.Ap.* 123-132.
[191] *H.Cer.* 289. Cf. Miller (1986: 53 n.129) on the "connotations of violence and desperation in ἀσπαίροντα."
[192] *H.Bacch.* 13-14.

exploratory antics of a puerile period, such as we see with Hermes. Instead, he rapidly matures into an authoritative young man and exercises his authority by declaring his *timai*: the lyre, the bow, and prophecy.[193] As Bergren points out, all three of his domains are characterized by accuracy:

> …archaic Greek thought perceived in the bow and the lyre the capacity of attaining an exact mark of sound or space, if the string is plucked properly. That such attainment is also the property of the βουλὴ Διός is implied by the metaphorical *nemertéa*: the βουλὴ Διός is an arrow that never misses its mark, is never sharp or flat. And so, moreover, is the re-presentation of it by Apollo, for the verb *chreso*, a cognate of *chre* and *chreon*, implies the accuracy of cosmic necessity. Zeus is the primary archer of the mind, and Apollo, by virtue of his skill with the lyre and bow, is his unerring *porte-parole*.[194]

Since Apollo cannot be Zeus, nor can he be quite like Zeus, he will be Zeus' mouthpiece. Like an arrow approaching its mark, he attains this state of similarity and nearness to Zeus as quickly as possible. But in this perfect obedience there is always a hint of transgression, that which turns his swaddling clothes into bonds and him into a writhing monster.

b. Hermes, the Naughty Child

In the case of Hermes, a more unorthodox child, nectar and ambrosia will operate somewhat differently. Unlike Apollo, born among a group of supportive goddesses who have the power to facilitate his entry into the community, Hermes is born in secret to Maia, a nymph who appears to be excluded from this community.[195] She lives in a dark cave, not on Olympus, and she is a daughter of Atlas, one of the notoriously insubordinate Iapetids.[196] Hermes does not eat nectar or ambrosia in the hymn; in fact, he does not appear to eat at all. The closest he comes is when he tries and fails to eat beef.

While the baby Apollo's first deliberate act is to declare his domains to the goddesses who are present at his birth, Hermes takes a more circuitous approach to identity and self-fashioning. His first act is to wander out of his cave, find a tortoise, bring it inside, kill it, and use its shell to craft the first lyre, an act that will be discussed in detail below. He then plays the lyre and narrates his own birth in song:

> θεὸς δ' ὑπὸ καλὸν ἄειδεν
> ἐξ αὐτοσχεδίης πειρώμενος, ἠΰτε κοῦροι

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[193] "Rather than negotiating for the lyre, bow, and prophecy, he proclaims these τιμαί by fiat. In doing so, he asserts his special prerogative to these without acknowledging potential counterclaims (e.g., previous owners of Delphi)" (Bungard 2012: 451).

[194] Bergren 1982: 91-92.

[195] "Unlike Apollo's birth, which drew the attention of the world, Hermes' birth is known only to his mother and father. The major project of this hymn is then how the unknown Hermes will make himself visible and become known" (Bungard 2012: 453). AHS draw a comparison between *h.Ap.* 127 and *h.Merc.* 15 based on Apollo's "precocious strength and talent" (1936: 221); I would disagree, seeing more of a contrast between Apollo's maturation after eating nectar and ambrosia and Hermes' more outrageous antics performed without having undergone any physical maturation. Sissa and Detienne similarly observe the parallels, but not the divergences, of the two passages (2000: 78).

[196] Cf. Stocking 2017: 120.

ἠβηταὶ θαλίῃσι παραιβόλα κερτομέουσιν,
ἀμφὶ Δία Κρονίδην καὶ Μαιάδα καλλιπέδιλον
† ὃν πάρος ὠρίζεσκον † ἑταιρείῃ φιλότητι,
ἣν τ' αὐτοῦ γενεὴν ὀνομακλυτὸν ἐξονομάζων·
ἀμφιπόλους τε γέραιρε καὶ ἀγλαὰ δώματα νύμφης,
καὶ τρίποδας κατὰ οἶκον ἐπηετανούς τε λέβητας.[197]

And the god sang along beautifully
Trying it out offhandedly, as youths
In their prime taunt deceitfully at festivities,
About Zeus son of Kronos and lovely-shod Maia,
How they previously associated in amorous love,
And describing his own famous birth;
And he celebrated the maids and glorious house of the nymph,
And the tripods and abundant cauldrons throughout the house.

Hermes is characteristically slippery and changeful in this passage: even the song itself is at once lovely, rough or amateurish, and somehow deceitful or contentious. He calls his birth famous, although the narrator's version of the same story emphasized its secrecy, with his mother hiding from the other gods, Zeus only meeting her when Hera is asleep, and the affair being hidden from the rest of the gods and humans.[198] Meanwhile, he describes Maia's "house" as luxurious, with slaves, tripods, and cauldrons, when elsewhere her home has been described as a dark, damp cave.[199] Thus far in the hymn, there is a discrepancy between how Hermes appears to exist in reality—excluded from Olympus, bereft of such Olympian markers as nectar and ambrosia, inhabiting a dark cave, and a bastard still unacknowledged or even kept secret by his father—and his self-presentation as famous, a son of Zeus, and inhabiting a glorious and well-furnished house. He calls Zeus by his patronymic to emphasize his own place in Zeus' prestigious lineage, while perhaps hinting at his resemblance to his tricky grandfather. As the hymn progresses, these two possible identities of Hermes will overlap and eventually blend together, making him both legitimate and transgressive (or at least unbound by the rules of legitimacy) at once. Nectar and ambrosia will appear at the very crux of this strategic slippage of identities.

We learn more about what Hermes thinks of himself when Maia confronts him after his theft of Apollo's cattle. She warns him that his behavior makes him vulnerable to punishment by Apollo, and that this punishment will consist of being bound in unbreakable bonds (ἀμήχανα δεσμὰ): the punishment to which gods imprisoned in Tartarus are subject.[200] Hermes counters

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[197] *H.Merc.* 54-61.
[198] *H.Merc.* 5, 8, 9. Vergados (2011: 103) reads Hermes' song as pure *mise en abîme*: "Both Hermes' and the poet's proems emphasize the god's parentage and stress the duration of Zeus and Maia's love-affair. This coincidence in the song's contents validates the poet's own account: if the god were to praise himself, he would have performed a song similar to the one we are in fact hearing." While I agree that Hermes' song is metapoetic, its obvious similarity to the hymn in which it appears is all the more reason to look for meaning in the gaps between the two narratives; to ignore them is to neglect Hermes' project of self-fashioning. Cf. Clay 1989: 109-110, who describes Hermes' song as more self-aggrandizing and -legitimizing, and Richardson 2010: 164, who notes but does not interrogate the overlap between Hermes' description of the cave and the luxury goods he intends to steal from Apollo.
[199] The cave is παλίσκιος (shadowy, 6), ἠερόεις (murky, 172, 234, 359), and βαθύσκιος (deep-shaded, 229).
[200] *H.Merc.* 157. the hundred-handers, Hes. *Th.* 640-642.

that his methods will "feed" or "tend" (βουκολέων) her and himself for all time.[201] He expresses disdain for their current situation without honor, explicitly linking it to their residence in the cave, and contrasts it with the luxurious life they should be leading, and that he can gain for them, among the other Olympians.[202] Finally, he declares that if Zeus does not give him honor, he will become a master thief, and that if Apollo tries to punish him, he will bore through and rob Apollo's temple at Delphi, stealing tripods, cauldrons, gold, iron, and cloth.[203] In this speech, then, Hermes acknowledges the undesirable nature of their home in the cave and expresses a desire to obtain the luxurious Olympian lifestyle to which he feels entitled, but insists that he can obtain this lifestyle through theft as opposed to obedience. It is no accident that the luxury goods he mentioned in his fanciful description of Maia's cave, tripods and cauldrons, also appear on the list of things he hopes to steal from Apollo.

When Apollo comes to the cave to punish Hermes, we finally see the two identities come together. Prior to this, Apollo intuits the thief's identity from a bird omen as γεγαῶτα Διὸς παῖδα Κρονίωνος, "a child born from Zeus son of Kronos," again emphasizing Hermes' place in the divine lineage through the use of the patronymic. When he arrives at the cave, which is twice called dark in the context of his arrival, he enters uninvited and searches the cave without permission:[204]

> παπτήνας δ' ἀνὰ πάντα μυχὸν μεγάλοιο δόμοιο
> τρεῖς ἀδύτους ἀνέῳγε λαβὼν κληῖδα φαεινὴν
> νέκταρος ἐμπλείους ἠδ' ἀμβροσίης ἐρατεινῆς·
> πολλὸς δὲ χρυσός τε καὶ ἄργυρος ἔνδον ἔκειτο,
> πολλὰ δὲ φοινικόεντα καὶ ἄργυφα εἵματα νύμφης,
> οἷα θεῶν μακάρων ἱεροὶ δόμοι ἐντὸς ἔχουσιν.[205]
>
> And peering around over every corner of the great house,
> He opened three cupboards, taking the shining bolt,
> Full of nectar and lovely ambrosia;
> And much gold lay within and silver,
> And many purple and silver-white garments of the nymph,
> Such things as the holy houses of the blessed gods hold within.

Apollo becomes the home invader "in violation of all human and divine etiquette,"[206] as if Hermes' reversal of the cattle's footprints really did "reverse the apparent direction of the exchange and reverse also the apparent difference between owner and thief."[207] Apollo has been baited by his baby brother into abandoning his sense of decorum and acting like the "prince of thieves" that Hermes aspired to become. The word used here for Maia's storage cupboards, ἀδύτους, "places that must not be entered," is the same word used for the inner sanctuary of

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[201] *H.Merc.* 167. The core sense of the word is to graze cattle, so it is an odd one for Hermes to apply to himself and his mother, especially just after his cattle rustling adventure; the word choice points yet again to Hermes' irreverent and materialistic attitude, which aligns divine hunger with human or even, here, animal hunger.
[202] *H.Merc.* 167-172.
[203] *H.Merc.* 174-181.
[204] *H.Merc.* 229. 234.
[205] *H.Merc.* 246-251.
[206] Clay 1989: 133.
[207] Bergren 1982: 98.

Apollo's temple at Delphi in the *Hymn to Apollo*.[208] By ransacking them, Apollo acts out a mirror version of the scenario Hermes described to his mother, that of robbing Apollo's temple. The role reversal is important, but so is what Apollo finds: nectar and ambrosia, the sure markers of Olympian identity, as well as gold, silver, and fine clothing, closely resembling the gold, iron, and cloth that completed Hermes' list of items to steal from Delphi.[209] What is more, the luxury goods are likened to the furnishings of the gods, suddenly bringing the excluded Maia and Hermes into a material condition similar to that of the Olympian gods who exclude them.[210] It is a very strange moment, raising many questions: if Maia has a cupboard full of nectar and ambrosia, why hasn't Hermes eaten any of them? If she possesses these luxury goods, why does the cave appear so humble? Indeed, why does Hermes feel the need to steal luxury goods, or to steal honor, if they apparently already have both luxury goods and nectar and ambrosia, the physical manifestations of Olympian honor? Or, more troublingly, did Maia know that these cupboards existed? Did Hermes? Did they come to exist when Maia gave birth to a son of Zeus? Did Hermes sing them into existence? None of these questions are answered in the text, but broadly speaking, I would suggest that the presence of these cupboards in the cave signifies Hermes' double identity. Since his birth, he has devoted his time to lying and stealing, but he is an Olympian nonetheless, and he will not be bound or thrown for his infractions. As the son of Zeus, he is entitled to these kinds of possessions, but he is also capable of getting them for himself by using his skill as a thief, *and* he can slide effortlessly between these two identities, son of Zeus and prince of thieves.

If we compare the behavior of the two baby boys, with Apollo spending only moments as an infant before ingesting nectar and ambrosia and transforming into a young man, and Hermes ignoring or avoiding them while he goes about lying, stealing, and playing tricks, we may glimpse an additional layer of wit in the *Hymn to Hermes*. Its audience might have expected a scene similar to *h.Ap.* 123-132, where Hermes would eat for the first time and undergo a rapid maturation process. In fact, such a scene seems ripe for the kind of slapstick humor that this hymn-poet loves; one can imagine a different story in which Hermes would snatch the ambrosia from under Themis' or some other authority figure's nose and eat it just in time to grow up and escape pursuit, or some similarly cheeky antics. If rapid physical maturation was associated with a child's first meal of nectar and ambrosia, then the fact that Hermes does not choose to eat even though his mother has plenty of these foods on hand might in fact respond to one of the hymn's longest-running jokes: Hermes' incongruous appearance as a "supposedly innocent, helpless babe."[211] Hermes relies on his physical stature to deny his theft of Apollo's cattle in his defensive speeches to both Apollo and Zeus; meanwhile, he dismisses Maia for treating him like a baby.[212] Is it possible that part of the joke is that he has chosen not to eat nectar and ambrosia so that he can exploit his childlike appearance to the fullest? He strategically switches between

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[208] *H.Ap.* 443.
[209] Shelmerdine 1986: 56-57.
[210] Detienne and Sissa recognize this passage as evidence of nectar and ambrosia's importance to a child's Olympian identity, but collapse the temporal progression of the hymn, ignoring the effect of the delayed revelation of the cupboards (2000: 78). The humor and surprise of this revelation is compounded when Hermes claims to Apollo that he only knows about baby things, like his mother's milk (*h.Merc.* 267), perhaps referring to the moment in *h.Ap.* when Apollo is said *not* to drink his mother's milk, just the nectar and ambrosia provided by Themis (*h.Ap.* 123-125). Hermes, as far as we are told, has not nursed at his mother's breast either, but he has been secretive enough to now make whatever claims may give him an advantage.
[211] Clay 1989: 133; cf. Brown 1947: 90.
[212] *H.Merc.* 245, 266-273, 376-380; cf. Clay 1989: 128, 133, 135.

different identities, in this case using his physical stature, which he intentionally keeps small and vulnerable, to manipulate other characters' expectations of him, while relying on his actual abilities and nature to inspire confidence when he wants to.[213]

II. Rotten Meat, Inedible Meat

Now that we have a sense of the two brothers' ways of being in the world, their approaches to honor and power, and their statuses in the divine community, let us examine their interactions with meat and violence. Again, Apollo emulates Zeus as much as he can while acting within the bounds of behavior that is now acceptable for Olympians, while Hermes uses intelligence to pursue his material desires without regard for the rules of Zeus. Both will be disappointed. Apollo, limited by the decisions made by Zeus long ago, grasps at meat and power but can only find the nearest approximations: the smoke of fat and bones, the devotion of human subjects, and the rotting meat of a small-time monster. Hermes, who cares not at all for the rules that would bind him, goes scrappily about the business of obtaining the meat and power that he wants, but ultimately his attitude toward the rules does not matter, because they do, in fact, bind him. He is a god, and just as his being-a-god meant that the nectar and ambrosia were always already in the cupboard, it also means that even if he gets the meat for which he is so hungry, he may never swallow it. His cravings, too, will have to be satisfied with symbolism.

a. The Arrogant God

Apollo is strongly situated, both by the first feast scene and by his conduct, as his father's son. He goes about his rise to power as his father would, using violence to impose his will on the world.[214] At the same time, he tries to claim a place for himself that will fit neatly into his father's reign, but he is frustrated at every turn. The locations he attempts to stake out are already guarded by petty land-maidens and repulsive monsters. The people and places he meets do not pay him the respect to which he feels entitled, and the kinds of control that he is able to exert without stepping outside the bounds of Zeus' power leave him wanting. Apollo's desires, and his constrained position, are apparent even before he is born. His mother searches far and wide for a place that will allow her to give birth, finally having to negotiate an agreement with the humble island of Delos. Her first proposal foreshadows her son's priorities:

> Δῆλ᾽, εἰ γάρ κ᾽ ἐθέλοις ἕδος ἔμμεναι υἷος ἐμοῖο,
> Φοίβου Ἀπόλλωνος, θέσθαι τ᾽ ἔνι πίονα νηόν, —
> ἄλλος δ᾽ οὔτις σεῖό ποθ᾽ ἅψεται, οὐδέ σε λήσει:
> οὐδ᾽ εὔβων σέ γ᾽ ἔσεσθαι ὀίομαι οὔτ᾽ εὔμηλον,
> οὐδὲ τρύγην οἴσεις οὔτ᾽ ἂρ φυτὰ μυρία φύσεις. 55
> εἰ δέ κ᾽ Ἀπόλλωνος ἑκαέργου νηὸν ἔχῃσθα,
> ἄνθρωποί τοι πάντες ἀγινήσουσ᾽ ἑκατόμβας
> ἐνθάδ᾽ ἀγειρόμενοι, κνίσση δέ τοι ἄσπετος αἰεὶ

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[213] "*Mētis*, to be sure, loves to hide itself, pursuing its goals while dissembling as weakness and childlike innocence" (Clay 1989: 133). Consider also Hermes' trick of the modified sandals, by which he can be perceived, through his footprints, not as a small child, but as a large beast such as a wolf, a bear, or a lion, or even a monster such as a centaur (*h.Merc.* 223-224). Cf. Bungard 2012: 459 on Hermes' confounding of "the usual sight clues."

[214] "Like his father, he uses violence to implement cosmic order" (Felson 2011: 279).

δημοῦ ἀναΐξει βοσκήσεις θ᾽ οἵ κέ σ᾽ ἔχωσι
χειρὸς ἀπ᾽ ἀλλοτρίης, ἐπεὶ οὔ τοι πῖαρ ὑπ᾽ οὖδας.[215]

Delos, if only you would willingly be the seat of my son,
Phoebus Apollo, and make on yourself a rich temple—
but no one else will ever touch you, nor will that escape your notice;
nor do I think you will be rich in cattle nor in sheep,
nor will you bear grain, nor will you grow many plants.
But if you hold the temple of the far-worker Apollo,
then all men will bring hecatombs to you
gathered here, the savor of fat will always spring up for you
abundant, and you will feed those who inhabit you
from another's hand, since your soil is not rich at all.

Leto tries to motivate Delos to become her son's birthplace by reminding her of her infertility and poverty. Currently, Delos has neither cattle, nor sheep, nor grain, nor plants, but if she is the seat of Apollo, she will be rich with meat and the savor of fat—not from what she can grow herself, but from the hecatombs that worshippers of Apollo will bring to her. She already has in mind for Apollo the satisfaction that will be available to him: the savor of roasting meat. She sets up an opposition between poverty and plenty that will remain important throughout Apollo's story. Apollo, here emphatically a bastard son whose mother is reduced to wandering and begging for a place to give birth, will paradoxically be a bringer of riches. But the way in which he will bring the riches is unusual. He will not bring fertility or growth, but rather, an imposition on others to bring their animals there to slaughter. She is begging Delos for refuge, but she centers Apollo's future opulence so as to put Delos in the position of the beggar. At the same time, the future opulence she imagines for Apollo is an opulence of meat: not meat that he will consume, but meat that he will watch others consume, which is obtained through dominance.

Delos is interested in Leto's proposition, but she has concerns of her own, which also foreshadow the nature of the child who is about to be born:

λίην γάρ τινά φασιν ἀτάσθαλον Ἀπόλλωνα
ἔσσεσθαι, μέγα δὲ πρυτανευσέμεν ἀθανάτοισι
καὶ θνητοῖσι βροτοῖσιν ἐπὶ ζείδωρον ἄρουραν.
τῷ ῥ᾽ αἰνῶς δείδοικα κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν,
μή, ὁπότ᾽ ἂν τὸ πρῶτον ἴδῃ φάος ἠελίοιο,
νῆσον ἀτιμήσας, ἐπεὶ ἦ κραναήπεδός εἰμι,
ποσσὶ καταστρέψας ὤσῃ ἁλὸς ἐν πελάγεσσιν,
ἔνθ᾽ ἐμὲ μὲν μέγα κῦμα κατὰ κρατὸς ἅλις αἰεὶ
κλύσσει: ὃ δ᾽ ἄλλην γαῖαν ἀφίξεται, ἥ κεν ἄδῃ οἱ,
τεύξασθαι νηόν τε καὶ ἄλσεα δενδρήεντα:
πουλύποδες δ᾽ ἐν ἐμοὶ θαλάμας φῶκαί τε μέλαιναι
οἰκία ποιήσονται ἀκηδέα, χήτεϊ λαῶν.[216]

For they say that Apollo will be excessively reckless,

[215] *h.Ap.* 51-60.
[216] *h.Ap.* 67-78.

and will really lord it over immortals
and mortal men upon the grain-giving earth.
I am terribly afraid in my mind and in my heart,
lest, as soon as he sees the light of the sun,
dishonoring my island, since I truly have hard soil,
overturning me with his feet, he push me into the waters of the sea,
where a great wave will constantly wash over my head;
and he will go to another land, whichever one pleases him,
to build his temple and wooded groves;
and octopuses will make their bedrooms in me, and dark seals
will make their rustic houses, in the absence of people.

Delos flips Leto's rhetoric on its head. If Apollo is to be a bringer of riches, and if Delos is a lowly beggar, then why would Apollo want anything to do with her? Rumor has it that Apollo is going to be *atasthalos*, so he will not react well to a birthplace that he considers beneath him. The specific vision of Apollo's *atasthalia* that Delos offers is telling as well: if he is not pleased with her, he might kick her into the ocean to be inhabited by sea creatures. For a land-maiden like Delos, habitation by animals seems to carry the same horrifying weight that ingestion by animals carries for warriors in the *Iliad*.[217] It is also a reversal, or a negative scrambled version, of Leto's promise. She describes a scenario in which Delos is a wealthy and prestigious place to which people bring animals to slaughter and eat. And this is, indeed, a possible outcome of being the birthplace of a dominant and violent god. But as Delos points out, another possible outcome is to become a place whose already-low status has been stripped, to which animals come not to die, but to live. Of course, this will not end up happening to Delos herself; Leto assures her that Apollo will hold her dear. The birth is allowed to take place, and sure enough, Delos turns gold with the joy of the new god.

Once Apollo is grown, however, we learn that Delos was entirely correct in her apprehensions.[218] When Apollo finds a place he deems suitable for his temple, near the spring Telphusa, he does not approach her with the tact or deference that characterized Leto's interaction with Delos, but with imperious entitlement:

Τελφοῦσ' ἐνθάδε δὴ φρονέω περικαλλέα νηὸν
ἀνθρώπων τεῦξαι χρηστήριον, οἵ τέ μοι αἰεὶ
ἐνθάδ' ἀγινήσουσι τελησσας ἑκατόμβας,
ἠμὲν ὅσοι Πελοπόννησον πίειραν ἔχουσιν
ἠδ' ὅσοι Εὐρώπην τε καὶ ἀμφιρύτους κάτα νήσους,
χρησόμενοι· τοῖσιν δέ τ' ἐγὼ νημερτέα βουλὴν
πᾶσι θεμιστεύοιμι χρέων ἐνὶ πίονι νηῷ.[219]

Telphusa, here indeed I have in mind to make a lovely temple,
An oracle for humans, who always
Will bring perfect hecatombs here for me,
All who hold the rich Peloponnese,

[217] See Redfield 1975: 199 and *passim*.
[218] Felson 2013: 274.
[219] *h.Ap.* 247-253.

> And those who hold Europe and the sea-girt islands,
> In order to consult the oracle; and for all of them
> I could declare a true council, prophesying in a rich temple.

Apollo does not frame his intention as mutually beneficial, nor does he ask permission or invite Telphusa's input at all.[220] He describes what *he* wants to do in this location (deliver prophecies) and how it will benefit *him* (perfect hecatombs, i.e., the smell of meat). He even specifies that the hecatombs will be "for me" rather than bringing fame or desirability to the location, as Leto said to Delos.[221] What is more, he begins laying the foundations of his temple before Telphusa even has a chance to respond. No wonder, then, that she is angry, or that she tries to use deception to turn away this intruder.[222] She pretends to give him useful advice, claiming that her area is noisy with people and horses passing by, and suggests another location, under Parnassus. The implication is that she knows that this spot is plagued by the Python and that she hopes Apollo will be defeated.[223] Her deception is emphasized by two uses of ἐξαπαφίσκω, the same verb by which Prometheus is said to (attempt to) deceive Zeus at Mecone.[224] Telphusa, like Prometheus, faces an antagonist who possesses far more power and authority, but tries to gain an advantage for herself through the use of a deceptive gift: instead of barren bones covered in enticing fat, she gives him a deadly monster hidden in an "untroubled" landscape.[225] I am not suggesting any particular or deliberate connection between Telphusa and Prometheus, but rather, pointing out that Apollo tends to find himself in situations that resemble his father's exploits on a smaller scale. Whereas Zeus faced off against Prometheus, his own first cousin, a powerful figure in his own right and a plausible challenger, Apollo's deceiver is a relatively powerless nymph of only local importance.

But Apollo, like Zeus, is not to be deceived. Like Zeus, he will punish deception with violence. After he has walked into Telphusa's trap and killed the Python (which will be discussed below), he realizes that the spring was dishonest with him and returns to punish her.

> βῆ δ᾽ ἐπὶ Τελφούσῃ κεχολωμένος, αἶψα δ᾽ ἵκανε:
> στῆ δὲ μάλ᾽ ἄγχ᾽ αὐτῆς καί μιν πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπε:
> "Τελφοῦσ᾽, οὐκ ἄρ᾽ ἔμελλες ἐμὸν νόον ἐξαπαφοῦσα
> χῶρον ἔχουσ᾽ ἐρατὸν προρέειν καλλίρροον ὕδωρ.

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[220] Miller 1986: 76.
[221] Miller 1986: 77.
[222] Miller recognizes the parallel between Delos and Telphusa, but interprets it rather differently than I do: "Faced with Apollo's overwhelming might, Delos and Telphusa both have reason to take thought for self-protection, but whereas Delos expresses her fears openly and takes straightforward steps to obviate them at their source, Telphusa never acknowledges the nature of her grievance and resorts to duplicitous indirection for a solution" (1986: 79). I would argue that the conduct of Delos and Telphusa is not directly comparable because they are responding to such different kinds of treatment; who is to say that Delos would have been so polite to someone rude, or that Telphusa would not have been gracious in response to a proposition like Leto's? Indeed, Miller acknowledges Apollo's rudeness compared to his mother, but stops short because of "the inherent unlikelihood that a poet whose purpose is (among other things) to praise Apollo would portray him in an unfavorable light" (1986: 77), seeming to conclude that Apollo must always be right and his foes wrong in this poem. I would counter that the juxtaposition of the Delos and Telphusa dialogues seems quite pointedly to highlight the god's imperious attitude and that it is not impossible for a hymn to reflect ambivalence about its subject.
[223] Miller 1986: 80.
[224] *H.Ap.* 376, 379; Hes. *Th.* 537.
[225] Nagy 1981: 199-201.

ἐνθάδε δὴ καὶ ἐμὸν κλέος ἔσσεται, οὐδὲ σὸν οἴης.”
ἦ καὶ ἐπὶ ῥίον ὦσε ἄναξ ἑκάεργος Ἀπόλλων
πετραίῃς προχυτῇσιν, ἀπέκρυψεν δὲ ῥέεθρα
καὶ βωμὸν ποιήσατ᾽ ἐν ἄλσεϊ δενδρήεντι,
ἄγχι μάλα κρήνης καλλιρρόου: ἔνθαδ᾽ ἄνακτι
πάντες ἐπίκλησιν Τελφουσίῳ εὐχετόωνται,
οὕνεκα Τελφούσης ἱερῆς ἤσχυνε ῥέεθρα.[226]

And he went to Telphusa in anger, and quickly he arrived;
And he stood very near her and spoke a word to her:
“Telphusa, you were not, by deceiving my mind, going to
Keep a lovely place and pour forth your beautiful-flowing water.
Here indeed my fame will also be, not only yours.”
And indeed the lord far-worker Apollo pushed onto her a peak
With showering stones, and he covered up her streams
And made an altar in the wooded grove,
Very close to the beautiful-flowing spring; there everyone
Prays to the lord with the nickname Telphusian,
Because he shamed the streams of holy Telphusa.

He has his own place and temple now, and he has successfully slain the dragon, but Telphusa’s attempt to beguile him still irks him. More bothersome than the lie itself is the idea that this tricky land-maiden should continue to enjoy her desirable location and her modest fame. He spitefully answers her unspoken hope—for the fame in that land to be hers, not his[227]—with his intention to impose his own fame. I am not convinced by Miller’s efforts to read “magnanimity” into this speech on the grounds that Apollo agrees to share the fame with Telphusa.[228] His subsequent actions make it clear that this is not his intention at all: he places a “peak” or a “crag” over the spring and buries her streams, effectively destroying her beauty that he so resented, and builds himself an altar on the spot. As Felson points out in a more pessimistic reading of the episode, Telphusa’s fate closely resembles the nightmare scenario described by Delos, suggesting that Apollo is in fact as *atasthalos* as the island feared.[229] That he takes on Telphusa’s name as his own cultic epithet should not be seen as conciliatory, but as closely parallel to his treatment of the Python, whose name he also claims for himself, or for that matter, as parallel to Zeus’ adoption of Metis’ name as an epithet after ingesting her.[230] If anything, his declaration of “my fame too, not only yours” smugly hints at his appropriation of her name. Her fame will live on in that place, but only as part of his, rendered unrecognizable by his transformation of the landscape.

But Telphusa is not the only female who must be defeated for Apollo to make a secure place for himself in the world.[231] Contained within the Telphusa episode is that of the Python: on Telphusa’s suggestion, Apollo builds his temple beneath Parnassus, but it turns out a dragoness

[226] *H.Ap.* 377-387.
[227] *H.Ap.* 276.
[228] Miller 1986: 77 and 90.
[229] Felson 2013: 274-275.
[230] Felson 2011: 282.
[231] Felson 2011: 259 and 279.

has been terrorizing the region. Who is this dragoness? Well, she is the foster mother of another famous snake-monster, Typhon. By this tenuous connection, the poet nests yet another story within this one.[232] It is the story of Typhon, but not as we know it from Hesiod; it differs in both focus and details. Instead of centering Typhon's battle with Zeus, it narrates the circumstances leading to his birth. In this version, instead of Gaia, his mother is Hera.[233] She prays for his parthenogenic birth in direct retaliation for the birth of Athena, both because her pride is wounded that Zeus would birth a child without her, and in the hope that this new son will be strong enough to overthrow him.[234] When he is born, she gives him to the Python to foster, and the anecdote ends there, with Typhon's menacing presence unaddressed.

The Typhon digression has been condemned as an interpolation by many commentators because of its length and its lack of direct relevance to the main narrative.[235] Others have allowed it to stand, but with an air of stern disapproval; Janko, for example, declares it "uncommonly clumsy" but "not incomprehensible."[236] Still others have diligently sought out less-obvious connections between the digression and the main narrative. Miller points to the presence of Hera as an antagonist and figure of disorder, which parallels her role in relation to Leto in the first half of the hymn, and proposes an "auxetic force" for Typhon, who is included in order to emphasize by association the fearsome nature of Python: "…the rhetorical function of the digression as a whole… is to provide a qualitative analogy for Apollo's monstrous foe and thus, by magnifying her importance, to magnify his triumph."[237]

Clay discovers a more compelling reason for the Typhon digression to be included: as a foil for Apollo. She explains:

> The poem's central concern, the emergence of Apollo, receives its full definition through the portrayal of what may be called his opposite number. The legitimate and mighty son who furthers his father's Olympian agenda stands in powerful contrast to the unnatural offspring, would-be usurper, and destroyer of the Olympian order.[238]

Indeed, Typhon, particularly when he is situated as Hera's son, provides a striking contrast to Apollo. Apollo has shown subtle signs of *atasthalia*, but in Typhon, or in Hera's vision of the future Typhon, we can see what unbridled *atasthalia* would look like. The Typhon narrative allows the poet to explore the fear of a rebellious son in the Olympian family without straying too far from praising his subject. "It is as if the poet had attempted to roll all succession stories into a single paradigmatic account."[239]

An even more interesting reason for Typhon's presence can be discerned if we make use of both Miller's and Clay's insights. Typhon is certainly a foil for Apollo, as Clay argues, but he is also a foil for the Python. In trying to explain the digression's unresolved ending, which leaves Typhon as the nursling of Python and does not include Zeus' victory over the monster, Miller lights on a crucial point:

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[232] Miller 1986: 91.
[233] Miller 1986: 85; Clay 1989: 69.
[234] Miller 1986: 85-86.
[235] For a full account of the episode's detractors, see Miller 1986: 82 n.12 and Clay 1989: 64 n.145.
[236] Janko 1982: 116.
[237] Miller 1986: 88; 87.
[238] Clay 1989: 65.
[239] Clay 1989: 66.

> Commentators have noted with vexation that the poet gives no hint of the fate which Typhon, as a consequence of his misdeeds, met at the hands of Zeus. When one remembers, however, that the hymn *qua* hymn is an encomium of Apollo and that all its parts should contribute in some way to that end, the poet's silence on this point makes perfect sense. Had he recounted, or indeed even mentioned, that titanic struggle between the greatest of the gods and a monster so formidable that only the thunderbolt could quell him, he would have put Apollo's killing of the serpent very much in the shade; the auxetic thrust of the whole digression would have been redirected toward Zeus and the encomiastic focus consequently blurred.[240]

In his effort to excuse the poet's apparent sloppiness in leaving out the end of the story, Miller opens up a productive line of questioning. It is true that if Zeus' battle with Typhon were included in the digression, it would outshine Apollo's own conquest. But hasn't Typhon's inclusion in Apollo's hymn already done just that? This fifty-line glimpse into the darker, louder, grander world of theogonic conflict can only dwarf the events of Apollo's own story. I would argue, therefore, that the effect of the digression and its odd ending is to trivialize Apollo and Python. The audience is drawn into the suspenseful, exciting account of Hera's dastardly plot, only for its climactic battle to be replaced by something much paler: Apollo's sparsely narrated fight with a serpent of local importance, the Python. Apollo replays Zeus' triumphs in miniature, a pattern that the juxtaposition of the Typhon digression makes painfully clear.

In fact, Apollo's fight against Python is not really narrated at all, but stated as briefly as possible. Before the digression, we are told that he "killed a dragoness"; when we return to the narrative, we learn that he "sent a strong arrow at her."[241] Instead of a fight scene, we find a death scene:

> ὃς τῇ γ᾽ ἀντιάσειε, φέρεσκέ μιν αἴσιμον ἦμαρ,
> πρίν γέ οἱ ἰὸν ἐφῆκε ἄναξ ἑκάεργος Ἀπόλλων
> καρτερόν: ἣ δ᾽ ὀδύνῃσιν ἐρεχθομένη χαλεπῇσι
> κεῖτο μέγ᾽ ἀσθμαίνουσα κυλινδομένη κατὰ χῶρον.
> θεσπεσίη δ᾽ ἐνοπὴ γένετ᾽ ἄσπετος: ἣ δὲ καθ᾽ ὕλην
> πυκνὰ μάλ᾽ ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα ἑλίσσετο, λεῖπε δὲ θυμὸν
> φοινὸν ἀποπνείουσ᾽:[242]
>
> Whoever met with her (Python), his death day bore him off,
> until the lord far-worker Apollo sent a strong arrow at her;
> but she, rent by difficult pangs,
> lay panting greatly, rolling on the earth.
> And her unearthly scream was unceasing; and throughout the forest
> she twisted very densely here and there, and left her bloody
> spirit, gasping it out.

Although the passage describes Apollo's victory over the monster, there is not much sense of him overcoming or conquering. He is already the god of the bow, and he seems to dispatch

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[240] Miller 1986: 87-88.
[241] *H.Ap.* 301; 357-358.
[242] *h.Ap.* 356-361.

Python with a single arrow. The agony of her death, on the other hand, is described in detail: her pain, her gasping, her writhing, her horrible cry, even more writhing, and even more gasping. Her body is vast, filling the landscape with repulsively undulating coils, dying furiously. Instead of emphasizing Apollo's civilizing triumph over nature and femininity, the poet centers the bloody spectacle of the monster's death, tinging this moment with negativity.

But before she dies, her conqueror addresses her, and the tone becomes even more negative:

> ὃ δ᾽ ἐπηύξατο Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων:
> ἐνταυθοῖ νῦν πύθευ ἐπὶ χθονὶ βωτιανείρῃ:
> οὐδὲ σύ γε ζώουσα κακὸν δήλημα βροτοῖσιν
> ἔσσεαι, οἳ γαίης πολυφόρβου καρπὸν ἔδοντες
> ἐνθάδ᾽ ἀγινήσουσι τεληέσσας ἑκατόμβας:
> οὐδέ τί τοι θάνατόν γε δυσηλεγέ᾽ οὔτε Τυφωεὺς
> ἀρκέσει οὔτε Χίμαιρα δυσώνυμος, ἀλλά σέ γ᾽ αὐτοῦ
> πύσει Γαῖα μέλαινα καὶ ἠλέκτωρ Ὑπερίων.
> ὣς φάτ᾽ ἐπευχόμενος: τὴν δὲ σκότος ὄσσε κάλυψε.
> τὴν δ᾽ αὐτοῦ κατέπυσ᾽ ἱερὸν μένος Ἠελίοιο,
> ἐξ οὗ νῦν Πυθὼ κικλήσκεται: οἳ δὲ ἄνακτα
> Πύθιον ἀγκαλέουσιν ἐπώνυμον, οὕνεκα κεῖθι
> αὐτοῦ πῦσε πέλωρ μένος ὀξέος Ἠελίοιο.[243]
>
> And Phoebus Apollo boasted:
> "Here, now, rot upon the man-feeding earth;
> nor will you, living, be an evil trouble for mortals,
> who, eating the fruit of the bountiful earth,
> will bring perfect hecatombs here;
> and neither Typhon nor ill-reputed Chimera
> will ward off cruel death for you, but
> the dark earth and the beaming sun will rot you here."
> Thus he spoke boasting, and darkness covered her eyes.
> And the holy strength of Helios rotted her there,
> from which event Pytho now takes its name; and they call
> the lord by the nickname Pythian, because there
> the strength of keen Helios rotted the monster.

Her huge body is transformed by Apollo's boast into a mass of rotting meat.[244] This is the same transformation from flesh into meat that haunts the warriors of the *Iliad*, about which they love to taunt each other. But in Python's case, her meat is not good to eat. She is a snake, a monster, a foul creature. Her meat is contrasted with the earth, which is bountiful and feeds people, and

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[243] *h.Ap.* 362-374.

[244] Bergren connects this moment to Apollo's power of naming: "The god commands a natural transformation, nature obeys, and at once the transformation becomes the name of the place and of the god. The property of the place is now the property of Apollo" (1982: 95). Clay adds that "the chthonic creature of darkness rots when exposed to the light of the sun" (1989: 72). These elements are certainly in play, but I would argue that these readings do not account for the pointed juxtaposition of the rotting meat and the hoped-for perfect hecatombs.

with the perfect hecatombs that Apollo hopes his devotees will bring. He fixates on Python's meat on the one hand, and perfect hecatombs on the other, because they are the closest things to what he really wants: the taste of meat itself, as well as the power to set the rules about who does and does not eat it.

We do not need to spend much more time with Apollo, but let us devote a brief moment to the hymn's final section, in which Apollo abducts a ship of Cretan merchants and impresses them to be the priests of his new temple. He takes control of the ship in the form of a dolphin lying on its deck, another image that resonates with Delos' dark prediction of being inhabited by marine creatures. Readers have noticed Apollo's domineering posture in this episode, the fact that the sailors are "stripped of family, home, and city," that they are "given no choice," and that their "absolute obedience is taken for granted," but still tend to assume that because of Apollo's superior knowledge, the imposition of his will is for the best for these humans, and "the frightening aspect of the god will, in due course, yield to joy."[245] I would point out one particular way in which Apollo imposes his will on his new priests, which, like all of this, represents both a material gain and a loss of agency for the men.[246] First, he commands them to perform a bloodless sacrifice on the beach. Then, when he brings them to Delphi and they ask how they are to live in such an inhospitable environment, he reassures them that they, like Delos, will be rich in meat brought by other people.[247] He has decided when, where, and how his priests will be able to eat meat, and he places them at a level of remove from the source of their food. In a way that almost resembles the situation of the gods themselves, these men will neither have to nor be able to obtain their own food. Instead, they will depend on others, less important than themselves, to provide their meat. Apollo may not be able to eat meat himself, or to possess real power in the world of the gods, but he resolves these issues by directing his controlling impulses downwards, into the world of humans.

b. The Borer

Hermes, too, approaches meat and violence in a way that lines up with what we have observed about his interactions with nectar and ambrosia. Recall that one of Hermes' first acts is to sing about the things he wants—acknowledgement from his father, prestige among the gods, and the material comforts that signify this prestige—as if he already has them. Rather than trying to gain the fame and prestige that he wants through obedience to the existing order, or by the more obvious and officially approved means, i.e., the nectar and ambrosia that his mother seems to have had in the pantry all along, he plans to steal the material goods that he sees as the foundation or core of Olympian prestige. His opportunistic materialism becomes more troubling when he comes into contact with animals, which he views as assemblages of materials with the

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[245] Clay 1989: 83; Miller 1986: 97-98; ibid. 95; Clay 1989: 82. See also Felson 2011: 279 on how Apollo's treatment of the sailors aligns with his other violent actions.

[246] I am suggesting something similar to the double condemnation of Delphians in the Aesopic tradition proposed by Leslie Kurke: "In the later full-scale *Lives* of Aesop, the emphasis falls on the Delphians as "slaves of all the Greeks," whereas fragments of what seems to be an older tradition highlight the Delphians' savage and self-serving sacrificial practices. And yet, I would contend, these two aspects together limn a coherent critique of Delphic greed, servile dependence on pilgrims, and inequitable sacrificial exactions—a cluster that may date back to the classical period" (2011: 68-69). While Kurke describes this critique of Delphian servility and greed as a "topsy-turvy" version of the "effortless prosperity" promoted in the *Hymn*, I wonder if we might see a precursor of this negativity in Apollo's insecure imperiousness and his priests' uneasy acceptance of their new luxuriously dependent status.

[247] *H.Ap.* 535-537.

potential to serve his ends. Unlike Apollo, he feels no need to abide by the rules of Zeus' world, so for him, the craving for meat is not sublimated into a need for control; meat is among the material components he seeks in his experiments with the bodies of animals. But he will not succeed in his quest to consume meat. Instead, the objects he has collected and reconfigured will end up benefiting him, not directly, but as things that can be exchanged. Like the other members of the Olympian order, he must experience things in a more symbolic way.[248] He cannot eat meat, but he can buy his way into the similar-enough satisfaction of being the god of cows.

Hermes' desire for meat and his eagerness to steal are centered from the very start of the narrative section of the hymn:

> ὃς καὶ ἐπεὶ δὴ μητρὸς ἀπ' ἀθανάτων θόρε γυίων
> οὐκέτι δηρὸν ἔκειτο μένων ἱερῷ ἐνὶ λίκνῳ,
> ἀλλ' ὅ γ' ἀναΐξας ζήτει βόας Ἀπόλλωνος
> οὐδὸν ὑπερβαίνων ὑψηρεφέος ἄντροιο.[249]
>
> Who, just as soon as he leapt from the immortal knees of his mother,
> No longer for long lay staying in his holy cradle,
> But darting up, he sought the cows of Apollo,
> Crossing over the threshold of the high-roofed cave.

The abundant temporal expressions (καὶ ἐπεὶ, οὐκέτι δηρὸν) as well as the verbs of motion (θόρε, ἀναΐξας, ὑπερβαίνων) emphasize the speed and decisiveness of the baby's first steps into the world. The scene also contrasts pointedly with Apollo's first moments; Hermes takes action without eating, whether his mother's milk or nectar and ambrosia, nor does he say anything yet. He does not need to make a grand declaration about his nature or his domains. He simply sets about finding and claiming what he wants for himself.

He appears to become distracted when he comes across a tortoise, but the tortoise is just the first of the animals he will investigate to see what value, whether for meat or fame, he can extract. His greeting to the tortoise betrays the extractive attitude which he will then put into practice in the way he kills it.

> σύμβολον ἤδη μοι μέγ' ὀνήσιμον: οὐκ ὀνοτάζω.
> χαῖρε, φυὴν ἐρόεσσα, χοροιτύπε, δαιτὸς ἑταίρη,
> ἀσπασίη προφανεῖσα: πόθεν τόδε καλὸν ἄθυρμα
> αἰόλον ὄστρακον ἔσσο χέλυς ὄρεσι ζώουσα;
> ἀλλ' οἴσω σ' ἐς δῶμα λαβών: ὄφελός τι μοι ἔσσῃ,
> οὐδ' ἀποτιμήσω: σὺ δέ με πρώτιστον ὀνήσεις.
> οἴκοι βέλτερον εἶναι, ἐπεὶ βλαβερὸν τὸ θύρηφιν:
> ἦ γὰρ ἐπηλυσίης πολυπήμονος ἔσσεαι ἔχμα
> ζώουσ': ἢν δὲ θάνῃς, τότε κεν μάλα καλὸν ἀείδοις.[250]
>
> Already a great lucky sign for me! I do not blame it.
> Hello, you who are lovely in form, dancer, friend of the feast,

[248] On Zeus' order as increasingly indirect and symbolic see Arthur 1982: 64 and 73 and Hamilton 1989: 32.
[249] *h.Merc.* 20-23.
[250] *h.Merc.* 30-38.

appearing welcome; from where do you, a tortoise living in the mountains,
wear this beautiful adornment, a variegated shell?
But I will bring you into the house; you will be a help to me,
nor will I dishonor you; but you will profit me first.
Better to be at home, since outside is harm;
for truly when you are alive you will be a defense against baneful witchcraft;
but if you die, then you could sing quite beautifully.

Hermes first describes the tortoise as a thing, a lucky sign "for me," then greets it as a person. He notices that the tortoise has a beautiful form and, although he does not yet say exactly what he means, seems to intuit that it may be good for music. He imagines its shell as a fancy accessory, again reducing the animal to its constituent parts and how they might be useful, and states twice that he intends to profit from this creature.[251] He mocks it by quoting Aesop: the tortoise famously believes that "home is best," but in this case harm will occur inside the house.[252] Finally, he proposes two fates for the tortoise, one in life and one in death, but the alternative is a false one, since its medicinal properties, as well as its potential as a musical instrument, would both require its death.[253] Although the tortoise itself has no agency here, and so it does not matter whether it is taken in by Hermes' deceptive address or not, this is the first we see of the "persuasive, seductive, and deceptive" rhetoric that will carry him so far.[254] He recognizes that the tortoise might be valuable as medicine, before arriving at his final plan for the animal, which he hinted at previously: it must die to become the first lyre. When he said he would not "dishonor" it, this was his meaning. The tortoise will gain fame and honor not as a living being, but as a dead object.

The sinister implications of Hermes' greeting are made real as soon as they enter the cave. He unceremoniously slaughters the animal in order to separate out its usable parts.

ἔνθ᾽ ἀναπηρώσας γλυφάνῳ πολιοῖο σιδήρου
αἰῶν᾽ ἐξετόρησεν ὀρεσκῴοιο χελώνης.
ὡς δ᾽ ὁπότ᾽ ὠκὺ νόημα διὰ στέρνοιο περήσῃ
ἀνέρος, ὅν τε θαμειαὶ ἐπιστρωφῶσι μέριμναι,
ἢ ὅτε δινηθῶσιν ἀπ᾽ ὀφθαλμῶν ἀμαρυγαί,
ὣς ἅμ᾽ ἔπος τε καὶ ἔργον ἐμήδετο κύδιμος Ἑρμῆς.
πῆξε δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἐν μέτροισι ταμὼν δόνακας καλάμοιο
πειρήνας διὰ νῶτα διὰ ῥινοῖο χελώνης.
ἀμφὶ δὲ δέρμα τάνυσσε βοὸς πραπίδεσσιν ἐῇσι
καὶ πήχεις ἐνέθηκ᾽, ἐπὶ δὲ ζυγὸν ἤραρεν ἀμφοῖν,

[251] "The tortoise's shell, a necessary defense against the outside world, is understood by the crafty god as an ἄθυρμα, a plaything. Rather than seeing the shell as an integral part of the living tortoise, Hermes recasts it as a glittering adornment" (Bungard 2012: 455).
[252] The phrase also occurs at Hes. *WD* 365, but in context seems to refer to the fable of Zeus and the Tortoise (Chambry 126 = Perry 106).
[253] Pliny *NH* 32.14(4) gives a good idea of the many things a tortoise's body might have been used for: the consumption of every part of its body, from its limbs to its shell to its blood to its urine and feces, is said to be effective against quite a variety of ailments, from cataracts to epilepsy to bites and stings from asps and scorpions.
[254] Clay 1989: 106. Shelmerdine connects the "bargain" between Hermes and the tortoise to the "comedy of innocence" of pretending to obtain an animal's consent before sacrificing it (1984: 204-205).

ἑπτὰ δὲ θηλυτέρων ὀίων ἐτανύσσατο χορδάς.[255]

Then, having maimed it with a knife of gray iron,
he drilled out the spine of the mountain-dwelling tortoise.
And as when a swift thought passes through the breast
of a man, whom crowded thoughts haunt,
or when twinkles whirl from his eyes,
thus glorious Hermes planned both word and deed at once.
And he fixed stalks of reed, having cut them in measure,
piercing across the back through the shell of the tortoise.
And he stretched the skin of a cow around by his wits
and he placed horns on it, and he fitted a yoke on both of them,
and he stretched out seven strings of female sheep-guts.

The manner in which he kills it, by "drilling out its life," has been noticed as peculiarly appropriate to him, the god who bores through things.[256] It also highlights his cold utilitarianism. Even before the tortoise is dead, he views it as a tinkering project, and his priority is to kill it without damaging the components in which its value lies.[257] His speed is emphasized again, this time with a double simile: he acts as quickly and spontaneously as thoughts moving through a man's mind or twinkles flashing in his eyes. He acts without having to think or plan, displaying an intuitive genius for engineering that allows him to take the materials in front of him, whether they are animate or inanimate, and put them together into something useful.[258] He continues to pierce, fit, and stretch his materials into an instrument. The diversity of materials at hand, including the skin and guts that logically ought not to be there until after his cow theft, bring the episode outside of the temporal logic of aitiology.[259] The question answered here is not "where did the lyre come from," but rather, "who is this new son of Zeus and what is he capable of?" In the case of the tortoise, Hermes has seen an animal of potential value, methodically separated it out into usable parts, and determined which of his ends it will serve. It will bring him fame: first, when he sings a song glorifying his own birth, and later, when he becomes famous as its inventor. At the same time, it will also end up serving his desire for meat, since he will give it to Apollo in exchange for the cattle he has already stolen. He attempts a similar process with the cattle, going after them in his brazen pursuit of meat, stealing them with the aid of cleverly invented devices, and even trying to analyze and apportion their bodies in the same way. However, this time, his experimentation will leave him not with a perfectly crafted instrument, but with an embarrassing mess.[260] His approach of seeking the material components of his

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[255] *h.Merc.* 41-51.
[256] Clay 1989: 106-107.
[257] "Penetrating the slender boundary between life and death, Hermes manages to leave the tortoise's shell intact so that it can become the sounding board for the lyre" (Clay 1989: 107).
[258] "Hermes' *bricolage* resides in his ability to exploit whatever happens to be at hand and to devise from chance finds an instrument of salvation" (Clay 1989: 108).
[259] Cf. the somewhat rationalized version of this story at Apollodorus 3.10, where he invents the lyre *after* slaughtering the cows and using their guts for strings.
[260] As Clay points out, the slaughter of the cattle is not included in the list of Hermes' "famous deeds" at 17-19; he tries to hide the remnants of the slaughter and fire before he leaves; and he takes pains to make sure that Apollo does not see them, "for they attest to Hermes' earlier uncertainty concerning his divinity" (Clay 1989: 105-106, 123, 137).

desires without concern for the rules or boundaries of the world into which he ventures has hit a snag: this is still the world governed by Zeus, and he is still bound by the law established by Zeus and Prometheus at Mecone. He is a god, and meat is not for him.[261]

Let us consider the parallels and divergences of Hermes' slaughters of the tortoise and the cows.[262] Much as he came across the tortoise while "seeking the cows of Apollo," as discussed above, he sets out again after creating the lyre because he is "desirous of meat," an expression used elsewhere of lions.[263] As he did with the tortoise, he brings the cows to a good workplace. Here we see his prodigious strength, not at all commensurate with his small and helpless appearance, suggesting, as discussed above, that he has purposely avoided ingesting nectar and ambrosia so that he can keep his childlike stature.

> ὄφρα δὲ πῦρ ἀνέκαιε βίη κλυτοῦ Ἡφαίστοιο,
> τόφρα δ' ὑποβρύχιας ἕλικας βοῦς ἕλκε θύραζε
> δοιὰς ἄγχι πυρός, δύναμις δέ οἱ ἔπλετο πολλή·[264]
>
> And while the fire burned, strength of famous Hephaestus,
> Then he dragged the bellowing twisted-horned cows through the door
> Two of them, near the fire, and great strength was in him.

The cows bellow in protest, dispelling any notion that this may be an approximation or reenactment of any proper sacrificial ritual.[265] In fact, the bellowing recalls the posthumous groaning of the cattle of Helios after they have been impiously slaughtered by Odysseus' crew, as well as the piercing scream of the dying Python.[266] He proceeds to treat them similarly to the tortoise:[267]

> ἀμφοτέρας δ' ἐπὶ νῶτα χαμαὶ βάλε φυσιοώσας·
> ἐγκλίνων δ' ἐκύλινδε δι' αἰῶνας τετορήσας,
> ἔργῳ δ' ἔργον ὄπαζε ταμὼν κρέα πίονα δημῷ·[268]
>
> And he threw them both panting to the ground on their backs;
> And leaning he rolled them, boring through their spines,
> And he added deed to deed, cutting the meat rich with fat.

The tiny baby manhandles the large and struggling cattle, manipulating them this way and that. He kills them by "boring through their spines," the same strange way he killed the tortoise,

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[261] Clay 1989: 122.
[262] See Shelmerdine 1984 on how the slaughters of the tortoise and the cattle use similar diction and both refer to sacrificial practice.
[263] *H.Merc.* 22 and 64; of lions at *Il.* 11.551 and 17.660; see Clay 111, esp. n.54.
[264] *H.Merc.* 115-117.
[265] Clay rightly follows Kahn in pointing out that this contrasts sharply with the normal practice of simulating the consent of the sacrificial victim (1989: 120; Kahn 1978: 58). Burkert insists that there is nothing strange about this, since there are some sacrifices where it is good for the cow to bellow (1984: 837).
[266] See Shelmerdine 1986: 57-59 on the similarities between Hermes' theft of Apollo's cattle and Odysseus' crew's theft of Helios' cattle, which Shelmerdine reads as part of an effort by the hymnist to call up associations of the *Odyssey* in order to liken the new god to a famous hero (ibid. 63).
[267] Clay 1989: 120.
[268] *H.Merc.* 118-120.

setting this apart from a sacrificial ritual where the throats would be slit.[269] Again, he prioritizes preserving the potentially useful parts of the animal's body, although, unlike the tortoise, this tinkering experiment will be a failure.[270] That he "added a deed to a deed" points to the same easy, improvisatory workmanship implied by the thought simile discussed above. Slaughtering the cows is just one ἔργον in a series of ἔργα that do not seem noticeably different to their accomplisher.

> ὤπτα δ' ἀμφ' ὀβελοῖσι πεπαρμένα δουρατέοισι,
> σάρκας ὁμοῦ καὶ νῶτα γεράσμια καὶ μέλαν αἷμα
> ἐργμένον ἐν χολάδεσσι, τὰ δ' αὐτοῦ κεῖτ' ἐπὶ χώρης.
> ῥινοὺς δ' ἐξετάνυσσε καταστυφέλῳ ἐνὶ πέτρῃ,
> ὡς ἔτι νῦν τὰ μέτασσα πολυχρόνιοι πεφύασι
> δηρὸν δὴ μετὰ ταῦτα καὶ ἄκριτον.[271]
>
> And he roasted [the meat] pierced on wooden spits,
> All at once, flesh and the honorable back portions and dark blood
> Enclosed in the guts, and the rest lay there on the ground.
> And he stretched out the skins on a rugged rock,
> As even now thereafter they have become ancient
> For a really long time continuously after these things.

Hermes experiments with the components he has obtained by killing and dismembering the cows, once again piercing and stretching. It is significant that the back portion is called a portion of honor here, reflecting the Iliadic code whereby the best portions of meat are reserved for kings in exchange for their bravery in war.[272] The meat is described as a human, indeed a warrior, would perceive it, suggesting that Hermes assigns the same kind of prestige to the flesh he butchers.

Next, Hermes divides the meat into twelve portions. Clay takes this as the basis for her idea that what Hermes does here is not a perverted sacrifice, but a *dais eise*, a meal divided up between equals.[273] He claims a place among the Olympians by including himself in their number. And yet it is still odd for the young god to serve up twelve portions of stolen meat to his fellow

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[269] There is much disagreement about whether Hermes' activities here constitute a sacrifice, a parodic or perverted sacrifice, or something else entirely. Clay essentially bypasses the issues of this episode by calling it a *dais* rather than a sacrifice (1989: 119), which does not really solve the problem, especially since some would say that every *dais* is a sacrifice (Bakker 2013: 40). Burkert attempts to normalize it on the grounds that Greek rituals cannot be reduced to uniform principles (1984: 836), and that we have evidence for many odd-seeming local cults and rituals, so there is no reason to assume that this is not a local Arcadian festival for which evidence has not survived (1984: 840). I follow Clay (1989: 118) in her complaint that, although Burkert finds parallels for many of the strange components of Hermes' ritual, most of them come from pointedly different types of rituals, such as hero cult. I find Kahn's account of the many perversions of this sacrifice much more convincing (1978: 43). Richardson says only that this episode must be an aition for a rock formation and possibly also for the custom of sacrificing to the twelve gods (2010: 175-176).

[270] Cf. Clay 1989: 107 on preserving the tortoise's shell.

[271] *H.Merc.* 121-126.

[272] See, e.g., Sarpedon's speech to Glaucus about how kings are granted the best portions of meat in exchange for their excellence in battle (*Il.* 12.310-328) and analysis by Bakker (2013: 37), Thalmann (1988: 5), and Redfield (1975: 101).

[273] Clay 1989: 119-122.

immortals. Looking at it one way, he appears to sacrifice to all of the gods *including himself*, an action that fully befuddles the notion of sacrifice, normally a device by which humans communicate with the gods.[274] Looking at it another way, he offers the gods portions of the same meat for which he feels an irresistible and forbidden hunger, as if to drag them down to his ambiguous level, or to drag all of them, again *including himself*, down to the level of mortal men. Whatever we may imagine as his motivation, he is pushing on the meat-eating taboo in his own typically unsettling and experimental way.

The climax of his unsettling experiment comes when he tries to eat the meat but finds himself unable:

> ὀδμὴ γάρ μιν ἔτειρε καὶ ἀθάνατόν περ ἐόντα
> ἡδεῖ᾽: ἀλλ᾽ οὐδ᾽ ὥς οἱ ἐπείθετο θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ,
> καί τε μάλ᾽ ἱμείροντι, περᾶν ἱερῆς κατὰ δειρῆς.
>
> For the sweet smell wore him out, although he was
> an immortal; but not even thus was his noble spirit persuaded,
> even though he really wanted it, to let it pass through his holy throat.

The smell of the meat *wears him out although he is immortal*. The smell of meat is supposed to satisfy gods' cravings, but for young Hermes, it only makes him hungrier. Some commentators read the passage to mean that he refrains from eating despite his desire, but if that were the case, why specify that the meat *was not allowed to pass through his throat*?[275] It would be far simpler to say that he does not eat any of it.[276] But his spirit—that is, the essence of divinity that is in him, that which is implied by his mother keeping nectar and ambrosia in the cupboard—will not let it penetrate his throat. Hermes, who keeps trying to get what he wants by piercing, cutting, stretching, and fixing the things (and bodies) he finds, here hits the wall of divine or natural law, whatever we are to call the norms established and upheld by Zeus: he can pierce the tortoise and pierce the cattle, but he cannot be pierced. He can only manipulate the world to the extent that it is manipulable, and his own nature is not manipulable.

Hermes hides the results of his experiment because it is his first failure. But it will lead him to a greater success: he is now compelled to accept the nature of the world and make do. In the aftermath of his sojourn into butchery, Zeus commands him to show Apollo the location of his stolen cattle. He does so, but before Apollo can see what is left of his attempted feast, he distracts him with the result of his other experiment, the lyre. Apollo agrees to let him keep the cattle in exchange for his invention, and by this arrangement Hermes gains cattle as one of his domains. Like Apollo, Hermes finds a position that passably satisfies his desires for power and meat at a certain level of abstraction. All of his tinkering cannot give him the right to eat meat or

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[274] This is similar to how he sings a hymn to himself; see Clay 1989: 109.

[275] The text is difficult here; see Richardson and AHS ad loc. on possible readings of περᾶν, but in any case, it is clear that Hermes' spirit is "not persuaded" to let the meat go down his throat, which seems to me to imply that he does try to eat it rather than simply declining.

[276] "Hermes plays the role of both the god who eats and the human who craves to do so" (Bergren 1982: 99). AHS implies that he intentionally refrains from eating the meat, rather than trying and finding himself unable (1936: 305). Shelmerdine says that Hermes refuses to eat the meat and that this is an allusion to Odysseus' refusal to partake of the forbidden meant of Helios' cattle (1986: 59). Versnel also states that Hermes decides not to eat the meat (2011: 321-322).

to rule the world, but it produces a treasure that he can trade for the right to rule a small part of the world and to preside over an aspect of meat production. Such is life for sons of Zeus.

Chapter Three
The Greatest Meat Mistake: Humans and Animals on Thrinacia

In the last two chapters, we examined the moments in archaic hexameter when gods come into contact with animal foods: the inedible parts of the animal that sacrifice and myth assign to them, and the meat from which they are barred. The relationship of gods to animal consumption is a fraught one; I have argued that it is similar to the relationship of a castrated man to sexual desire, who finds himself burdened with longing that is impossible to satisfy. But ultimately, it is clear that all of these stories about meat exist in the service of humanity. Human minds invented the tales and human hands practiced the sacrificial rituals, and the idea that gods are mysteriously forbidden from consuming the edible parts of the animal is transparently convenient to human taste and human hunger, since it leaves all of the meat for humans and absolves them of any conflict related to the question of what they *should* be eating and what they *should* be reserving for the gods. And yet the question remains: is the relationship of humans to animal consumption any less fraught? The multitude of stories in archaic hexameter, especially the *Odyssey*, about neglected or wrongly conducted sacrifices and unnatural or unsanctioned meat consumption suggests that it is not.

In this chapter, let us turn to this final component of the archaic mythological understanding of meat and sacrifice: the role of humans in relation to the animals they eat. While a thorough analysis of this topic could easily fill volumes, here I will approach just one story, reading it from multiple perspectives and bringing it into dialogue with the episodes that surround it and explain it. The story is that of the Cattle of Helios that appears in Book 12 of the *Odyssey*, the incident that leads to the deaths of all of Odysseus' remaining men, that is the climax of at least two separate narrative threads, as well as claiming the honor of being the only specific episode of Odysseus' wanderings to be mentioned in the proem. A fuller and more nuanced understanding of this episode will bring us much closer to clarity about the troubled and troubling presence of meat in so many archaic tales.

This is the first of two chapters offering two possible interpretations of the episode. In this chapter, I will attempt to read the episode on the vertical axis, i.e., in terms of how humans are positioned between animals and gods, according to the structuralist conception of Greek thought.[277] The other theoretical concept that underpins this section is empathy, a concept important to authors in the field of animal studies including Jacques Derrida, Mark Payne, and David Foster Wallace, all of whose ideas have contributed to my reading.[278] In addition to these theoretical models, I also find helpful models for thinking and talking about animals in pop culture and in personal experience. The argument of this chapter is that throughout Odysseus and his crew's journey in what some scholars call the Otherworld, the men lose their normal sense of empathy with animals, and that this leads to a gradual but total breakdown in their sense of belonging in the hierarchy of beings and their awareness of the rules for how they should interact with other kinds of beings. The slippage begins when they sacrifice and eat Polyphemus' ram, which is marked out as an animal object of affection, essentially a pet; the wrongness of their treatment of the ram is reinforced by the resonance between this scene and the scene of Odysseus' reunion with his dog. Their loss of empathy and awareness continues when they consume animals that are likely to be transformed humans on Circe's island. Thus, their decision

[277] See e.g., Vidal-Naquet 1981. In chapter IV, I will attempt a reading of the episode along the "horizontal axis," that is, in terms of relationships between humans, especially the power struggle between Odysseus and Eurylochus.
[278] I use "empathy" throughout this chapter to mean the human ability to recognize animals as subjects.

to consume the cattle of Helios—cows that are not mere pets, nor mere humans, but divine—is no random error, but the culmination of a process of moral and perceptual degradation resulting from the loss of empathy with animals.

I. Empathy with Animals

"When human beings no longer understand their encounters with other animals as a meeting between nature and culture, how will they experience them?"[279]
--Mark Payne

Homer's *Odyssey* is an imaginative space to wonder what life would be like outside the constraints of human society. The various places and peoples visited by Odysseus and his crew each represent some departure from human norms: in terms of diet, sacrifice, livelihood, marriage practices, bodies, etc., these beings are uncannily recognizable as both human and nonhuman. So, for example, the Cyclops, the most infamously uncivilized monster guilty of cannibalism and other hospitality violations, appears a competent, organized, and affectionate shepherd, while Aeolus, an ideal host and otherwise admirable character, has married his daughters to his sons, creating an incestuous, self-contained, and therefore ultimately sterile society. In each case, the questions asked are: What is it to be human? What if things were different?

The same questions have been taken up in contemporary culture by the genres of fantasy and science fiction, where different realities serve as lenses through which to analyze our own. And, in keeping with the *Odyssey*, the question of what it is to be human is often explored through situations that erase the line between human and animal.[280] I wish to cite examples from two such works. The first is a popular animated television show, *Bojack Horseman*. Its protagonist is an actor whose once-successful career has stalled and who struggles with mental illness and substance abuse; its content is on the whole similar to what you might expect of any dark sitcom or tongue-in-cheek drama. However, it takes place in a world that is like our own in every way except that it is populated by a mixture of humans and anthropomorphic animals. Much of the show's humor derives from the self-conscious inconsistency between treating the animal characters as humans and as animals: a cat who is in most scenes a serious and savvy businesswoman bristles and hisses when insulted; a charismatic but needy golden retriever sticks up his ears and shouts "Someone's at the door!" every time his doorbell rings.

In one episode, the show digs into the ethical implications of eating animals in a world where animals are like humans in abilities and intelligence. "Where does meat come from in this world?" is a question that is usually far from the viewer's mind, but in this episode, a humanoid factory-farmed chicken escapes from her farm and is befriended by one of the show's eccentric human protagonists. An advertisement for a more "ethical" competing farm coincidentally plays on another character's phone: a rooster wearing overalls speaks in a smooth southern drawl, explaining how his farm's chickens become "meat":

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[279] Payne 2010: 145.
[280] Essentially, these kinds of works are one of the few venues where the kind of "poetic thinking" (as opposed to "philosophical knowledge") that Derrida says can lead us to understand animal subjectivity intersects with popular and accessible styles of storytelling, creating an opportunity to understand the ways that people in general might think about animals (2002: 377); see also Payne 2010: 8-10.

> Rooster: Over at Chicken 4 Dayz, they pump their chickens full of hormones and keep them cooped up in tiny cages. Now, as a chicken, this concerns me. Here at Gentle Farms, we treat our livestock differently. Lush fields, plenty of dignity, and Foosball. The chickens here have wonderful lives before we harvest them, so you can eat them.
> Son: But wait, Pa, aren't we chickens? I don't wanna get eaten!
> Rooster: Boy, these animals aren't like us. They're specifically bred to be eaten, and genetically modified for maximum flavor. When our chicks first hatch, we lovingly inject them with natural delicious hormones, which makes them meat, thereby erasing any moral gray area! Now you can feel good about eating our meat. It's simple: No one knows chicken like chickens. Gentle Farms.[281]

This scene elicits discomfort in several ways. The juxtaposition of the anthropomorphic rooster and the babbling, patchy-feathered "meat" chickens (who, in keeping with the world of the show, are also human-sized and -shaped) prompts a number of emotionally reactive questions: How could a chicken farm his own species to be eaten? How could anyone eat chicken in a world where there are chickens with the same mental faculties as humans? Why, then, does it matter if there are intelligent chickens, if the fate of the dumb chickens is the same? It is shocking how much the show is able to draw attention to the horrors and hypocrisy of meat production, simply by depicting chickens that walk like humans and do not even speak. Gentle Farms, the ethical chicken farm, is fairly obviously compared to a facility for the disabled or the mentally ill, boasting "movie nights" and "hours of free play."

Thus, through a series of small logical leaps, the episode leads viewers to a conclusion of repulsion at meat eating. The first step is the already established premise of the show: all kinds of animals walk, talk, and behave like humans in this world. The second step is the introduction of walking, talking chickens in particular. The third step is the addition of the pathetic and more birdlike genetically modified chickens. Finally, the chicken farmer's moral justification of his practices is uncannily similar to the ways that real people justify real treatment of animals, making the indictment clear. I do not meant to suggest by this comparison that a similar indictment exists in the *Odyssey*, but only to lay the groundwork for the ways that an exploration of the indistinct boundary between humans and animals, especially one that takes place in an imaginative otherworld where this boundary is even less distinct than it appears in reality, can express deep tensions and misgivings about animal consumption.

Another popular work of fantasy raises similar questions. In C.S. Lewis' *The Silver Chair*, the fourth installment of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, three friends are traveling together in the otherworldly realm called Narnia: two humans from our world, one who has spent time in Narnia before and one who has not; and one "marsh-wiggle," a humanoid creature of Narnia. One of the well-established norms of Narnia is that there exist both talking animals and "normal" animals. The talking animals are physically identical to animals but as intelligent as humans, while the normal animals are like animals in our world. The three friends are taken in as guests by a group of initially friendly giants, but, when the giants serve them meat, their ill intent begins to become clear:

> Suddenly Puddleglum turned to them, and his face had gone so pale that you could see the paleness under the natural muddiness of his complexion. He said:

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[281] *Bojack Horseman* Season 2, Episode 5, "Chickens."

> "Don't eat another bite."
>
> "What's wrong?" asked the other two in a whisper.
>
> "Didn't you hear what those giants were saying? 'That's a nice tender haunch of venison,' said one of them. 'Then that stag was a liar,' said another. 'Why?' said the first one. 'Oh,' said the other. 'They say that when he was caught he said, Don't kill me, I'm tough. You won't like me.'"
>
> For a moment Jill did not realise the full meaning of this. But she did when Scrubb's eyes opened wide with horror and he said:
>
> "So we've been eating a *Talking* stag."
>
> This discovery didn't have exactly the same effect on all of them. Jill, who was new to that world, was sorry for the poor stag and thought it rotten of the giants to have killed him. Scrubb, who had been in that world before and had at least one Talking beast as his dear friend, felt horrified; as you might feel about a murder. But Puddleglum, who was Narnian born, was sick and faint, and felt as you would feel if you found you had eaten a baby.
>
> "We've brought the anger of Aslan on us," he said. "That's what comes of not attending to the signs. We're under a curse, I expect. If it was allowed, it would be the best thing we could do, to take these knives and drive them into our own hearts."[282]

Here, the (civilized) friends are made vulnerable to the deceit of the (barbarous) giants by the ambiguity between talking and non-talking animals. The distinction between these two classes of animals is of utmost importance, and yet they are physically indistinguishable; the faculty of speech makes no difference when they are dead, even less when they are cooked. Thus, the normal, civilized act of consuming meat is transformed into the abnormal, barbarous act of consuming the flesh of a talking animal, explicitly compared to cannibalism and morally abhorrent enough to motivate one character to contemplate suicide. And as it turns out, just before escaping from the giants' house, the friends find a cookbook in the kitchen that includes recipes for "Man" and for "Marsh-wiggle" alongside various types of animal meat. After their escape, they are openly pursued as game by the giants, with their king shouting, "After them, after them, or we'll have no man-pies to-morrow." It rapidly becomes clear that beings who do not respect the distinction between talking and non-talking animals respect no moral norms whatsoever and are as happy to eat a human whom they have hosted and with whom they have conversed as they are a duck they have caught.

I am interested in Lewis' explicit delineation of the different characters' reactions to the realization in relation to their familiarity with talking animals, with one feeling "sorry," one "horrified," and one so overcome with guilt that he contemplates suicide. Each character has a different degree of empathy with talking animals, and this shapes their responses: Jill seems perhaps as upset and someone would be about the death of someone else's pet, while Eustace can grasp the killing but not the eating; Puddleglum, in contrast, responds almost like a character in a

[282] Lewis 1953: 108-109.

Greek tragedy who has unwittingly committed a grave wrong such as incest or kin-murder. It is clear that a person's ability to empathize with different kinds of beings has a profound effect on his or her moral and alimentary code. What allows this interesting morally relative situation is the presence in the world of beings that defy the distinction between human and animal; the ease with which the friends eat the meat without knowing it calls attention to the relatively minor distinction between a talking stag and a regular stag.[283]

The same problem has been explored in works of popular moral philosophy. The obverse situation is described by David Foster Wallace in his famous essay originally written for *Gourmet* magazine, "Consider the Lobster," in which he visits and analyzes the Maine Lobster Festival. The question that interests him is how it is possible for a huge public festival to openly feature and display the painful deaths of tens of thousands of animals, and more generally, how it is that home cooks are able to kill lobsters by boiling them alive, when almost all other meat production in this country is surrounded by so much secrecy and willful ignorance. He suggests that because lobsters are crustaceans, evolutionarily quite far removed from humans, it is easier to avoid sympathizing with their pain: "The point is that lobsters are basically giant sea insects. Midcoasters' native term for a lobster is, in fact, 'bug,' as in 'Come around on Sunday and we'll cook up some bugs.'"[284] Because of this, he argues, people are willing to witness and explain away their pain in a way that they are unable to do with mammals:

> As mentioned, the World's Largest Lobster Cooker, which is highlighted as an attraction in the festival's program, is right out there on the [festival's] north grounds for everyone to see. Try to imagine a Nebraska Beef Festival at which part of the festivities is watching trucks pull up and the live cattle get driven down the ramp and slaughtered right there on the World's Largest Killing Floor or something—there's no way.[285]

Most unnerving of all, he presents the arguments of the Maine Lobster Promotion Council that the act of boiling lobsters is not cruel because they do not have the physical capacity to

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[283] This strategy—the concept presented here and in *Bojack Horseman* of animals with the mental faculties of humans—has a similar effect to the "argument from marginal cases (AMC)," explained in plain terms by Michael Pollan in a bizarre anecdote about reading Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* while eating a rib-eye steak: "We alone are (as Kant pointed out) the moral animal, the only one capable of even entertaining a notion of "rights." Hell, we invented the damned things—*for us.* So what's wrong with reserving moral consideration for those able to understand it? Well, right here is where you run smack into the AMC: the moral status of the retarded and the insane, the two-day-old infant and the advanced Alzheimer's patient. These people ("marginal cases," in the detestable language of modern moral philosophy) cannot participate in ethical decision making any more than a monkey can, yet we nevertheless grant them rights. Yes, I respond, for the obvious reason: *They're one of us*" (Pollan 2006: 311). Pollan's knee-jerk reaction to the utilitarian argument is a perfect example of how humans tend to deal with these questions: by avoiding them, or by replacing them with other questions. Pollan goes on to push the utilitarian argument for animal rights to the point of making it a straw man: "Here in a nutshell is the practical problem with the philosopher's argument from marginal cases: It can be used to help the animals, but just as often it ends up hurting the marginal cases. Giving up our speciesism can bring us to an ethical cliff from which we may not be prepared to jump, even when logic is pushing us to the edge" (Pollan 2006: 312). This alarmist language skips far past the actual argument—that we should take seriously the problem of animal suffering—to a doomsday scenario in which marginal human cases are mistreated as horribly as animals are. In short, arguments from marginal cases, whether serious philosophical ones or imaginative ones veiled in whimsy and fantasy, consistently cause the most trouble for a normal human sense of the moral hierarchy of beings (here represented by Pollan).

[284] Wallace 2006: 237.

[285] Wallace 2006: 247.

experience pain, alongside convincing evidence that they do.[286] In the same way that animals that are too similar to humans, like humanoid chickens and talking stags, arouse discomfort about the idea of eating meat, animals that are perceived as very foreign allow for such a disavowal of empathy that humans are comfortable not only with eating their meat, but even with seeing them die painfully.[287] With this framework of empathy and its correspondence to alimentary codes in mind, let us turn to Homer.

The Cattle of Helios episode occurs at Book 12, lines 260-425, and can be summarized as follows: Odysseus has been warned by both Tiresias and Circe not to let his men harm the Cattle of Helios, so he tries to stop them from landing on the island of Thrinacia at all. However, his men are too exhausted to continue and defy him to land on the island. Once they have landed, the winds change and they are unable to leave for a full month. They run out of provisions and survive on fish and birds for a while, but when Odysseus falls asleep, his crew kills and eats some of the cattle. They continue to feast on the cattle for a week, at which time the winds change and allow them to leave. Finally, Zeus strikes the ship with lightning, and everyone except Odysseus drowns in the shipwreck. Traditionally, this incident of the crew's foolish defiance of Odysseus and self-inflicted doom has been viewed as just one more of the many times when the crew acts foolishly. However, it becomes more meaningful when it is understood as the climax of a coherent narrative thread: the narrative of the crew undergoing a series of experiences that cause them to lose their empathy for animals and their understanding of the alimentary code.[288] Before attempting to understand the climax, it will be helpful to trace this thread throughout Odysseus' tales of the Otherworld.

II. Rams can be Dogs

"Ever since I was a child I have been angry with Odysseus for his sacrificing the good ram to whom he owes his life."[289]
--Walter Burkert

The first long episode of Odysseus' adventures is that of the island of Cyclopes. There is no need to belabor the well-known and already thoroughly interpreted details of the story; while there will always be much to say about Odysseus' tricks and escape (and while in a later chapter I will return to those of his men who become Polyphemus' dinner and breakfast), my concern here is the insight that this episode gives into the possibilities of empathy with animals. Burkert asserts that the stolen sheep are really the central concern of the whole story.[290] And indeed, the episode ends with a sacrifice of the sheep stolen from the Cyclops, the very ones who provided a safe escape to the sailors, including the ram singled out as the Cyclops' favorite and the one large

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[286] Wallace 2006: 245.
[287] See also Payne 2010: 17-19.
[288] Cf. Scodel's assertion that the significance of the stag on Aeaea is as the second step in a series of three increasingly difficult hunting narratives, starting with Goat Island and ending with Thrinacia (1994: 533). While I would argue that an episode like that of the stag is almost never reducible to a single, simple reading, I find the idea of this progression quite persuasive.
[289] Burkert 1979: 33.
[290] "If the tale is seen within the general structure of the 'quest,' the object to be gained is precisely the flocks themselves, edible animals, and the solemn meal is the logical conclusion: the sacrifice… To gain the edible animals, man has to assimilate himself to them. To be eaten, or not to be eaten but to eat, these are the two sides of the basic process of life." (1979: 33).

and strong enough to hold Odysseus by itself. This sacrifice is somewhat mysteriously rejected by Zeus. Vidal-Naquet posits that the sacrifice is unsuitable because the animals were raised in the Otherworld rather than on ordinary human-inhabited land.[291] I prefer a different reason for Zeus' disdain: these sheep are not for eating. They have been empathized with as what we would call pets, placing them in a different category of being, body, and flesh; in Haraway's terminology, these sheep are not "killable."[292] Because Odysseus and his crew are from the ordinary world, they perceive all livestock as unmarked animals equivalent to those they have been plundering and eating throughout the war, but in the Otherworld, this is almost never the case with animals.

The special status of Polyphemus' herds is first signaled by the scene of his cave, where the visitors find neatly organized cheeses and whey, lambs and kids separated by age, described in "precise and affectionate" detail, and surprising enough to cause the humans to stare in wonder.[293] At this point, they certainly eat some of the cheese, and they may or may not kill and eat one of the animals.[294] Either way, they have eaten food in their host's home without being invited, making them, for a moment, the barbarous ones.[295] The idea of Polyphemus as a "good pastoralist" is interrupted by his horrifying conduct towards the humans, for which he is reasonably punished with blindness.[296] But his affection for the animals returns to the narrative at his greatest moment of vulnerability, making for a moving vignette:

> τὸν δ' ἐπιμασσάμενος προσέφη κρατερὸς Πολύφημος·
> κριὲ πέπον, τί μοι ὧδε διὰ σπέος ἔσσυο μήλων
> ὕστατος; οὔ τι πάρος γε λελειμμένος ἔρχεαι οἰῶν,
> ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρῶτος νέμεαι τέρεν᾽ ἄνθεα ποίης
> μακρὰ βιβάς, πρῶτος δὲ ῥοὰς ποταμῶν ἀφικάνεις, 450
> πρῶτος δὲ σταθμόνδε λιλαίεαι ἀπονέεσθαι

[291] "And the sacrifice they offer on the island just across from that of the Cyclopes—which is abnormal because the victims are the sheep belonging to Polyphemus, animals not reared by a man—is rejected by Zeus (9.551-5): even when a human community does sacrifice in non-human territory, the sacrifice is improper" (Vidal-Naquet 1981: 85). See also Bakker (2013: 133): "The biggest mistake in Poseidon's world, a mistake made first by Odysseus and the Companions, later by the Companions alone, is to pretend that the normal rules with regard to heroism and the relations with the gods apply. In fact, each attempt at creating normalcy in the Otherworld fails. The sacrifice of the Cyclops' ram is rejected by Zeus, not because he wants to punish Odysseus for any hubris, but because sacrifice is as such inappropriate at this moment and in this place."

[292] Haraway uses this term for animals and humans whose lives are so devalued that their killing is viewed as inconsequential. She argues that it is possible to kill animals to eat while still facing the weight and responsibility of their deaths. "It is not killing that gets us into exterminism, but making beings killable" (2008: 80).

[293] *Od.* 9.218-223; Bakker 2013: 66.

[294] There is uncertainty about the meaning of ἐθύσαμεν in line 231; the verb normally refers to a sacrifice of meat, but some, including Merry (1899: 106), assert that it must be an offering of burnt cheese; LSJ accepts this sense, while Cunliffe simply includes this instance with others meaning "to offer in sacrifice portions of a meal." Newton (1983: 140, n. 11) defends the possibility that they do, in fact, slaughter and sacrifice one of the sheep, calling the idea of the cheese offering "highly improbable," and attributes the minimal and ambiguous description of the event to Odysseus' desire as narrator to avoid offending his Phaeacian audience by explicitly admitting to such a violation of *xenia*. It is better for my argument if they do in fact sacrifice an animal, but either way, an error has been committed.

[295] "It is true that Odysseus' major act of hybris comes at the end of the episode. But from the moment he sets foot into Polyphemus' cave Odysseus behaves in a manner far from praiseworthy. He is the first to violate guest hospitality" (Newton 1983: 139).

[296] Bakker 2013: 57.

ἐσπέριος· νῦν αὖτε πανύστατος. ἦ σύ γ᾽ ἄνακτος
ὀφθαλμὸν ποθέεις, τὸν ἀνὴρ κακὸς ἐξαλάωσε
σὺν λυγροῖς ἑτάροισι δαμασσάμενος φρένας οἴνῳ,
Οὖτις, ὃν οὔ πώ φημι πεφυγμένον εἶναι ὄλεθρον. 455
εἰ δὴ ὁμοφρονέοις ποτιφωνήεις τε γένοιο
εἰπεῖν ὅππῃ κεῖνος ἐμὸν μένος ἠλασκάζει·
τῷ κέ οἱ ἐγκέφαλός γε διὰ σπέος ἄλλυδις ἄλλῃ
θεινομένου ῥαίοιτο πρὸς οὔδεϊ, κὰδ δέ κ᾽ ἐμὸν κῆρ
λωφήσειε κακῶν, τά μοι οὐτιδανὸς πόρεν Οὖτις.[297] 460

And touching him, strong Polyphemus addressed him:
"Good ram of mine, why do you proceed last of the sheep through my cave?
Not at all previously did you go left behind by the sheep,
but by far the first you would graze on the soft flowers of grass
walking far ahead, and first you would reach the streams of rivers,
and you were eager to return first to the steading
in the evening; but now you are the last of all. Do you miss
the eye of your master, which an evil man blinded
with his hateful companions, after defeating my mind with wine,
No One, who, I declare, has not yet escaped death.
If you could sympathize and become endowed with speech
to say where that man skulks from my strength;
then his brain would flow here and there through the cave
when he is smitten on the ground, and my heart
would find relief from evils, the ones which worthless No One gave me."

Polyphemus begins by touching the ram, identifying it in tactile terms although he cannot see it.[298] He addresses the animal directly, asking it a question as if it could respond with an answer; the question expresses both concern and admiration by comparing the ram's current lethargy to his usual vigor, while further emphasizing the bond between them by describing the ram's eagerness to come home at night: the ram, according to Polyphemus' imagination, is not only kept in the cave, it thinks of it as its own home. The idea of this bond is deepened when he goes on to imagine that the reason for the ram's slowness is *its* concern for *him* because of his blindness, mirroring his own affection for the animal. He pauses to rage at the injury Odysseus has done to him and make vague threats, but in the process, hits upon the idea that Odysseus only

[297] *Od.* 9.446-460.

[298] Alex Purves gives a beautiful and helpful reading of this passage in terms of touch, in conjunction with Henry Fuseli's "Polyphemus, blinded, feels at the exit of his cave his ram, under whom Odysseus is escaping." Polyphemus, she argues, "laments the fact that his ram has no voice, yet the scene still suggests that he communicates something to him through his touch, and something is communicated from the ram back to him" (2016: 73). Meanwhile, Donna Haraway centers touch in her discussion of companion species, asking over and over again, "Whom and what do I touch when I touch my dog?" (2008: 3, 5, 95, et al.). She clarifies, "Because I become with dogs, I am drawn into the multispecies knots that they are tied into and that they retie by their reciprocal action. My premise is that touch ramifies and shapes accountability… Touch does not make one small; it peppers its partners with attachment sites for world making. Touch, regard, looking back, becoming with—all these make us responsible in unpredictable ways for which worlds take shape" (2008: 35-36). Let us keep these unpredictable responsibilities in mind as we approach Polyphemus, his ram, Odysseus, and his dog.

defeated him with the help of his companions. As a result, he finally imagines what would happen if the ram were not, as it were, an animal, but an ally. What if it could sympathize (or literally, ὁμοφρονέοις, think in the same way)? What if it could speak? Human(oid) reason and the faculty of speech are the very things which set him apart from the ram as an animal.[299] While his fellow Cyclopes have been taken in by Odysseus' trick and abandoned him, he feels such trust in his pet that he thinks that if it could move up the spectrum of beings and have abilities equal to his, the two of them together could easily best the foe that defeated him when he was alone.[300]

It is nothing new to remark that Polyphemus exhibits surprising sensitivity in this scene, or that he "anthropomorphizes" his animals.[301] What I am interested in interrogating in this passage is the ways that it marks the ram as not-meat. If Odysseus' men eat an animal when they stumble upon them in the cave, it is less of a problem, since they have no alternative paradigm through which to view these sheep and goats, animals which, in their world, are meat; but they certainly eat the sheep after they have escaped and after they have witnessed that these are not ordinary sheep, or at least that they do not play the role of ordinary sheep in their context, *and* after they have been directly helped by the sheep.

This all might be dismissed as silly sentimentalism—why should Odysseus and his crew care if the sheep that they eat are the pets of the giant who has just devoured six of their friends right in front of them?—if it were not for its resonance with another memorable passage, the one describing Odysseus' recognition of his old dog, Argos, and his dog's recognition of him.[302] When Odysseus approaches his house in disguise, Argos recognizes him on sight (and is the only member of the household to do so right away).[303] This moment, in which Argos sees his returning master and reacts with physical alertness, lets the dog have a surprising amount of subjectivity.[304] It also elicits an emotional response from the normally cold Odysseus:

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[299] "Fuseli's painting stages an irreparable moment of rupture between two periods in time ('the old days' and 'now') as between the beings themselves. This is particularly obvious at the end of the speech, when the giant wishes that the ram were endowed with voice and laments the impossibility of *homophrosune* (like-mindedness) between them: 'If only you could be one with me and be given a voice' (456). *Homophroneo* is used elsewhere in the *Odyssey* to express the like-mindedness of a husband and wife, but here the final aching syllables of *homophroneois* are full of frustration and desire (the optative form in *-ois* introduces an unattainable wish, as it also evokes the 'oi' of *oimoi*, the Greek words for 'alas,' while the opening of the mouth around *e-oi*, is perhaps also captured in Polyphemus' 'extraordinary open mouth' on the canvas.). The yearning which generates the final omicrons and iotas of *homophroneois* and *genoio* emerges from the convergence of feeling and speaking (*epimassamenos prosephe,* 9.446) with which the passage began. It is only under the pressure of the Cyclops' touch, in other words, that we are driven to understand the sense of loss that physically connects Polyphemus to his ram" (Purves 2016: 69-71).

[300] *Od.* 9.410-414.

[301] Bakker 2013: 57.

[302] The same connection is drawn by Newton (1983: 141). It may also be instructive that, as Purves points out, Polyphemus touches the ram with the same verb, ἐπιμαίομαι, used to describe Eurykleia's haptic discovery of Odysseus' scar at 19.468 (Purves 2016: 73-74). Polyphemus' relationship with his ram, then, resonates not only with that of Odysseus and his pet, but even with that of Odysseus and his surrogate mother figure.

[303] *Od.* 17.290-304.

[304] Cf. Derrida's famous encounter with his cat: "The animal is there before me, there close to me, there in front of me—I who am (following) after it. And also, therefore, since it is before me, it is behind me. It surrounds me. And from the vantage of this being-there-before-me it can allow itself to be looked at, no doubt, but also—something that philosophy perhaps forgets, perhaps being this calculated forgetting itself—it can look at me. It has its point of view regarding me. The point of view of the absolute other, and nothing will have ever done more to make me think through this absolute alterity of the neighbor than these moments when I see myself seen naked under the gaze of a cat" (2002: 380).

> ‘Εὔμαι’, ἦ μάλα θαῦμα, κύων ὅδε κεῖτ’ ἐνὶ κόπρῳ.
> καλὸς μὲν δέμας ἐστίν, ἀτὰρ τόδε γ’ οὐ σάφα οἶδα,
> εἰ δὴ καὶ ταχὺς ἔσκε θέειν ἐπὶ εἴδεϊ τῷδε,
> ἦ αὔτως οἷοί τε τραπεζῆες κύνες ἀνδρῶν
> γίγνοντ’: ἀγλαΐης δ’ ἕνεκεν κομέουσιν ἄνακτες.’[305]
>
> “Eumaius, what a strange thing, this dog lies in dung.
> He is beautiful in body, but I do not clearly know this,
> whether he was really swift at hunting in addition to this appearance,
> or if he was more like the dogs who sit at the tables of men;
> but for the sake of splendor the masters care for them.”

First, he expresses surprise (ἦ μάλα θαῦμα) that the dog is lying in a dung heap, implying a certain degree of concern for the animal. He goes on to praise the dog’s beauty with a barbed compliment: it is so beautiful, he muses, that it might not have been a hunting dog at all, but rather a table dog kept only for its good looks. He is reacting on two levels: on the surface, as the beggar, approaching the situation as a stranger and an outsider, acting surprised that a rich man’s dog is in such a sorry state and speculating about the frivolity of the reasons that rich men keep dogs; but at the same time, his genuine reaction as himself colors his performance as the beggar. As the dog’s owner, he is shocked to find his pet excluded from the household and entirely demeaned. He knows firsthand that although Argos is beautiful enough to be a table dog, he was once a great hunting dog as well. Thus, although he already knows the answer to it, his question serves two purposes: to channel and conceal his emotional reaction to seeing Argos, and to find out *how* his pet came to be excluded from the house (which he cannot ask directly without showing that he knows more than he should). Eumaius responds just as Odysseus wants, with an expansive description of the good and tough hunting dog that Argos was in his day and of the neglect by despicable slaves that has led to his current pathetic state. Odysseus conceals his tears from Eumaius, and this is one of only a small handful of moments during his period of disguise when he is overcome by a sincere emotion.[306] Thus, it seems safe to conclude from this passage that Odysseus has a deep attachment to his dog and, therefore, a firm understanding of pets as a special category of animals.

The parallels between the two passages are many: both involve a master whose house has been disrespected by intruders and who is in a relatively disadvantageous position, Polyphemus because he has just been blinded, Odysseus because he is compelled to return in disguise as a beggar; both masters inquire about a favorite animal, observing that it is in a worse condition than it normally is or seems like it should be. The ram’s slowness, although Polyphemus doesn’t know it, is the fault of Odysseus, who is weighing him down, while Argus’ exclusion from the house is blamed on the slaves who have grown lazy in Odysseus’ absence; in both cases, it is a disturbance in the household that leads to the animal’s worsened condition. Finally, both beloved animals die shortly after the moment of connection with their masters.[307] This resonance forces a

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[305] *Od.* 17.306-310.
[306] Odysseus does not physically touch Argus, but his visual interpretation of Argus’ situation is reminiscent of Haraway’s “fingery eyes” and seems to implicate him in the same kind of unpredictable responsibilities (2008: 5 et al.).
[307] Cf. Newton 1983: 141.

reconsideration of the Polyphemus passage. If Polyphemus is a childlike savage, treating his animals like people, then no matter; but after seeing the normally aloof Odysseus moved to tears in sympathy for his pet, listeners must recognize that pets are a special category of animals, even in this world, even for Odysseus.

Special categories, like pets, can lead to some quite interesting inconsistencies in the ways that people view the world, not unlike the people-like animals discussed above. For example, I was once on a hike where my friends and I met a middle-aged couple with a beautiful and friendly dog. My friends greeted and began playing with the dog, and the couple proudly told us that they had purchased her from someone who had rescued her from a Chinese dog farm. Here was this delightful animal, before our eyes, playing and romping, who could have been *eaten*. I cannot count the number of times I have seen meaningless internet petitions circulating among Americans on Facebook advocating the outlawing of dog meat consumption in Asia. The people I know who circulate these petitions are not, by and large, vegetarians. I did not ask the couple on the trail if they are vegetarians, but I would not be surprised if they are not.

I had another odd experience with pet/meat during my junior semester abroad in Bordeaux. I was eating in a slightly upscale restaurant downtown with another study abroad student, and I noticed that the restaurant served rabbit as one of the specials. I commented that I might order the rabbit to see what it was like, since I had never had it before and it seemed like something I might not get the chance to try back in the US. My friend stiffened noticeably and told me that she would not order the rabbit because she had had pet rabbits as a child, but that it was fine if I did. Rabbit is an interesting test case, since rabbits are a recognized but not extremely common animal to own as a pet in the US, as well as a known but not extremely common animal to eat. Whereas dog lovers shout and rage against the idea that anyone in the world could ever consume the meat of the same kind of animal that they like to own as a pet, my friend, though strained, calmly explained to me that because *she* personally had experienced rabbits as pets, *she* could no longer tolerate eating rabbits as meat, but she also understood that others did not have this experience or this reaction to the idea of eating a rabbit.

In *Eating Animals*, in an attempt to awaken this kind of revulsion in readers about their own meat consumption, Jonathan Safran Foer includes a traditional Filipino recipe for stewed dog and encourages readers to read and contemplate it. And to be honest, having grown up in America, not even having grown up with dogs, I find it difficult to read. He then reflects:

> A simple trick from the backyard astronomer: if you are having trouble seeing something, look slightly away from it. The most light-sensitive parts of our eyes (those we need to see dim objects) are on the edges of the region we normally use for focusing. Eating animals has an invisible quality. Thinking about dogs, and their relationship to the animals we eat, is one way of looking askance and making something invisible visible.[308]

Foer's intentions here are undisguised: he wishes to suggest to people who consume meat that their meat consumption is no different from the consumption of a dog, and thereby to convince them that they should stop consuming meat. Obviously I do not mean to suggest that any intention of this kind is present in the composition of the *Odyssey*. Rather, I think that the resonance between Polyphemus' ram and Odysseus' dog suggests, first, an explicit recognition of the category of pets as a different kind of animal, one whose death would sadden its master, and second, an awareness that it is possible for any animal to fall into this category given the

[308] Foer 2009: 29.

right cultural context. And so, Zeus rejects the meat of Polyphemus' ram, disgusted not as much as he would be by a human sacrifice, but in a similar way. This is the first step of wrong meat-eating that will ultimately lead to eating the cattle of Helios.

III. Stags can be Men

The next substantial episode is the crew's sojourn on Aeaea, Circe's island. This encounter is rife with food-related disasters and near-disasters, only some of which are described explicitly. Many of these will not be discussed in detail until [chapter on cannibalism]; what is relevant here is the first food that the Ithacans eat after arriving on the island, before they suspect what a strange nightmare they have stumbled into. Reading this passage with a full awareness of the events of this book—that Circe transforms the crew into swine and only restores them when Odysseus forces her to—I believe it is quite clear that this stag should be understood as a transformed human;[309] but even without taking this knowledge into account, the description of the hunt and feast of the stag is striking in its attention to the animal's body, suggesting that the stag is in some way special.[310]

When they arrive on Aeaea, the entire crew collapses from exhaustion for two full days, after which Odysseus begins to explore the island, but decides that the crew needs food before they can resume adventuring. He encounters the perfect animal to feed them:

> ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δὴ σχεδὸν ἦα κιὼν νεὸς ἀμφιελίσσης,
> καὶ τότε **τίς με θεῶν ὀλοφύρατο** μοῦνον ἐόντα,
> ὅς ῥά μοι **ὑψίκερων ἔλαφον μέγαν** εἰς ὁδὸν αὐτὴν
> ἧκεν. ὁ μὲν ποταμόνδε κατήιεν ἐκ νομοῦ ὕλης
> πιόμενος: δὴ γάρ μιν ἔχεν μένος ἠελίοιο.[311]
>
> But when I came near the curved ship,
> then someone of the gods pitied me because I was alone,
> who sent a lofty-horned great stag for me, into the road itself.
> He was going down to the river from the pasturage of the forest
> to drink; for indeed, the strength of the sun held him.

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[309] "But on Circe's island, men are metamorphosed into lions, wolves, and pigs. In such a place, the stag could be something more than just a stag" (Roessel 1989: 32). Roessel concedes that because "there is no indication that Circe changed men into anything except swine, lions and wolves" (1989: 34), the episode requires additional explanation, eventually concluding that the stag is evidence of an earlier inclusion of the Actaeon story; I would argue, in contrast, that each time the narrative introduces animals that are pointed out as transformed humans, they are a different kind of animal (lions, wolves, pigs); and that therefore, any introduction of a new kind of animal invites the audience to imagine that it might be a transformed human.

[310] See Bakker 2013: 78-79 for more on the possible significance of the stag; Bakker mentions the idea of the stag as "a hapless former hunter turned into the animal he presumably pursued," but takes this as a jumping off point into a discussion of metempsychosis on Circe's island without fully engaging with the implications of the stag as a transformed or "reborn" human. Schmoll, in turn, argues for the stag as a more figuratively transformed human: an animal that has been elevated to the narrative importance of a human opponent for Odysseus, a "metaphoric combat," and that the real transformation being effected is that of Odysseus from warrior into peaceful king (1987: 22). A simpler solution is that the stag is described as a human warrior because it *is* truly a human.

[311] *Od.* 9.156-160.

Odysseus interprets this boon as the result of a divine intervention, and specifically that of a sympathetic deity.[312] The stag, when it first appears, is already described with two glorifying adjectives, being both lofty-horned and great.[313] Its journey to the river to drink puts it in a similar situation to Odysseus, who also travels through the landscape in search of nourishment; its position as the object held by the sun's strength is also comparable to Odysseus, who is constantly at the mercy of his environment.

> τὸν δ᾽ ἐγὼ **ἐκβαίνοντα** κατ᾽ ἄκνηστιν μέσα νῶτα
> πλῆξα: τὸ δ᾽ **ἀντικρὺ δόρυ χάλκεον ἐξεπέρησε**,
> κὰδ δ᾽ ἔπεσ᾽ ἐν κονίῃσι μακών, ἀπὸ δ᾽ ἔπτατο θυμός.
> τῷ δ᾽ ἐγὼ **ἐμβαίνων** δόρυ χάλκεον ἐξ **ὠτειλῆς**
> εἰρυσάμην:[314]
>
> And I impaled him in the spine, in the middle of the back, as he walked away;
> And the bronze spear pierced through to the other side,
> and he fell down bellowing in the dust, and his spirit flew away.
> And I, walking up to him, drew the bronze spear from the wound...

The stag is further identified with Odysseus in two ways: first, the beginning of lines 161 and 164 are nearly identical, but the participle ἐκβαίνοντα refers to the stag, the object of Odysseus' spear throw, while ἐμβαίνων describes Odysseus approaching its corpse. The similarity of the two participles, and their appearance in the same metrical position in such similar lines, is surely enough to cause a moment of doubt in listeners about the referent of the second participle. Second, Odysseus says that he pulls his spear from the wound using the word ὠτείλη, a word that appears fourteen times in Homer, but only three times in the *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad*, it always describes the wounds of humans or gods; its other appearances in the *Odyssey* also refer to human bodies, once in the suitors' complaints about the mistreatment of their corpses, but crucially, once in the story in book 19 of Odysseus' scar; the wound he received from the boar as a child, the very same wound that left the scar that would become his one stable identifying feature, is called an ὠτείλη.[315] What is more, the phrase ἀντικρὺ δόρυ χάλκεον ἐξεπέρησε appears elsewhere only at *Il.* 16.346 of Idomeneus killing Erymas, a Trojan. Thus the slain stag is assimilated with wounded warriors in general and with Odysseus in particular, which is

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[312] Cf. 4.364, where τίς με θεῶν ὀλοφύρατο is used by Menelaus of the intervention of Eidothea, or rather, in a contrary-to-fact condition describing what would have happened to his crew if "someone of the gods" *hadn't* taken pity. Cf. also the nymphs whose intervention Odysseus assumes on the "goat island" before they visit the Cyclops (*Od.* 9.153). Alexander argues that the simplest interpretation of this whole episode is as a "displaced element from a widely attested folk-motif," i.e., an animal that leads a hunter into an Otherworld or the Underworld; this fits nicely with the idea of the unnamed intervening divinity, but fails to explain the length or detail of the episode (1991: 520).

[313] Schmoll interprets the "loftiness of the language" and "emphatic repetition of the beast's size" as "a poetic affirmation of heroism" (1987: 24-25). It seems simpler, however, to read these repetitions as an emphasis on the body of the animal that they describe rather than a more indirect affirmation of Odysseus' hunting prowess.

[314] *Od.* 9.161-165.

[315] *Il.* 4.140, 4.149, 5.870, 11.266, 14.518, 16.862, 17.86, 17.297, 18.351, 19.25, 21.122; *Od.* 19.456, 24.189. Scodel discusses Odysseus' scar and its importance to his identity, positing that "it is significant that Odysseus' first adventure is a hunt set outside the cultivated works of men" in relation to his hunting of the stag on Aeaea, but does not make the connection between his scar and the stag's wound (1994: 532).

especially fitting since Odysseus' ὠτείλη was received not in war but in hunting, and here he is hunting again.[316]

Lines 165-171 are essentially devoted to illustrating the great size of the stag:

> ...τὸ μὲν αὖθι κατακλίνας ἐπὶ γαίῃ
> εἴασ᾽: αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ σπασάμην ῥῶπάς τε λύγους τε,
> πεῖσμα δ᾽, ὅσον τ᾽ ὄργυιαν, ἐυστρεφὲς ἀμφοτέρωθεν
> πλεξάμενος συνέδησα πόδας δεινοῖο **πελώρου**,
> βῆν δὲ καταλοφάδεια φέρων ἐπὶ νῆα μέλαιναν
> ἔγχει ἐρειδόμενος, ἐπεὶ οὔ πως ἦεν ἐπ᾽ ὤμου
> χειρὶ φέρειν ἑτέρῃ: **μάλα γὰρ μέγα θηρίον ἦεν**.[317]
>
> Then I let it (the spear) go, leaning it on the ground;
> but I plucked shrubs and withies,
> and a well-twisted cable, about a fathom,
> weaving it around both sides, I bound together the feet of the fearsome monster,
> and I went bearing it over the neck to the dark ship
> supporting it with my spear, since it was not possible
> to bear it on the shoulder with my other hand; for it was a very great beast.

This is quite a lot of space to grant to Odysseus making a rope to carry the stag's body, especially considering that he is already near the ship. Listeners are expected to gather that this is not just any stag; it cannot be dragged or carried; it is worth quite a bit of effort and ingenuity to move; and even then, we are informed that it is too big to carry over the shoulder. *It was a very great beast*.[318]

In the next section, Odysseus uses the stag to impress and encourage his crew:

> κὰδ᾽ δ᾽ ἔβαλον προπάροιθε νεός, ἀνέγειρα δ᾽ ἑταίρους
> μειλιχίοις ἐπέεσσι παρασταδὸν ἄνδρα ἕκαστον:
> ὦ φίλοι, οὐ γάρ πω καταδυσόμεθ᾽ ἀχνύμενοί περ
> εἰς Ἀίδαο δόμους, πρὶν μόρσιμον ἦμαρ ἐπέλθῃ:
> ἀλλ᾽ ἄγετ᾽, ὄφρ᾽ ἐν νηὶ θοῇ βρῶσίς τε πόσις τε,
> **μνησόμεθα βρώμης, μηδὲ τρυχώμεθα λιμῷ.**[319]
>
> And I threw it before the ship, and I roused my companions,

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[316] "The early lines of the passage are couched in military language reminiscent of the *Iliad*… Odysseus is not simply encountering a stag, he is pitted against a warrior in panoply of horn and hoof" (Schmoll 1987: 22). The identification of the stag with Odysseus, and expanded description of its death and body, suggest that it could fall into the "archive of hunting narratives that focus on this moment of eye contact between hunter and hunted" that Payne contemplates in conjunction with his own experience of failing to shoot a fox because he "had looked into its eyes, and I knew that it was looking at me, and that it knew that I knew" (2010: 3). While Odysseus does not directly express sympathy for the stag, his description of it might do just that.

[317] *Od.* 10.165-171.

[318] "But the poet goes out of his way to draw attention to the stag, even repeating the phrase μάλα γὰρ μέγα θηρίον ἦεν within the space of ten lines (171, 180)" (Roessel 1989: 32). Schmoll suggests that the function of these lines is for Odysseus to demonstrate to his Phaeacian audience that in addition to strength, he also possesses dexterity and ingenuity (1987: 24).

[319] *Od.* 10.172-177.

with pleasing words, standing by each man:
"Friends, since we will not yet sink down, although grieved,
into the houses of Hades, before our death day comes;
but come, while there is food and drink in the swift ship,
let us remember food, and not be consumed by famine."

In his speech, he emphasizes several times the life-giving quality of the food that he has caught: they are not yet going to the underworld; their day of death has not yet arrived; and as long as they remember to eat, they will not starve to death.[320] And his men are as impressed as they should be with a stag of this magnitude:

ὣς ἐφάμην, οἱ δ᾽ ὦκα ἐμοῖς ἐπέεσσι πίθοντο,
ἐκ δὲ καλυψάμενοι παρὰ θῖν᾽ ἁλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο
θηήσαντ᾽ ἔλαφον: μάλα γὰρ μέγα θηρίον ἦεν.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ τάρπησαν ὁρώμενοι ὀφθαλμοῖσιν,
χεῖρας νιψάμενοι τεύχοντ᾽ ἐρικυδέα δαῖτα.[321]

Thus I spoke, and they swiftly obeyed my words,
and unveiling themselves by the shore of the barren sea
they wondered at the stag; for he was a very great beast.
But after they delighted in looking with their eyes,
after washing their hands, they made a splendid meal.

Whereas before it was a problem for Odysseus to overcome, now the stag's size is a source of wonder and delight for the men; θηήσαντ' is the same form used when the Greeks admire Hector's naked corpse at *Il.* 22.370.[322] αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ in line 181 suggests that this admiration of the stag's body has lasted for a significant pause, enough to need to mark that action is resuming. Of course, the real consequence of the stag's size is that it provides abundant meat:[323]

ὣς τότε μὲν πρόπαν ἦμαρ ἐς ἠέλιον καταδύντα
ἤμεθα δαινύμενοι κρέα τ᾽ ἄσπετα καὶ μέθυ ἡδύ.[324]

Thus then all day long until the setting of the sun
we sat feasting on boundless meat and sweet wine.

While this sumptuous feast precedes the harrowing ordeal of the crew visiting Circe and being transformed into swine, and of Odysseus outsmarting and being seduced by her, it also begins what Bakker calls the "yearlong feast";[325] they will remain on the island willingly for a full year,

[320] Cf. Bakker 2013: 77-78.
[321] *Od.* 10.178-182.
[322] "Odysseus returns the stag to his men not only as a feast described as *erikudea* but also as a trophy—a symbol of successful martial endeavor, the prize for which all heroes strive" (Schmoll 1987: 25).
[323] "[The stag's] function within the narrative is straightforward and does not in itself demand such elaborate interpretation; the incident with the stag belongs to a series of incidents that test the ability of Odysseus and his crew to obtain meat, and so develop central themes of feasting, social order, and leadership" (Scodel 1994: 530).
[324] *Od.* 10.183-184.
[325] Bakker 2013: 85.

and this year seems to be occupied by nothing but eating.[326] The feast provided by the great stag's body is the first of many such meals. Odysseus refuses to eat until Circe restores his men to human form, suggesting that he is well aware of the risks of her world and wants to avoid eating his own friends, but his concern stops there.[327] He (having just had his men turned into pigs and back, and having been afraid that he might be tricked into eating them) and his men (even more astonishingly having *been* transformed into pigs and back and having been at risk of being eaten themselves) eat and eat and eat, either not wondering or already knowing that the animals they consume are quite likely to have human souls.

It starts with eating someone's pet, an understandable mistake given the cultural differences: it wasn't an animal that would normally fit into that category, so it seemed fine. But there is a stretching and slipping of the alimentary code, and the next thing you know you have eaten a talking stag, so to speak. And once you have eaten one, even if you didn't know it at the time, you might let go of your categories altogether and indulge the gnawing, beastly hunger that always plagues you. Eating an animal, eating a human, eating *like* an animal, these are things that are no longer sufficiently distinct to you: what you can eat, what can eat you, and your place in the hierarchy that should always order the world for you, all of these things have come unstuck.

For the whole year that they live with Circe, it seems that they do not sacrifice. There is no direct violation here, since they are ostensibly eating the wild animals of the island, but to go a whole year without sacrificing cannot be a good thing. If sacrifice is how humans communicate with the gods, then Odysseus and his men are quite out of touch. Their escalating deviations from the norms of animal consumption have loosed them into this purgatorial state of always consuming meat and never performing the rites that ought to accompany it in human life. It is no wonder, then, that when the time comes, they devour the meat of immortal cows.

IV. Cows can be Gods

Now the groundwork has been laid for the climactic mistake of meat eating. Let us consider how this episode is a continuation of those discussed previously and how it is marked as different and incalculably worse.

A major difference between the earlier episodes and the crew's visit to Thrinacia is that Odysseus and, in turn, his men are warned about this meat, while their previous transgressions were not so serious that they needed to be pointed out in advance to Odysseus, or to listeners. But Tiresias and Circe, two figures of formidable power and knowledge, both make sure to pinpoint this mistake as the key that will make the difference between coming home with the crew intact and coming home late and badly. This is the only one of the meat mistakes that is grave enough to warrant divine punishment or divine forewarning; and yet the men are susceptible to committing it because of the gradual erosion of their alimentary boundaries that occurred during the previous two long episodes. It seems that the gods do not particularly mind if a person eats someone's pet, nor even if they eat another person, but once they turn their hunger

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[326] The line ἤμεθα δαινύμενοι κρέα τ' ἄσπετα καὶ μέθυ ἡδύ occurs six times in the *Odyssey*: 9.162 (of eating wild goats on Goat Island), 9.557 (of eating Polyphemus' sheep), 10.184 (here, of the stag), 10.468 (of the year spent on the island), 10.477 (of the day before they leave for the underworld), and 12.30 (of the day after they come back from the underworld). All but 10.468 are accompanied by πρόπαν ἦμαρ, "all day long," while 10.468 is specified as ἤματα πάντα τελεσφόρον εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν, "every day for a whole year." Thus, the year on Aeaea, while it contains three specific instances of these sumptuous all-day feasts, also appears as one huge, expanded all-day fest.

[327] *Od.* 10.383-385; see Bakker 2013: 85-86.

upwards on the hierarchy, consuming beings who outrank them, that is a mistake worth noticing and punishing.

First, in the underworld, Tiresias gives a detailed warning that offers two possible outcomes: If the cattle are unharmed, Odysseus may reach home with his companions, but still suffer evils; or, if the cattle are harmed, his companions may die, and he may reach home alone and under unfavorable circumstances. Death is not threatened for Odysseus himself in either scenario. When Circe repeats the warning, it is more detailed, perhaps as a nod to her own parentage: Circe is another daughter of Helios, so Phaethousa and Lampetia are her half-sisters. She has insider knowledge of Thrinacia.

> Θρινακίην δ' ἐς νῆσον ἀφίξεαι· ἔνθα δὲ πολλαὶ
> βόσκοντ' Ἠελίοιο βόες καὶ ἴφια μῆλα.
> ἑπτὰ βοῶν ἀγέλαι, τόσα δ' οἰῶν πώεα καλά,
> πεντήκοντα δ' ἕκαστα. γόνος δ' οὐ γίνεται αὐτῶν,
> οὐδέ ποτε φθινύθουσι. θεαὶ δ' ἐπιποιμένες εἰσί,
> νύμφαι ἐϋπλόκαμοι, Φαέθουσά τε Λαμπετίη τε,
> ἃς τέκεν Ἠελίῳ Ὑπερίονι δῖα Νέαιρα.
> τὰς μὲν ἄρα θρέψασα τεκοῦσά τε πότνια μήτηρ
> Θρινακίην ἐς νῆσον ἀπῴκισε τηλόθι ναίειν,
> μῆλα φυλασσέμεναι πατρώϊα καὶ ἕλικας βοῦς.
> τὰς εἰ μέν κ' ἀσινέας ἐάᾳς νόστου τε μέδηαι,
> ἦ τ' ἂν ἔτ' εἰς Ἰθάκην, κακά περ πάσχοντες, ἵκοισθε·
> εἰ δέ κε σίνηαι, τότε τοι τεκμαίρομ' ὄλεθρον
> [νηΐ τε καὶ ἑτάροισ'. αὐτὸς δ' εἴ πέρ κεν ἀλύξῃς,
> ὀψὲ κακῶς νεῖαι, ὀλέσας ἄπο πάντας ἑταίρους.'][328]
>
> And you will reach the island Thrinacia; and there many
> cows and fat sheep of Helios graze,
> seven herds of cows, and the same number of good flocks of sheep,
> fifty each, and there is no birth of them,
> nor do they ever die, and goddesses are their shepherds,
> lovely-haired nymphs, Phaethousa and Lampetia,
> whom shining Neaira bore to Helios Hyperion,
> whom, having raised and borne them, their mistress mother
> settled on the island Thrinacia to live far away,
> guarding their father's sheep and curly-horned cows.
> If you leave them unharmed and think of your return,
> you could still reach Ithaca, although enduring evils;
> but if you harm them, then I predict death
> for your ship and your companions. But even if you yourself escape,
> you will arrive late and badly, having lost all of your companions.

Circe knows more than Tiresias, explaining how many flocks and how many animals per flock. More importantly, she knows what makes these animals special, not mere favorites or pets like Polyphemus' sheep, but approaching divine status themselves: they do not reproduce and they do

[328] *Od.* 12.127-141.

not die. What is more, their herders are no rustic Cyclopes, but goddesses, Helios' own daughters (who will turn out to play an important part in his all-seeing rule). She finishes with the same two possible outcomes pronounced by Tiresias.

These warnings are issued by powerful figures to Odysseus alone. The work of conveying the warnings to his men falls to him. The next section will engage more rigorously with Odysseus' failure of leadership in these passages, but it is important to note here that he also fails as a messenger. As they approach the island, Odysseus tells them only that it would be better not to land there at all (an option not offered at all by either guide) because of the potential for disaster.[329] When defied, he merely asks that the men swear an oath not to harm the livestock there, without fully telling them why:

> 'ὦ φίλοι, ἐν γὰρ νηῒ θοῇ βρῶσίς τε πόσις τε
> ἔστιν, τῶν δὲ βοῶν ἀπεχώμεθα, μή τι πάθωμεν·
> δεινοῦ γὰρ θεοῦ αἵδε βόες καὶ ἴφια μῆλα,
> Ἠελίου, ὃς πάντ' ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούει.'[330]
>
> "Friends, since there is food and drink in the ship,
> let's keep away from the cows, lest we suffer something;
> for these are the cows and strong sheep of a fearsome god,
> Helios, who sees everything and hears everything."

The reason that he gives for the need not to harm the animals is that they are owned by Helios, repeating Tiresias and Circe's description of Helios' perceptive powers; he describes the flocks as essentially similar to those of Polyphemus, but maybe on a slightly larger scale, since their master, the sun god, is more powerful than a cyclops. The cattle are pets of Helios that should not be harmed because it might lead to "suffering something." He leaves out two important details: First, this is no mere hunch or hint that they may "suffer something." He was told in no uncertain terms that if the cattle are harmed, *all of the men will die*. Second, he does not explain that the cattle are more than just pets of Helios, but rather, they are not supposed to undergo reproduction or death. Both of these details make the command not to touch the cows more persuasive, but he, usually a master of rhetoric, neglects to mention them. This omission is indicative of the slippage that has occurred over the course of their journey. Now that so many errors have been committed and gone unpunished, Odysseus no longer observes the importance of the difference between breaking a relatively minor rule of what one should eat (pets) and a very important one (divine animals). Perhaps this detail would make no difference to his men, since they have experienced the same relaxation of standards; the important thing is that Odysseus, the enforcer of rules and purveyor of important information, does not see this information as grave enough to convey.

When Odysseus extracts the oath, his men comply. But even Circe's provisions run out when they are stranded on the island for a full month. And for a while, they do as they have been told, surviving by hunting fish and birds. This section of the episode shares several lines and themes with Menelaus' story in book 4 of being stranded on Pharos before catching Proteus.[331] Both crews find themselves trapped by unfavorable winds in barren locations, Menelaus' for not

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[329] *Od.* 12.271-276.
[330] *Od.* 12.320-323.
[331] *Od.* 4.360-366.

sacrificing before beginning their journey, Odysseus' for unspecified but imaginable reasons. Menelaus' story has a happy ending: when they are on the verge of starvation, they are assisted by Eidothea, a sympathetic goddess, in catching and consulting Proteus, who both tells them how to remedy their situation and gives them access to divine knowledge about their compatriots. Odysseus seems to be seeking some such divine intervention when he leaves his men to pray, but he receives nothing, and returns to find that his men have defied their oath in his absence and killed the cattle. Both episodes hinge on a group of numbered animals who are special to a divinity: Proteus' seals and Helios' cows. But Menelaus and his men, under Eidothea's guidance, successfully ambush Proteus impersonating four of his seals. Odysseus and his crew are given no such special access or guidance. Phaethousa and Lampetia, Helios' daughters, could fill this role of sympathetic guide, but they do quite the opposite, with Lampetia serving instead as a guard or spy for Helios.

So perhaps the only difference that matters between Odysseus and Menelaus is that the gods are less hostile to Menelaus and do not drive him into as desperate of a situation. But it still seems important that Odysseus' men try to survive on game at first, *under constraint*.

> οἱ δ᾽ ἦος μὲν σῖτον ἔχον καὶ οἶνον ἐρυθρόν,
> τόφρα βοῶν ἀπέχοντο λιλαιόμενοι βιότοιο.
> ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δὴ νηὸς ἐξέφθιτο ἤια πάντα,
> καὶ δὴ ἄγρην ἐφέπεσκον ἀλητεύοντες ἀνάγκῃ,
> ἰχθῦς ὄρνιθάς τε, φίλας ὅ τι χεῖρας ἵκοιτο,
> γναμπτοῖς ἀγκίστροισιν, ἔτειρε δὲ γαστέρα λιμός.[332]
>
> And they, while they had food and red wine,
> Kept away from the cows, valuing their life.
> But indeed, when all the provisions in the ship were used up,
> And indeed they pursued game, hunting under constraint,
> Fish and birds, whatever reached their hands,
> With curved hooks, but hunger wore out their bellies.

It is implied by the mention of λιμός that the wild game is not plentiful enough to sustain the men; and yet even when they hunt at all, they hunt under constraint. Their reluctance to survive on game, and their relative willingness to eat the divine cows when they know that it means their death, suggests a further confusion of categories: game is unpleasant but unproblematic. The cows are delicious but forbidden. But for these men, who have gradually let go of their understanding of what is and is not to be eaten, the cows are preferable.[333] After visiting the Cyclops, they chose to eat stolen pet-animals rather than continue to eat the plentiful wild goats of Goat Island;[334] on Aeaea, they ate meat all year long, although presumably they could have eaten vegetable food while they were there, since Circe had barley with which to make *kukeon*. They have embraced a hedonistic, nihilistic way of eating, and in this situation, it matters:

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[332] *Od.* 12.327-332.

[333] See Vidal-Naquet 1981: 88: "While Odysseus and his companions have bread and wine, they respect the interdict (12.327-9), but with their supplies exhausted they must make a choice, between wild nature—to hunt and fish (the legitimate alternative, which Odysseus chooses: 12.330-2)—and the forbidden herds, which involves the sacrifice, the classification as 'domestic', of animal which they have to capture, to bring in from the wild. This latter is the choice of Odysseus's companions (12.343-65)."

[334] Bakker 2013: 104.

choosing the more pleasurable but less acceptable option now is not an issue of breaking a social norm or feeling strange; it elicits punishment from the gods and threatens to upset the fabric of reality.[335]

I will discuss Eurylochus' speech in more detail in the next chapter, but for now, it is helpful to realize that his argument is essentially a nihilistic one. He acknowledges three possibilities: that they will not be punished and will atone for the theft later; that they will starve; or that they will drown. There is no mention in his speech of the outcome Odysseus champions: that they will withstand the famine until they can leave. This essentially makes it a non-choice: as presented by him, the only outcome of restraint is starvation, so why not just accept drowning along with the possibility of getting off scot-free? The failure of this sacrifice on every level has been amply noticed and described—oak leaves for barley and water for wine—but I might add that these substitutions are yet another instance of Odysseus' men confusing their categories. Even as they substitute divine flesh for mortal animal flesh, they also substitute leaves and water—starvation foods—for barley and wine, the civilized vegetable components of a sacrifice.[336]

But before we see the sacrifice completed and the flesh eaten, an incongruous interlude puts the narrative of the corrupted sacrifice on hold. Before Odysseus returns and sees the sorry state of his men, the story turns to a stunning moment of divine drama. The situation rapidly escalates from minor to major to most as Lampetia informs Helios what has happened, Helios complains to Zeus, and Zeus promises to punish the men. The content of Helios and Zeus' exchange is important as well:

> 'Ζεῦ πάτερ ἠδ' ἄλλοι μάκαρες θεοὶ αἰὲν ἐόντες,
> τεῖσαι δὴ ἑτάρους Λαερτιάδεω Ὀδυσῆος,
> οἵ μευ βοῦς ἔκτειναν ὑπέρβιον, ᾗσιν ἐγώ γε
> χαίρεσκον μὲν ἰὼν εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντα,
> ἠδ' ὁπότ' ἂψ ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἀπ' οὐρανόθεν προτραποίμην.
> εἰ δέ μοι οὐ τείσουσι βοῶν ἐπιεικέ' ἀμοιβήν,
> δύσομαι εἰς Ἀΐδαο καὶ ἐν νεκύεσσι φαείνω.'[337]
>
> "Father Zeus and the other blessed gods who live forever,
> pay back now the companions of Odysseus son of Laertes,
> who arrogantly killed my cows, in which I
> used to rejoice when I went into starry heaven,
> and whenever I turned back to the earth from heaven.
> But if they do not pay me a fitting recompense for the cows,
> I will sink down into the house of Hades and shine among the corpses."

Helios' threat to relocate to Hades is particularly interesting; the idea of the sun abandoning the earth and humans for the underworld and the dead speaks of a cosmic upheaval.[338] This is a

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[335] "The animals are literally immortal, the crime is not an infraction of the rules of a sanctuary or for the management of sacred land, but a direct, personal offense to an important divinity, and the punishment is not a fine, but total annihilation" (Bakker 2013: 102-103).
[336] See e.g., Vernant 1989b: 166.
[337] *Od.* 12.377-383.
[338] Bakker 2013: 110.

matter of life and death, not only for Odysseus and his crew, but, if Helios is serious, for all humans. Consider the frequent usage in Homer of φάος ἠελίοιο as a metonym for life: to λείψειν φάος ἠελίοιο is to die, while to ὁρᾶν φάος ἠελίοιο is to live.[339] The somewhat unnatural insertion of this interlude into the human drama of the sacrifice (Odysseus attempts to excuse it by explaining that he heard about it later from Calypso) is due to its importance in understanding the significance of the episode.[340] After the men have killed the cows, but before they eat them, the poet tells us: This is a violation so major that the gods must get involved. This is a violation so major that it threatens life itself. This is a violation of the whole world.

With this new insider knowledge, listeners enter back into the narrative of the sacrifice, now fully aware that this is no mere rejected ram or accident of cannibalism. And right on cue, the bodies of the cows reveal their true nature, moving and vocalizing:

> αὐτὰρ ἐπεί ῥ’ ἐπὶ νῆα κατήλυθον ἠδὲ θάλασσαν,
> νείκεον ἄλλοθεν ἄλλον ἐπισταδόν, οὐδέ τι μῆχος
> εὑρέμεναι δυνάμεσθα· βόες δ’ ἀποτέθνασαν ἤδη.
> τοῖσιν δ’ αὐτίκ’ ἔπειτα θεοὶ τέραα προὔφαινον·
> εἶρπον μὲν ῥινοί, κρέα δ’ ἀμφ’ ὀβελοῖσ’ ἐμεμύκει,
> ὀπταλέα τε καὶ ὠμά· βοῶν δ’ ὡς γίνετο φωνή.[341]
>
> But when I came back to the ship and the sea,
> they were fighting one with another, standing around, and we were not
> able to find any solution; but the cows were already dead.
> And right away then, the gods showed forth signs to them:
> the hides crawled, and the meat mooed on the spits,
> both roasted and raw; and it was like the voice of the cows.

The scene remarkably brings together the finality and the impossibility of the act. There is no way to undo the crime that they have done, for *the cows are already dead*; meanwhile, the portents sent by the gods to signal to them that they have gotten themselves into trouble are themselves reminders of the cows’ special undying status. Movement and voice, the two defining features of living beings, are still in the bodies of the cows. Their lives cannot be gotten back, but at the same time, their death, or rather their deadness, is not stable.[342] Perhaps it is not the sacrifice itself of these strange divine animals that demonstrates the greatest abandonment of alimentary codes, but the continued eating of them for six days after the nauseating sight of the cows’ skins crawling and the horrifying sound of their meat moaning as it roasts. The men have lost so much of what they once knew about what humans should eat that by now neither the thought of eating a pet nor the threat of cannibalism nor the threat of capital punishment nor even the threat of cosmic crisis is enough to restrain their appetite.

To circle back to the original premise of this section—that the consumption of the cattle of Helios is the result of a gradual breakdown of empathy with animals and the codified

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[339] See *Il.* 5.120, 18.11, 18.61, 18.442, 24.558; *Od.* 4.540, 4.833, 10.498, 14.44, 20.207.
[340] *Od.* 12.398-90.
[341] *Od.* 12.391-396.
[342] “The pieces of flesh on the skewers low, whether they are roasted or still raw, as if the distinction between raw and cooked disappears along with the line between living and dead, when the opposition between wild and domesticated, sacrifice and hunt, is not respected” (Vernant 1989b: 166).

worldview that this empathy supports—the idea is that a normal person's correct degree of empathy with animals in the real world should be enough to distinguish between animals that are eaten (cows, etc.) and animals that are not (dogs, etc.). In the Otherworld, these restrictions should logically extend to apply even more strongly to higher categories of animals, such as animals that exhibit human qualities, animals that may actually be transformed humans, and animals that exhibit divine qualities. However, because of the confusing experiences they have undergone during their time in the Otherworld, Odysseus and the crew have restricted their sense of empathy rather than extending it. Instead of creating new, higher categories for kinds of animals that are even more important not to eat than pets, they have thrown away their categories altogether and assimilated all animals into the category of animals that are eaten.

Chapter Four
Eat the Rich: Eurylochus, the Cattle of Helios, and the Class Politics of Meat

In books 9-12 of the *Odyssey*, the hero relates his journey from Troy to Ogygia. He leaves Troy with twelve ships full of men, but three years later when he reaches Ogygia, he is alone. In a way, the story Odysseus tells to the Phaeacians is the story of the gradual whittling away of his crew, the shedding of unnecessary companions that must occur for the hero to become the solitary wanderer we know he is destined to be.[343] The proem tells us that he could not save his companions, though he tried, because they died by their own recklessness when they ate the cattle of the sun.[344] And indeed, the last of them did perish at the hands of Zeus for eating the stolen cattle of Helios. Most of them, though, died sooner, lost by the half-dozen or the hundred in the course of his adventures, sometimes defying orders, sometimes following them. But it is the deaths of the last remaining companions on Thrinacia, marked out as important by their mention in the proem and by their place at the end of the *apologoi*, that concern me here. The companions have traditionally been interpreted as, on the one hand, simply foolish, always stumbling into danger due to their uncontrolled appetites, and on the other hand, deeply culpable of mutiny and sacrilege.[345] Their leader, Eurylochus, is usually seen as a malicious instigator.[346] At best, commentators might concede that the companions act under constraint at Thrinacia, having no other options for survival.[347]

In the previous chapter, I suggested that the companions die as a result of their loss of empathy with animals. In this chapter, I will interpret the actions of the companions not in relation to animals, but in terms of power relationships between humans. This reading will make better sense of the companions' actions under Eurylochus' leadership by allowing for the possibility that the *Odyssey*'s audiences would likely have sympathized with its nonelite characters much of the time.[348] I follow Mark Buchan's suggestion to read the text "from the perspective of its victims," as well as Ben Radcliffe's idea that the companions "model for audiences a mode of narrative experience that resists the epic's centripetal orientation around the *nostos* of its elite protagonist."[349] If we read resistantly, paying attention to dynamics of power,

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[343] See McInerney 2010: 93.
[344] *Od.* 1.6-9.
[345] See e.g., Nagler 1990: 339-341; Scodel 2002: 198; McInerney 2010: 94; Bakker 2013: 101-108; Stocking 2017: 137-140.
[346] E.g., Radcliffe 2021: 197 n.53.
[347] E.g., Clay 1983: 230.
[348] While Homeric epic is often thought of as pro-elite in its ideology (see e.g., Morris 1986: 123-124), some have argued that "despite their dedication to the value-system of the warrior-nobility, the Homeric epics reveal significant traces of an anti-aristocratic tradition" (Donlan 1973: 150; see also ibid. 154). Dalby even argues that epic should be seen "as the projection into wealthy society of the world view of quite humble people: 'Homeric society' is built on the perceptions of the poorest, the least aristocratic, the least powerful of eighth century Greeks" (1995: 279). Scodel asserts that "the notional audience… extends through the social scale," that "the most important remaining difference among audience members is, crudely put, that between elite and nonelite," and that "the epics try to include everyone… those who are content with local aristocrats and those who hate them" (2002: 178; 176; viii).
[349] Buchan 2004: 133; Radcliffe 2021: 179. Radcliffe (2021: 185) follows Peradotto in applying the Bakhtinian terms "centripetal" ("forces in any language or culture that exert a unifying, centralizing, homogenizing and hierarchizing influence; such forces tend to be closely associated with dominant political power, with the official and heroic, with 'high' literary genres and 'correct' language") and "centrifugal" ("forces which exert a disunifying, decentralizing, stratifying, denormatizing influence; these forces tend to be associated with the disempowered, the popular and carnivalesque, with antics of the trickster, rogue, and outlaw, with 'low' literary genres and dialects") to the two dominant narrative tendencies of the *Odyssey* (Peradotto 1990: 52). Cf. Finnegan's suggestion that oral

food, and violence, we will find that the companions' slaughter of the cattle of Helios is not the last in a series of avoidable follies that gets them rightly killed, but rather, the culmination of tension between Odysseus and his crew that has been building throughout the *apologoi*. Eurylochus is neither a fool nor a villain, but a more Promethean figure, a folk hero who is bold and cunning enough to challenge Odysseus on behalf of the crew. He persuades them to eat the cattle not out of mere desperation, but in the vain hope that this catastrophic meal might bring their arrogant captain down with them.

In my first section, I will establish a theoretical framework for thinking about the functions of meat and violence in Homeric poetry. Drawing on ideas from anthropologist Maurice Bloch and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, and applying these ideas to test-case episodes from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, I will show that meat is a locus of power in the Homeric world, but that its power is understood very differently by elite and nonelite characters because of their differing experiences of the passage of time. In the second section, I will trace the intensifying conflict between Odysseus and the crew across the episodes of the *apologoi*, finding that Odysseus consistently prioritizes his *nostos* and the accumulation of wealth and stories over the sustenance and safety sought by the crew. Finally, in the third section, I will analyze the persuasive speeches of Odysseus and Eurylochus in book 12, demonstrating how each man's rhetorical strategy is informed by his class position: Odysseus' leadership finally fails because of his reliance on his heroic-aristocratic status, while Eurylochus draws the men into his rebellion by engaging them with more immediate and material language.

I. Approaches to Meat and Violence

It will be helpful to begin by establishing a framework for thinking about the interconnections between meat, violence, and social class. One model for thinking about meat and its relationship to violence is offered by Maurice Bloch in *Prey into Hunter*. Bloch proposes a single matrix underlying many rituals across cultures, summarized as follows:

> Firstly, there is a representation of a bifurcation of life between an exaggeratedly chaotic vitality and a transcendental, permanent order which is the basis for institutions. Secondly, there is a representation of the abandonment of chaotic vitality, an abandonment which is caused by an attack on the vital chaotic aspect of the self or of the community. Thirdly, we have a triumphalist recovery of mastered and consumed vitality obtained from an external source.[350]

As his paradigmatic example of this matrix, he presents the initiation ritual of the Orokaiva people of New Guinea:

> …the elders organise a ritual in which the children to be initiated are first associated with pigs, creatures which are seen as very similar to them, and… as pigs the initiates are hunted and symbolically killed by masked men representing ancestral spirits or birds. Then, the initiates are isolated in a dark hut in the forest, where it is said that they, like all

poetry is well suited to serve multiple ideological ends, whether "to uphold the *status quo*" or "to pressurize authority or express and consolidate the views of minority and dissident groups" (1992: 242-243).

[350] Bloch 1992: 43; see also ibid. 5.

> those who have gone beyond death, have themselves become a kind of spirit. Finally, the children re-emerge and return from the world of the spirits. They re-emerge associated with the spirits which initially killed them, as hunters and consumers of pigs. However, at this stage the pigs which the initiate will hunt are real pigs. From being conquered and consumed as though they were pigs, the initiates have become conquerors and consumers of pigs and of everything which the pigs evoke: vitality, strength, production, wealth and reproduction.[351]

He unpacks the alternation between participants' symbolic association with the birdlike spirits, which lack "pig-like mortal bodies," but "are nonetheless very much like people" in that they have language, personality, and motivation, and with pigs, with whom humans share "attributes such as bodies, grease, sexuality and death."[352] Pigs are present as companion animals in daily life, but always bound for eventual slaughter, hence "pigs inform all activities with the inseparability of human life and death."[353] The children, by becoming pigs, playing the victims of a symbolic hunt, and experiencing a ritual death, are distanced from this idea of mortality and brought nearer to the superiority and immortality of the spirits.

A full identification with the spirits, however, is not tenable: "If mortal, pig-like village existence can be escaped by dying as a village pig and becoming a bird-like spirit, this cannot be a complete solution for living humans… They must also stay alive in the village environment with pigs and domesticity, with agriculture and with birth and death."[354] Thus, the return to normal life is marked by the killing and eating of pigs.

> But when the children return from their time spent in the bush as spirits they must regain the pig element in the form of conquered food, for example the meat of the real pigs which have really been threatened and killed. This regained pig element is therefore not identical to the internal pig which had been violently taken from them in the first part of the ritual. Now, in the second half of the ritual, it is external pig which they incorporate.[355]

This violence and consumption are essential for the participants to become masters of their condition as mortal beings. "In the return the transcendental is not left behind but continues to be attached to those who made the initial move in its direction; its value is not negated. Secondly, the return to the here and now is really a conquest of the here and now by the transcendental."[356] Once they have returned to mortal life with this mastery of "conquered vitality," they are not only superior to animals, but also to other humans; the ritual is often a precursor to raids against neighbors, which Bloch calls "rebounding violence."[357]

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[351] Bloch 1992: 24.
[352] Bloch 1992: 12.
[353] Bloch 1992: 11.
[354] Bloch 1992: 15.
[355] Bloch 1992: 16.
[356] Bloch 1992: 5.
[357] "The place of the pigs in the hunt and the dances of the emerging initiates is therefore interchangeable with that of killed enemies, who in the past were also eaten, and it is no accident that the same word is used by the Orokaiva for the killing of pigs and humans and for no other living beings" Bloch 1992: 18. "Rebounding violence" ibid. 6.

While this is an initiation ritual, Bloch applies the matrix he derives from it to rituals of many kinds.[358] What is useful to us, in turn, is not its application to ritual, but the relationship Bloch traces between animal meat, violence, and human mortality, which resonates with the function of meat in archaic epic. He elaborates upon the political importance of meat in the real world:

> Indeed it is only when we bear in mind the significance of the exchange of pig meat for building up political alliances and followings as well as for obtaining wives that we fully grasp what is evoked in a culture such as this by the recovery of external pig meat in exchange for the loss of natal pig. Pig meat thus comes to stand for strength in this world, which is believed to come not only from the nutritional effect of the meat, especially the fat, but also from strength-giving political and affinal exchange relationships which are created and maintained by the exchange of pork.[359]

It is not hard to find examples of this idea in the world of archaic epic: that meat stands for "strength in this world," not only due to its nutritional value, but because of the violence (against animals or fellow humans) through which it is obtained, the distance that this violence creates between humans and their sense of their own mortality, and its exchange value for strengthening political relationships. From the Iliadic economy of abundant plundered meat, to the *Odyssey*'s obsession with limited quantities of food and cattle, to Hesiod's contest of power between Zeus and Prometheus, which plays out in the arena of control over the distribution of meat to humans, meat is often a site of contestation for dominance in these texts.[360]

In his famous speech to Glaucus in *Iliad* 12, for example, Sarpedon names the best cuts of meat among the privileges granted to kings by their people in exchange for their bravery in battle.[361] He imagines this statement in the mouth of a common Lycian soldier whose potential approval or disapproval motivates him to fight in the front lines.[362] What is more, he asserts that fighting would not be necessary if he were immortal, but that since he must die, the fame he gains through his glorious performance in battle serves as a sufficient consolation.[363] Each element of Bloch's matrix is present here: the Lycians perform sacrifices, enacting ritualized violence upon animals that asserts their superiority to them, and granting a special status to their chief by reserving the best meat for him. The chief then stands as protector of his people, enacting rebounding violence upon their enemies. He is superior not only to the animals he consumes, but also to his fellow humans, both his compatriots who give him the best meat, and the enemies who become animal-like when he slaughters them. Still, his godlike superiority does

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[358] "… this simple pattern applies well beyond initiation and has much greater significance for our understanding of the nature of human beings than it does merely as a recurrent feature of a special type of ritual. The dramatic transformation of prey into hunter, which we saw among the Orokaiva, underlies in different forms the practices which can easily be subsumed under the English word 'religion,' as well as many practices which cannot" (Bloch 1992: 10).

[359] Bloch 1992: 16.

[360] See Bakker 2013: 37 and 51-52.

[361] *Il.* 12.310-328. See Thalmann (1988: 5) on how this speech constitutes an expression of class ideology: "Sarpedon expresses perceptions of an unequal economic and social arrangement on the part of his own class and the lower orders (at least as he represents their perspective)."

[362] As Ruth Scodel points out, these elites want "to be seen as a meritocracy" (2002: 208). "This view projects onto the common people what the elite would like them to think; but it also gives them a basis on which to blame the elite" (ibid. 194). See Sutherland 1979: 511 on the idea that the nameless soldier's statement is a veiled threat.

[363] *Il.* 12.322-328.

not extend to immortality, and his awareness of this motivates him to assert his superiority in the physical realm, accepting this domination as a substitute for immortality.[364]

Similarly, in *Odyssey* 18, meat is closely tied to another contest for domination: the one between Odysseus and the beggar Irus, the victor of which will be rewarded by the suitors with a roasted goat stomach.[365] This fight is a game staged by the suitors for their entertainment, but the stakes are quite real for Irus, who is truly destitute and hungry, and Odysseus, who is temporarily compelled to endure the conditions of poverty in order to maintain his disguise as a beggar.[366] Antinous, the leader of the suitors, baits the beggars into fighting by appealing to their hunger, offering them one of the goat stomachs (*gasteres*) they are roasting over the fire, to which Odysseus responds that his stomach (*gaster*) compels him to fight even though he knows that he cannot win.[367] The beggars, in their hunger, are assimilated to the animal meat that they will later consume, not unlike the Orokaiva children playing the role of pigs in the mock hunt. They are made even more animal-like by the insults they fling at each other: Irus compares Odysseus to a pig when he challenges him, Antinous threatens Irus with an insulting name that seems to be related to an ox (*bougaios)*, and even Irus' given name, Arnaios, may refer to a lamb (*arnos*).[368] When Odysseus strikes Irus, the blow is described in language that evokes sacrifice, and Irus is compared to a dying ox when he falls.[369] What is more, Antinous threatens the loser with being sent away to Echetus, a threatening figure residing on the mainland,

> ὅς κ᾽ ἀπὸ ῥῖνα τάμῃσι καὶ οὔατα νηλέϊ χαλκῷ,
> μήδεά τ᾽ ἐξερύσας δώῃ κυσὶν ὠμὰ δάσασθαι.[370]
>
> Who would cut off your nose and ears with pitiless bronze,
> And after tearing off your genitals, would give them raw to dogs to eat.

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[364] "In the first half Sarpedon praises the warrior's role; in it, he says, a man becomes godlike. In the second half Sarpedon (as it were) steps back from his own picture and says: all this is only a social illusion. The hero may appear godlike, but he is only mortal. But this shift of perspective enables Sarpedon to justify heroism in another way. Man dies in any case, but he can choose to die well. He becomes a hero because he cannot become a god" (Redfield 1975: 101). Thalmann goes as far as to say that this section of the speech "in effect [denies] that economic and social relations, as Sarpedon has represented them, are the determining reason to fight. They are displaced, without, of course, being abolished, by a metaphysical explanation: the inevitability of death, and the consequent need to die with glory. The implied claim is that the hero ultimately does not risk his life for material rewards (which remain a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for his fighting) but for intangible values. Insofar as this explanation, for Sarpedon himself as well as for his peers, disguises other reasons for fighting, it is ideological. We therefore see the ideological character of the heroic ideal, of which this passage is a key statement" (1988: 5-6).

[365] *Od.* 18.43-49.

[366] Thalmann makes similar connections, although not bringing up the Sarpedon episode specifically, proposing that this fight between beggars "anticipates the contest of the bow on a lower social level" and that "the whole episode is, in fact, a reduction of heroic duels" (1998: 100; 101).

[367] *Od.* 18. 44, 53; see Thalmann 1998: 102 and Steiner 2010: 162-163 on the "γαστήρ motif" here and throughout the poem. Note that line 47, τάων ἥν κ᾽ ἐθέλῃσιν ἀναστὰς αὐτὸς ἐλέσθω, is close in meaning to Hes. *Th.* 549, τῶν δ᾽ ἔλε᾽, ὁπποτέρην σε ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θυμὸς ἀνώγει, Prometheus' response to Zeus' complaint about the unequal shares of the ox. Considering the prominence of the γαστήρ in both episodes, it seems that the specter of Mecone is present here as well, and again Odysseus finds himself in the role of Zeus. Cf. Bakker 2013: 137 on the resonances of γαστήρ, Prometheus, and deception in this scene.

[368] *Od.* 18.29, 79, 5; see Cunliffe on βουγάϊος; Thalmann 1998: 106; Steiner 2010: 161, 168, 156.

[369] *Od.* 18.103-106; McInerney 2010: 95.

[370] *Od.* 18.83-87.

The beggars are likened to food, to animals, and even to food for animals.[371] The loser stands to suffer from rebounding violence, becoming more like the pigs and enemies of the Orokaiva, while the winner stands to consume the vitality of the goat stomach, becoming stronger through its nourishment while also building a political relationship of sorts with the men who offer him both violence and meat.[372] If meat signifies "strength in this world," then the contest of blows between Odysseus and Irus shows how this idea operates in a contest between rivals.[373] Irus initially has the favor of the suitors, i.e., the political relationship and the meat scraps that it guarantees, but loses both of these and becomes potential food for dogs when he is proven the weaker fighter.[374]

The story of Odysseus and his companions on Thrinacia is not, however, only concerned with meat as such; it is particularly interested in the unequal distribution of meat among a group of humans. For this reason, it will be helpful to supplement and complicate Bloch's matrix of vitality with ideas from French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu about the complex relationship between food, social class, time, and pleasure. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* Bourdieu documents the spending habits of people of various professions in France, noting that on average the working class spends more income on food than the professional class does. He explains this as a working-class preference for pleasure over self-denial and collectivism over individualism:

> The art of eating and drinking remains one of the few areas in which the working classes explicitly challenge the legitimate art of living. In the face of the new ethic of sobriety for the sake of slimness, which is most recognized at the highest levels of the social hierarchy, peasants and especially industrial workers maintain an ethic of convivial indulgence. A bon vivant is not just someone who enjoys eating and drinking; he is someone capable of entering into the generous and familiar—that is, both simple and free—relationship that is encouraged and symbolized by eating and drinking together, in a conviviality which sweeps away restraints and reticence.[375]

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[371] See Nagy (1979: 228-232) for the many connections between Irus and the figure of the blame poet. Payne (2010: 27-39) gives a detailed discussion of the connection between animal imagery, abjection, humiliation, and aggression in Archilochus and Hipponax, and all of these elements are present here. Given this cluster of animal-related insults, it seems likely that this section is in dialogue with the tradition of abuse poetry. See also Steiner 2010: 171.

[372] As Steiner notes, the end of line 87 is identical to what Achilles tells the shade of Patroclus he will do with Hector's corpse at *Il.* 23.21 (2010: 170).

[373] Another episode that conforms closely to Bloch's scheme is the narrative of Odysseus' scar in at 19.428-466. His only true mark of identity is the scar that he received from a boar on a coming-of-age hunting expedition with his maternal grandfather and other male relatives. The boar wounds him in the leg, but he kills the boar, and as a result receives care (including a spell—ἐπαοιδή, 19.457—to stop the bleeding) and gifts from his grandfather and uncles and gains a story that he can repeat when asked about the scar. Young Odysseus briefly inhabits the role of a hunted animal when he is wounded by the boar, but successfully transforms the violence he suffers into rebounding violence, both against the boar and against all future adversaries. See Peradotto 1990: 94 on the centrality of the boar hunt to Odysseus' identity.

[374] Rose argues that the episode's indictment of bad oligarchs in the form of the suitors outweighs any condemnation of lazy beggars in the form of Irus (1975: 144), while Thalmann disagrees: "And if one looks past the obvious effects of the scene—the implicit condemnation of the suitors and the vindication of Odysseus through a display of his true qualities in contrast to Iros's cowardice—it is surprising, and unsettling, that the real beggar is depicted with such hostility, as a vacuous braggart" (1998: 101). I must agree with Thalmann that the portrayal of Irus seems quite hostile to members of the lower classes who exhibit any boldness or self-importance. See also Steiner 2010: 154 for a good discussion of "the poem's variegated ideological orientation" in this episode.

[375] Bourdieu 1984: 179.

For the upper classes, in contrast, "The disappearance of economic constraints is accompanied by a strengthening of the social censorships which forbid coarseness and fatness, in favour of slimness and distinction."[376] Each of these attitudes, he argues, is grounded in a different conception of time, with the working classes viewing the future as less certain, and therefore less worth considering in these decisions, while the upper classes, who are confident in their own survival and stability, feel compelled to counterbalance present pleasures against future rewards:

> When it is noted that the reduced spending on food, especially on the most earthly, earthy, down to-earth foods, is accompanied by a lower birth-rate, it is reasonable to suppose that it constitutes one aspect of an overall transformation of the relationship to the world. The 'modest' taste which can defer its gratifications is opposed to the spontaneous materialism of the working classes, who refuse to participate in the Benthamite calculation of pleasures and pains, benefits and costs (e.g., for health and beauty). In other words, these two relations to the 'fruits of the earth' are grounded in two dispositions towards the future which are themselves related in circular causality to two objective futures… the propensity to subordinate present desires to future desires depends on the extent to which this sacrifice is 'reasonable', that is, on the likelihood, in any case, of obtaining future satisfactions superior to those sacrificed.[377]

He then aligns these distinct "dispositions towards the future" with the individualism of the upper classes and the relative collectivism of working people, positing that

> The being-in-the-present which is affirmed in the readiness to take advantage of the good times and take time as it comes is, in itself, an affirmation of solidarity with others (who are often the only present guarantee against the threats of the future), inasmuch as this temporal immanentism is a recognition of the limits which define the condition.[378]

Bourdieu's formulation of eating habits as a manifestation of one's relationship to the world, and especially to the passage of time, with elites practicing self-restraint because of their confidence in the future and in their individual success, and more precarious workers indulging their appetites because they have less to lose or gain by doing so, maps easily onto the behaviors of characters in the *Odyssey*. The companions, as Odysseus describes them, are famously hungry and unrestrained, always eating even when it puts them in danger.[379] Odysseus, on the other hand, is always in control of his appetites, subordinating his physical needs to the *telos* of his current scheme or to the greater *telos* of his homecoming.[380] On the rare occasions when he gives

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[376] Bourdieu 1984: 185.
[377] Bourdieu 1984: 180.
[378] Bourdieu 1984: 183.
[379] Bakker argues that throughout the wanderings, "Odysseus and the Companions are opposed to each other in relation to food… The Companions' nutritional needs are no greater than Odysseus', but they are mindlessly compulsive eaters, prone to error due to their cravings and extremely vulnerable to temptation" (2013: 129).
[380] See Peradotto 1990: 87.

in to the needs of his body, it is exhaustion from his state of constant vigilance, rather than hunger, that overcomes him.[381]

To return to the test-case episodes of meat and violence introduced above, they also respond well to reading with Bourdieu. In the case of Sarpedon, he first names fine cuts of meat among the rewards given to kings by their subjects, then seems to distance himself from the material reality of this reward by supplementing it with the idea of military glory as a substitute for immortality.[382] He does not fight for the meat itself, he seems to be saying, but for the moral and political relationship that it signifies; he then further revises his reason for fighting into an even more abstract desire for a good reputation, since being remembered for one's great deeds is the only consolation against death.[383] He has faith in the idea that he is an important enough man to be remembered, and the promise of this future reward is enough to justify his present sacrifice of fighting in the front ranks.[384] And as it happens, his bravery is rewarded with a glorious death, marked by bloody rain from Zeus, and a highly refined burial, which the gods say is the best possible end for a mortal.[385]

Conversely, in the case of Odysseus and Irus, the threats and rewards of their fight are immediate and material.[386] They fight against each other not in pursuit of some grand ambition or ideal, but out of hard necessity, for the sake of a single, markedly coarse meal, and the privilege of eating scraps in Odysseus' house in the near future.[387] The loser stands to be deprived of this and future meals, to be mutilated beyond recognition, and to be fed to dogs.[388] The two beggars are pitted against each other by the elite suitors, but they are joined in their willingness to put their bodies and lives at stake in order to enjoy a rich, fatty, bloody, meaty meal.[389] To be fair, any alignment between them is ultimately false, since Odysseus is a false beggar, assured of the gods' favor and confident in his own eventual restoration as king and master of the house. But in the moment of the scene, he inhabits the life of a beggar and performs the interconnected hunger and risk-taking entailed by this social position.

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[381] See Radcliffe 2021: 192 on Odysseus' "authoritarian tendency" and "unwilling[ness] to share the responsibility with his crew" leading him to steer the ship for nine days without rest, which leads in turn to his untimely sleep and the release of the winds (*Od.* 10.28-33).

[382] Thalmann points out that in Sarpedon's imagination, the soldier only discusses the glory of the *basileis*, not their physical risks: "Aristocrats exist to act aristocratically by gaining glory (*kleos*); that is enough justification for an unequal distribution of goods in the eyes of this hypothetical Lycian, who has been coopted into the conceptual framework that justifies this system" (1998: 263).

[383] "The two types of compensation, meat and glory, are in fact interrelated: the privilege to enjoy choice meats is for the hero while he is alive what *kleos* is for him after his death" (Bakker 2013: 37). See also Redfield 1975: 101.

[384] ""The heroes, to be sure, need the gods to win that glory and immortal fame which compensates at least in part for their mortality. But the promise of undying glory is neither proffered nor pursued by the common run of mankind, who must, willy-nilly, resign themselves to their mortality" (Clay 1983: 238).

[385] *Il.* 16.457, 675.

[386] "Indeed, as the suitors are inappropriately disembodied, vicariously enjoying the dangers of competition as spectators, the two combatants become excessively bodily" (Kurke 1999: 257).

[387] Thalmann asserts, comparing this with the heroic duels of the *Iliad*, "Above all the stakes are not honor but who will have the right to beg in this house, and more immediately a pudding set as prize" (1998: 102). See also Steiner 2010: 157, 162, 165, 172 on the similarities of this fist fight to an Iliadic duel.

[388] As McInerney points out, the suitors' "hospitality is conditional, as imperfect as their gluttony" (2010: 95).

[389] "The *Odyssey*'s pattern of game and real violence constitutes an ideology of embodiment: noble men themselves make contact with *xeinoi*, participate in war or in the elegant athleticism of the Phaiakians. The suitors, in contrast, reveal their inadequacy in this system by their predilection for substitution" (Kurke 1999: 260).

II. The Captain and the First Mate

With this framework in mind, let us now consider the dynamic that develops between Odysseus and his crew throughout the course of the *apologoi* and how Eurylochus emerges as a rival figure of leadership. As we will see, the pattern established across these episodes is for Odysseus to control his crew's access to food (and to dictate when they become food), while Eurylochus offers resistance and gives voice to their ordinary concerns about hunger, safety, and fatigue. We should also keep in mind that these books are narrated not by the omniscient narrator, but by Odysseus to his Phaiacian audience, and that the episodes are framed accordingly to position Odysseus' needs and desires as inevitable and necessary, and those of his crew as reckless and frivolous.[390]

From the very beginning of book nine, this dynamic begins to take shape. The unfortunate raid on the Cicones, where the companions' refusal to flee makes them vulnerable to a counter-raid by the locals, establishes the expectations that Odysseus would like his audience always to keep in mind: that his crew is short-sighted and foolish, driven by their appetites even when this leads them into direct danger, while he is sensible and strategic, trying against the odds to keep his unruly crew out of harm's way and failing only because of their incompetence and insubordination.[391] The crew behaves in a manner we could compare to Bloch's uninitiated: they inhabit the realm of pigs, eating wantonly without converting the meat into the consumed vitality that would allow them to enact rebounding violence against the Cicones, instead making themselves easy targets for the townspeople.

In the following episode, when the crew meets the Lotus-Eaters, we can see how Odysseus' framing of his own and the crew's actions exerts itself on the audience's perception of events. The natives of the island welcome his men and offer them the abundant, delicious fruit of the lotus, and the men wish to stay, but Odysseus drags them back to the ship and compels them to continue the journey. His narration suggests an analogy with the previous episode of the Cicones: the crew are led by their bellies into a dangerous situation from which their shrewd leader must rescue them. The particulars of this situation are, however, in many ways the reverse of what happened with the Cicones. The men are not forcibly taking meat from unwilling villagers, risking violence in return, but receiving vegetable food from generous hosts. Their reluctance to leave when ordered comes not from apathy towards danger, but from a desire for safety, nourishment, and rest. When Odysseus drags his companions back to the ship, it is in his role as "enforcer of social stratification and division"; he does not only drag them back into the journey homewards, but also away from the perfect egalitarian feast.[392] As Radcliffe has suggested, the Lotus-Eaters' vegetarian diet is marked out against the meat-dividing norms of Homeric society as anti-hierarchical, while the abundance of the lotus and the inclusivity of the community of Lotus-Eaters "represents a form of utopian commensality."[393] Odysseus' narration aligns himself with reason and safety, but it is not evident that the course of action he orders is the safer one. Rather, he always prioritizes the *nostos*, the far-off homecoming day, over the

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[390] "Odysseus has indeed succeeded in charming his hearers, but he has been talking about himself and describing adventures in which he played the leading role. Moreover, Odysseus speaks not only from the perspective of his own actions and experiences, but also with the benefit of hindsight" (Clay 1983: 24).

[391] Bakker argues that throughout the wanderings, "Odysseus and the Companions are opposed to each other in relation to food… The Companions' nutritional needs are no greater than Odysseus', but they are mindlessly compulsive eaters, prone to error due to their cravings and extremely vulnerable to temptation" (2013: 129).

[392] Radcliffe 2021: 204.

[393] Radcliffe 2021: 204; 198.

present possibility of safety.[394] Just as Bourdieu's analysis would predict, Odysseus displays the bourgeois willingness to defer present gratification for the promise of future rewards, while the men of the crew wish only to enjoy what they can when they can, having far less reason to believe in a *nostos* they may never see.[395] After all, the *nostos* in the service of which all these men will die is not theirs, but his.[396]

The rift between Odysseus and his crew intensifies during their stay on Polyphemus' island.[397] After he and his reconnaissance party become trapped in the cyclops' cave, he concocts and executes a plan to blind the monster and escape with his men through his own courage and cunning.[398] Again, Odysseus paints himself as a bold leader who rescues the majority of the men in the cave through sheer cleverness. But why were the men in the cave in the first place?[399] The episode has been interpreted as a successful quest for meat, with Odysseus as hero,[400] but the text emphasizes the spectacular abundance of meat on the uninhabited island full of goats where they stop just before Polyphemus' island.[401] It is Odysseus' curiosity, then, that brings them there; he orders the reconnaissance mission and, when the other men want to take food and leave, he insists on staying in the hope of receiving a guest-gift.[402] Because of this decision, six of his men become food for Polyphemus.

Thus, not only does he control his crew's access to food, dragging them away from abundance; he also makes the choices that determine how many of them will end up as food, gambling away each of their *nostoi* as he calculates his own risks and benefits, weighing glory against safety. The pattern of the Cicones is now fully reversed, with the crew trying to restrain a defiant Odysseus from an unnecessary risk. When the crew takes a risk, it is for the sake of (collectively) eating and drinking; when Odysseus is the risk taker, it is in pursuit of guest-gifts

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[394] Clay draws a contrast between Achilles' *kleos*, which depends on military excellence and early death, while "the *kleos* of Odysseus… resides in endurance and survival and on the accomplishment of the Return through the aid of *metis*" (1983: 111).

[395] See again Bourdieu 1984: 180 on the "two relations to the 'fruits of the earth'… grounded in two dispositions towards the future… related in circular causality to two objective futures" of elites and workers.

[396] "From Odysseus' perspective, then, the wayfaring community that he forms with his comrades is a transitory arrangement designed to support his own political *nostos*" (Radcliffe 2021: 183).

[397] Bakker 2013: 107-108.

[398] See Peradotto 1990: 46-47 on Odysseus' praise of his own μῆτις ἀμύμων at 9.414.

[399] "How did Odysseus get trapped in the monster's cave in the first place? Autolycan curiosity and greed played a critical role in creating Odysseus' predicament. One cannot overlook it with impunity" (Clay 1983: 74).

[400] "If the tale is seen within the general structure of the 'quest,' the object to be gained is precisely the flocks themselves, edible animals, and the solemn meal is the logical conclusion: the sacrifice… To gain the edible animals, man has to assimilate himself to them. To be eaten, or not to be eaten but to eat, these are the two sides of the basic process of life" (Burkert 1979: 33).

[401] "We should remember also that on the island of the goats, unlike at Thrinacia, the company is not stranded, nor is it driven to explore by hunger" (Clay 1983: 114); the function of goat island is to "throw into relief Odysseus' motives for crossing over to the Cyclopes… Odysseus is impelled to discover the smoke out of curiosity and a desire for guest-gifts" (Clay 1980: 261). Bakker, on the other hand, finds the motivation for the Cyclops expedition in the lure of his domesticated sheep, which are more appealing than the numberless wild goats (2013: 66).

[402] ἀλλ᾽ ἐγὼ οὐ πιθόμην, ἦ τ᾽ ἂν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν,/ ὄφρ᾽ αὐτόν τε ἴδοιμι, καὶ εἴ μοι ξείνια δοίη ("but I was not persuaded, although it would have been much better,/ in order that I might see him, and whether he would give me a guest-gift") (*Od.* 9.228-229). "Here, however, Odysseus' curiosity serves no practical purpose, nor is it decreased when he begins to suspect the worst, which he soon does… It seems, then, that Odysseus' desire to get home and to save his companions—of which the proem spoke so emphatically—is attenuated by his curiosity and by his interest in gifts…" (Clay 1983: 115-116).

and impressive stories that will bring him (individual) glory in the long term.[403] The disparity between his interests and theirs sharpens as they escape from the island: he continues to taunt Polyphemus from their boat even though they are still vulnerable to his boulder-throwing attacks, prompting the crew to speak for the first time in a collective voice to beg him to desist.[404] He ignores their plea and reveals his name to Polyphemus, leading directly to Poseidon's curse that will keep them all away from home for so long.[405] In this case, Odysseus' appetite for treasure and stories has led to a more consequential error than the companions' appetite for meat ever did.[406]

Tensions continue to rise with each episode of book 10. Their visit to Aeolus' island is similar in moral tone to the Cicones episode. Aeolus gives Odysseus a bag of winds and sets him a favorable wind to get back to Ithaca, but when they are almost there, the jealous companions open the bag, and the released winds blow them back to where they started. The crew, as Odysseus tells it, makes a blunder that costs them all their *nostos*, driven by nothing but their own greed and stupidity—a κακὴ βουλή.[407] But again, we would do well to interrogate Odysseus' framing of the episode. He does not indicate why he has not warned the companions about the danger of the bag, in keeping with his tendency to "strategically [disclose] and [withhold] information that he has acquired through his privileged relationships."[408] What is more, the crew's grumbling here makes it clear that Odysseus has acquired a private fortune from guest-gifts that he does not share.[409] Their adventure on Lamos, in turn, is another time for Odysseus to calculate how many of his men he can spare. While he sends all of the other ships into the harbor, he keeps his just outside of it, and when the Laestrygonians suddenly begin smashing the ships and spearing men to eat, he unhesitatingly leaves with his own ship and the men lucky enough to be on it.[410]

Finally, the men arrive on Aeaea, the land that will bring all of these tensions to a head. Odysseus begins their time there by killing a stag and providing its meat to his crew. In doing so, he reaffirms his status as leader of the group and provider of sustenance.[411] However, he then

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[403] See Radcliffe 2021: 182 on Odysseus' tendency to delay his *nostos* when it means he can accumulate more *xeinia* because "*nostos* for Odysseus requires not only his return to Ithaca as a geographical location but also his restoration as head of the island's inegalitarian social order."

[404] They call Odysseus σχέτλιε (9.494), the same word Eurylochus will use to characterize him as too tough to understand the crew's exhaustion at 12.279. Cf. Radcliffe's articulation of "spectatorship" whose subject is "anyone" and which "involves every member of a community without regard for status or expertise" (2021: 191).

[405] *Od*. 9.528-536; Clay 1983: 121; Peradotto 1990: 140.

[406] Cf. Clay's point about Homer's pro-Odysseus bias in the proem, where the companions' mistakes in Thrinacia are described for four lines, but no mention is made of Odysseus' blinding of Polyphemus, "a major cause of Odysseus' troubles" (1983: 38).

[407] The phrase κακὴ βουλή appears only three times in the *Odyssey*: At 10.46, referring to this decision of the crew to open the bag of winds; at 12.339, referring to Eurylochus' speech persuading the crew to eat the cattle of Helios; and at 14.337, in Odysseus' false tale to Eumaeus about his background, referring to the Thesprotian crew's decision to sell him into slavery. Odysseus uses this phrase of crews who either defy his authority or commit an impious crime, or both.

[408] Radcliffe 2021: 190.

[409] Radcliffe 2021: 181.

[410] *Od.* 10.95, 125-132. Clay concludes from this episode, along with the deployment of a search party on Aeaea, that "the outcome of the visit to Po!yphemus has taught Odysseus to balance curiosity with caution" (1983: 114); I would add only that the caution he has learned appears to apply to his own life and not to those of his companions.

[411] "Within the poem, heroic leadership lies in the ability to find food. A deer is primarily meat on the hoof, essential both to meet the physical need for food and to permit the feast which is the central expression of group solidarity in Homeric culture (Scodel 1994: 531). See also Bakker 2013: 76-77.

orders them to explore the island, a task which they now have compelling reasons to fear: the last two times he has ordered them to explore an island and make contact with its inhabitants, some of them have ended up dead and eaten, as even Odysseus' narration acknowledges.[412] This is where we find the first appearance of the line ὣς ἐφάμην, τοῖσιν δὲ κατεκλάσθη φίλον ἦτορ ("thus I spoke, and their own heart was crushed"), a line that will occur twice more: once when Odysseus tells them that they must visit the underworld, and again when he proposes that they pass Thrinacia without landing there.[413] The line is used to mark moments when Odysseus gives his crew an unreasonable order, one that asks ordinary men to display the endurance and boldness of heroes.[414] What is more, the first two of these instances are closely followed by an even more telling line: ἀλλ' οὐ γάρ τις πρῆξις ἐγίνετο μυρομένοισιν ("but in fact they got no profit from their weeping").[415] With this pronouncement, Odysseus demonstrates both his unsympathetic attitude towards his men, whose tears do not move him at all, and his transactional approach to human interactions. He frames their weeping as a calculated action with a desired outcome—the "profit" or "issue" that he denies them—rather than as a sincere expression of fear and grief or a plea for sympathy. In response to Odysseus' unreasonable orders, Eurylochus emerges as an advocate for the crew.

Eurylochus is first named when Odysseus chooses him as the leader of the reconnaissance mission.[416] He quickly distinguishes himself as more intelligent than the other men, and more resistant to Odysseus' orders, by refusing to enter Circe's house when the rest do, demonstrating that most Promethean attribute, foresight. His caution is contrasted with Odysseus' recklessness when he returns with news of his group's disappearance; Odysseus commands him to lead him to Circe's house, but he refuses. He expresses concern both that more crew members will fall prey to Circe and that Odysseus himself will die, indicating a more communitarian approach, while Odysseus, always the heroic individualist, sets out to face the witch by himself. When Odysseus leaves, he tells Eurylochus to stay by the ship, eating and drinking.[417] This, again, points to the divergence in worldview between Odysseus and the rest: they can indulge in their frivolous physical needs, he implies, while he saves the day alone.

When Odysseus goes to confront Circe and rescue his men, he faces her not alone, but with divine favor. Hermes approaches him with advice and a special plant that works as an antidote to her magical drugs.[418] Again, we can see something of Bourdieu's objective futures:

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[412] *Od.* 10.199-200. Clay draws a contrast between this and the adventure on Polyphemus' island on the grounds that they are disoriented and need more information (1983: 114), but the mission is not necessary to their survival in the same way that finding food is.

[413] *Od.* 10.198 = 10.566 = 12.277.

[414] As Clay puts it, ""The Epic hero, as we have seen, inhabits a precarious and unstable zone between men like us, *anthropoi*, and the immortals" (1983: 181). The companions are mere *anthropoi* faced with the trials of an epic hero. See also Bakker 2013: 157-169 on the concept of "interformularity," which establishes a scale between traditional repetition of phrases and literary allusion. Bakker argues that although phrases may be traditional and formulaic, their selection and placement still allows the poet to "[encode] important parallels" and "create similarity between contexts" (ibid. 164).

[415] *Od.* 10.202 = 10.568.

[416] *Od.* 10.205-207. Eurylochus' potential as a rival is already suggested in the symmetry of drawing lots between two search parties, the other of which would have Odysseus as leader. Cf. Buchan's assertion of Eurylochus' "symbolic closeness" to Odysseus, referring to their relation by marriage and to Eurylochus' rebellion against Odysseus' authority (2004: 166).

[417] *Od.* 10.261-273. See Bakker 2013: 129.

[418] As Clay points out, there is a "need" for Hermes to intervene here because "against Circe's divine art, the art of metamorphosis, the purely human arts, even the skills of an Odysseus, hold no sway" (1983: 165-166).

Odysseus can charge into the witch's lair and have faith that a god will appear to teach him the trick he needs to know to get out of it. He is a hero and has been helped by the gods before.[419] Eurylochus refuses to do the same because his experiences have led him to understand the opposite: that he and his fellow companions are expendable and nowhere near special enough to merit help from a god, and that their bravery in dangerous situations does not lead to bedding a goddess, but to becoming food for monsters.

When Odysseus returns successful and announces that they will stay on Aeaea for the time being, Eurylochus is finally driven to open defiance:

> "ἆ δειλοί, πόσ' ἴμεν; τί κακῶν ἱμείρετε τούτων;
> Κίρκης ἐς μέγαρον καταβήμεναι, ἥ κεν ἅπαντας
> ἢ σῦς ἠὲ λύκους ποιήσεται ἠὲ λέοντας,
> οἵ κέν οἱ μέγα δῶμα φυλάσσοιμεν καὶ ἀνάγκῃ,
> ὥς περ Κύκλωψ ἔρξ', ὅτε οἱ μέσσαυλον ἵκοντο
> ἡμέτεροι ἕταροι, σὺν δ' ὁ θρασὺς εἵπετ' Ὀδυσσεύς·
> τούτου γὰρ καὶ κεῖνοι ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο."[420]
>
> "Oh wretches, where are we going? Why do you desire these evils?
> To enter into the house of Circe, who will make us all
> Either pigs or wolves or lions,
> Who could guard her great house even under constraint,
> Just as the Cyclops confined (them), when our friends reached
> His cave, and bold Odysseus followed with them;
> For it was by his recklessness that those men died."

Eurylochus correctly senses the danger of this place, where their status as hunters rather than prey, and indeed their very humanity, are highly precarious. He compares this potential loss of humanity directly to the loss of humanity experienced by the men who became food for Polyphemus.[421] What is more, as Nagler points out, he refers to Odysseus' actions as ἀτασθαλία, challenging the narrative authority of the proem with his own counternarrative in which Odysseus is the one guilty of criminal recklessness.[422] Eurylochus does not yet succeed in fomenting a rebellion; Odysseus considers decapitating him, but the conflict is deescalated when the other men reassure him that they will follow his orders and that they prefer his leadership.[423] Such an extreme punishment remains unnecessary while his position is secure, but the episode has demonstrated to both the crew and the audience that Odysseus is willing to employ violence

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[419] Cf. Odysseus' conversation with Athena, where he reproaches her for her absence during his wanderings (13.316-319) and reminds her of her consistent support for him in battle at Troy (13.389-391). Although Odysseus is without divine aid during most of the wanderings, he feels entitled to her favor because he is accustomed to it. See Clay 1983: 201 and 205-6 on this passage. Segal similarly comments on Odysseus' declaration that Polyphemus' misfortune is a punishment from the gods: "…he succeeds because he identifies his purposes with the gods' ways of justice and vengeance" (1994: 201).

[420] *Od.* 10.431-437.

[421] "The underlying argument of Eurylochus is, I think, that in entering the cattle enclosure of the Cyclops, the men themselves are acting as cattle, beholden to a master. The same motif of encirclement occurs in the Circe episode" (Buchan 2004: 164).

[422] Nagler 1990: 346; see also Buchan 2004: 155 and Clay 1983: 37.

[423] *Od.* 10.442, τοῦτον μὲν ἐάσομεν, εἰ σὺ κελεύεις ("we will leave this man, if you bid").

to enforce hierarchy, while Eurylochus displays a greater concern for the safety and humanity of all members of the group, even Odysseus.[424]

Indeed, their positions are precisely reversed from the Lotus-Eaters episode, with Eurylochus now warning of the threat that this place poses to their *nostos,* while Odysseus is easily persuaded by Circe's invitation to stay on her island and rest. Her invitation emphasizes the suffering and fatigue of Odysseus and his men and the need for them to restore their spirits by resting, eating, and drinking, and his acquiescence seems to confirm the necessity of this rest period[425]—a period in which they all, including Odysseus, behave like the pigs whose form they briefly inhabited:

> ἔνθα μὲν ἤματα πάντα τελεσφόρον εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν
> ἥμεθα δαινύμενοι κρέα τ᾽ ἄσπετα καὶ μέθυ ἡδύ.
>
> Then every day for a full year
> we sat feasting on plentiful meat and sweet wine.[426]

And we can see why Odysseus, who feared the seductive abundance of the Lotus-Eaters' island, is more comfortable on Aeaea, where the abundance of food is counterbalanced by the danger of becoming animals or food, which in turn is guarded against only by Odysseus' own privileged relationship with Circe.[427] His priority, then, is neither the safety of his men, nor their return, but the preservation of his superior position in a hierarchy; the companions remain dependent upon him for their survival, while he retains control of information and decisions. In the end, it is the companions who must remind Odysseus of his home and fatherland, bringing their year of piglike torpor to an end and resuming their progress towards *nostos.*

These patterns remain in clear operation throughout the remaining episodes of the *apologoi*. Odysseus breaks their hearts again by ordering them on a journey to the underworld, another emblematically heroic quest undertaken for the sake of his own personal *nostos*.[428] On this quest, too, Eurylochus is one of two men Odysseus chooses to assist him with the sacrifice, still standing out as competent and trustworthy even after his insubordination on Aeaea.[429] After they return from the underworld, they embark upon a series of ordeals for which Circe has given Odysseus instructions; as usual, he maintains strict control of this privileged information and of his companions' experiences, keeping the pleasure of the sirens' song for himself while they perform the labor to facilitate his sublime listening, and determining their course of action between Scylla and Charybdis without informing them of the known risks.[430] Another six men become food for a monster, and while their deaths appear unavoidable, this is yet another

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[424] Buchan 2004: 166.
[425] *Od.* 10.456-465.
[426] *Od.* 10.467-468.
[427] As Radcliffe points out, after the Aeolus episode, "the companions receive almost all of their food from Odysseus or from Circe," paralleling their "[increasing reliance] on Odysseus' leadership and expertise" (2021: 197).
[428] See e.g., Louden (2011: 197-221) and Bakker (2013: 78).
[429] *Od.* 11.23.
[430] Odysseus always tries "to restrict their sensory experiences according to his own self-serving criteria" (Radcliffe 2021: 189) and hears the song "at the expense of his crew" (ibid. 211); cf. Clay's emphasis on Odysseus' silent decision-making about how to implement Circe's advice about the sirens and Scylla and Charybdis (1983: 153).

moment when Odysseus alone gets to decide how many of his men's lives he can spare.[431] Odysseus himself makes a comparison between this and the "greater evil" they faced in the Cyclops' cave, where, he reminds them, they only escaped "by means of my excellence and counsel and intelligence."[432]

III. Drowning is Better than Starving

Thus, Odysseus and his crew are already at odds when they approach Thrinacia. Odysseus has consistently prioritized his own interests—the acquisition of treasure and stories, as well as his position at the top of a hierarchy, whether on his ship or back in Ithaca—over those of the crew, which tend towards food, rest, and safety. Eurylochus, meanwhile, has demonstrated his competence, his concern for his companions' welfare, and his willingness to defy Odysseus during the events that unfolded on Aeaea. While his attempted mutiny there was unsuccessful, conditions have worsened since then: not only did Odysseus keep them waiting for a whole year while he lived with Circe, but he also required them to undergo a harrowing journey to the underworld in pursuit of information that concerned only him. The companions are now hungry, tired, and resentful enough to become ungovernable.[433]

The dissolution of Odysseus' authority happens in two stages: first, the companions overrule his order to sail past Thrinacia without landing there; then, once their rations have run out, they break their oath and slaughter the cattle of Helios. At each stage, it is Eurylochus who persuades them to defy their leader and seek the material sustenance that they need, just as he tried to persuade them to flee the danger of Circe's palace on Aeaea. A detailed reading of Odysseus' orders and Eurylochus' rebuttals will reveal each man's rhetorical strategy, both of which conform to the patterns I identified above: Odysseus pushes the men to endure, expecting them to defer to his authority, his friends in high places, and the gods, while Eurylochus sympathizes with their suffering and offers material hope.[434] First, Odysseus urges them to avoid Thrinacia:

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[431] Consider that Circe instructs Odysseus to bear closer to Scylla because "it is much better to miss six companions in the ship than all of them at once" (12.109-110) and their ensuing exchange about the risks and benefits of possible strategies for approaching this obstacle (12.111-126). While it is clear that Odysseus wants to minimize his losses, it is also clear that he and Circe exist on a higher plane than the companions, as the decision makers about how many lives are "better" to lose.

[432] *Od.* 12.209-212.

[433] Here I would disagree with Radcliffe, who sees a break between the "egalitarian ethos" that motivates the companions in books 9 and 10 and the "diminished role of egalitarianism" evident in the "mutiny" on Thrinacia (2021: 197-198). He blames Eurylochus for this shift; after the Aeolus episode, he says, "The companions no longer oppose Odysseus collectively or in pursuance of egalitarian principles but under the direction of Eurylochus" (ibid. 197 n.53). I see no reason to read Eurylochus as being opposed to egalitarian principles, when, as discussed above, he shows greater concern than Odysseus for the welfare of the companions, and his complaints against Odysseus' leadership are demonstrably legitimate. I would argue instead that Eurylochus functions as a representative of the crew's interests who is intelligent enough to challenge Odysseus' power, and that his rise to prominence is a continuation of, not a divergence from, the egalitarian moments of books 9 and 10, with Thrinacia as the climactic moment of the people seizing food for themselves (and each other).

[434] McInerney reaches a similar conclusion but frames it in a way that is much more critical of the companions for not being like Odysseus: "It is a test of their ability to restrain themselves, to curb their spirits, as Teiresias says. It is a brutal test, to be sure, since they face starvation, yet the stakes only make the lesson more compelling. The need for self-restraint is absolute" (2010: 94).

‘κέκλυτέ μευ μύθων, κακά περ πάσχοντες ἑταῖροι,
ὄφρ’ ὔμιν εἴπω μαντήϊα Τειρεσίαο
Κίρκης τ’ Αἰαίης, ἥ μοι μάλα πόλλ’ ἐπέτελλε
νῆσον ἀλεύασθαι τερψιμβρότου Ἠελίοιο·
ἔνθα γὰρ αἰνότατον κακὸν ἔμμεναι ἄμμιν ἔφασκεν.
ἀλλὰ παρὲξ τὴν νῆσον ἐλαύνετε νῆα μέλαιναν.’
ὣς ἐφάμην, τοῖσιν δὲ κατεκλάσθη φίλον ἦτορ.[435]

“Listen to my words, friends, although you are enduring evils,
so that I may tell you the prophecies of Tiresias
and of Aeaean Circe, who enjoined me many times
to avoid the island of Helios who brings delight to men;
for there she was saying there would be a very terrible evil for us.
But drive the dark ship past the island.”
Thus I spoke, and their own heart was crushed.

Although Odysseus is asking for a lot—for his men to continue the journey without rest or food, when they have just undergone the trials of the sirens and Scylla and Charybdis—he phrases his orders in a way that is vague and unpersuasive. He appeals to the authority of two of his superhuman allies: Tiresias, for whom he led these men to the underworld and back Circe, who turned half of them into pigs. Neither of these figures is particularly trustworthy from the perspective of the companions, having demonstrated only that they are invested in the success of Odysseus himself. What is more, he does not convey the urgency of the information that Tiresias and Circe gave him. Both advisors were very clear about the consequences of harming the cattle of Helios: “destruction for your ship and your companions, and even if you escape, you will return late and badly, having last all your companions.”[436] Odysseus mentions only “a very great evil for us,” not specifying that the predicted evil means certain death for everyone but him.[437] Finally, while he does acknowledge that his men are suffering, he says nothing to offer them hope or encouragement; if anything, his imagery emphasizes the cruelty of the order, contrasting the delightful brightness of the island with the darkness of the ship.[438]

No wonder, then, that the companions are open to Eurylochus’ subversive rejoinder:

αὐτίκα δ’ Εὐρύλοχος στυγερῷ μ’ ἠμείβετο μύθῳ·
‘σχέτλιός εἰς, Ὀδυσεῦ, περί τοι μένος, οὐδέ τι γυῖα
κάμνεις· ἦ ῥά νυ σοί γε σιδήρεα πάντα τέτυκται,
ὅς ῥ’ ἑτάρους καμάτῳ ἀδηκότας ἠδὲ καὶ ὕπνῳ
οὐκ ἐάᾳς γαίης ἐπιβήμεναι, ἔνθα κεν αὖτε
νήσῳ ἐν ἀμφιρύτῃ λαρὸν τετυκοίμεθα δόρπον,

[435] *Od.* 12.271-277.
[436] *Od.* 11.112-114 = 12.139-141.
[437] Regarding Odysseus’ failure of leadership here, Buchan suggests that “*Metis* cannot be reduced to powers of perception. It is instead related to an ability to manipulate powers of perception (to turn or not to turn a blind eye). It is dependent on the uncertainty as to which is which” (2004: 160). He argues that Odysseus is not defeated here, but “turns a blind eye” and allows his men to walk into the trap of Thrinacia. This is an intriguing possibility, and although I am more interested in the intentionality of Eurylochus’ actions here, it is not impossible for these readings to be compatible: perhaps Eurylochus’ rebellious actions are always already inscribed in Odysseus’ *metis*.
[438] I am indebted to Leslie Kurke for pointing this out to me.

ἀλλ’ αὔτως διὰ νύκτα θοὴν ἀλάλησθαι ἄνωγας,
νήσου ἀποπλαγχθέντας, ἐν ἠεροειδέϊ πόντῳ.
ἐκ νυκτῶν δ’ ἄνεμοι χαλεποί, δηλήματα νηῶν,
γίνονται· πῇ κέν τις ὑπεκφύγοι αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον,
ἤν πως ἐξαπίνης ἔλθῃ ἀνέμοιο θύελλα,
ἢ νότου ἢ ζεφύροιο δυσαέος, οἵ τε μάλιστα
νῆα διαρραίουσι, θεῶν ἀέκητι ἀνάκτων;
ἀλλ’ ἦ τοι νῦν μὲν πειθώμεθα νυκτὶ μελαίνῃ
δόρπον θ’ ὁπλισόμεσθα θοῇ παρὰ νηΐ μένοντες·
ἠῶθεν δ’ ἀναβάντες ἐνήσομεν εὐρέϊ πόντῳ.’
ὣς ἔφατ’ Εὐρύλοχος, ἐπὶ δ’ ᾔνεον ἄλλοι ἑταῖροι.[439]

But right away Eurylochus answered me with a hateful word:
“You are hard, Odysseus, and you have exceptional strength, nor
Do you get tired in your limbs; really, you are made entirely of iron,
You who do not allow your companions, worn out with toil and exhaustion,
To set food on the land, where in turn
On a sea-girt island we could make a delicious meal,
But you order us to wander through the swift night,
Avoiding the island, on the hazy sea.
But the winds at night are difficult, bane of ships;
Where could one escape sheer death,
If somehow suddenly a squall of wind comes,
Either of Notus or of stormy Zephyr, who most of all
Destroy ships, against the will of the ruling gods?
But truly now, let us obey dark night
And prepare a meal, staying by the swift ship;
And at dawn, boarding the ship, we will launch into the broad sea.”
Thus spoke Eurylochus, and the other companions approved.

He calls Odysseus σχέτλιός, which means hardy but also cruel, suggesting that he is too tough to sympathize with the crew’s exhaustion, while also recalling the crew’s plea to Odysseus to stop taunting Polyphemus.[440] This subtly reframes Odysseus’ order not to land as the *more* reckless proposal, and his own position as the more cautious one. The idea that Odysseus’ body is made of iron instead of flesh suggests a similar complaint: Odysseus is both inhumanly resilient, able to weather anything, and inhumanly unfeeling, unmoved by his comrades’ suffering.[441] The very toughness that is the core of Odysseus’ heroism, exemplified by *polytlas* and related epithets,[442]

[439] *Od.* 12.278-294.
[440] *Od.* 9.494. Eurylochus’ accusation negatively frames one of Odysseus’ most admired qualities, his ability to endure hardships, as exemplified in his epithet πολύτλας, which is only used of him, appearing 37 times in the *Odyssey* and three in the *Iliad.*
[441] “Refusing their request, Odysseus seems ‘made of iron,’ as if he did not know the need shared by all mortal creatures to restore eroded strength by the daily ingestion of food” (Vernant 1989: 164-165).
[442] “Odysseus is called *polytlemon, polytlas* ‘much enduring’; *polyplanktos,* ‘much wandering’; *polypenthes,* ‘of many sorrows’; *polykedes* and *polystonos,* ‘of many woes’” (Clay 1983: 33). Clay and Peradotto both divide Odysseus’ *poly-* epithets into two groups, one referring to his mental versatility, the other, exemplified by *polytlas*, to this quality of endurance and suffering (Peradotto 1990: 52, 87, 163).

now allows Eurylochus to undermine his authority, laying bare the hierarchy that assigns so much more value to his life than to theirs. Unlike Odysseus, he does offer them something to hope for—just to rest on land for one night and to eat one delicious meal, modest but vital consolations for the difficult journey.

The second half of Eurylochus' speech cleverly responds to the contrast Odysseus made between the bright island and the dark ship, elaborating upon the darkness and danger of the night at sea that Odysseus demands of them. The sea is hazy and plagued by harsh winds, dangers which the men have experienced before and know to fear. He even points out that winds are destructive in a way that is so chaotic that it is beyond the influence of the gods, implicitly discounting the warnings of Odysseus' divine and prophetic friends. These advisors, he seems to say, may warn against a great evil, but what do they know about the real dangers of a real night on a real ship? His injunction to *obey* the night brings this point home: the highest authority, which they have no choice but to obey, is nature, the reality in which they find themselves, rather than a remote prophecy or instruction.[443] Finally, he asserts that they will continue the journey at dawn, reprising the imagery of light and darkness with the contrast between an unbearable nighttime voyage and a pleasant morning departure.

Odysseus tries to prevent the disaster of the cattle despite the group's decision to land on the island, but still does not speak persuasively or share the information that might make the men take his orders seriously, relying instead on his own authority and his privileged relationships. First, he asks them to swear an oath:

> Εὐρύλοχ', ἦ μάλα δή με βιάζετε μοῦνον ἐόντα.
> ἀλλ' ἄγε νῦν μοι πάντες ὀμόσσατε καρτερὸν ὅρκον:
> εἴ κέ τιν' ἠὲ βοῶν ἀγέλην ἢ πῶυ μέγ' οἰῶν
> εὕρωμεν, μή πού τις ἀτασθαλίῃσι κακῇσιν
> ἢ βοῦν ἠέ τι μῆλον ἀποκτάνῃ: ἀλλὰ ἔκηλοι
> ἐσθίετε βρώμην, τὴν ἀθανάτη πόρε Κίρκη.[444]
>
> "Eurylochus, truly indeed you compel me, since I am only one.
> But come now, all of you swear a strong oath to me:
> If we find any herd of cattle or great flock of sheep,
> let no one with evil recklessness
> kill either a cow or any sheep; but at ease
> eat the food which immortal Circe provided."

He laments his solitude among the men, the downside of his usual individualism and tendency to position himself as the only one smart or brave enough to solve their problems. Now that the men are thinking and assenting together, he has no real power over them.[445] The oath he demands has no mechanism of enforcement; it relies on their fear of the gods and their respect for him, both of which are rapidly eroding. The oath ends with a command to relax and eat the

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[443] Peradotto identifies this episode as the most vivid example of "a 'myth' of nature's recalcitrance to culture," one of the *Odyssey*'s "two kinds of narrative ideology," the other being folktale narratives of "desire accomplished" (1990: 82; 49).

[444] *Od.* 12.297-302.

[445] See Buchan 2004: 156-157 on Odysseus' figuring of his solitude as being subject to the "force" of Eurylochus and the possibility that he is effectively "playing dead" here.

food from Circe, shakily upholding his position as provider of sustenance via his privileged relationships while revealing the weakness of the oath, which makes no provisions for what they are to do when the food from Circe runs out. Similarly, when they come ashore, he bids:

> ὦ φίλοι, ἐν γὰρ νηὶ θοῇ βρῶσίς τε πόσις τε
> ἔστιν, τῶν δὲ βοῶν ἀπεχώμεθα, μή τι πάθωμεν:
> δεινοῦ γὰρ θεοῦ αἵδε βόες καὶ ἴφια μῆλα,
> Ἠελίου, ὃς πάντ᾽ ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ᾽ ἐπακούει.
> ὣς ἐφάμην, τοῖσιν δ᾽ ἐπεπείθετο θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ.[446]
>
> "Friends, since there is food and drink in the dark ship,
> let us keep away from the cattle, lest we suffer something;
> for these cattle and fat sheep belong to a formidable god,
> Helios, who sees everything and hears everything."
> Thus I spoke, and their noble heart was persuaded.

As the explanatory clause in the first line makes clear, Odysseus' injunction depends on the availability of food in the ship. He warns them of Helios' powers of surveillance, again trying to enforce order through fear of the gods, but says nothing about what will happen when there is no more food.

Before we approach Eurylochus' final speech, let us consider the context in which he makes it. The men have run out of food, and Odysseus, tellingly, does not report any of his own dialogue after this point in the story until he discovers the slaughter of the cattle. They try to survive by hunting birds and fish, providing themselves with meager nourishment; Odysseus, who does not participate, is no longer the confident leader who slew them a stag on Aeaea.[447] His status as provider of sustenance is lost, and its associated power along with it.[448] The sleep that seizes Odysseus, allowing Eurylochus to make his plea, has been recognized as strongly parallel to the sleep that overtakes him in book 10, allowing the men to open the bag of winds.[449] The parallel lies not only in the men defying orders while their captain is asleep or in the idea of a κακὴ βουλή; it lies also in their resentment, then of his horded treasure, now of his inhuman endurance. The dilemma Odysseus reported pondering after the winds were released from the bag is instructive:

> αὐτὰρ ἐγώ γε
> ἐγρόμενος κατὰ θυμὸν ἀμύμονα μερμήριξα,
> ἠὲ πεσὼν ἐκ νηὸς ἀποφθίμην ἐνὶ πόντῳ,

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[446] *Od.* 12.320-324.

[447] "The ability to acquire edible meat from the land, and thus to make the feast possible, is a form of practical leadership. In the normal, civilized world, the king binds his followers to him by providing them with feasts. A king who cannot entertain is no king…" (Scodel 1994: 533).

[448] On Aeaea, Odysseus' "symbolic authority" and "his threat of violence to Eurylochus" are enough to "tame" the threatened mutiny (Buchan 2004: 166); these conditions do not hold on Thrinacia.

[449] See Bakker (2013: 26), where these two events are aligned in the "symmetrical arrangement of the wanderings." As Radcliffe points out, "when Odysseus is awake, the narrative relates events according to his focalizing perspective; when he sleeps, the narrative digresses in unforeseeable directions, following the experiences of anonymous minor characters gathered in undifferentiated groups" (2021: 195-196).

ἦ ἀκέων τλαίην καὶ ἔτι ζωοῖσι μετείην.[450]

But I,
waking up, pondered in my blameless heart,
whether, falling out of the ship, I would die in the sea,
or if unwilling I would endure and remain among the living.

In the face of the crisis brought on by his crew's defiance, Odysseus' trademark endurance comes close to breaking: he weighs continued perseverance equally against suicide by drowning before choosing the former.

Let us keep this in mind as Eurylochus weighs the benefits of drowning and enduring and comes to the opposite conclusion:

Εὐρύλοχος δ' ἑτάροισι κακῆς ἐξήρχετο βουλῆς·
"κέκλυτέ μευ μύθων, κακά περ πάσχοντες ἑταῖροι·
πάντες μὲν στυγεροὶ θάνατοι δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι,
λιμῷ δ' οἰκτιστον θανέειν καὶ πότμον ἐπισπεῖν.
ἀλλ' ἄγετ', Ἠελίοιο βοῶν ἐλάσαντες ἀρίστας
ῥέξομεν ἀθανάτοισι, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν.
εἰ δέ κεν εἰς Ἰθάκην ἀφικοίμεθα, πατρίδα γαῖαν,
αἶψά κεν Ἠελίῳ Ὑπερίονι πίονα νηὸν
τεύξομεν, ἐν δέ κε θεῖμεν ἀγάλματα πολλὰ καὶ ἐσθλά.
εἰ δὲ χολωσάμενός τι βοῶν ὀρθοκραιράων
νῆ' ἐθέλῃ ὀλέσαι, ἐπὶ δ' ἕσπωνται θεοὶ ἄλλοι,
βούλομ' ἅπαξ πρὸς κῦμα χανὼν ἀπὸ θυμὸν ὀλέσσαι
ἢ δηθὰ στρεύγεσθαι ἐὼν ἐν νήσῳ ἐρήμῃ."[451]

And Eurylochus began a bad plan for the companions:
"Listen to my words, friends, although you are suffering evil things;
All deaths are hateful to wretched mortals,
But the most pitiful way to die and to meet fate is by famine.
But come, driving the best of the cows of Helios
We will sacrifice to the immortals, who hold wide heaven.
But if we reach Ithaca, our father land,
Right away we will build a rich temple to Helios Hyperion,
And we could place in it many good treasures.
But if he, getting angry at all about his straight-horned cows
Wants to destroy the ship, and the other gods follow suit,
I prefer to die once gasping out my soul into a wave
Rather than to starve for a long time on a desert island."

He begins with the same line Odysseus used when he first ordered them not to land on Thrinacia, acknowledging the crew's suffering, and the repetition draws a contrast: unlike Odysseus,

[450] *Od.* 10.49-52.
[451] *Od.* 12.339-351.

Eurylochus is suffering along with them and trying to assuage their plight.[452] He asserts that famine is the worst way to die and proposes that they end their suffering in the only way that they can, by eating some of the cattle that are in front of them.[453] He suggests that it may be possible to repay Helios with a temple and offerings. This solution is both materialistic, imagining Helios as a rich man who might delight in treasures as Odysseus does, and temporally distant, delaying the penalty for the crime until a time when it is unlikely to matter one way or the other, because the companions are likely to be dead.[454] Finally, he affirms his acquiescence to death, if that is the consequence of eating. He nods to the power of Helios and the other gods, but seems to regard death at their hands as remote compared to the death by starvation that they are presently enduring. The sentiment is crystallized in the last two lines: he would rather die ἅπαξ (once) than δηθά (for a long time).

The logic aligns perfectly with Bourdieu's formulation of the "spontaneous materialism of the working classes, who refuse to participate in the Benthamite calculation of pleasures and pains, benefits and costs."[455] The meal, Eurylochus seems to say, will cost whatever the meal turns out to cost; for now, let us end our suffering and enjoy a meal together.[456] This is the "being-in-the-present" which Bourdieu calls "an affirmation of solidarity with others (who are often the only present guarantee against the threats of the future)."[457] Unlike Odysseus, who plans and saves for the future and for himself, Eurylochus encourages the men to accept the risks of the meal together.[458] This much is evident in the passage, but we can push the idea further by considering what is implicit in his speech. He never mentions Odysseus, whose absence allows for the speech to be made at all.[459] Perhaps this is more than just a rejection of the elite ethic of self-denial that Odysseus presses upon them; perhaps it is an attempt to weaponize the difference between their worldviews. Odysseus, who is made of iron, is tough enough to endure famine, but they are not. On the other hand, Eurylochus presumes, if the gods destroy their ship, all of them will drown together. Thus, we may see in Eurylochus' speech an attempt to take away Odysseus' special status by bringing on a crisis so severe that it will affect all of them, hero and ordinary man alike. Rather than allow Odysseus to outlast them all and eventually escape the island,

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[452] See again Bakker 2013: 157-169 on interformularity.

[453] As Clay points out, the companions do not really have a choice here: "They are obliged to eat, and thereby to commit a crime, or to perish, just as with the Cyclops their choice had consisted either of maiming Polyphemus or of being eaten. But mortals, to remain mortals, must eat and avoid being eaten. Swift and complete punishment results; Helios demands the destruction of all Odysseus' companions. Again, the extremity of their circumstances constitutes no defense. In both cases, Poseidon and Helios act with complete ruthlessness to protect their offended honor. The fundamental innocence of their victims receives no consideration whatsoever" (1983: 230).

[454] Here we might remember the scholion that connects the 350 cattle to the days of the year (Schol. *Od.* 12.129; see Bakker 2013: 104). The companions' lack of respect or fear of the forbidden status of the cattle, which do not naturally die or reproduce, but ought to be as untouchable as the passage of time itself, speaks to their different relationship with time.

[455] Bourdieu 1984: 180.

[456] Radcliffe dismisses this speech which "does not refer to Odysseus at all but only to the necessity of escaping starvation" as opposed to the "principled appeal to equality that motivates the companions to open the bag of winds" (2021: 197). I would argue instead that Eurylochus' focus on the material conditions necessary for his companions' survival—"only… the necessity of escaping starvation"—is entirely in keeping with the egalitarian principles that he advances on behalf of the companions and with Bourdieu's analysis of working-class approaches to food.

[457] Bourdieu 1984: 183.

[458] "Odysseus, of all men, epitomizes that ability of the mind to take stock of the world and to plan in terms of that understanding (μῆτις, νόος)" (Peradotto 1990: 87).

[459] See again Radcliffe 2021: 195 on the narrative digressions allowed by Odysseus' sleep.

Eurylochus hopes to entangle him in the same "rebounding violence" that will come down on all of them.[460]

Unfortunately for Eurylochus, this is Odysseus' poem, not his, and Odysseus' heroic privilege extends so far as to exempt him from dying in the shipwreck. Events unfold exactly as Tiresias predicted, and not only does Odysseus survive, he even gets to know the details of the exchange between Helios and Zeus that leads to the shipwreck, which are reported to him by Calpyso:[461] more privileged information gained through a privileged relationship, another impressive story gained at the cost of his men's lives. Still, I hope I have shown that the crew's meal on Thrinacia is a moment of liberation in the narrative, a last burst of centrifugal motion before the more centripetal second half of the poem, and the climax of the conflict between Odysseus and his men that has intensified in the course of the *apologoi*.[462] Under Eurylochus' leadership, they make a final, spectacular attempt to be hunters, only to become prey—food for the fishes—once and for all.

[460] For "rebounding violence" see Bloch 1992: 4.
[461] *Od.* 12.376-390. As Clay points out, this is "the only important exception" to "the Epic rule" which dictates that "Homer can describe the activities of both gods and men in all their fullness. A mortal without the special gift of divine knowledge may know the latter, albeit imperfectly, but not the former" (1983: 24 and 23). By specifying the source of Odysseus' knowledge, the poet makes clear that "no matter how talented a storyteller Odysseus may be, he remains unable to describe Olympian scenes without divine intermediaries" (1983: 25). This striking departure from the narrative norms of Homeric epic, emphasizing both Odysseus' special privileges and his limitations, is a fitting conclusion for a story about his heroism reaching the end of its utility for the purposes of leadership.
[462] See again Peradotto 1990: 52 and Radcliffe 2021: 185 on centripetal vs. centrifugal tendencies in the *Odyssey*.

Chapter Five
Eating Each Other in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*

> τόνδε γὰρ ἀνθρώποισι νόμον διέταξε Κρονίων,
> ἰχθύσι μὲν καὶ θηρσὶ καὶ οἰωνοῖς πετεηνοῖς
> ἔσθειν ἀλλήλους, ἐπεὶ οὐ δίκη ἐστὶ μετ' αὐτοῖς·
> ἀνθρώποισι δ' ἔδωκε δίκην, ἣ πολλὸν ἀρίστη
> γίνεται·
>
> For this law the son of Cronus assigned to humans,
> For fish and beasts and winged birds
> To eat each other, since there is no justice among them;
> But he gave justice to humans, which is by far the best.[463]

In the popular novel *Life of Pi*, the protagonist, the son of a zookeeper, survives the sinking of a ship that was transporting his family and a number of their zoo animals across the Pacific. He finds himself on a lifeboat with several of the animals, but they eventually kill each other off until only the boy and a Bengal tiger remain. The two learn to coexist on the lifeboat, enduring many surreal trials, and finally reach the coast of Mexico, where the tiger disappears into the wilderness. The novel ends unsettlingly with the boy being questioned by two transit officials who have been tasked with determining the cause of the shipwreck. He tells them his story, but they insist that they need to know "what really happened," and he finally realizes, "You want a story without animals."[464] When they agree, he tells a new story, a harrowing tale in which he and three other people survive the wreck, but in their time on the lifeboat, they turn to murder and cannibalism, until the boy is the last one left alive. The transit officials, baffled and repulsed, determine that there is no information to be gained about the shipwreck from this line of questioning. The boy finally asks them:

> So tell me, since it makes no factual difference to you and you can't prove the question either way, which story do you prefer? Which is the better story, the story with animals or the story without animals?

To which they respond, "The story with animals is the better story."[465] The story without animals has many close parallels to the plot of the novel, with each human character corresponding to one of the animals, and the tiger corresponding to the boy himself. The reader is left quite uncertain which story should be taken as "true." Was the whole novel a delusional fairytale that the boy constructed in order to cope with his trauma? Or was it his real experience, and was the darker version something that he invented to chastise the insurance agents for their cynicism? As he himself points out, there is no way to know.

A similar problem of knowing has emerged in the anthropological study of cannibalism. In 1979, William Arens published *The Man-Eating Myth*, in which he argued that claims of institutionalized or socially acceptable cannibalism are entirely unsubstantiated. Anthropologists, he contends, have been too willing to believe that nonwestern peoples practice cannibalism, and

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[463] Hes. *Op.* 276-280.
[464] Martel (2001: 302-303).
[465] Martel (2001: 317).

as a result have accepted unreliable accounts and faulty data as true. He blames this tendency on Eurocentric biases and sensationalism, pointing out, for example, that Roman accusations of cannibalism against early Christians are never taken seriously even though there is no more reason to doubt their authenticity than that of any other ancient account.[466] Meanwhile, he cites but dismisses other anthropologists who have come to the opposite conclusion.[467] Harner, for example, asserts that scholars have "radically [scaled] down the originally reported figures" for Aztec human sacrifice, and that "the evidence for Aztec cannibalism has largely been ignored and consciously or unconsciously covered up."[468] The poles of the issue, then, are that anthropologists have exaggerated cannibalism because of their biases, or that they have attempted to conceal evidence of cannibalism out of squeamishness or "a misguided sense of scholarly morality."[469]

Arens' hypothesis was widely rebutted. Brady chides Arens for his impossible standards of evidence, complaining that

> the level of satisfaction required for reaching "satisfactory first-hand accounts" with "adequate documentation" and proper "sustaining ethnography" from "reliable sources" engaged in active observation rather than something more vicarious seems to slip into more extreme modes of empirical accountability and doubt the deeper one goes into Arens's cave full of "non-cases." Ultimately it seems as though nothing short of affidavits by certified man-eaters in a lengthy and carefully documented display of their gusto for gore will do. Even then one might suspect that the cannibals were just "mouthing" their victims unless positive proof of swallowing could be obtained. And who could prove that such behavior is "customary" anyway and not just a moment's aberrancy as entertainment for the visitors or antagonism toward the objects of the great ingestion? A statement to the contrary by suspected man-eaters will not do. Arens regularly rejects such testimony.[470]

Still, while Arens has been said to "overstate his case" with his "provocative suggestion," *The Man-Eating Myth* also opened up interesting questions about methodology and inspired greater rigor in the documentation of cannibalism.[471] More importantly for our purposes here, the controversy centering around Arens demonstrates some of the difficulties of thinking about cannibalism. Because of the deep revulsion with which our culture views cannibalism, we run the risk of seeing it where it is not, in cultures that we view as other. Equally true is Brady's point that cannibalism, like "masturbation in monasteries and homosexuality in the Army," is in many instances a subject of shame and so may not be easily observable even where it does exist.[472] And even Arens does not really question the underlying assumption of his objection: that cannibalism is a great evil and that attributing it to another culture can only be slanderous.[473] Anthropologists, like the transit officials in *Life of Pi*, have thus suspected and sought out frightening secrets about cannibalism, and yet, upon finding them—whether they are true or

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[466] Arens 1979: 19.
[467] Arens 1979: 8.
[468] Harner 1977: 119.
[469] Arens 1979: 8.
[470] Brady 1982: 598-599.
[471] Sanday 1986: 9; Lindenbaum 2004: 475-476. See also Kidd 1988 for a summary of the whole controversy.
[472] Brady 1982: 599.
[473] See Nyamnjoh 2018: 16.

not—have recoiled and turned away. I would argue that these impulses were as real for the Greek poets of the archaic period as they are for modern scholars: to fear and yet be fascinated by cannibalism; to suspect that it is hidden from us; to seek to know it and at the same time to deny it.

Fortunately, my goal in this chapter is not to determine the truth or falsehood of any claims about real cannibalism from any time or place, but to try to understand the role that it plays in the Homeric epics. Strangely enough, there are no real, literal instances of a human who looks like a human eating another human who looks like a human in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad*, cannibalism is threatened, wished for, and used as an insult; the cannibalistic nature of violence is drawn out in the many battle similes describing animals eating each other; and it is referred to obliquely through the whole idea of feeding one's dead foes to animals.[474] In the *Odyssey*, on the other hand, it looms as a constant possibility—either being consumed by the hostile inhabitants of a foreign island, or unwittingly consuming a human who has taken another form—and yet still never fully comes to the surface. Odysseus' men become food for monsters and monstrous humanoids, but not for other humans, nor for each other. Even in the situation that would seem almost to necessitate it, when they run out of supplies on Thrinacia and resort to eating the divine cattle of Helios despite having been warned not to, they are not said to even consider sacrificing some part of the group for the survival of the whole.

In this chapter, I will explore these many near misses with cannibalism in Homer and attempt to understand what they can tell us about the archaic imagination. Why do these stories seem to gravitate towards cannibalism, only to turn away?[475] Rather than an issue of decorum or propriety, I will argue that the Homeric treatment of anthropophagy depends on a metaphorical understanding of cannibalism: that it is not limited to the literal gnawing of human flesh, but includes other kinds of consumption of human life. The idea is explained concisely by anthropologist Francis Nyamnjoh:

> To literally kill a person in order to feed on the resources and opportunities made available to us by their death amounts to cannibalism, regardless of whether we actually make a meal of the dead person's body. To feed on someone's life chances is tantamount to feeding on someone's flesh—either way, one is depleted, diminished, cannibalized. Similarly, to reduce a person to a degradable, shameful, acute and passive level of dependency and powerlessness—to a bare existence stripped of self-worth, personhood and agency—by one's exceedingly predatory claims of entitlements to power, privilege, resources and the bodies and energies of others in a given context… amounts to cannibalism.[476]

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[474] Redfield 1975: 199.

[475] One approach to this question has been to compare the surviving Homeric epics to the fragmentary cyclic material and to extrapolate from their differences. For example, the *Thebaid* featured Tydeus eating the brains of Melanippus, while "such persons are in the *Iliad* unthinkable" (Griffins 1977: 46). The result of this approach is to conclude that the Homeric poems are simply more serious and better than the cyclic poems, which allowed for all sorts of romantic, fantastical, and lurid elements because of their inferior quality (ibid. 52). I am hesitant to draw such a sharp distinction between Homer and all other epic poetry, particularly with regard to what was "allowed," since there are many Homeric anomalies which must then be excised or minimized, as has sometimes been the case with the *Doloneia* (ibid. 46). In any case, I am more interested in the Homeric poems in their own right, asking not "Why doesn't Homer mention cannibalism when other epic poets do?" but "Why does Homer avoid mentioning cannibalism while, at the same time, referring obliquely to it and making it clear that it is on every character's mind?"

[476] Nyamnjoh 2018: 5-6.

This formulation is helpful in suggesting the broader, more flexible understanding of cannibalism that is necessary if we are to make sense of the phenomenon as it appears in the Homeric epics. To eat the flesh of another human is only the most concrete, obvious, and distilled manifestation of a much more mundane, pervasive, and sinister phenomenon: as Nyamnjoh puts it, the "exceedlingly predatory claims of entitlements to power, privilege, resources and the bodies and energies of others." Literally or figuratively, those with more power prey on those with less, and an awareness of this problem generates the many but oblique references to cannibalism that we find in the Homeric corpus. In the *Iliad*, fantasies of cannibalism are plentiful, but are never realized. This is because every man who fights in a war is, in the sense described by Nyamnjoh, cannibalized, and therefore can never fully enter the subject position of predator (cannibal).[477] In the *Odyssey*, humans are literally eaten and (I would argue) literally eat other humans, but these acts are always mediated by animals and monsters; perhaps, then, the possibility of cannibalism exists in the *Odyssey* because its hero does, in the end, achieve something of the status of predator, even as his companions are literally and figuratively cannibalized for the sake of his victory.

I. Cannibalism in Herodotus: An Instructive Foil

> Δαρεῖος ἐπὶ τῆς ἑωυτοῦ ἀρχῆς καλέσας Ἑλλήνων τοὺς παρεόντας εἴρετο ἐπὶ κόσῳ ἂν χρήματι βουλοίατο τοὺς πατέρας ἀποθνήσκοντας κατασιτέεσθαι: οἳ δὲ ἐπ᾽ οὐδενὶ ἔφασαν ἔρδειν ἂν τοῦτο. Δαρεῖος δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα καλέσας Ἰνδῶν τοὺς καλεομένους Καλλατίας, οἳ τοὺς γονέας κατεσθίουσι, εἴρετο, παρεόντων τῶν Ἑλλήνων καὶ δι᾽ ἑρμηνέος μανθανόντων τὰ λεγόμενα, ἐπὶ τίνι χρήματι δεξαίατ᾽ ἂν τελευτῶντας τοὺς πατέρας κατακαίειν πυρί: οἳ δὲ ἀμβώσαντες μέγα εὐφημέειν μιν ἐκέλευον. οὕτω μέν νυν ταῦτα νενόμισται, καὶ ὀρθῶς μοι δοκέει Πίνδαρος ποιῆσαι νόμον πάντων βασιλέα φήσας εἶναι.
>
> Darius, in the time of his rule, having summoned those of the Greeks who were present, asked for how much money they would be willing to eat up their fathers when they died; and they said that they would not do this for any price. And after these things, Darius, having summoned those of the Indians called Callatiae, who eat up their parents, asked, with the Greeks present and learning what was said through an interpreter, for what price they would accept burning up their dead fathers with fire; and they, shouting greatly, ordered him to be quiet [about impious matters]. Thus now these things are customary, and Pindar seems to me to have been correct in saying that custom is the king of all.[478]

Before approaching the Homeric poems, let us pause to consider stories about cannibalism in a very different kind of text, the *Histories* of Herodotus. Although Herodotus writes in a different genre and comes from a different historical period and cultural context, his delightful fables and tidbits about anthropophagy can help us understand the absence of similar

[477] Cf. Slatkin's assertion that "Through [Thetis] the *Iliad* offers… a conception of heroic stature as inseparable from human limitation and of heroic experience as a metaphor for the condition of mortality, with all its contradictions. No hero in the *Iliad* is given immortality, which would be utterly incompatible with such a perspective; the possibility is entirely absent" (1992: 39). My argument here is an extension and a specification of this idea.

[478] Hdt. *Hist.* 3.38.3-4.

tales in Homer. Herodotus mentions cannibalism ten times. Of these, one is a classic case of survival cannibalism; one is aggressive and exerts social control; three refer to incidents of people being tricked into committing cannibalism as a punishment or revenge; and five are ethnographic descriptions of peoples with cannibalistic customs.[479] He touches upon the major categories of cannibalism as described by anthropologists: survival cannibalism is universal; the mercenaries who drink their opponents' sons' blood represent exocannibalism, employing it as "social control"; "innocent cannibalism," that is, committed without knowledge, describes the cases of vengeful trickery; and most of the ethnographic examples are endocannibalistic funerary rituals.[480]

Herodotus employs the idea of cannibalism in a variety of ways. In the story of Astyages and Harpagos, for example, Astyages tricks Harpagos into eating his son as revenge for having saved the baby Cyrus when he was ordered to kill him. The story is clearly modeled on the myth of Atreus and Thyestes, and Herodotus uses it to invoke the genre of tragedy.[481] Having Astyages lead Harpagos to commit innocent cannibalism helps characterize Astyages as a larger-than-life villain for Cyrus to overcome. Cyrus, a child whose life has been threatened by his maternal grandfather, is set up as a heroic figure, and the circumstances of his rise to power are imbued with high stakes and powerful emotions.[482] Meanwhile, the story gives Harpagos a plausible motivation to help Cyrus overthrow Astyages. In this context, the presence of cannibalism has little to do with culture; since the story is modeled on a story about Greek aristocrats, it suggests less about the Medes in general and more about these particular characters. Indeed, it is also interesting to compare this particular story with Homer's treatment of the myth of the house of Atreus: although Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Aegisthus are all mentioned in Homer, and although Aegisthus' murder of Agamemnon is presumably, at least in part, retribution for the innocent cannibalism inflicted by Atreus on Thyestes, these events are not mentioned in Homer.

In ethnographic contexts, on the other hand, Herodotus employs cannibalism in conjunction with other cultural tropes to mark extreme cultural difference, but often in ways that seem to be intended to force readers to confront their own biases. The most explicit example of this is the passage quoted above, where Darius uses funerary cannibalism to prove to the Greeks that their disgust with cannibalism is arbitrary. It is telling that Herodotus takes cannibalism as a sort of paradigmatic taboo by which Darius demonstrates the principle of cultural relativism and which Herodotus, in turn, uses to explain why Cambyses' lack of respect for other peoples' customs is so foolish.[483]

In the case of the Padaioi of India, he uses cannibalism in opposition to vegetarianism to create two alternative visions of a brutal, uncompassionate society characterized by strange diets. One set are nomadic and eat their meat raw; their custom is to kill and eat anyone who falls ill, men eating men and women eating women.[484] This instance of endocannibalism is made to seem unusually aggressive and hostile by the details given: that a person's closest friends are the ones

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[479] Hdt. *Hist.* Survival: 3.25.6; Social control: 3.11.2; Innocent: 1.73.3-5, 1.119, 1.129; Customs: 1.216, 3.38.3-4, 3.99, 4.26, 4.106.
[480] See e.g., Lindenbaum (2004: 478-479).
[481] Burkert 1983: 108-109; Saïd 2002: 128-129; Griffin 2006: 48.
[482] Griffin 2006: 49.
[483] Herodotus' anecdotes about cannibalism were among those taken up by the sophistic *Dissoi Logoi* to demonstrate arbitrary cultural contradictions, and Thomas suggests that he might have included these kinds of stories in part because of the popularity and influence of sophistic cultural relativism at the time (2006: 70).
[484] Hdt. *Hist.* 3.99.

who kill and eat him, and that those who fall ill try to deny their illness but are not believed. The other set are nonviolent vegetarians and do not practice agriculture or even build houses. They eat grass and a type of grain that does not need to be husked. And yet their treatment of the sick is not much better than their raw-flesh-eating counterparts: anyone who falls ill goes off into the desert to die alone and is offered no help or concern by his compatriots.[485] The cannibals' aggression and the vegetarians' apathy have the same result: those who fall ill die quickly, whether by murder or by neglect. Is the fate of being eaten after death worse than that of being isolated and allowed to die of natural causes? It is not clear that Herodotus thinks so.[486]

His reports of funerary cannibalism are equally fascinating and complex. The Massagetai are described as having a number of peculiar customs: they practice sexual promiscuity; they eat no vegetable foods, only animals, fish, and milk; and they sacrifice horses to the sun, who is the only god that they worship.[487] But strangest of all, they have a practice of ritually killing and consuming people at an appointed time, sacrificing them along with sheep and stewing the meat together. Herodotus takes pains to make it clear that this practice is *not* aggressive or hostile: those who die of illnesses before their appointed time are not consumed, and this is considered unfortunate. Similarly, the Issedones, who are called "civilized and righteous" and practice gender equality, have a funeral ritual consisting of cooking the dead person's flesh in a stew along with cattle meat, eating it as a feast with the whole family, stripping bare and gilding the dead person's head, and sacrificing to it every year thenceforth.[488] He even compares the yearly sacrifice directly to the Greek custom of commemorating a dead family member's birthday. These clusters of customs are arranged in such a way as to be both foreign and familiar.[489] The customs described, while decidedly foreign, are in both cases a strange mixture of civilized and uncivilized, and the descriptions of the cannibalistic funerals combine aspects of the funeral and what Redfield calls the anti-funeral, the feeding of the foe to animals as a substitute for cannibalism.[490] That is, Herodotus seems interested in emphasizing the point that it is possible to have a funeral that is proper and reverent in its own context, but that also contains the defining horror of the anti-funeral.

The story of the Greek and Carian mercenaries of the Egyptian king who punish Phanes for leading the Persian army by drinking his sons' blood in front of him before battle fits well with the social-control hypothesis of cannibalism. The mercenaries kill the sons one at a time, draining all of their blood into a wine bowl, and add wine and water to it before drinking it to be "fortified" before fighting. The deed is thus highly performative, designed to intimidate Phanes and his army.[491] This use of the cannibalism motif is similar, in a way, to the stories of innocent

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[485] Hdt. *Hist.* 3.100.

[486] Consider again Nyamnjoh's formulation of cannibalism (2018: 5-6). "The vegetarian is no less inhuman than the cannibal" (Vidal-Naquet 1981: 87).

[487] Hdt. *Hist.* 1.216.

[488] Hdt. *Hist.* 4.26. Murphy and Mallory use the example of the law-abiding Issedonae to argue that Herodotus' tales of cannibalism are unlikely to be mere hyperbolic slander of foreign cultures (2000: 390).

[489] Karttunen gives the Issedones and the Massagetai as examples of "intermediate" peoples whose funerary practices are a mixture of savage and familiar, pointing out that they are called "sacrifices" and that the inclusion of animal meat makes them resemble Greek sacrifices (2002: 461).

[490] Redfield 1975: 169; cf. Vernant 1991: 70-72.

[491] Cf. for analogy the social-control theory of Anasazi: "… we find it quite plausible that a few score or hundred well-organized and fanatical warrior-cultists using rule-breaking but example-setting cannibalism and human sacrifice as conspicuous elements of terrorism might quickly and easily dominate small farming communities… The use of cannibalism as a short-term mechanism for social control fits the sociobiological paradigm well. Terrorizing, mutilating, and murdering might be evolutionarily useful behaviors when directed against unrelated competitors"

cannibalism: it functions in the story as the worst possible thing that could be done to Phanes, thus characterizing the mercenaries as intensely vengeful, particularly considering that some of them are Greeks. The mixture of wine, water, and blood is also quite unsettling, underlining the horror and the insult of the crime.

The one instance of survival cannibalism in Herodotus—the category that most studies of cannibalism consider universal and not culturally significant—is, interestingly, highly culturally determined.[492] It occurs at the end of Cambyses' doomed expedition against the Ethiopians. He begins by sending spies to attempt to corrupt the Ethiopians with luxurious gifts, but they reject these advances, being naturally gifted in ways that make all of the luxury goods superfluous: they have no need for purple cloth, since their dark skin is naturally beautiful; they smell good naturally, so they are not enticed by perfume; and gold is common and without value in their country.[493] Among the other wondrous privileges of the Ethiopians, they possess the Table of the Sun, which spontaneously produces cooked meat. Cambyses, angry about their rejection, leads an army against them, but the army runs out of provisions and turns first to eating their pack animals, then to eating grass, and finally to cannibalism before he relents. The contrast here is between the Persians, who think that their decadent luxury goods are valuable when they are in fact empty of value, and the Ethiopians, whose pure and simple life is both incorruptible and naturally luxurious. The Ethiopians' virtuous life gives them meat without effort, while the Persians' arrogance leads them to consume improper meat, improper plant food, and finally the most improper food of all, human flesh.[494] In this way, Herodotus' deployment of survival cannibalism says nothing about cannibalistic practices among the Persians, but much about their decadence and folly.[495]

Herodotus, being as interested as he is in cultural difference and in sordid stories, is eager to collect and curate tales of cannibalism.[496] He also seems, overall, to view humans as somewhat less helpless than they are in the Homeric poems.[497] By this I do not mean that cannibalism has the same symbolic value in Herodotus that it does in Homer, but rather, that because Herodotus is not so pessimistic about the human condition, cannibalism remains an exciting curiosity that can be deployed for different symbolic purposes in different contexts.

II. Glutting Ares with Blood: War as Meat Grinder in the *Iliad*

Cannibalism is a looming presence in the *Iliad*, mentioned explicitly or implicitly many times but never fully realized. It is wished for or attributed to three characters—Hera, Achilles,

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(Turner and Turner 1999: 477). This kind of "rule-breaking but example-setting" cannibalism is exactly what the Greek and Carian mercenaries are doing here.

[492] See, e.g., Lindenbaum 2004: 477; Arens 1979: 18.

[493] "To seduce the Ethiopians and reduce them to slavery, Cambyses has gifts delivered whose precious character is also a deception" (Vernant 1989b: 167).

[494] See Vernant 1989b: 169.

[495] Saïd includes this episode in explaining how Herodotus characterizes Xerxes' campaign as the climax of a tragedy of Persian imperial expansionism (2002: 145). See also Vernant 1989b: passim.

[496] As Redfield puts it, "Herodotus' interests are not micro-systemic, in the internal coherence of particular cultures, but macro-systemic, in the patterned display provided by the range of cultures. Those two great tourists, Herodotus and Lévi-Strauss, have made their science by setting culture against culture in a pattern of symmetrical oppositions" (1985: 106).

[497] See, for example, the anecdote at 9.16 of the Persian at the Theban banquet who predicts the defeat of the Persians, but, when urged by his Theban table-mate to tell his commander, declines on the grounds that all Persians must follow their orders. Greeks, at least, seem to have slightly more control of their destiny.

and Hecuba—but rather than focusing on these most direct encounters with the ultimate taboo, I hope to gain fresh insights into the problem by approaching it more obliquely. In this section, I will attempt to understand the patterns of thought about cannibalism in the *Iliad* via two approaches: first, by tracking the ways that animal similes align the act of killing each other with the act of eating each other; and second, by examining the use of a verb, ἄω, "glut," that frequently refers to humans-turned-food satisfying and nourishing their devourers, be they gods or animals. These inquiries will reveal that even at their bloodiest and most brutal, the *Iliad*'s images of violence are always grounded in a deep anxiety about the warrior's place in the world. Regardless of any individual warrior's supremacy over others, his existence is intimately bound up in violence in a way that will always inevitably make him the victim of forces beyond his control.

Animal similes are a venue for cannibalistic undertones.[498] The warriors of the *Iliad* are compared to animals for their agility, their brutality, and their voracity. And while the warriors themselves never indulge the urge to sink their teeth into each other's flesh—only their weapons—the animals that are parallel to them in the mirror world of similes do all the time. This is different from, but related to, the idea that cannibalism is a defining feature of animals as opposed to humans, as in the Hesiod passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter.[499] Cannibalism—eating members of one's own species—is, indeed, associated with animals, but even simple carnivorism becomes a space for imagining cannibalism when it is aligned with human-on-human violence through similes. A man killing a man is likened to a lion killing *and eating* a deer; the lion is not a cannibal, but the one man is like a predator, the other is like prey, and the act of killing is like the act of eating. Hunting imagery, superimposed onto the war narrative through similes, keeps the idea of being a predator or being prey near at hand.[500] The cannibalistic impulses that lurk beneath the surface of the narrative in the *Iliad* can be discerned in the frequent equation of humans' violent destruction of one another's bodies to animals' destruction *and consumption* of one another's bodies.

While it would be possible and worthwhile to map the entire thematic network of animals in similes in the *Iliad*, such a study would extend beyond the scope of this chapter. For my purposes here, I will explore two important and interrelated subsets of animal similes: those describing lions and those describing bulls. There are thirty-eight lion similes in the *Iliad*, out of which twenty-nine describe the lions as purely aggressive.[501] They are often employed to emphasize the prowess of a victorious warrior, especially in his *aristeia.*[502] These generally convey praise and awe for the lion's strength, while sometimes also hinting at blame for the

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[498] See Redfield 1975: 198 on how the "buried theme" of cannibalism is revealed in animal similes.

[499] See Vidal-Naquet 1981: 81-82.

[500] The pathos of hunting/hunted/predator/prey similes is reminiscent of Burkert's argument for the evolutionary origins of human violence, which he locates in the human transition from prey to predator and the imitation of the violence of predatory animals (1983: 17). He proposes that this violence was sometimes turned against the slower, easier prey of other humans, leading to cannibalism (ibid. 18). Conversely, he says, sacrificial rituals came about because of human sympathy with prey animals: "Most of all, this similarity with man was to be recognized in killing and slaughtering: the flesh was like flesh, bones like bones, phallus like phallus, and heart like heart, and, most important of all, the warm running blood was the same. One could, perhaps, most clearly grasp the animal's resemblance to man when it died" (ibid. 20).

[501] Aggressive lion similes: *Il.* 3.23, 5.136, 5.161, 5.476, 5.554, 5.782, 7.256, 10.297, 10.485, 11.113, 11.129, 11.173, 11.383, 12.293, 12.299, 13.198, 15.592, 15.630, 16.487, 16.498, 16.752, 16.756, 16.823, 16.826, 17.61, 17.542, 18.161, 24.41, 24.572; defensive or mixed lion similes: 5.299, 8.338, 11.293, 11.548, 12.42, 17.133, 17.657, 20.164; lion similes not related to combat: 17.20.

[502] E.g., Diomedes at 5.136, 5.161, or Agamemnon at 11.113, 11.129, 11.173.

lion's cruelty and voracity. Rarely, a lion simile is used outside of the context of battle, and in these situations the implication of blame is stronger. Apollo, for example, blames Achilles for his brutal abuse of Hector's corpse, comparing him to a lion,

> ὅς τ' ἐπεὶ ἄρ μεγάλῃ τε βίῃ καὶ ἀγήνορι θυμῷ
> εἴξας εἶσ' ἐπὶ μῆλα βροτῶν ἵνα δαῖτα λάβῃσιν·[503]
>
> who, yielding to his great strength and bold heart,
> goes against the sheep of mortals in order to take a meal.

The lion described here is similar in nature to the lions of battle similes—powerful, hungry for meat, and unconstrained by the rules of human society—but Apollo, by saying that the lion "yields" to his strength, frames this as indicative of weakness and self-indulgence.[504] Lions kill the livestock and eat the meat to which their strength entitles them, and here, Apollo implies, Achilles' strength has given him too great a sense of entitlement.[505] Meanwhile, the comparison of Achilles abusing Hector's corpse to a lion eating domestic sheep creates an implication of cannibalism, and Achilles' prior expression of cannibalistic desires strengthens this implication.[506] The satisfaction that Achilles seeks by dragging Hector's remains behind his chariot and offering it to dogs is like that of the lion "making a meal" of the sheep.[507] The impulse that Achilles "yields" to is like the hunger that drives the lion to transgress.

Sometimes, though, the lions in the similes are portrayed with a fascinating mix of fierceness and vulnerability.[508] For example, when Aeneas kills two brothers, Orsilochus and Crethon, they are compared to two lions:

> οἵω τώ γε λέοντε δύω ὄρεος κορυφῆσιν
> ἐτραφέτην ὑπὸ μητρὶ βαθείης τάρφεσιν ὕλης·
> τὼ μὲν ἄρ' ἁρπάζοντε βόας καὶ ἴφια μῆλα
> σταθμοὺς ἀνθρώπων κεραΐζετον, ὄφρα καὶ αὐτὼ
> ἀνδρῶν ἐν παλάμῃσι κατέκταθεν ὀξέϊ χαλκῷ·

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[503] *Il.* 24.42-43.

[504] Many lion similes emphasize hunger for meat, e.g., 11.548, 12.299, 17.657. "His ferocity in attack, tenacity in pursuit, and swiftness in escape, his hunger and fury—all these activities and qualities are in the similes" (Scott 1974: 60).

[505] "A human characteristic is here transferred to the animal: the lion 'gives in' to his strength and pride because he represents the man who is the enemy of other men" (MacLeod 1982: 91).

[506] The other lion simile that appears outside the context of battle also refers to Achilles: after speaking with Priam, and indeed after warning Priam not to provoke him to violence, he leaps up like a lion to prepare Hector's corpse for return. This is subtler than Apollo's condemnation, but hints at the same problem: Achilles' inability to control his strength outside of battle. Cf. Scott (1974: 60): "The lion grieves and then tracks the hunter for revenge; in parallel fashion Achilles promises to avenge Patroclus' death immediately after the simile. This is the birth of a new wrath which does not die until the return of the body to Priam; consequently the lion comparisons are used even as he is accepting ransom from Priam."

[507] "The word [δαῖτα] is properly used of a human meal. Here and in 1.5… it is used of animals' prey with sinister effect" (MacLeod 1982: 91-92).

[508] "Lions are fearful and cowardly as well as courageous… The poet's sympathy with the weaknesses of the lion complements his admiration of his strengths, and the net result is one of heightened realism" (Lonsdale 1990: 46).

τοίω τὼ χείρεσσιν ὑπ’ Αἰνείαο δαμέντε
καππεσέτην, ἐλάτῃσιν ἐοικότες ὑψηλῇσι.[509]

Such as two lions in the peaks of a mountain
They were nourished in thickets of the deep forest by their mother;
The two of them snatching cows and fat sheep
Ravaged the stables of men, until also the two
In the hands of men were killed with sharp bronze;
Such did the two of them fall, mastered
By the hands of Aeneas, resembling tall fir-trees.

As discussed above, lions in similes are usually aggressive but occasionally defensive; it is unusual that here they are at once aggressors and victims. Also unusual is the simile’s point of contact: while the lions and the warrior-brothers are both aggressive and we see them both killing, the comparison is not of their violence but of their deaths.[510]

The brothers Orsilochus and Crethon have been introduced thirteen lines earlier, when Aeneas seizes them, and their backstory is explained with a long genealogy.[511] We learn that they are descended from the river Alpheius, who begat their grandfather, Ortilochus, to be king of the surrounding people. They left their home to win glory for another pair of brothers, Agamemnon and Menelaus. The parallels between the two brothers and the two lions go well beyond their aggression or their deaths. Whereas the brothers have quasi-autochthonous origins, being descended from a river god, the lions are first nourished by their mother, the thickets, and the forest. The lions, like the brothers, move from a nurturing, natural space, the forest, into the violent world of men. The lions are motivated by their hunger for meat, while the brothers are said to go to war in order to win glory—but for the sons of Atreus, not for themselves. Most striking of all, the simile and the narrative are beautifully symmetrical in their emphasis on the turning point from predator into prey.[512] The lions’ violence and voracity are described over a line and a half—their theft of cows and sheep, their destruction of the stables—until they come up against ὄφρα, and are killed by men with bronze.[513] The brothers, similarly, are described maturing and becoming more warlike, but are only introduced into the narrative at the moment of their deaths. There is a strange identity between the lions’ and the brothers’ position in relation to society: both are driven by a compulsion to violence—and, for the lions at least, a hunger for flesh—that makes them inevitable victims of violence.

Warriors, and especially Achilles, the paradigmatic warrior, live on the fine line between being a predator and being prey, and the lion similes provide a space for the exploration of this

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[509] *Il.* 5.554-560.
[510] This lion simile is unique in having death as the point of comparison (Kirk 1990: 115-116).
[511] 5.541-553.
[512] “Varied actions against so many varied opponents create a highly flexible system, yet the situations are simple and repetitive: the lion as hunter or hunted” (Scott 1974: 60). See also Redfield: “On the battlefield man becomes predator to man… the enemy may be thought of as an opposing predator, a lion or whild boar. In this case the enemy retains his dignity, and the warrior thinks of himself as the huntsman who drives on the snarling, cowering dogs. This metaphor, however, lasts only so long as the adversaries confront each other as equals. The defeated warrior loses his dignity and generates a second metaphor; he becomes deer or rabbit, prey. The victorious warrior comes down with him and becomes his merely predatory self, that is, a dog” (1975: 199).
[513] “The language and much of the detail are unusually formular… Yet 557 ὄφρα καὶ αὐτώ stresses the apparent inevitability of their own deaths, and it is perhaps this aspect of warfare that the poet wishes to emphasize in a deliberately flat and somber conclusion” (Kirk 1990: 116).

precarious existence.[514] Another wonderful example of the tension between viciousness and vulnerability comes in the simile that describes Achilles leaping like a lion against Aeneas:

> Πηλεΐδης δ' ἑτέρωθεν ἐναντίον ὦρτο λέων ὡς
> σίντης, ὅν τε καὶ ἄνδρες ἀποκτάμεναι μεμάασιν
> ἀγρόμενοι πᾶς δῆμος· ὃ δὲ πρῶτον μὲν ἀτίζων
> ἔρχεται, ἀλλ' ὅτε κέν τις ἀρηϊθόων αἰζηῶν
> δουρὶ βάλῃ ἐάλη τε χανών, περί τ' ἀφρὸς ὀδόντας
> γίγνεται, ἐν δέ τέ οἱ κραδίῃ στένει ἄλκιμον ἦτορ,
> οὐρῇ δὲ πλευράς τε καὶ ἰσχία ἀμφοτέρωθεν
> μαστίεται, ἐὲ δ' αὐτὸν ἐποτρύνει μαχέσασθαι,
> γλαυκιόων δ' ἰθὺς φέρεται μένει, ἤν τινα πέφνῃ
> ἀνδρῶν, ἢ αὐτὸς φθίεται πρώτῳ ἐν ὁμίλῳ·
> ὣς Ἀχιλῆ' ὄτρυνε μένος καὶ θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ
> ἀντίον ἐλθέμεναι μεγαλήτορος Αἰνείαο.[515]
>
> And the son of Peleus on the other side rose up opposite like a lion
> Ravening, whom in fact men are eager to kill,
> The whole people gathered; but he first paying no heed
> Goes, but whenever someone of the swift-fighting young men
> Strikes with spear and he is hemmed in, gaping, around his teeth foam
> Appears, and in his breast his strong heart groans,
> And with his tail he lashes his flanks and hips
> On both sides, and he goads himself to fight,
> And glaring, he rushes straight with strength, if he may slay someone
> Of the men, or himself perish in the front of the crowd;
> Thus his strength and noble spirit goaded Achilles
> To go against great-hearted Aeneas.

The simile is a bit curious, exhibiting such pathos when Achilles has no reason to particularly fear Aeneas, a demonstrably weaker fighter than himself.[516] And the simple explanation would be that the point of contact is clear: the vigor with which Achilles leaps is like that of a lion who is driven to greater vigor by his desperate situation. The answer that I find more interesting, however, is that the simile is here because even when Achilles is sure of victory in a specific fight, he is *always* the surrounded lion, always foaming at the mouth, always groaning in his

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[514] Cf. Vernant on Sarpedon at 12.305-306: "…among the Trojan warriors, in his courage and his prowess in battle, he is like a lion whose gnawing hunger drives him, heedless of danger, after his prey. He does not care that the flock is in an enclosed pasture, guarded by herdsmen armed with pikes and accompanied by dogs. Once he is on the attack, nothing will turn him away. There are only two possible endings: either he will snatch his victim, against and despite all odds, or he will be struck by a spear and fall" (1991: 56).

[515] *Il*. 20.164-175.

[516] "At this point the poet's remark that the lion risks attack in spite of all odds injects a not of pathos to balance with the earlier description of the lion's eathos. The ring is then completed with the resumptive clause summarizing the warrior's corresponding intent to attack. Although attack and counterattack are mentioned in the simile, the outcome of the confrontation is left in suspense… In the same way we are left in suspense about the confrontation of Achilles and Aineias by the long verbal exchanges that follow" (Lonsdale 1990: 41).

heart, and always bracing himself to slay someone or to perish himself. He is always, and must always be, goading himself to excellence.[517]

In the above simile, the lion's opposition to a group of men overlaps with Achilles' reality. Achilles' opponents, like the lion's tormentors, are often men armed with spears. When lions attack other animals in similes, as they so often do, there is a different kind of overlapping of reality and simile: the warrior's desire to kill his opponents overlaps with the lions' desire to kill *and eat* other animals. For example, when Patroclus kills Sarpedon, it is not only Patroclus who becomes a lion; Sarpedon, too, becomes a slain bull:

> ἠΰτε ταῦρον ἔπεφνε λέων ἀγέληφι μετελθὼν
> αἴθωνα μεγάθυμον ἐν εἰλιπόδεσσι βόεσσι,
> ὅλετό τε στενάχων ὑπὸ γαμφηλῇσι λέοντος,
> ὣς ὑπὸ Πατρόκλῳ Λυκίων ἀγὸς ἀσπιστάων
> κτεινόμενος μενέαινε…[518]
>
> As when a lion coming among the herd kills
> A tawny, great-hearted bull among the rolling-gaited oxen,
> And it dies groaning beneath the claws of the lion,
> Thus the leader of the shield-bearing Lycians
> Raged as he was being killed by Patroclus.

Both the lion and the bull are formidable, sometimes dangerous creatures, but when they meet, at least in the world of the similes, the lion will always be the predator and the bull will always be prey.[519] The contrast between the bull's usual role of defender of the herd and its sudden transformation into the lion's prey is highlighted by several details in the language: the glorifying epithets that describe it (αἴθων, meaning shining or tawny, is usually applied to lions, not bulls, and μεγάθυμος, great-hearted, is normally applied to heroes or gods, but only here to an animal);[520] the dramatic scene of the bull moaning while it is mangled by the lion's sharp claws; and Sarpedon, the real-life bull, reacting to his own death not with sadness but with fury.[521] Shortly after this, Patroclus damages Sarpedon's body by tearing away part of his midriff when he removes his spear.[522] Sarpedon's transformation from warrior into mere flesh is thus emphasized in the main narrative as well as the simile.

Battle turns some warriors into lions and others into bulls.[523] But sometimes, the idea of a bull—an animal that humans, too, eat—brings the specter of cannibalism in similes weirdly close

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[517] "The sentiment 'kill or be killed' is commonly attributed to warriors… Here it fits in with the military language of the simile" (Edwards 1991: 310).
[518] *Il.* 16.487-491.
[519] This is analogous to Scott's point that lions and boars are interchangeable in similes in all aspects but this: boars may be aggressive, but they never appear killing other animals (1974: 59-60).
[520] Janko 1994: 380.
[521] In some similes, the lion's consumption of the other animal is even more prominent, e.g., 3.23, where Menelaus looks at Paris like a lion finding and eating the carcass of a stag or a goat, or 13.198, where the two Aiantes despoil a corpse like two lions carrying off a goat.
[522] *Il.* 16.504-505.
[523] "Combat appears in the similes as a kind of predation, in which the enemy appear alternately as competing predators and as prey. The warrior may become (metaphorically) a predator, or he may mobilize the predator (metonymically) within him…" (Redfield 1975: 196).

to something more literal. For example, when Achilles kills Hippodamas, he is compared to a bull being dragged to sacrifice:

> Ἱπποδάμαντα δ' ἔπειτα καθ' ἵππων ἀΐξαντα
> πρόσθεν ἔθεν φεύγοντα μετάφρενον οὔτασε δουρί.
> αὐτὰρ ὃ θυμὸν ἄϊσθε καὶ ἤρυγεν, ὡς ὅτε ταῦρος
> ἤρυγεν ἑλκόμενος Ἑλικώνιον ἀμφὶ ἄνακτα
> κούρων ἑλκόντων· γάνυται δέ τε τοῖς ἐνοσίχθων·
> ὣς ἄρα τόν γ' ἐρυγόντα λίπ' ὀστέα θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ·
>
> And then Hippodamas, darting down from the horses,
> Fleeing in front of him, he wounded in the back with a spear.
> But he breathed out his spirit and bellowed, as when a bull
> Bellows being dragged for the Heliconian lord (Poseidon)
> With youths dragging; and the earth-shaker rejoices in these;
> Thus the noble spirit left his bones as he bellowed…[524]

The simile focuses on Hippodamas' last breath and cry, and the cry becomes the point of contact for the simile, opening the door to the image of a bellowing, resistant bull.[525] The dying warrior and the struggling bull overlap in ways that are not entirely predictable: rather than a simple overlaying of one death onto another, Hippodamas' moment of death is equivalent to the bull's vigorous resistance to death, emphasized by two uses of ἕλκω in quick succession. Even more interesting for our purposes is the role of Poseidon in the simile. He is said to rejoice in τοῖς, which may refer either to the bulls or to the youths.[526] For Poseidon to rejoice in the sacrifice of bulls or in the humans who kill them is normal behavior for a god, but it raises the question of what the simile means in relation to the narrative. Hippodamas is the tenor of the bull; Achilles is the tenor of the young men who drag the bull. While it is not productive to harp on the incongruities between vehicle and tenor in a Homeric simile as flaws, in this case the disjunctions between the narrative and the simile raise interesting questions. Will the youths in the simile taste the meat of the bull? Presumably. Will any god, in the narrative, rejoice in Hippodamas' death in the way that Poseidon rejoices in the death of the bull? That is a question worth pondering.[527]

Consider, for comparison, the Hopi story of Maasaw, a deity of death, war, and fire, with associations of human sacrifice, convincing the Hopi chief to sacrifice his favorite niece because the sun can only continue burning with human grease. The chief sacrifices his niece and he and Maasaw use her fat to rekindle the sun.[528] This story articulates, in clear and vivid terms, an idea that I think is present in the *Iliad*: that human bodies and lives must be consumed as some sort of

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[524] *Il.* 20.401-406.
[525] See Edwards (1991: 334). Scott notes that "bulls bound and dragged" can represent "the helplessness of a dying warrior," referring to this passage and to 13.571, where a bound bull is dragged down from the mountains (1974: 79).
[526] Edwards 1991: 334.
[527] Edwards suggests that "like the bull, Hippodamas is in a sense the victim of Poseidon, who supports the Greeks" (1991: 334).
[528] Turner and Turner 1999: 467-468.

price—or fuel, as in the Hopi story—for the continued operation of the universe.[529] It is the inverse of the motivation proposed in the *Cypria*, that Zeus brought the war about to lighten the burden of humans on Gaia.[530] The two ideas can coexist; human bodies can be at once Gaia's unwanted refuse and, as we will soon see, Ares' nourishment.

The idea that a god would delight in the deaths of men in war in the same way that he delights in the slaughter of sacrificial animals can also be discerned in the expression αἵματος ἆσαι Ἄρηα, "to glut Ares with blood," which is uttered three times: once by Diomedes to Aeneas and Pandarus, just before killing Pandarus; once by the narrator describing Achilles' desire to fight Hector; and once by Achilles to Hector, just after refusing his request that they swear to return each other's remains, not merely boasting or threatening, but declaring that *one or the other* of the two of them must suffer this.[531] Perhaps it is not so remarkable to notice that Ares, the god of war and particularly of its more destructive and chaotic side, takes pleasure in humans killing each other, the principle activity of war. What is, in fact, remarkable here is not the broad implication of these lines, but the specific language used. Ares is not merely delighting, but *glutted*. The spilling of human blood, then, seems to satisfy Ares in a more physical way than we might expect. He is not literally drinking the blood of the battlefield, but the language does imply that it is appealing, pleasurable, and nourishing to him in a way that is like food.[532]

For a fuller understanding of the nuances of ἄω, let us consider its other uses in the *Iliad*. It appears fifteen times: the three aforementioned references to Ares; twice for Achilles being sated with food; twice for dogs being sated with eating corpses; four times for personified spears being sated with human flesh; twice for mourners being sated with weeping or wailing; once for horses being sated with running; and once for the Greeks being sated with war.[533] Out of these fifteen uses, two refer to food, four to abstract activities, and *the other nine* to human flesh. Even its uses in relation to food are not neutral: it is the word that Phoenix uses to illustrate his closeness to Achilles as a doting father figure, mentioning how when Achilles was a young child he would sit on Phoenix's knee and Phoenix would indulge him with morsels of food and sips of wine.[534] Similarly, when Achilles refuses to eat before returning to battle, he asks that the others not "bid him glut his own heart with food and drink."[535] Both of these passages imagine eating motivated by pleasure rather than utility, first with Phoenix's memory of spoiling the young Achilles with treats, and later with Achilles dismissing eating as self-indulgent and unnecessary.

The idea that feeding one's foes to dogs is a substitute for cannibalism has been well established by Redfield, and the two uses of ἄω to describe dogs glutted by the human corpses that they devour fit well into this scheme.[536] One of them is spoken by Hecuba, shortly before she declares her own desire to eat Achilles, and thus merits further consideration:

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[529] Similarly, Slatkin argues that Achilles' mortality is given such importance in the *Iliad* "in order to show that cosmic equilibrium is bought at the cost of human mortality" (1992: 103).
[530] See, e.g., Redfield 1979: 106.
[531] *Il.* 5.289, 20.78, 22.267.
[532] This is similar to the image of Ares as the χρυσαμοιβὸς σωμάτων (money-changer of bodies) at A.*Ag.* 437, but more immediate and visceral; instead of trafficking in and profiting from the deaths of the war, Ares is imagined to eat and be satisfied by the actual substance of their bodies.
[533] Food: 9.489, 19.307; dogs: 11.818, 24.211; spears: 11.574, 15.317, 21.70, 21.168; mourning: 23.157, 24.717; horses: 18.281; war: 19.402.
[534] *Il.* 9.489.
[535] *Il.* 19.307.
[536] See Redfield 1975: 199.

τῷ δ’ ὥς ποθι Μοῖρα κραταιὴ
γιγνομένῳ ἐπένησε λίνῳ, ὅτε μιν τέκον αὐτή,
ἀργίποδας κύνας ἦσαι ἐῶν ἀπάνευθε τοκήων
ἀνδρὶ πάρα κρατερῷ, τοῦ ἐγὼ μέσον ἦπαρ ἔχοιμι
ἐσθέμεναι προσφῦσα· τότ’ ἄντιτα ἔργα γένοιτο
παιδὸς ἐμοῦ, ἐπεὶ οὔ ἑ κακιζόμενόν γε κατέκτα,
ἀλλὰ πρὸ Τρώων καὶ Τρωϊάδων βαθυκόλπων
ἑσταότ’ οὔτε φόβου μεμνημένον οὔτ’ ἀλεωρῆς.[537]

Thus for him when he was born strong Fate once
Assigned with the thread, when I myself bore him,
To glut swift-footed dogs, far away from his parents
At the house of a strong man, whose liver in the middle of him I wish I could
Eat, latching on; then there would be deeds of vengeance
For my child, since he killed him not playing the coward,
But standing before the Trojans and the deep-bosomed Trojan women,
Remembering neither fear nor cowardice.

In a single sentence, Hecuba declares that it is Hector’s fate to glut Achilles’ dogs and that she wishes she could eat Achilles’ liver.[538] The wish is added onto the statement with a relative clause, joining two cannibalistic scenarios in the person of Achilles. “He is fated to glut dogs beside a strong man, *whose* (τοῦ) liver I wish I could eat.” Everything turns on the relative pronoun. First, Hector’s body becomes food for dogs, Achilles’ dogs, surrogates for Achilles himself: through his dogs, he can realize his wish to bring himself to ingest Hector. But as soon as Achilles, the “strong man,” is mentioned, he becomes the object of another’s cannibalistic fantasies: Hecuba, who, like the ravenous birds assigned to torment Prometheus and Tityus, wants to bite into the liver that is in the middle of him.[539] She reacts to the certainty of her son’s—her flesh and blood’s—degradation, his final and permanent transformation into prey, by grasping desperately at her own predatory instincts.[540] To become an animal and devour Achilles would, she imagines, remove herself and her loved ones from the horrible limbo of the human condition.

The references to spears, in turn, add a strange and fascinating dimension to the idea of being sated. Each refers to a spear missing its mark and sticking in the ground in spite of its eagerness to be sated with flesh (χρώς), in one case specifically “a man’s flesh.”[541] The spears are personified and granted not only the desire to kill, but an actual appetite for human bodies.[542] Lattimore’s translation, which usually stays fairly literal, betrays the oddness of the expression by changing it into something more expected, “straining to reach the bodies.” The idea of weapons as sentient killing machines can only remind the audience of the men who deploy those

[537] *Il.* 24.209-216.
[538] Cunliffe gives “burying my teeth in it” for προσφῦσα, though the literal meaning is “grow on” or “cling to.” Whichever way it is translated, it conjures a grotesque image of invading and even merging with the enemy body.
[539] Hes. *Th.* 523-524; Hom. *Od.* 11.576-581.
[540] “The wish, ‘I could eat your raw!’, recalls 22.346-7 (Achilles to Hector)… It comes forcefully and abruptly after the resignation of 208-12; and it strikingly echoes ὠμηστής (207): the thought of Achilles’ savagery provokes Hecuba’s” (Macleod 1982: 106).
[541] *Il.* 21.70.
[542] See Hainsworth (1993: 285) on the personification of spears.

weapons, as they have been deployed by their commanders. The spear is metonymy for the soldier.[543] The men sent forth to kill send the spears forth to kill, and the spears kill, and are *satisfied* by the act of killing, *nourished* by the flesh that they tear.[544] In addition to the gods and animals who are eating humans in this war, we may note that even inanimate objects are filling their bellies with the flesh of men.

The metaphorical uses of ἄω are telling as well. Achilles and Priam both use the word to refer to excessive mourning by a group. Achilles asks Agamemnon to send the army away from the pyre of Patroclus to eat, and Priam scolds the Trojans, who in their grief surround the wagon on which he bears Hector's remains, telling them to let him bring the body into the palace before they sate themselves with weeping. In both situations, someone deeply affected by a death uses the idea of "glutting with weeping" to dismiss the grief of a group more distantly connected to the dead person. Poulydamas, while advising Hector to retreat to the city, uses ἄω to describe what will happen to Achilles' horses if he has to ride all the way to the city: they will be glutted with running. And Achilles uses the expression, "when we are glutted with fighting," in commanding his horses to bring him back safely just before he sets out to fight. Here, again, Lattimore's uncharacteristically loose translation, "when we give over fighting," exposes the strangeness of the expression. Achilles imagines being satisfied by fighting in the same way as by the food that he recently declined to eat. All of these activities seem to be objects of ambivalence, things that one enjoys but cannot or should not do indefinitely; things that are in one's nature to do, like a horse running; things that are necessary, but overwhelming, like grief.

The idea that all of these uses of ἄω, and indeed, that all of these brushes with cannibalism in the *Iliad* point to, is that there is a deep satisfaction, repugnant though it may be, that is imagined to come from the consumption of other people—that is, from becoming permanently the predator and escaping forever the subject position of the prey.[545] The reason that no one satisfies this urge in the poem, and that the fantasy is made explicit so rarely but hinted at so much, is that every man in a war must always know that he is prey. Warriors dance on the line between hunter and hunted, lion and bull, straining towards the victory of consuming that is always so entangled with the chance of being consumed, but in the end, all will be cannibalized. Much as Achilles expresses in book I and book IX, all of their lives are destroyed, in one sense or another, by the vast enterprise in which they are caught.[546] Even Agamemnon, whom Achilles calls δημοβόρος, is destroyed by the consequences of the war that he was so instrumental in bringing about, slaughtered in his own home ὥς τίς τε κατέκτανε βοῦν ἐπὶ φάτνῃ, "as one kills an ox at the manger."[547]

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[543] "It is a question, however, whether the personification is a rhetorical fancy of the poet or an animistic aspect of popular speech; in a world where wind (5.524), rivers (12.18), fire (23.177, etc.), the sun (*Od.* 10.160), are said to have μένος, weapons may easily share the μένος of the hands that hurl them" (Hainsworth 1993: 285).

[544] The effect is similar that of the sword in Sophocles' *Ajax*, which, once received as a gift, acts as an agent of the giver, Hector, and causes Ajax to destroy his life (Mueller 2016b: 29-30).

[545] See Bloch 1992: 4-7.

[546] *Il.* 1.152-160, where Achilles declares that he has no personal stake in or benefit from the war, since he has not been personally injured by the Trojans; cf. 9.337-341, where he points out that the war only benefits the sons of Atreus, and 9.401-409, where he complains that no material rewards can compensate him for losing his life in the war. ""So far as [Achilles] can see, in this war that belongs primarily to Agamemnon and his brother, Agamemnon constantly leaves it to others to give their lives in the heart of the fray… For all that he is the kingliest… among the lords, he has not crossed the boundary that separates ordinary men from the truly heroic. The latter, by accepting from the beginning the fact that life is short, devote themselves completely and single-mindedly to war, adventure, glory, and death" (Vernant 1991: 53).

[547] *Il.* 1.231; *Od.* 4.535 = 11.411.

III. Speared like Fish: Becoming Food in the *Odyssey*

Cannibalism plays a somewhat different role in the *Odyssey*. It is no mere threat or fantasy; many men are literally eaten in the *Odyssey*, always by monsters or monstrous humanoids rather than other humans, but nevertheless, the vast majority of Odysseus' crew become food, and food for beings who can speak and reason. Meanwhile, Odysseus and his crew come far closer to eating other people during their stay on Aeaea with Circe than anyone in the *Iliad* does. As discussed in chapter III, it is strongly implied in the text that all of the animals on Circe's island, including the ones eaten by the Ithacans, are actually transformed humans. Perhaps the protagonists of the *Odyssey*, more at the mercy of fate and nature than of their fellow men, do not inhabit that claustrophobic space between predator and prey that is the domain of every character in the *Iliad*, but rather live at the extremes.[548] Their situation is one of greater hope and greater fear, and so they enter the roles of predator and prey in more realized ways than is possible for characters in the *Iliad*. But at the same time, the cannibalization of Odysseus' crew is carried out on multiple levels: they are *literally eaten* as part of the cost of their leader reaching his home, in a way that does not benefit them at all, and so they, too, are cannibalized in the figurative sense that I proposed above for the soldiers of the Trojan War.

The first time that we see Odysseus' companions eaten, and the most famous scene of (quasi-) cannibalism in the *Odyssey*, is in Polyphemus' cave. These are not the first companions to die—some were killed in the clash with the Cicones—but they are the first to die after crossing over into the Otherworld, and so they die in a properly otherworldly fashion. It is worth pausing to remember the encounters that make up book 9 and the way that they form a coherent unit and establish patterns that will play out in the other adventure books. First, the Ithacans raid a town of the Cicones, feast on stolen wine and cattle, and are then counter-attacked by warriors from a neighboring town, losing six men from each ship.[549] Next, they visit the Lotus-Eaters, and some of them eat the lotus fruit, which makes them lose the will to return home.[550] So when they approach the island of the Cyclopes, we have already seen two of the ways in which eating can be dangerous.[551] And their encounter with Polyphemus, too, begins with them eating his cheese, and possibly his sheep, uninvited.[552]

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[548] I am not suggesting a difference in authorship or date for the two epics, but only that the differences in subject matter generate certain differences in style and sensibility, similar to the differences in representations of weather explained by Alex Purves: "Between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the wind's representation moves from one that is primarily located in the world of the similes to one that literally blows the hero through certain books of the plot. It is no wonder that this epic contains a great deal fewer similes than the *Iliad*; the action of the poem is now doing much of the work that the *Iliad* used the simile to accomplish. But this also means that the breezes that blow through the *Odyssey* are no longer mostly figurative; indeed, we find a number of winds that move through it in purposeful and directed ways" (2010: 333). I am proposing a similar shift between the two poems in the representation of cannibalism and cannibalistic desires.

[549] *Od.* 9.39-61.

[550] *Od.* 9.82-104.

[551] "On his travels Odysseus seeks the status of guest; he is the victim, alternately, of hypo-entertainment and hyper-entertainment. In hypo-entertainment the stranger is treated as a creature of another species, a beast or fish… usable for food. This theme is introduced among the Cicones (for combat, as we learn from the *Iliad*, is a modified form of cannibalism)… To be eaten is to be incorporated into the nature of another. Hyper-entertainment, by contrast, threatens cultural incorporation; the traveler is to be transformed by his host and so perfectly socialized that he can never leave" (Redfield 1983: 237-238).

[552] Newton 1983: 139-140.

When Polyphemus finds the group in his cave, he and Odysseus have a brief exchange before Polyphemus devours the first two men. Polyphemus asks Odysseus if he and his crew are pirates, which is not far from the truth, and informs him that he does not abide by the laws of Zeus.[553] He proceeds to crush and eat two of Odysseus' men. This shocking first act of anthropophagy is described in lurid detail:

> ὣς ἐφάμην, ὁ δέ μ' οὐδὲν ἀμείβετο νηλέϊ θυμῷ,
> ἀλλ' ὅ γ' ἀναΐξας ἑτάροισ' ἐπὶ χεῖρας ἴαλλε,
> σὺν δὲ δύω μάρψας ὥς τε σκύλακας ποτὶ γαίῃ
> κόπτ'· ἐκ δ' ἐγκέφαλος χαμάδις ῥέε, δεῦε δὲ γαῖαν.
> τοὺς δὲ διὰ μελεϊστὶ ταμὼν ὁπλίσσατο δόρπον·
> ἤσθιε δ' ὥς τε λέων ὀρεσίτροφος, οὐδ' ἀπέλειπεν,
> ἔγκατά τε σάρκας τε καὶ ὀστέα μυελόεντα.[554]
>
> Thus I spoke, but he with ruthless spirit did not answer me at all,
> But he, leaping up, laid his hands on my companions,
> And seizing two of them, like puppies, he struck them on the ground;
> And the brains flowed out onto the ground, and drenched the earth.
> And cutting them through limb by limb, he prepared a meal;
> And he ate like a mountain-raised lion, nor did he leave any behind,
> Entrails and flesh and marrowy bones.

In the *Iliad*, animal similes provided a venue for cannibalistic impulses and fantasies to play out; here, they almost seem to mitigate the horror of what is happening in the text, while at the same time the description of the men's destroyed bodies keeps the account grounded in physical reality.[555] Polyphemus is like a lion in devouring their bodies, making explicit the association between lions and eating one's foes that was so common in the *Iliad*; he crushes them like puppies, curiously assimilating them to animals whose main role in the *Iliad* is as menacing scavengers. At the same time, their brains soaking into the earth, and Polyphemus' methodical dismemberment of their limbs, make quite vivid the moment of transformation from person into an assemblage of edible parts.

The vast majority of Odysseus' companions die when they are attacked by the Laestrygonians in their harbor. One of the scouts is eaten by the king, who then calls all of his subjects to attack the ships in the harbor:

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[553] See Buchan 2001: 17 on "the rejection of the law of Zeus" as representing Polyphemus' inability to understand language. The passage also responds interestingly to the idea, presented at Hes. *Op.* 276-280, that Zeus gave justice to humans, and that the opposite of justice, the custom of animals, is to eat one another.

[554] *Od.* 9.287-293.

[555] Buchan proposes that Polyphemus is, in Lacanian terms, a psychotic, lacking "an understanding of the relationship of words to meaning—an understanding available only to those who inhabit the polysemic realm of language," and that Achilles desires "to be a Cyclops," that is, "a perfect, whole, one-dimensional being" with no obligations to a community, but does not follow through on his desire, choosing a "return to the social" (2001: 19; 21; 27). While I believe that my reading of Achilles' failure to commit cannibalism is simpler and more plausible, I do think that there is an interesting comparison to be drawn between Achilles and Polyphemus, who are both antisocial and cannibalistic, and who are both compared to lions (cf. ibid. 2001:17-21).

αὐτὰρ ὁ τεῦχε βοὴν διὰ ἄστεος· οἱ δ’ ἀΐοντες
φοίτων ἴφθιμοι Λαιστρυγόνες ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος,
μυρίοι, οὐκ ἄνδρεσσιν ἐοικότες, ἀλλὰ Γίγασιν.
οἳ ῥ’ ἀπὸ πετράων ἀνδραχθέσι χερμαδίοισι
βάλλον· ἄφαρ δὲ κακὸς κόναβος κατὰ νῆας ὀρώρει
ἀνδρῶν τ’ ὀλλυμένων νηῶν θ’ ἅμα ἀγνυμενάων·
ἰχθῦς δ’ ὣς πείροντες ἀτερπέα δαῖτα φέροντο.[556]

But he made a shout through the city; and the strong Laestrygonians
Came when they heard, each one from a different way,
Countless, not resembling men, but Giants.
Lo, they threw from the rocks with boulders as heavy as a man can carry;
And quickly a bad noise arose over the ships
Of men dying and of ships being smashed at the same time;
And as if piercing fish, they got for themselves an unhappy meal.

The Laestrygonians have a king and an assembly, so they are not as uncivilized as the Cyclopes. Rather, they all come to eat men in response to the king’s call; unlike the isolated, primitive Cyclopes, their political institutions make them more efficient cannibals. They trap and devour the crews of eleven of Odysseus’ twelve ships by means of a large-scale boulder-throwing effort, a more ambitious and organized version of the attack that the blinded Polyphemus attempted to make on Odysseus’ escaping ship. The boulders that the giants use to smash the ships are ἀνδραχθής, “as heavy as a man can carry,” although the word could also mean “as heavy as a man,” and Lattimore translates it as “man-sized.” Their act of “making an unhappy meal,” then, consists of hurling man-sized stones at the ship, exchanging manlike boulders for dead men, inanimate and inedible objects for lifeless, edible humans. The description of the sound of “men dying and ships being smashed at the same time” adds vividness to the scene, and does more to equate the men who are soon to be a meal to their inanimate surroundings. Just as ships are crushed by rocks, human bodies may also be crushed, and both make horrendous noises when they are crushed.

The simile employed here is interesting as well: although the giants kill the men using the blunt force of boulders, the activity is compared to spearing fish. In one respect, the simile is quite simple: the giants are eating creatures that they have caught from the water, and so this act of catching and eating is similar to fishing. Other dimensions of the comparison become more complicated. It makes the giants into fishermen, a far cry from Polyphemus’ hungry lion, perhaps reflective of their more organized society. Meanwhile, it makes the men into fish, another of the *Iliad*’s dreaded scavengers. The men are killed and eaten like fish, creatures that *both* eat *and* are eaten by humans.

The men become fish again when they meet their final devourer, Scylla. Scylla stands apart from the other Odyssean cannibals in that she is fully monstrous, not speaking or reasoning as far as we are told, and more markedly different from a human with respect to her six-headed body. As Circe has explained to Odysseus, Scylla eats six men at a time, at regular intervals, and in this way appears as more of a force of nature than a character. But even Scylla, when she devours people, becomes a fisherman:

[556] *Od.* 10.118-124.

ὡς δ’ ὅτ’ ἐπὶ προβόλῳ ἁλιεὺς περιμήκεϊ ῥάβδῳ
ἰχθύσι τοῖς ὀλίγοισι δόλον κατὰ εἴδατα βάλλων
ἐς πόντον προΐῃσι βοὸς κέρας ἀγραύλοιο,
ἀσπαίροντα δ’ ἔπειτα λαβὼν ἔρριψε θύραζε,
ὣς οἵ γ’ ἀσπαίροντες ἀείροντο προτὶ πέτρας.
αὐτοῦ δ’ εἰνὶ θύρῃσι κατήσθιε κεκλήγοντας,
χεῖρας ἐμοὶ ὀρέγοντας ἐν αἰνῇ δηϊοτῆτι.[557]

And as when a fisherman on a projecting rock with a long rod
Throwing food down as a trap for the few fishes
Throws the horn of a field-dwelling cow into the sea,
And then, having caught them, he throws them gasping on the ground,
Thus they, gasping, were lifted onto the rock.
And there in the doorway she ate them as they cried,
Stretching hands to me in grim struggle.

In this more extended simile, the fisherman does not spear the fish, but catches them in a trap with bait before throwing them on the ground to suffocate. The comparison is affecting in its description of the men’s helplessness, flopping about ineffectually as they await their sad fate of being eaten quickly and unceremoniously by a monster, “there in the doorway.” And once again, it likens men at the moment of their becoming-food to the very creatures who *turn men into food*.

In order to fully understand these comparisons between men and fish, let us return to the *Iliad*, where there is one important cannibalistic incident that we have yet to explore: the consumption of corpses by fish. While consumption by dogs appears in threats, wishes, and fears, as well as the proem, but never comes to pass, consumption by fish is threatened and actually does happen. When Achilles fights with various Trojans in and around the waters of the river Scamander, he replaces the threat of being eaten by dogs or birds with a new, situationally specific threat of being eaten by the fish that live in the river:

ἐνταυθοῖ νῦν κεῖσο μετ’ ἰχθύσιν, οἵ σ’ ὠτειλὴν
αἶμ’ ἀπολιχμήσονται ἀκηδέες· οὐδέ σε μήτηρ
ἐνθεμένη λεχέεσσι γοήσεται, ἀλλὰ Σκάμανδρος
οἴσει δινήεις εἴσω ἁλὸς εὐρέα κόλπον·
θρῴσκων τις κατὰ κῦμα μέλαιναν φρῖχ’ ὑπαΐξει
ἰχθύς, ὅς κε φάγῃσι Λυκάονος ἀργέτα δημόν.[558]

Lie here now among the fishes, who will lick off
Blood from your wound without funeral rites; nor will your mother
Weep for you, having placed you on the bier, but whirling Scamander
Will bear you into the broad bosom of the sea;
Some fish, leaping over the dark wave, will dart beneath
A ripple, who could eat the rich fat of Lycaon.

[557] *Od*. 12.251-257.
[558] *Il.* 21.122-127.

Here, Achilles' threats emphasize the "anti-funeral," juxtaposing the funeral rites and the customary mourning of female relatives with the anonymity of being washed out into the ocean and devoured by sea creatures.[559] The details of the fish licking blood from his wounds and eating his fat underline the dissolution of the body's integrity. The piecemeal fashion in which fish will nibble at the corpse is a bit more like decomposition, like the flies that Achilles imagines infiltrating Patroclus' body, than the decisive biting and tearing of dogs or lions.[560] And not long after this threat, the fish and eels of the river do actually eat a corpse, that of Asteropaeus, who appropriately happens to be descended from a river, the Axios. This is the only time in the *Iliad* that a specific corpse is, in the reality of the narrative, eaten by anyone or anything:

> Ἦ ῥα, καὶ ἐκ κρημνοῖο ἐρύσσατο χάλκεον ἔγχος,
> τὸν δὲ κατ' αὐτόθι λεῖπεν, ἐπεὶ φίλον ἦτορ ἀπηύρα,
> κείμενον ἐν ψαμάθοισι, δίαινε δέ μιν μέλαν ὕδωρ.
> τὸν μὲν ἄρ' ἐγχέλυές τε καὶ ἰχθύες ἀμφεπένοντο
> δημὸν ἐρεπτόμενοι ἐπινεφρίδιον κείροντες.[561]
>
> Thus he spoke, and from the bank he pulled his bronze spear,
> And left him there, when he took away his dear heart,
> Lying in the sand, and the dark water drenched him.
> Then the eels and fishes attended to him,
> Gnawing the fat of his kidneys, nibbling.

Again, the way that the creatures consume the body highlights its dissolution. The fish and eels are small, but many, and they surround the body, eating it in tiny bites, finding the richest meat to chew on in the body that has so quickly been reduced to its constituent parts.

But what does it mean to be eaten by fish? Does it mean the same thing as being eaten by dogs or birds? Is it better or worse? Segal, for one, deems it worse: "The battle in the river brings the corpse theme to a new pitch of horror… not just dogs and vultures devour the corpses, as is so often threatened in the *Iliad*, but eels and fish, and the mutilation is actually a fact, not just a remote threat."[562] Redfield, on the other hand, dismisses the incident as minor in comparison to the taboo the poet will not defy, being eaten by one's own dogs: "Yet no one is ever fed to the dogs in the *Iliad*. It is as if the poet, having established through general expressions and threats the limiting case of impurity, draws back from that limit. The rising arc of horrors crests in the poem with Lycaon and Asteropaeus in Book Twenty-one—who are fed to the fish…"[563] Redfield, responding directly to Segal, goes on:

> This way of putting it presumes that eels and fish are more horrific than dogs and vultures, but the opposite is surely the case. Lycaon and Asteropaeus are eaten by wild creatures, but under water, out of human sight; the impurity is literally washed away by the purifying streams of river and ocean… Priam, on the other hand, foretells that he will

[559] Redfield 1975: 169.
[560] *Il.* 19.23-27.
[561] *Il.* 21.200-204.
[562] Segal 1971: 31.
[563] Redfield 1975: 169.

> be eaten by his own dogs in his courtyard, disgraced and exposed among his own people. The two scenes are parallel; in the river scene a mutilation one step short of the worst is enacted; in Priam's speech the very worst is described but not enacted.[564]

While Redfield is right to point out that being eaten by one's own dogs, in front of one's family, would be more humiliating, I believe that Segal is also right in sensing something uniquely awful about being eaten up by sea creatures in the water. It is, I would argue, less humiliating, but more dehumanizing.

As it happens, fish make another prominent appearance in book 21, in a simile describing Achilles' pursuit of the Trojans into the river:

> ὡς δ' ὑπὸ δελφῖνος μεγακήτεος ἰχθύες ἄλλοι
> φεύγοντες πιμπλᾶσι μυχοὺς λιμένος εὐόρμου
> δειδιότες· μάλα γάρ τε κατεσθίει ὅν κε λάβῃσιν·
> ὣς Τρῶες ποταμοῖο κατὰ δεινοῖο ῥέεθρα
> πτῶσσον ὑπὸ κρημνούς.[565]
>
> And as when other fishes, fleeing from a mighty-mawed dolphin,
> Fill the innermost parts of the harbor that provides good shelter,
> Afraid; for he will really eat up whatever he catches;
> Thus the Trojans shrank into the streams of the fierce river
> Under the banks.

Achilles, the very one who both threatens and succeeds in making his Trojan opponents into fish food, is here compared to a dolphin pursuing and eating fish, and the Trojans who flee him are compared to the fish who crowd into the sheltered places in the harbor.[566] Fish are the eaters of dead men, breaking down corpses into morsels; and they are also the eaten, a collective that scatters and dissolves into easily devoured individuals when threatened by a predator.

Turning back to the *Odyssey*, then, something similar seems to be going on with Odysseus' crew and fish. They become fishlike when they are devoured by monsters, they eat fish when they are starving, and the last of them die in a shipwreck, meaning that their bones will be picked clean by bottom-feeders. A similar connection is made by Vernant: "Like the birds and fish they once sought, Odysseus' companions perish by a wild death and disappear without burial beneath the bitter waves."[567] Indeed, their death is wild and unceremonious, and while the nibblings of the fish and eels at their organs are not described here as they are for the corpse of Asteropaeus, these men have certainly been both literally and metaphorically cannibalized: their corpses are unburied and subject to the anti-funeral, and their life chances have been used up in the service of Odysseus.

We might even wonder why Odysseus and his crew, always so susceptible to eating or being eaten by beings outside of the group, never meet the same fate as Cambyses' army in the anecdote of the Ethiopian expedition discussed above. We have an extended starvation narrative

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[564] Redfield 1975: 274 n.15.
[565] *Il.* 21.22-26.
[566] It is worth noting that just after this simile, he selects the twelve Trojan captives who will be sacrificed on Patroclus' funeral pyre, another rather near miss with cannibalism (*Il.* 21.26-28).
[567] Vernant (1989b: 166).

about their time on Thrinacia, which ends with a different kind of wrong eating, the impious and inadvisable slaughter and consumption of the cattle of Helios. Thrinacia is the midpoint between the moment when they watch six of their compatriots devoured by Scylla, essentially as the cost for their safe passage, and the moment when they succumb to a watery death. While such a question is highly speculative and impossible to answer, we may wonder if there was ever a version of the story that combined these elements in different proportions: rather than three discreet tales of some members of the group being eaten, other members of the group eating something forbidden, and death as punishment for this misstep, could there ever have been a suggestion that they survive their time on Thrinacia by eating each other? One can imagine this horrifying but pragmatic idea coming from Eurylochus or even from Odysseus himself. If this were the case, then the displacement of the wrong eating from humans onto divine animals would be yet another example of animals standing in for humans, in one role or another, in fantasies of cannibalism.[568]

While we could leave our inquiry into Odysseus and his crew's encounters with cannibalism here, there is another fantasy of cannibalism that looms in the *Odyssey*: Tantalus, famous for killing his son and trying to serve his meat to the gods, whose shade Odysseus sees among the heroes and sinners of the underworld.[569] Although his crime is not stated in the text, his punishment and the collocation of themes and details that surround him provide an intriguing distillation of the overlapping themes connected to cannibalism: insatiable hunger, vulnerable bodies, and violent animals.[570]

He appears between Tityus and Sisyphus, forming a triad of transgressors. Tityus, the only criminal whose crime is specified, is being punished for his attempted rape of Leto. His punishment is to be stretched out over nine acres while his liver is continuously eaten by vultures.[571] Tantalus, presumably for the crime of murdering his son and attempting to serve his meat to the gods, is punished with eternal hunger, thirst, and the taunting presence of inaccessible water and food.[572] Sisyphus, whose crime is not specified but is likely to have been understood as his attempts to trick and escape death, is punished with the eternal toil of trying to roll a stone up a hill, only for it to roll back down.[573] In broad terms, each punishment is well suited to its crime.[574] Tityus, guilty of sexual aggression towards a goddess' (his cosmic

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[568] While he does not take the idea quite as far as I do here, Vernant connects this episode to cannibalism in a similar way, in his discussion of this passage in conjunction with Herodotus' story of Cambyses' Ethiopian expedition: "By eschewing civilized food in this radical way, [the Persians], like Odysseus' crew, cut the last ties that bind them to the divine world. To eat one another to satisfy one's hunger is an act that is no less horrible, no less terrifying in its impiety, than eating the Sun's cattle. In both cases, one ceases to be human" (1989b: 169).

[569] I follow Sourvinou-Inwood in regarding this passage as "an integral part of the final composition of the *Odyssey*" (1986: 37). Heubeck and Hoekstra also defend the passage's authenticity on the grounds that it reflects popular religious beliefs (1989: 112).

[570] Although Tantalus' crime is not stated, I would argue that the poet exploits the traditional associations of the myth to imply cannibalism without stating it directly, as in the process Slatkin describes as "using traditionality as an instrument of meaning" (1992: 5).

[571] *Od.* 11.576-581.

[572] *Od.* 11.582-592. See Sourvinou-Inwood (1986: 40-46) for a good summary of the evidence that the cannibalism story is meant here, although, as she points out, Pindar's alternative version, where Tantalus is punished for stealing nectar and ambrosia from the gods and sharing them with other men, "is semantically very closely related to that of cannibalism; it is its reverse transgression. Like cannibalism, it involves Tantalos' commensality with the gods, and it is a transgression pertaining to the food which is appropriate to the different beings that make up the cosmos" (ibid. 45).

[573] *Od.* 11.593-600.

[574] See Sourvinou-Inwood (1986: passim).

superior's) body, is punished with immobility and the violation of his body's integrity by animals, his cosmic inferiors.[575] Tantalus, in recompense for abusing his commensality with the gods, straying towards the bestial end of the spectrum, and endangering the cosmic order, is punished with eternal hunger and thirst.[576] Sisyphus, as punishment for his unusual up-and-down movements between the earth and the underworld, is punished with the futile up-and-down movements of the stone; as punishment for immobilizing death, he is trapped in a state of constant motion.[577]

But beyond the simple symmetry of crime and punishment, there is a richness of detail in Tantalus' punishment that may yield further insights into the nature of his crime. He is suspended in water, beneath fruit trees, but cannot eat or drink:

> καὶ μὴν Τάνταλον εἰσεῖδον χαλέπ' ἄλγε' ἔχοντα,
> ἑσταότ' ἐν λίμνῃ· ἡ δὲ προσέπλαζε γενείῳ.
> στεῦτο δὲ διψάων, πιέειν δ' οὐκ εἶχεν ἐλέσθαι·
> ὁσσάκι γὰρ κύψει' ὁ γέρων πιέειν μενεαίνων,
> τοσσάχ' ὕδωρ ἀπολέσκετ' ἀναβροχέν, ἀμφὶ δὲ ποσσὶ
> γαῖα μέλαινα φάνεσκε, καταζήνασκε δὲ δαίμων.
> δένδρεα δ' ὑψιπέτηλα κατὰ κρῆθεν χέε καρπόν,
> ὄγχναι καὶ ῥοιαὶ καὶ μηλέαι ἀγλαόκαρποι
> συκέαι τε γλυκεραὶ καὶ ἐλαῖαι τηλεθόωσαι·
> τῶν ὁπότ' ἰθύσει' ὁ γέρων ἐπὶ χερσὶ μάσασθαι,
> τὰς δ' ἄνεμος ῥίπτασκε ποτὶ νέφεα σκιόεντα.[578]
>
> And indeed I saw Tantalus having difficult pains,
> Standing in a pool; and it was dashing against his chin.
> And he was pressing forward in his thirst, but he was not able to take to drink;
> For each time the old man stooped down desiring to drink,
> The water vanished, swallowed up, and around his feet
> The dark earth appeared, and a god dried it up.
> And high-leafed trees hung fruit over his head,
> Pears and pomegranates and apples bearing goodly fruit
> And sweet figs and ripe olives;
> Of which whenever the old man reached to grasp with his hands,
> The wind tossed them to the shady clouds.

When Tantalus is not trying to drink, he is suspended in water up to his chin. It seems right for him to be submerged in water, like his son in the cooking pot, or like the corpses flung by Achilles into the river and carried into the ocean. He is, of course, a shade, and does not have a body to become food, but his punishment reproduces the conditions of a human body at risk of dissolving into its inanimate surroundings. Meanwhile, the fruit that tempts him overhead is described with the same two lines that describe the magical orchards of the Phaeacians, which

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[575] Sourvinou-Inwood (1986: 39).
[576] Sourvinou-Inwood (1986: 46).
[577] Sourvinou-Inwood (1986: 53).
[578] *Od.* 11.582-592.

bear all kinds of fruit year round.[579] The lines appear in only these two places. In Alcinous' garden, they signify the very best of nature's bounty and a divinely charmed, impossibly good version of the human condition. Over Tantalus' head, then, this appealing combination of fruits is present not only in order to mock his hunger with the proximity of food, but to draw a comparison between his current condition and his earlier position of divine favor.

The three criminals are bookended by two heroic hunters, Orion and Heracles. Orion's shade is said to hunt the same animals that he killed in his life, over and over forever, and Heracles wears a baldrick bearing designs of "bears and wild boars and lions with flashing eyes, fights and battles and murders and manslaughters."[580] So, although Tantalus' crime is not specified in the text, he is surrounded with the marks of displaced cannibalism: Tityus being devoured by animals; Sisyphus performing a task that replays, forever, his attempt to escape mortality and exemplifies man's precarious position in the universe; and violent images of men killing animals and each other. What is more, Heracles is present here as a shade (εἴδωλον), separate from his real self, which is "delighting in festivities among the immortal gods and has lovely-ankled Hebe (as wife)," a bizarre state of affairs that suggests that even for the greatest hero of all, Heracles, the escape from mortality can never be truly complete.[581] Heracles, by ascending to Olympus, should have finally escaped from the position of prey, but here is some imprint of his essence, trapped in the world of death, where heroes struggle forever, marked with signs of bestiality and violence. He is "gazing fiercely, always resembling one about to shoot," always grasping at the subject position of the predator. Heracles is the last shade Odysseus sees before he becomes frightened and leaves the underworld.

Odysseus descends into the world of death in search of knowledge, and at the end of his time there, he beholds these famous men, each trapped in his own version of the failed quest to escape or subvert mortality. It is no accident that Tantalus stands as the centerpiece of the tableau. His attempted rebellion of tempting the gods to be polluted with cannibalism is the most outrageous possible example of a human searching futilely for some crack in the cosmic order by which he might shatter the whole thing, finally escaping his own pitiable place in it.[582]

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[579] *Od.* 7.115-116=11.589-590.
[580] *Od.* 11.572-575; 11.601-616.
[581] *Od.* 11.602-603.
[582] For a helpful analogy, see Burkert 1983: 105-106 on the detail preserved in some variants of the Thyestes myth that the sun reversed its direction after the sacrifice of Thyestes' children: "This dreadful sacrifice stirred the powers of the cosmos: the sun reversed its course. During the height of fifth-century speculation about nature, this wondrous change was variously rethought and rationalized. These interpretations assume that at that time the sun began to follow the course which it demonstrably follows today; the world was organized differently beforehand. Thus, the crime assumes an almost cosmogonic function: ever since that unspeakable sacrifice, and because of it, the sun has kept to its familiar and reliable course." While this refers to cannibalistic crimes of a later generation of Tantalids, it is suggestive of the same idea, that cannibalism is disturbing to the cosmic order.

Chapter Six
Divine Flesh

We now arrive at the most forbidden, paradoxical, and paradigm-breaking food of the archaic mythological world: the flesh of the gods. In the previous chapter, I argued that cannibalism is frequently fantasized about in the *Iliad,* but never realized, because of an underlying awareness that everyone who fights in a war is cannibalized in one way or another, their bodies consumed and destroyed for the benefit of more powerful forces. Warriors wish for cannibalism because they long to escape the position of the victim and to enter the position of the cannibal. In this chapter, I will build on these ideas with an investigation of cannibalism among the gods. In a way, my thesis from chapter VII applies very simply here as well: for gods, who live at the top of the food chain, cannibalism is no mere fantasy. For the most powerful beings in the cosmos, eating each other is within reach, which, ironically, means that being eaten by each other is also possible. At the same time, the problem of cannibalism is complicated and obfuscated by the nature of divine bodies: what does it mean to eat someone, or part of someone, who cannot die? The bodies of the gods exist at the limits of the archaic imagination. As discussed in earlier chapters, they do not need meat, but they want it; their charmed existence is conditional upon their access to nectar and ambrosia; they can be wounded, but not die; and, in Homer at least, they bleed, but they do not have blood.

The key text for this inquiry is Hesiod's *Theogony*, the surviving poem with the greatest interest in the world, life, and relationships of the gods. In this story about primordial power struggle, immortal beings search for novel ways to overcome and suppress one another despite the protections of immortality. This exploration of violence includes various acts that approach (or stand as the preliminary components of) cannibalism. Some scholars have been hesitant to apply the label of cannibalism, even to acts as outrageous as Kronos' consumption of his children, because they do not meet every requirement for what we would now call "cannibalism": Kronos does not *eat* his children, they reason, but merely *swallows* them.[583] While the distinction between eating and swallowing is worth making and will be discussed in this chapter, thus far it seems to have functioned as a loophole allowing scholars to dismiss the violence of the gods as "not cannibalism" without really grappling with the question of what kind of violence this *is*. If, on the other hand, we approach violence in the *Theogony* as a pattern culminating in Zeus' masterfully cannibalistic acts, a coherent narrative emerges. Many interpretations of the *Theogony* correctly hinge on the idea of Zeus achieving success by moderating, appropriating, or synthesizing elements and forces which, before his time, were in conflict with each other. Whether it is the conflict between male and female, which Zeus resolves by consuming Metis and becoming a "male mother"; or that between the older and younger generations of gods, which Zeus eliminates by recruiting old gods like Styx, the Cyclopes, and the Hundred-Handers into his new order; or that between craft and force, which Zeus transcends by wielding the craftily forged thunderbolt; Zeus' power always comes from mixtures.[584]

I hope to illuminate another facet of this generational struggle and back-and-forth that is intertwined with many of the others: the ways that different groups use different kinds of violence. Because of the immortality of divine bodies, violence among the gods is always somewhat cannibalistic. It aims either to consume the rival's body (incorporation), or to destroy

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[583] See e.g., Detienne (1981: 216), Davidson (1995: 363-364), Muellner (1996: 69).
[584] Muellner (1996: 93); Brown (1953: 20) and Clay (2003: 106); Muellner (1996: 79).

it and break it apart (mutilation).[585] Both of these types of violence cluster around moments of birth, suggesting a connection or symmetry between extreme violence and fecundity. Before the generation of Zeus, incorporative violence is associated with the "male principle": Ouranos forcefully incorporates his children back into their mother, while Kronos simply swallows his. Mutilative violence is associated with the "female principle" and carried out through hostile foreign objects: Gaia creates the sickle that will sever Ouranos' genitals, while Rhea, under Gaia's guidance, tricks Kronos into allowing the stone to enter his body and weaken him.[586]

The pattern bears out when we see that Zeus integrates these two conceptions of violence into his strategies. In two different "youngest son"-type situations, he finds an ideal blend of incorporation and mutilation to give himself the greatest advantage. By swallowing Metis, he suppresses the dangerous energy that she embodies and the threat posed by her fertility, but he does so in a way that is more like true cannibalism than what Kronos did with his children. Not only does he incorporate her, he "digests" her to some degree by taking on her attributes for himself.[587] In the case of Prometheus, who is not Zeus' son but is situated in the text in a way that creates a similar dynamic, Zeus responds to Prometheus' meat-related crime by turning Prometheus into meat for an animal.[588] Prometheus' body is mutilated and consumed at the same time, continuously. The immortality of divine bodies inspired novel kinds of violence in the earlier generations, but Zeus finds a way to deploy these kinds of violence in order to turn the body's own immortality against itself.

In this chapter, I will articulate and clarify the ways that this pattern of cannibalistic violence operates in the *Theogony* and fits into the broader patterns of conflict in the text, and I will push back somewhat against the idea that "Hesiod" (and I do think many of the problems here result from approaching the poem as the work of a single, identifiable poet rather than the product of a complex, collaborative poetic process taking place over a long period of time) was entirely positive in his attitude about Zeus and his new order. This is not to call the *Theogony* "subversive," whatever that would mean for such a work, but to acknowledge that stories about a god who is seen as presiding over the world as it currently stands are likely to be tinged with resentment and ambivalence. To say that Hesiod is aligned with Zeus because he is aware that the older divine patriarchs were worse is to fail to account for the rather brutal violence of his regime, as well as his undeniable antagonism towards humans.[589] After all, while the *Theogony* is a poem concerned mainly with the gods, it was composed, performed, and enjoyed by humans.

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[585] To be clear, I am not using the term "incorporation" in its psychoanalytic sense, i.e., a process by which an object of mourning is interiorized but remains intact and separate within the self (see e.g., Derrida 1977). I use the term in a much more literal sense, to refer to violence that seeks to suppress a hostile body by surrounding or containing it, as opposed to mutilation, which seeks to damage or dissolve the hostile body.

[586] I follow Clay (2003: 17-18) in this use of "male principle" and "female principle."

[587] "But the omniscience of Zeus's first two wives takes different forms; which accounts for his marrying Themis only after he has digested the special powers of Metis, and made himself *metieta* ('metisized')—by swallowing her" (Vernant 1981a: 1).

[588] See Clay (2003: 106) on the "genealogical sleight-of-hand" that places the Iapetids out of chronological order, after the children of Kronos, situating Prometheus as the "youngest son" in relation to Zeus. Cf. Hamilton's assertion that the Prometheus episode contains "elements of the Succession Myth" but that they are "disconnected and trivialized" so as to "suppress any indication of a succession struggle" (1989: 33-34).

[589] As Arthur rightly points out, "Zeus' emergence as a ruler… is in many ways based on his similarity to his predecessors," i.e., his assertion of power through violence (1982: 76). See, e.g., Solmsen (1949: 9, 65, 72, and passim) and Lloyd-Jones (1971: 36) for the idea that Zeus' justice and mercy relative to Ouranos and Kronos are proof of the poet's positive attitude towards, or even identification with, Zeus; Lloyd-Jones (1971: 32-35) and Vernant (1981c: 69-70) for pessimistic evaluations of Zeus' relationship with humans.

Zeus may be more just than his father to Styx or to the Hundred-Handers, but his only interaction with humans in this poem is to deny and remove their privileges, and their only advocate, Prometheus, receives the worst possible punishment for his trouble.[590]

In my first section, I will explore the phenomenon of contemporary American placentophagy as a conceptual aid for understanding connections between cannibalism and reproduction, as well as the important differences between chewing and swallowing. My second section will focus on incorporative violence in the *Theogony* and how it is associated with fathers in the first two generations. The third section will be a corresponding analysis of mutilative violence and its connection with mothers in the first two generations. In the fourth section, I will argue that Zeus synthesizes incorporation and mutilation into truly cannibalistic violence in his dealings with Metis and with Prometheus. Through this powerful mixture, Zeus exceeds his father and grandfather, learning to use violence not only to suppress or destroy his rivals, but to exploit them for his own benefit.

I. Meat of Life: Chewing And/Or Swallowing the Placenta

Another intersection between reproduction and cannibalism exists in the phenomenon of placentophagy, the consumption of the placenta after the birth of a child. Often listed in general accounts of cannibalism as the most common form of human autocannibalism, placentophagy is normal among most terrestrial mammals, may exist or have existed in various cultures, and is now practiced by some Americans, especially as part of the home birth movement.[591] It is not known with certainty why so many mammals, even herbivores, eat their placenta. Among the possible explanations are that it helps clean up the birthing area and remove smells that might attract predators; that hormones contained in the placenta help stimulate milk production; or that it restores protein and iron to the mother's body, strengthening her after the trauma of birth and allowing her to care for her new babies rather than search for food.[592] Among humans, there does not seem to be much evidence for or against the benefits of placenta consumption, but it is viewed by proponents as both physically and spiritually beneficial.

The placenta may be consumed in a variety of ways: raw, cooked, sealed into pills, or even prepared and shared as a special meal for the whole family. In an article for *Science Digest* in 1980, Karen Janszen lists possible preparations for the placenta:

> Placenta is eaten raw or cooked, depending on the sensitivity of diners' palates and stomachs. When cooking it smells like liver frying and even tastes like liver or kidney but is sweeter and milder. It is a tender meat. Cooking preparations range from simple to gourmet, limited only by the imaginations of the chefs—usually the new fathers. Placenta can be boiled in salted water, pan fried in butter and garlic, stir fried in soy sauce with vegetables, sautéed in wine and spices, or sun dried in strips for jerky. Placenta stew is an old favorite…[593]

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[590] This is with the exception of Heracles, whose status as Zeus' son and an eventual inhabitant of Olympus separate him from the general category of humans who are the beneficiaries of Prometheus' trickery and the victims of Zeus' anger.

[591] E.g., Lindenbaum (2004: 479). See Jordan (2017: 7) on the possible origins of placentophagy in European and Chinese medical traditions.

[592] Janszen (1980: 79).

[593] Janszen (1980: 78-79).

These various recipes and preparations seem indicative of an experiential approach to placenta consumption, motivated less by perceived medical benefits and more by an idea that tasting, chewing, and sharing the organ will be a positive symbolic experience for the mother and, sometimes, other family members. In the cultural moment captured in the article, placentophagy was associated with the kind of people who had "experimented with alternatives such as food cooperatives and macrobiotic vegetarianism."[594] And indeed, one fascinating aspect of the phenomenon is its bizarre status as vegetarianism-compliant cannibalism. As Janszen reports:

> Surprisingly, vegetarians are enthusiastic about eating placenta. Some vegetarians simply do not classify placenta as meat. Others do but feel placenta is not taboo for reasons that depend on why they follow a meatless regime. Vegetarians who avoid meat so as not to be party to the killing of another living being for food believe placenta is the only "unkilled" meat available. They reason, "Nobody had to die to get this meat; it is meat of life, not death."[595]

This is one vision of placentophagy, in line with the practice of making the placenta into a festive meal. The placenta is a miracle food, free of the moral taint of killing animals but satisfying the meatiest of cravings.[596]

Another vision of placentophagy conceptualizes the placenta as a cure rather than a food. In recent years, the more common practice is placenta encapsulation. The placenta is saved and refrigerated after the birth, then cleaned and prepared by a placenta encapsulation specialist, producing capsules that the mother can then consume at will. Proponents assert a wide range of benefits:

> •can curb postpartum depression ("baby blues")
> •replenishes nutrients and is a natural painkiller
> •is shown to increase milk production
> •increases energy after birth, combats fatigue
> •is made perfectly for you, because it is you
> •helps stop or lessen postpartum bleeding after birth
> •provides natural iron supplementation after birth
> •helps with insomnia or sleep disorders
> •helps contract uterus back to normal size.[597]

These benefits have been self-reported by mothers who have had their placentas encapsulated and taken them as pills.[598] Opponents contend that there is no evidence for these benefits and that the practice puts mothers and children at risk of infection.[599]

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[594] Janszen (1980: 78).
[595] Janszen (1980: 79).
[596] See a similar account in Haraway (2008: 293-295).
[597] Myers (2017: 22). This is a "comprehensive list" of benefits that the author was given at the Birth Education Center of San Diego, where she attended a hypnobirthing class.
[598] Myers, for example, says that "I decided to consume my placenta, in both raw and encapsulated forms, with the hope that I would experience the benefits touted by proponents" (2017: 23). Pro-placentophagy authors tend to skirt the anecdotal and self-reported nature of these benefits.
[599] See McCabe 2017; Sabin 2017.

I do not intend to take a position for or against the practice of placentophagy here. Rather, I am interested in the language that proponents and observers use to talk about the practice. The placenta, as a food, defies categorization. It is human flesh, the most forbidden of foods, the most primal and animalistic of nourishments to crave. While placentophagy does not involve violence, the various responses of fear, disgust, and defensiveness surrounding it are all attempts to negotiate the aura of violence that inevitably overshadows the consumption of human flesh. And even given the clinical trappings of placenta encapsulation, this aura of violence, or at least of raw-flesh-eating and taboo, may be part of the practice's mysterious appeal. Some mothers who consume their placentas in capsules *also* consume some of the raw placenta when it is fresh, suggesting a desire to engage in this more primal aspect of placentophagy. One author describes the experience in terms of both want and disgust: "After the birth of the placenta, I remember asking my midwife for a piece of it, and the medical staff cringed a bit as she put a piece in my mouth anyway. When the placenta is warm, it is really not so bad raw."[600] While she went on to consume the rest of her placenta in capsules, her desire to consume it fresh was strong enough to outweigh the disapproval of the medical staff and its "really not so bad" taste.

As a medicine, the placenta quickly takes on quasi-magical properties, deriving its mystical status from the fact that it is generated by the mother's own body. One proponent, for example, describes the effects that she perceived when she began consuming her encapsulated placenta: "Reintroducing my own perfect blend of hormones and energy, through ingesting the placenta, kept my emotions regulated; it was a natural mood stabilizer."[601] Another proponent, in narrating her decision to become a placenta encapsulation specialist after consuming her own placenta capsules, explains, "I knew those placenta pills held some magic, and I wanted to share that…"[602] She describes her interactions with clients:

> During follow-up calls and emails, my clients often say something along the lines of "Thank you! You are awesome! I feel so good, these pills you made are amazing!"
>
> "Nonsense." I reply. "You made the placenta, and, therefore, you made the pills. All I did was clean it up a bit. Every bite you took in your pregnancy, every cell you grew—you—your body made something perfect for you to use. And you made the decision to use it. Thank you for entrusting me with your placenta."[603]

Both authors emphasize the placenta's miraculous properties and explicitly state that they result from its origin in the mother's body. Its use to combat post-partum depression points especially to a notion that something vital and ineffable is lost in pregnancy and birth, and appealingly, that only the maternal body itself can provide the remedy and restore wholeness.

The placenta, then, as imagined by its proponents, is both a food and a medicine. As a food, it nourishes the body, providing benefits such as increased milk production and reduced postpartum bleeding. As a medicine, it cures difficult psychological ailments such as postpartum depression and insomnia. Its dual status as forbidden and death-related (human flesh) and natural and birth-related (generated by the maternal body) grants it enormous power in the imagination. As we return to Hesiod, let us keep in mind the lessons that we have learned from this digression

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[600] Link-Troen (2017: 40-41).
[601] Myers (2017: 25).
[602] Link-Troen (2017: 41).
[603] Link-Troen (2017: 42).

into placentophagy culture. The distinction between eating and swallowing is easier to understand through the particulars of placenta stew and placenta capsules. The act of incorporation can, but does not have to, entail the chewing and tasting of the meat in question. The twin impulses of savoring the meat and swallowing the medicine that seem to inform modern placenta consumption practices are also present in the *Theogony*. Finally, the regenerative powers assigned to the placenta—uniquely maternal flesh—will be useful as a model for the incredible power unlocked by Zeus when he learns to combine the components of cannibalism and to make his own body more maternal.

II. Incorporation in the Older Generations of the Gods

Let us begin with an exploration of incorporation, the more apparent precursor to cannibalism in the *Theogony*. There are three major acts of incorporative violence that form a clear arc in the poem: Ouranos pushing his children back into Gaia's body; Kronos swallowing his children; and Zeus swallowing Metis. While the connections between these events as an evolution of fathers attempting to control the reproductive process has been recognized, the degree of continuity between the violent acts in each episode has not. Ouranos' "wicked deeds" have not been considered particularly cannibalistic, although they are obvious precursors to Kronos' consumption of his children.[604] Kronos' crimes, too, have been dismissed as swallowing and not eating, a means of suppression that can be written off as an analogue for binding. As for Zeus eating Metis, some commentators have found it so disturbing as to declare it inauthentic.[605]

The series is better read as a three-step process in the development of incorporative violence, the type of violence favored by patriarchs (as opposed to mutilative violence, which, as will be discussed in the next section, is the favorite tool of rebellious mothers). First, Ouranos reverses the births of his children, in a way that brings about a false death for them and causes physical and emotional pain for Gaia. He is temporarily successful in suppressing the new generation, but eventually fails because he leaves the children under Gaia's control. Kronos, then, reverses or undermines the births of his children by swallowing them. He recognizes the value of incorporation as a tactic for suppression, and develops a superior use of this kind of violence that gives him control over the children, although it, too, fails. Kronos' failure is due to both Rhea's greater control and access to her own reproductivity, and the limitations of incorporation, which does not allow him to gain advantages from the bodies that he has consumed. Finally, as will be discussed below in section IV, Zeus circumvents the problem of mothers and children by consuming Metis herself, along with her reproductive potential. This is a savvy solution to the succession problem, but it is also an innovation upon incorporative violence. By "digesting" Metis, taking on both her reproductivity and her cleverness as his own attributes, Zeus combines elements of mutilation with incorporation, making his violence as exploitative and advantageous as possible. In this section, we will examine the ways in which Ouranos' and Kronos' acts of incorporative violence both lay the foundations for, and elucidate the need for, Zeus' hybrid violence.

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[604] Arthur, for example, refers to Kronos' act as "a new form of violence, the eating of the children" (1982: 72); I would argue instead that the eating of the children is a development of Ouranos' incorporative violence.
[605] Solmsen 1949: 25 n.68; 67-68.

In the frenzy of sexual and asexual reproduction that occurs at the start of the narrative, with beings that are less characters than entire landscapes and abstract concepts,[606] the birth of Ouranos is described in a way that emphasizes the interactions of bodies in space:

> Γαῖα δέ τοι πρῶτον μὲν ἐγείνατο ἶσον ἑαυτῇ
> Οὐρανὸν ἀστερόενθ', ἵνα μιν περὶ πάντα καλύπτοι,
> ὄφρ' εἴη μακάρεσσι θεοῖς ἕδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεί.[607]
>
> And Gaia first birthed one equal to herself,
> Starry Ouranos, in order that he might cover her all around,
> In order that he might always be a stable seat for the blessed gods.

At the moment of Ouranos' birth, he is already Gaia's "equal"; the phrasing highlights his ambiguous status as both child and husband. Gaia's intentions in bearing him are then elaborated in two purpose clauses. His two purposes are to "cover her all around," both as the sky bounds the earth and as the husband mounts the wife in sexual union, and to be a "seat" for the gods, who still have yet to come into being.[608] Ouranos, with his vast body, is meant to surround and envelop Gaia, defining the world, and at the same time to be a world unto himself, a world for the gods.[609] His body exists to cover and to support other bodies.

Once Gaia has asexually produced the landscapes that gives shape and character to her body, she begins sexually reproducing with Ouranos.[610] As soon as the youngest son, Kronos, is born, he is said to hate his father; as soon as Ouranos' children are all born, they are said to have been hateful to him from the start. While intergenerational antagonism may be inevitable and self-evident, it seems remarkable that when these beings begin to change from bodies in space into characters, the first emotion described is hostility.[611] Ouranos' stated purpose of covering

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[606] "Unlike the biblical Genesis, Hesiod's model for the coming into being of the cosmos is not that of purposeful creation by a designing Creator, but follows instead the procreative pattern of a human family… In addition, the divine family in Hesiod, the ἀθανάτων ἱερὸν γένος, includes a cast of characters that we would never group together into a family unit since it includes members of very different species: the gods both present and past, but then also natural phenomena like the sun, moon, and stars as well as various monsters; finally a host of abstractions such as Death, Strife, Peace, Festivity, and Justice" (Clay 2003: 14).

[607] Hes. *Th.* 126-128.

[608] See West (1966: 198) and Clay (2003: 15 n.11) on the variants ἐέργοι and καλύπτοι in 127. I prefer καλύπτοι because of its resonances with Ouranos' other efforts to cover and hide, but either verb still points to, as Clay articulates, "the notion of boundedness that is an essential quality of Gaia and her line as opposed to the unbounded character of Chaos. Only after being delimited by Sky can Earth produce the mountains and sea that define her contours."

[609] It is possible to take either Ouranos (e.g., West 1966: 128) or Gaia (e.g, Clay 2003: 15) as the subject of εἴη in 128. I prefer Ouranos, whose body and purpose are the logical subjects of description in this, the passage that introduces him.

[610] "Uranus has a fate, Gaea a function. She is a woman and mother par excellence, yet at the same time is felt as a cosmic principle. She first bears Heaven, then the mountains, next the sea, all of them by herself, so that she has practically given birth to, and built up, the world before she unites herself to Uranus to bear offspring of a different kind, important, but not of cosmic importance" (Solmsen 1949: 22-23).

[611] "Once set in motion, however, the cycle of revenge, fueled by mutual hatred of parent and child, can only repeat itself. The name Uranus collectively assigns to his children, Titans, which is doubly etymologized as "those who stretched their hands against their father" and "those who would pay the penalty for their actions," embraces the vicious and apparently endless circle of crime and punishment" (Clay 2003: 17); "In other words, the hatred and dread between Kronos and Sky are only a metonym of the reciprocal hatred and dread between this, the first father,

and supporting other bodies now turns malevolent as he forces the newly emerged bodies to recombine into a single body:

> καὶ τῶν μὲν ὅπως τις πρῶτα γένοιτο,
> πάντας ἀποκρύπτασκε, καὶ ἐς φάος οὐκ ἀνίεσκε,
> Γαίης ἐν κευθμῶνι, κακῷ δ᾽ ἐπετέρπετο ἔργῳ
> Οὐρανός.[612]
>
> And as soon as one of them was born,
> He would hide them all away, and would not allow them up into the light,
> In a recess of Gaia, and he delighted in the evil deed,
> Ouranos.

The iterative forms of ἀποκρύπτασκε and ἀνίεσκε emphasize Ouranos' persistence in repeating his "evil act" over and over, while his refusal to allow them ἐς φάος makes it clear that this reverse-birth is a substitute for death.[613] Meanwhile, the hiding place into which he forces them is called a κευθμών, a word that can refer to any kind of recess. This allows for great ambiguity: is the recess part of Gaia the woman or Gaia the planet? Even if it is part of Gaia the woman, is it more of a womb or more of a stomach? With bodies as vast and vague as these, the difference between a reverse birth and something more like Gaia being forced to swallow her children is slight.[614]

Not only does Ouranos bring about a quasi-death for his children, but his violence also causes physical and emotional pain for Gaia:

> ἣ δ᾽ ἐντὸς στοναχίζετο Γαῖα πελώρη
> στεινομένη·[615]
>
> And as for huge Gaia, she was groaning inside,
> Being overfilled;

The first emotion named for Ouranos and Kronos was hatred; for Gaia, it is distress. Ouranos, the child/husband whom she produced to cover and contain her body, now disturbs her bodily integrity by covering other bodies within it. The adjective πελώρη draws attention to her body, which, despite its vast size, is στεινομένη, stretched and strained, by this forced incorporation.[616]

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and all his children. No prior cause is provided for this hatred and dread… and none is needed; they are a given aspect of the primordial family…" (Muellner 1996: 61).

[612] Hes. *Th.* 156-159.

[613] See Muellner 1996: 61.

[614] Comparing Kronos' consumption of his children with this, Muellner points out that "the difference between a spatial womb/cave and a *nedus* is another aspect of the myth's metonymic logic, in that the personages of the myth now can operate within an emerged natural world and accordingly have body parts that are distinct from physical features of nature" (1996: 70).

[615] Hes. *Th.* 159-160.

[616] "Sky has put Earth in a continuous, deadly state of childbirth, with maximum pain and without issue or end. The children's death is impossible, but Sky's acts are an attempt to invent death for his immortal children" (Muellner 1996: 61).

Ouranos' violence is characterized by the improper and forceful combining of multiple bodies into a single one.

According to the strict definition of cannibalism that leads some scholars to exclude Kronos' consumption of his children, where the aggressor must both consume and destroy the body of the victim, Ouranos' suppression of his children falls short. But let us consider again Nyamnjoh's formulation of cannibalism (discussed in greater detail in chapter VII): "To literally kill a person in order to feed on the resources and opportunities made available to us by their death amounts to cannibalism… To feed on someone's life chances is tantamount to feeding on someone's flesh…"[617] Ouranos does not literally kill or eat his children, but his forced reincorporation of them into their mother harms both them and her, in order to improve his own position. The distinction between this and the incrementally more cannibalistic acts of violence that will come later is important, since it is Zeus' discovery of the exploitative possibilities of strictly defined cannibalism that enables him to stabilize and hold his power, but Nyamnjoh's broader definition is helpful for understanding how Ouranos' attempt at incorporation is the conceptual precursor to Zeus' cannibalism.[618]

The continuity of this thread of incorporative violence is all the more apparent in the next generation, where Kronos' violence resembles that of his father as well as that of his son; he makes important innovations on Ouranos' use of incorporation, while also demonstrating the limits of its usefulness, thus setting the stage for Zeus' ingenious synthesis. The detrimental flaw in Ouranos' method of incorporating the children into their mother was that it left them under her control and allowed her the access that she needed to form an alliance with them against their father. When his time comes, Kronos seems to have learned that his method of suppressing his children must keep them under his own control and inaccessible to their mother.[619] But if the only point of consuming his children were to suppress them, he could do so by another method, such as binding. I would argue, instead, that Kronos' innovations are intermediate steps on the way to cannibalism, groping attempts to suppress while also exploiting, which fail. Muellner has pointed out that Kronos attempts to appropriate the female reproductive function by incorporating his children and turning his belly into a womb (*nedus*). Perhaps, then, he is not only experimenting with the gender of his body and body parts and the powers that might accompany them, but exploring the possibilities of incorporative violence, what it can do, and what powers it can grant.

Kronos' consumption of his children is narrated in greater detail than Ouranos' violence, in keeping with the increasing complexity of concepts and beings in the poem. The act is described but also explained; Kronos has not only a feeling, such as hatred or cruel delight, but also a plan:

> καὶ τοὺς μὲν κατέπινε μέγας Κρόνος, ὥς τις ἕκαστος
> νηδύος ἐξ ἱερῆς μητρὸς πρὸς γούναθ' ἵκοιτο,
> τὰ φρονέων, ἵνα τις τις ἀγαυῶν Οὐρανιώνων
> ἄλλος ἐν ἀθανάτοισιν ἔχοι βασιληίδα τιμήν.

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[617] Nyamnjoh 2018: 5-6.

[618] Ouranos' proto-cannibalism is similar to his proto-kingship, being "both a zero and a one, a proto-king and a non-king at once" (Muellner 1996: 68).

[619] "Ouranos had only reversed female procreation and asserted male sexuality at its expense, with the result that he was irreversibly detached from his male body part. By putting the children in his own *nedus*, Kronos has turned the tables on Rhea and put himself in the position that the 'winning' side had in the first episode of the myth. Though their father, he has hidden away the children inside himself!" (Muellner 1996: 70).

πεύθετο γὰρ Γαίης τε καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος,
οὕνεκά οἱ πέπρωτο ἐῷ ὑπὸ παιδὶ δαμῆναι
καὶ κρατερῷ περ ἐόντι, Διὸς μεγάλου διὰ βουλάς:
τῷ ὅ γ᾽ ἄρ᾽ οὐκ ἀλαὸς σκοπιὴν ἔχεν, ἀλλὰ δοκεύων
παῖδας ἑοὺς κατέπινε: Ῥέην δ᾽ ἔχε πένθος ἄλαστον.[620]

And great Kronos swallowed them down, when each one
Out of the holy womb arrived at the knees of their mother,
Thinking these things, in order that no one else of the noble Ouranians
Would hold kingly honor among the immortals.
For he learned from Gaia and starry Ouranos,
That it was fated for him to be subdued by his own child
Although he was strong, through the plans of great Zeus;
Therefore he did not keep watch blindly, but watching
He swallowed down his children; and unceasing grief held Rhea.

The incorporation of the children "when each one… arrived" is reminiscent of the way that Ouranos was said to hide his children away "as soon as one was born," both fathers repeating their violence each time a child is born. The repetitiveness of their actions dramatizes the tendency in the poem for the "male principle" to "discourage birth and unlimited fertility and to block generational change";[621] in both episodes, we see the patriarch working busily, and yet he is static, performing the same deed over and over, in an attempt to stay ahead of the reproductive process and the passage of time. But at the same time, the motivation, intention, and thought attributed to Kronos in the passage are quite unlike anything we saw with Ouranos. The act itself only takes two lines to tell, but Kronos' reasons for it stretch out over six. First, the purpose clause explains that Kronos hopes to prevent another god from becoming king, but this, too, requires explanation: he fears overthrow by his children because he learned from Gaia and Ouranos that it was fated "although he was strong." This concession may reveal something of Kronos' imagined reasoning: if he knows that he is fated to be overthrown by his son although he is strong, then perhaps he thinks that consuming his children will make him stronger. He, too, was a son who overthrew his father, and he knows about the vital, chaotic energy of mothers and children. Maybe he is trying, by ingesting his own children, to capture some of that chaotic energy for himself—not unlike swallowing a capsule of placenta.

It is true that κατέπινε in the first and last lines of the passage emphasizes that the children are swallowed, not chewed. This emphasis has led some scholars to label the event "not cannibalism," but this flattens and oversimplifies what is taking place in the story. The underlying implication of the label of "not cannibalism" seems to be that for Kronos to chew and swallow his children would break a religious or literary taboo and that this is a less shocking act.[622] But Kronos, I would argue, does not *refrain* from chewing and metabolizing his children; he simply does not know how. He suppresses the children by incorporating them, not realizing that chewing or digesting them could give him a greater advantage. The perfect efficiency of fully realized cannibalism is reserved for Zeus, but here Kronos is straining towards it, much as

[620] Hes. *Th.* 459-467.
[621] Clay (2003: 18).
[622] See again Detienne (1981: 216), Davidson (1995: 363-364), Muellner (1996: 69) for readings that seek to minimize Kronos' cannibalistic intentions.

he strains towards the appropriation of female reproductivity that Zeus will later carry out successfully.[623]

III. Matriarchs and Mutilation

If incorporation is the patriarchs' strategy for suppression, then mutilation is the matriarchs' strategy to rebel against and dismantle patriarchal suppression.[624] Whereas incorporation seeks to combine bodies, mutilation seeks to divide, damage, or destroy them. In Hesiod, mutilation is carried out through hard, threatening objects: Gaia's sickle and Rhea's stone. The tools of mutilation violate the boundaries of otherwise invulnerable, divine, masculine bodies, allowing them to be invaded and forcing them to release their contents. Mutilation may be a less obvious precursor to cannibalism that incorporation, but it is the component missing from Kronos' violence that has, for some, disqualified it. If, then, we look elsewhere in the text for the rending of flesh, we will find a distinct alternation between incorporative and mutilative acts of violence. What is more, as we will discuss in section IV, mutilation is the distinctive element setting Zeus' acts of violence apart from those of his father and grandfather.[625]

When Gaia is placed under physical and emotional distress by Ouranos' violence, she thinks immediately of revenge, and her first action is to create the weapon of her liberation, even before she seeks allies:

> δολίην δὲ κακήν τ᾽ ἐφράσσατο τέχνην.
> αἶψα δὲ ποιήσασα γένος πολιοῦ ἀδάμαντος
> τεῦξε μέγα δρέπανον καὶ ἐπέφραδε παισὶ φίλοισιν.[626]
>
> And she thought of a tricky and evil device.
> And right away, having made the race of gray steel
> She fashioned a great sickle and showed it to her dear children.

She does not only make the weapon; before she can do that, she must invent and physically generate the *type of material* that could constitute such a weapon, nicely expressed here with the

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[623] "So in order to preserve his masculine, kingly prerogative, whose existence is in itself a metonymic step forward from the blank role of Sky, Kronos is outdoing his father by reversing procreation and *actually adopting for himself a female procreative function* (concealment of the children before birth) because he now possesses within him a body part with procreation as its possible function" (Muellner 1996: 70).

[624] I differ from Muellner here on the particulars while fundamentally agreeing with his assessment that "the right mixture of violence with cunning, old with young, and male with female will someday produce the ultimate in cosmic power" (1996: 75-76). He proposes "a rule of sexual difference" according to which "females and males are both capable of exercising cunning, which is the unmarked member of the opposition, but only males are capable of exercising violence or physical force, the marked member of the opposition" (1996: 75). I would propose, instead, an opposition between fathers exercising incorporative violence and mothers exercising or orchestrating mutilative violence. Males, when they begin as youngest sons, can assist their mothers in mutilative violence (Kronos wielding the sickle that Gaia made, Zeus activating the stone that Rhea put in place), but when they age into fathers, they revert to incorporation, except in the case of Zeus, who will be discussed below in section IV.

[625] Cf. Arthur's idea that the "threatening aspects of the female are re-distributed" to marginal goddesses or "sublimated" into positive qualities, while male violence is not transformed across generations (1982: 73); "Zeus' 'neutralization' of the earlier threats consists in a bi-partite strategy whereby he 'replaces' the male figures of force at the same time that he maintains an identity with them, while he 'displaces' the various threatening aspects of the female forces and, at the same time, integrates them into his reign" (ibid. 76).

[626] Hes. *Th.* 160-162.

aorist participle ποιήσασα. There has been no need for metals yet; Gaia invents metal because she has a need for something hard and sharp. Much as the very first emotions described when Ouranos and Kronos came into their consciousness were hostility and resentment, the first inanimate and intentionally created object—the first tool—is a tool for hurting bodies.[627]

The metal that Gaia creates is hard—even its name is simply "unbreakable"—and the tool that she fashions is crafted for violence. After she enlists Kronos' help, we learn more details about her handiwork:

> γήθησεν δὲ μέγα φρεσὶ Γαῖα πελώρη:
> εἶσε δέ μιν κρύψασα λόχῳ: ἐνέθηκε δὲ χερσὶν
> ἅρπην καρχαρόδοντα: δόλον δ᾽ ὑπεθήκατο πάντα.[628]
>
> And huge Gaia rejoiced greatly in her mind;
> And she sent him forth, hiding him in an ambush; and she placed in his hands
> The saw-toothed sickle; and she explained the whole trick.

Gaia, like Ouranos, rejoices in the violence that she sets out to perpetrate. The sickle, previously only called "great," is now "saw-toothed" when it is placed in the hands of Kronos, the agent of violence (who was, himself, also produced from her body and in some ways also acts as her tool in this episode).[629] While Gaia's explanation of "the whole trick" is not quoted, even the shape of the weapon suggests the nature of the intended crime. Having had her fecundity turned against her by Ouranos through forced incorporation, she conceives of a new kind of violence.[630]

When Kronos carries out the violence that Gaia has planned, there is emphasis on Ouranos' vast and unviolated body, the power of the sickle, and the shocking rupture that occurs when the body of the first patriarch is mangled:

> ἦλθε δὲ νύκτ᾽ ἐπάγων μέγας Οὐρανός, ἀμφὶ δὲ Γαίῃ
> ἱμείρων φιλότητος ἐπέσχετο καί ῥ᾽ ἐτανύσθη
> πάντῃ: ὃ δ᾽ ἐκ λοχέοιο πάις ὠρέξατο χειρὶ
> σκαιῇ, δεξιτερῇ δὲ πελώριον ἔλλαβεν ἅρπην
> μακρὴν καρχαρόδοντα, φίλου δ᾽ ἀπὸ μήδεα πατρὸς
> ἐσσυμένως ἤμησε, πάλιν δ᾽ ἔρριψε φέρεσθαι
> ἐξοπίσω:[631]
>
> And great Ouranos came bringing night on, and around Gaia

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[627] Commenting on Gaia's defeat following the Typhonomachy, Clay draws a parallel between the sickle and the metallurgic simile at 861ff.: "If her campaign for generation began from the manufacture of an adamant sickle (161-162), her final capitulation is signaled by one of the rare similes in the *Theogony* drawn from metalworking. Her days of devising instruments of succession are over" (2003: 26). Gaia's downfall, figured in terms of molten metals, nicely reinforces the importance of the metal sickle as her concretized will in the world.

[628] Hes. *Th.* 173-175.

[629] I differ here from Muellner (1996: 75) about who is the agent of this violence; although Kronos wields the sickle, he does so at Gaia's behest.

[630] "The devising of adamant is already a metonymic antidote to Sky's reversal of procreation, since it is a kind of generation from within Earth; moreover, Earth then fabricates something from it, the sickle (in fact, both of her actions here are the first instances of an important principle later in the myth, namely, the symbolic equation of the cunning creation of crafted things with the procreation of children)" (Muellner 1996: 62).

[631] Hes. *Th.* 176-182.

Desiring sex he lay outstretched and stretched himself
Every way; but the child from his ambush reached out with his left
Hand, and with his right he seized the huge long
Saw-toothed sickle, and he cut off the genitals of his own father
Eagerly, and he threw them behind to be borne
Backwards.

The scene is set with just over two lines describing Ouranos' approach. Since he is the whole sky, his arrival is conflated with the oncoming of night; he is called great, and his enveloping, oppressive covering is narrated with two different finite verbs for spreading out and two prepositional phrases ("around Gaia" and "every way") highlighting his ubiquity. He is, at this point, still the whole body that Gaia produced, equal to herself. The passage also restates the importance of the sickle, now huge and long as well as saw-toothed. As soon as Ouranos' flesh is cut, it is *thrown*; the body's rupture is an event almost like an explosion.

Ouranos' body, previously vast and invulnerable, is now not only castrated, but disintegrated. The rapid scattering of his newly-consumable flesh makes the consequences of his mutilation very real.

τὰ μὲν οὔ τι ἐτώσια ἔκφυγε χειρός:
ὅσσαι γὰρ ῥαθάμιγγες ἀπέσσυθεν αἱματόεσσαι,
πάσας δέξατο Γαῖα: περιπλομένων δ᾽ ἐνιαυτῶν
γείνατ᾽ Ἐρινῦς τε κρατερὰς μεγάλους τε Γίγαντας,
τεύχεσι λαμπομένους, δολίχ᾽ ἔγχεα χερσὶν ἔχοντας,
Νύμφας θ᾽ ἃς Μελίας καλέουσ᾽ ἐπ᾽ ἀπείρονα γαῖαν.[632]

They (his genitals) fled not at all fruitless from his hand;
For as many bloody drops as fled away,
Gaia received them all; and when a year passed
She bore the strong Furies and the great Giants,
Shining in armor, holding long spears in their hands,
And the Nymphs whom they call Melian on the boundless earth.

Here we see how cannibalistic mutilation can be. Ouranos' blood and genitals are dispersed, no longer under his control; the blood falls on the ground, and is not exactly eaten, but certainly absorbed by Gaia. It generates the new bodies of the Furies, Giants, and Ash-Tree Nymphs, indicating that the event is understood as a conception and not a meal, but as we know from Rhea and Kronos, wombs and stomachs are easily aligned and confused. His genitals then combine with seafoam to beget Aphrodite, and since Pontos is also a child of Gaia, this is a less direct version of the same thing: Ouranos' flesh returning piecemeal to Gaia and her dynasty of fertility to produce new life. This first act of mutilation shows why it will be such an important component of Zeus' cannibalistic violence; incorporation is static, whereas mutilation is generative. Incorporation can manipulate and control bodies, but mutilation can destroy and create them.

In the second generation, Rhea must also devise a way to push back against the patriarchal suppression of her children. As discussed above in section II, Kronos' innovation was

[632] Hes. *Th.* 182-187.

to keep the children inside his own body, denying her access to them, and also, as I have argued, to grant himself special strength or energy. Her method, then, must undermine the integrity of his body. Her scheme needs to be subtler and more complex than that of Gaia because her world and situation are more complex; she needs not only to plan an attack against Kronos, but first, to gain access to the youngest son. The solution to this problem is the substitution of a stone for the newborn Zeus, which allows her covert access to the baby, who can then reach maturity and defeat Kronos in a physical confrontation. But substitution is not the stone's only function. The prominence of the stone, both when it is swallowed and when it reemerges, suggests that it has its own meaning: it is the mechanism of mutilation of Kronos' body. It is a placeholder in the sense that it allows Zeus not to be eaten, but it is also a foreign object that enters Kronos' body without his knowledge.[633] By tricking him into swallowing the stone, Rhea creates a point of vulnerability that can be accessed later. The saw-toothed sickle was a tool for mutilation in its purest form, the plain cutting-up and scattering-about of body parts. The stone, on the other hand, is a sickle in disguise, achieving the bare minimum of entering the body and creating enough of a gap for its integrity to be compromised and its contents—the children—to spill out.[634]

The stone is mentioned twice. Its first mention ties it closely to Kronos' fate of being overpowered by his child:

> τῷ δὲ σπαργανίσασα μέγαν λίθον ἐγγυάλιξεν
> Οὐρανίδῃ μέγ᾽ ἄνακτι, θεῶν προτέρῳ βασιλῆι.
> τὸν τόθ᾽ ἑλὼν χείρεσσιν ἐὴν ἐσκάθετο νηδὺν
> σχέτλιος: οὐδ᾽ ἐνόησε μετὰ φρεσίν, ὥς οἱ ὀπίσσω
> ἀντὶ λίθου ἐὸς υἱὸς ἀνίκητος καὶ ἀκηδὴς
> λείπεθ᾽, ὅ μιν τάχ᾽ ἔμελλε βίῃ καὶ χερσὶ δαμάσσας
> τιμῆς ἐξελάειν, ὃ δ᾽ ἐν ἀθανάτοισι ἀνάξειν.[635]
>
> And having wrapped a great stone in swaddling clothes, she gave it[636]
> To the great lord son of Ouranos, earlier king of the gods.
> Then he, taking it in his hands, placed it down into his belly,

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[633] I disagree with Davidson here, who asserts that the stone's functions are "contrast with the living baby Zeus" and so that Kronos "keeps up his record of disposing of all his children while simultaneously using up, as it were, his opportunity to swallow Zeus" (1995: 365). While substitution is obviously an important aspect of the stone, I would argue that it also has its own positive value, roughly equivalent to that of the sickle, as a foreign object capable of invading divine bodies. I am also doubtful of the first claim, that the stone is chosen as a substitute because of its contrast with the baby Zeus. Would not a living being be a more persuasive substitute, as in the tale reported by Pausanias where Rhea replaces the baby Poseidon with a foal? (Pausanias 8.8.2; see Davidson 1995: 367). See also Bassi (2016: 35) on how the stone is "more than an object of simple substitution and more than a mythological enigma"; while Bassi is more interested in the stone's meaning as a σῆμα to commemorate Zeus' victory in human time, this idea is not incompatible with the stone originating as a weapon of sorts.

[634] Davidson suggests that "aspects of the stone narrative echo the earlier description of the ambush and castration of Ouranos in the previous generation" (1995: 364).

[635] Hes. *Th.* 485-491.

[636] The unusual verb here, ἐγγυαλίζω (unique in Hesiod), literally means "put into the palm of the hand," from ἐν and γύαλον, which means various kinds of hollows, including, in the *Iliad*, hollows of breast plates, and elsewhere in Hesiod and the Hymns, valleys (LSJ). While it is clear that the verb was used to simply mean giving something to someone, in a text so full of hiding places and hidden objects, the word choice here also draws attention to Rhea's ultimate goal of placing the stone inside the hollow of Kronos' body.

Fool! He did not perceive with his mind, that for him for the future
Instead of the stone his son, undefeated and unheeded,
Remained, who soon, having defeated him with force and with hands,
Was going to expel him from honor, and himself rule among the immortals.

The feeding of the stone to Kronos is here intertwined with his downfall as king of the gods.[637] At the moment when she gives it to him, he is called both "great lord son of Ouranos," situating him as the hereditary ruler while at the same time drawing a parallel with his deposed father through the use of the patronymic. When he takes the stone into his hands and into his belly, he is called σχέτλιος, wretched or foolish.[638] As the rest of the passage makes clear, this is the mistake that makes Kronos' downfall unavoidable. It is his negligence in allowing the stone to enter his body, and not just his failure to swallow Zeus, that is highlighted here as his detriment.[639]

The prominence of the stone is reprised when Zeus confronts Kronos. Their fight is not described in any detail, but rather, the stone and its eventual placement dominate the passage:

καρπαλίμως δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἔπειτα μένος καὶ φαίδιμα γυῖα
ηὔξετο τοῖο ἄνακτος: ἐπιπλομένων δ᾽ ἐνιαυτῶν
Γαίης ἐννεσίῃσι πολυφραδέεσσι δολωθεὶς
ὃν γόνον ἄψ ἀνέηκε μέγας Κρόνος ἀγκυλομήτης
νικηθεὶς τέχνῃσι βίηφί τε παιδὸς ἑοῖο.
πρῶτον δ᾽ ἐξέμεσεν λίθον, ὃν πύματον κατέπινεν:
τὸν μὲν Ζεὺς στήριξε κατὰ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης
Πυθοῖ ἐν ἠγαθέῃ γυάλοις ὕπο Παρνησοῖο
σῆμ᾽ ἔμεν ἐξοπίσω, θαῦμα θνητοῖσι βροτοῖσιν.[640]

Quickly then the strength and shining limbs
Of the lord grew; and as the times passed
Beguiled by the wise suggestions of Gaia
Great Kronos of crooked councils vomited his offspring back up
Defeated by the skills and strength of his son.
But he vomited up the stone first, which he swallowed last;
Zeus fixed it on the earth of wide ways
In holy Pytho under the hollows of Parnassus
To be a monument for the future, a wonder for mortal men.

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[637] The emphasis on kingly sovereignty here points forward to its loss when the stone is activated, as explained by Muellner: "Vomiting the stone also represents Kronos's loss of sovereignty to Zeus as well as his defeat by him and by Gaia in a contest of trickery, but instead of losing his masculinity, as Ouranos had, he loses his attempt at femininity, his ability to conceal his own children in his *nedus*" (1996: 75). Cf. Arthur's point that "the struggle is now condensed so that withholding the child is homologous with withholding the βασιληὶς τιμή; to force Kronos to disgorge the children is at one and the same time to force him to yield up his *timê*" (1982: 71).

[638] σχέτλιος can also mean tough, merciless, or cruel, and LSJ gives "flinching from no cruelty or wickedness" for this instance; still, Caldwell translates it as fool, and Evelyn-White as wretch. In context, since consuming the stone is in fact *not* particularly cruel or merciless, but is the result of being tricked, foolish or wretched is the more logical translation here. See also West ad loc., who points out that "the corresponding idiom with νήπιος is usual in contexts of fatal ignorance" (1966: 301).

[639]

[640] Hes. *Th.* 492-500.

While the fight is narrated in a single line, and the rebirth of the Olympian gods is narrated in a single line, the stone is given an odd place of prominence by its sudden insertion into the narrative ("But first…") and the three full lines that are then spent describing its eventual home in Delphi. Given the pleasing symmetry of the swallowed children being reborn in reverse order, we might expect them to be named here, but instead, the only gesture towards the reversal of his consumptions is in the stone itself. He vomits up first that which he swallowed last. What is more, Zeus then installs the stone under the "hollows" of Parnassus—that is, γύαλον, the root of ἐγγυαλίζω, the verb by which Rhea gave Kronos the stone in the first place. This verbal echo draws attention to the through-line of the stone, placed first in the hollow of Kronos' belly, which it destroys, then situated more stably in the hollows of the earth.

Another clue that might offer insight into the importance of the stone can be found in Apollodorus' rendition of the story, where Metis, already allied with Zeus, administers to Kronos a drug (φάρμακον) that makes him vomit up his children.[641] It is impossible to know with certainty whether this preserves an older variant of the myth, or if it is an innovation of Apollodorus, perhaps an attempt to smooth out and rationalize the bumpy and oblique narrative of Hesiod. But in either case, it points to an idea that underlies Hesiod's account: that there must be a mechanism by which Kronos' bodily integrity is undone. I would suggest that the stone is given such prominence in Hesiod's version because it is imbued with the idea of a drug, a slow-acting emetic that weakens the boundaries of the body and that can later be activated by the physical confrontation with Zeus.[642] It is particularly appropriate, despite the chronological confusion, that Metis, another figure of threatening fertility, is the one to administer the drug. Much as Gaia generated the sickle out of her body, Metis possesses a drug that ends the children's false death and brings about their second birth. It is exactly this kind of destabilizing resourcefulness that Zeus absorbs, appropriates, and takes control of by eating Metis.

IV. Zeus' Hybrid Violence

In the third generation, Zeus—the only child of his generation who has *not* been cannibalized at all, but has had the benefit of two separate maternal wombs[643]—synthesizes the lessons of his father and grandfather in approaching his own wife and his own rival. In his dealings with Metis, he addresses the problems of a crafty wife and potentially hostile offspring through an ingenious combination of incorporation and mutilation, finding a solution that exploits the wife as much as possible and effectively cannibalizes her, with the resulting benefits of intelligence for himself and a strong alliance with their child. With Prometheus, who takes on the role of a challenger to Zeus in lieu of the youngest son (since Zeus minimizes the threats posed by his own sons through alliances and the distribution of *timai*)[644], Zeus turns his knowledge of mutilation, previously always used by mothers against fathers, against his potential usurper. Prometheus' punishment combines mutilation and incorporation in inverse proportions, while also subjecting him to the worst possible fate for humans, the group on whose behalf he

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[641] Apollodorus 1.2.1.
[642] Davidson hints at a similar idea but comes to a different conclusion, calling the stone "an ambiguous object" and "a symbol of the 'living death' from which Zeus has been preserved" (1995: 368-369). I think the ambiguity of the stone is easiest to understand if we keep in mind its functions as *both* a substitute for Zeus *and* a tool for violence.
[643] Davidson 1995: 368.
[644] See Clay 1989.

defied Zeus: being food for an animal. The eagle, Zeus' bird, is at once a foreign object and an extension of Zeus himself, able to simultaneously enter and consume Prometheus' body and thereby turn his immortality into the most miserable of disadvantages.

Zeus' dilemma with Metis is the culmination of a three-generation arc of reproductive conflicts.[645] Through prophecy or instinct, fathers always fear deposition by their sons, and Zeus, too, has been told in a prophecy that if Metis bears a son, he will overthrow Zeus and become king.[646] Whereas Ouranos incorporated his children back into their mother, leaving himself open to an attack by the allied mother and children, and whereas Kronos incorporated the children into himself, leaving Rhea as an agent free to defy him with her matriarchal wiles, Zeus incorporates the mother into his own body and births the child himself. This scheme is superior because it eliminates the mother's agency and secures the child as an ally. The father replaces the mother as the benevolent life giver, circumventing the whole problem of hostile children.[647] While the patterns and structure just described are well documented and understood, I hope to add an important element that both reinforces and complicates our understanding of the generational evolution narrated in the *Theogony*: that the alternation between the two types of cannibalistic violence that we have observed across the generations culminates in Zeus' brilliant synthesis. His use of violence is consequently both more brutal and more strategically self-serving, and turns out to be an important component of his success. This has far-reaching implications: it means that the current order of gods, as imagined by the poet, was founded on exploitative violence. How benevolent is a god who feeds his rivals to animals when they try to improve life for humans?[648]

First, let us consider the more straightforward case of Zeus and Metis.[649] There are two passages describing the swallowing of Metis in the Hesiodic corpus: one in the *Theogony*, and

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[645] Arthur 1982: 77.

[646] Hes. *Th.* 891-893, 897-898.

[647] "For an instant in the story of the world's creation, Zeus undismembered is its only perfect androgyne. His ability to give birth signals his complete victory, and his daughter Athena is a nonthreatening mirror image of his own combination of cunning and violence, a reinforcement of his sovereignty rather than its undoing. She is nonthreatening because she is female, and in this myth power is transferred only to males, although her status as a female is in doubt or, more accurately, neutered. She is a virgin, and so an infertile, nonerotic female as well as a warrior. In short, she is a masculinized female unable to produce male heirs. So her gender traits are both a mirror to the androgyny of Zeus, who gave birth to her, and a sharp contrast to the fertile eroticism of Aphrodite. In a word, Zeus has become the first (and only) male mother of a female son" (Muellner 1996: 92-93).

[648] My reading here goes against the grain of interpretations that would make the end of the *Theogony* a very positive account of Zeus ushering in a new order of peace and law. These interpretations are often founded on Zeus' marriage to Themis and fathering of various daughters representing positive concepts. But attempts to read Hesiod's attitude towards Zeus and his new order as wholly positive do so at the expense of glossing over other important elements in the text. Solmsen, for example, declares that "Hesiod's heart and mind are most strongly engaged with Zeus and the children of Themis and Mnemosyne," but admits that Zeus can be called "the only one whose record is free from the stain of 'shameful deeds'" only if the passage about his consumption of Metis is analyzed away as corrupt (1949: 72; 25). Similarly, Lloyd-Jones omits reference to Metis in his appealing reading of Zeus' triumph over Typhon and subsequent marriages and daughters: "Zeus after overcoming the last dangerous threat to his power by conquering Typhoeus marries Themis and becomes the father of Dike together with Eirene, Peace, and with Eunomia… Mythological genealogy was for Hesiod a means of expressing his beliefs about the universe and the way in which Zeus governed it…" (1971: 36). It is important to notice that both of these readings require parts of the extant version of the story to be dismissed. We do not need to be so rigid in our approach; it is possible to make sense of a Zeus who *both* marries Themis (gets the law on his side) *and* marries and swallows Metis (uses violence to stabilize his reign).

[649] While the episode of Zeus and Metis comes after that of Zeus and Prometheus in the text, the chronology of the story is difficult; the genealogy of the Iapetids overall and the sacrifice at Mecone in particular are famously out of

one in a fragment preserved in Chrysippus that has been included in some editions of the *Theogony*.[650] I will engage with both versions here. The version in the *Theogony* is as follows:

> Ζεὺς δὲ θεῶν βασιλεὺς πρώτην ἄλοχον θέτο Μῆτιν,
> πλεῖστα θεῶν εἰδυῖαν ἰδὲ θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων.
> ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ἄρ' ἔμελλε θεὰν γλαυκῶπιν Ἀθήνην
> τέξεσθαι, τότ' ἔπειτα δόλῳ φρένας ἐξαπατήσας
> αἱμυλίοισι λόγοισιν ἐὴν ἐσκάθετο νηδύν,
> Γαίης φραδμοσύνῃσι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος·
> τὼς γάρ οἱ φρασάτην, ἵνα μὴ βασιληίδα τιμὴν
> ἄλλος ἔχοι Διὸς ἀντὶ θεῶν αἰειγενετάων.
> ἐκ γὰρ τῆς εἵμαρτο περίφρονα τέκνα γενέσθαι·
> πρώτην μὲν κούρην γλαυκώπιδα Τριτογένειαν,
> ἶσον ἔχουσαν πατρὶ μένος καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλήν,
> αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' ἄρα παῖδα θεῶν βασιλῆα καὶ ἀνδρῶν
> ἤμελλεν τέξεσθαι, ὑπέρβιον ἦτορ ἔχοντα·
> ἀλλ' ἄρα μιν Ζεὺς πρόσθεν ἐὴν ἐσκάθετο νηδύν,
> ὥς οἱ συμφράσσαιτο θεὰ ἀγαθόν τε κακόν τε.[651]
>
> And Zeus, king of gods, made Metis his first wife,
> Who knows the most of gods and of mortal men.
> But when indeed she was about to bear the goddess bright-eyed
> Athena, then, having deceived her mind with a trick,
> With wily words he put her down into his belly,
> At the suggestions of Gaia and of starry Ouranos;
> For thus they declared, in order that no other might hold kingly honor
> Of the ever-existing gods except for Zeus.
> For from her it was fated for very thoughtful children to be born;
> First a daughter, bright-eyed Tritogeneia,
> Having strength and thoughtful council equal to her father,
> But then she was going to bear a son,
> King of gods and men, having a lawless heart;
> But first Zeus put her down into his belly,
> In order that the goddess could take council with him about good and evil.

In this rendition, Metis' status as Zeus' first, legitimate wife is emphasized, and Zeus swallows her when she is already pregnant and close to giving birth. Zeus is said to act in response to a prophecy delivered to him by Gaia and Ouranos, and the details are specified: that Metis' children will be wise, which is positive for a daughter, but spells disaster for a son.[652] Finally, Zeus' purpose in eating her is explained, allowing for an interesting bit of slippage. A few lines

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place [citation needed]. It is not important for my argument which event happens first in the story, only that both take place after the overthrow of Kronos and before Zeus' power is fully established.

[650] Fr. 343, which Heinemann includes in his text of the *Theogony* at 929ff. [find out more with access to editions] See West (1966: 401-403) on the possible sources of this fragment.

[651] Hes. *Th.* 886-900.

[652] See West (1966: 404).

earlier, the prevention of Zeus' overthrow was given as Gaia and Ouranos' purpose in telling him the prophecy. But when a new purpose clause explains Zeus' intentions, it does not mention his fear of overthrow, but rather the benefits that he seeks by internalizing Metis: for her to advise him about good and evil, so that her wisdom becomes his own.

Now let us compare the fragment from Chrysippus, which differs in several important ways:

> αὐτὰρ ὅ γ' Ὠκεανοῦ καὶ Τηθύος ἠυκόμοιο
> κούρηι νόσφ' Ἥρης παρελέξατο καλλιπαρήου
> ἐξαπαφὼν Μῆτιν καίπερ πολύιδριν ἐοῦσαν·
> συμμάρψας δ' ὅ γε χερσὶν ἑὴν ἐγκάτθετο νηδύν,
> δείσας μὴ τέξηι κρατερώτερον ἄλλο κεραυνοῦ·
> τούνεκά μιν Κρονίδης ὑψίζυγος αἰθέρι ναίων
> κάππιεν ἐξαπίνης. ἣ δ' αὐτίκα Παλλάδ' Ἀθήνην
> κύσατο· τὴν μὲν ἔτικτε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε
> πὰρ κορυφήν, Τρίτωνος ἐπ' ὄχθησιν ποταμοῖο.
> Μῆτις δ' αὖτε Ζηνὸς ὑπὸ σπλάγχνοις λελαθυῖα
> ἧστο, Ἀθηναίης μήτηρ, τέκταινα δικαίων,
> πλεῖστα θεῶν εἰδυῖα καταθνητῶν τ' ἀνθρώπων.[653]
>
> But he slept with the daughter of Okeanos and fair-haired Tethys
> Far away from lovely-cheeked Hera
> Deceiving Metis although she was very wise;
> But grasping her with his hands he placed her down into his belly,
> Fearing lest she bear another thing stronger than the thunderbolt;
> For this reason the high-throned son of Kronos living in the sky
> Swallowed her suddenly. And she immediately conceived
> Pallas Athena; whom the father of men and gods bore
> Through his head, on the banks of the river Trito.
> But Metis in turn lying hidden under the guts of Zeus
> Sat, mother of Athena, craftswoman of justice,
> Knowing the most of gods and of mortal men.

In this version, Metis is situated not as Zeus' wife, but as the daughter of sea gods, directing us towards her exotic past and ancestry rather than the role that Zeus assigns her. Zeus is already married to Hera and sneaks away for a liaison with Metis. The prophecy is not mentioned, but instead, Zeus acts on his own fear that Metis might bear "another thing stronger than the thunderbolt." This striking phrase imagines children as weapons and childbearing as the crafting of weapons, linking Metis' destructive potential back to events like Gaia's double deployment of Kronos and the sickle.[654] And whereas in the *Theogony* Metis was already pregnant when swallowed, here she seems to be impregnated at the very moment of her incorporation. This version also includes Athena's birth through Zeus' head, as well as Metis' ultimate fate: she lies

[653] Hes. fr. 343, 4-15.
[654] See Muellner (1996: 62) on the "symbolic equation of the cunning creation of crafted things with the procreation of children."

"hidden under the guts of Zeus," and is called the mother of Athena and the craftswoman of justice, the two components of her identity that have just been fully appropriated by Zeus.[655]

The detail given in the second passage, that Metis conceives Athena at the very moment of her incorporation by Zeus, may shed some light on the connections between reproduction and cannibalism in this text. The very act of consumption of another being seems to possess powerful regenerative properties. Zeus, whether by consuming his pregnant wife or by consuming and impregnating her at the same time, takes full control of the reproductive process. If the mothers discussed above in section I attempt to recapture some kind of lost vitality by consuming their own placentas, then Zeus attempts something similar by consuming Metis, although he seeks something that he did not have before. Metis, with her dangerous and uncontrollable reproductive energy, herself becomes the "meat of life," nourishing Zeus with her fertile, maternal flesh and granting him a sort of wholeness not available even to other gods. To put it another way, placentophagy is framed by its enthusiasts as the maternal body generating its own cure for its own ailments. When Gaia faced persecution by Ouranos, she generated the sickle, a tool to solve her problems, out of her body. Zeus even fears that Metis may "bear another thing stronger than the thunderbolt," which may refer not only to a possible son, but also to her potential to produce the tools of her own rebellion from her body. By eating her, he not only prevents this, but *takes on that very ability for himself*; Athena is born from his head "fierce, rousing the din of war, leading the host, the unwearied mistress, who likes din and wars and battles," both a daughter and a weapon.[656]

Zeus has also learned from his mother's and grandmother's deployments of mutilation that overbearing would-be patriarchs can be easily undone by puncturing or otherwise invading their bodies. But while Gaia used the sickle as a tool for dividing up Ouranos' body, and while Rhea used the stone to infiltrate Kronos' body with harmful outside forces, Zeus finds a more effective tool for mutilation: an animal. By sending the eagle to peck out Prometheus' liver every day forever,[657] Zeus achieves a punishment that synthesizes the advantages of so many of the earlier violent acts in the poem.

δῆσε δ᾽ ἀλυκτοπέδῃσι Προμηθέα ποικιλόβουλον
δεσμοῖς ἀργαλέοισι μέσον διὰ κίον᾽ ἐλάσσας:
καί οἱ ἐπ᾽ αἰετὸν ὦρσε τανύπτερον: αὐτὰρ ὅ γ᾽ ἦπαρ
ἤσθιεν ἀθάνατον, τὸ δ᾽ ἀέξετο ἶσον ἁπάντη
νυκτός ὅσον πρόπαν ἦμαρ ἔδοι τανυσίπτερος ὄρνις. 525
τὸν μὲν ἄρ᾽ Ἀλκμήνης καλλισφύρου ἄλκιμος υἱὸς
Ἡρακλέης ἔκτεινε, κακὴν δ᾽ ἀπὸ νοῦσον ἄλαλκεν
Ἰαπετιονίδῃ καὶ ἐλύσατο δυσφροσυνάων
οὐκ ἀέκητι Ζηνὸς Ὀλυμπίου ὑψιμέδοντος,
ὄφρ᾽ Ἡρακλῆος Θηβαγενέος κλέος εἴη 530
πλεῖον ἔτ᾽ ἢ τὸ πάροιθεν ἐπὶ χθόνα πουλυβότειραν.
ταῦτ᾽ ἄρα ἀζόμενος τίμα ἀριδείκετον υἱόν:

[655] See Arthur 1982: 77 on the "more anthropomorphized and rationalized version of Chrysippos."
[656] Hes. *Th*. 925-926.
[657] While Prometheus is freed from his torture by Heracles after what seems to be centuries (Hamilton 1989: 35), this does not appear to have been Zeus' original intention; since the reason Hesiod gives at 530-531 is that Zeus wants Heracles' fame to be augmented, this change of heart is grounded in the later mythic time of Heracles. Thus, although the punishment is not eternal, it is at the moment of its genesis intended to be eternal, and I will discuss it as such.

καί περ χωόμενος παύθη χόλου, ὃν πρὶν ἔχεσκεν,
οὕνεκ᾽ ἐρίζετο βουλὰς ὑπερμενέι Κρονίωνι.

And he bound Prometheus of varied plans in bonds,
Painful bonds, having driven a pillar through his middle;
And he set a long-winged eagle on him; but it was eating
His immortal liver, and it was growing every way
At night by just as much as the long-winged bird ate during the whole day.
The brave son of lovely-ankled Alcmene, Heracles,
Killed it, and warded off an evil sickness
for the son of Iapetus and released him from cares,
not against the will of Olympian Zeus who rules on high,
in order that the fame of Theban-born Heracles would be
even greater than before on the much-nourishing earth.
Respecting these things, then, he honored his famous son;
Although he was angry, he was stopped from anger, which he was holding before,
because [Prometheus] contended in counsels with the mighty son of Kronos.[658]

Like the patriarchs, he uses incorporation, arranging for the eagle to be fed and sustained by Prometheus' flesh. Like the matriarchs, he harnesses the king-unmaking potential of mutilation, piercing Prometheus' body both with the pillar and with the sharp, curved, sickle-like beak and talons of the eagle. And in keeping with the arc of the poem that has bent, across the generations, towards more symbolic forms of retribution, he substitutes the eagle for himself, thereby transcending the cycle of succession struggles.

Prometheus' punishment via the eagle is introduced at the end of the genealogy of the Iapetids, the final item in a list of their punishments by Zeus, and it in turn introduces the Mecone episode by way of explanation for the punishment. As I have argued in chapter I, Prometheus' deception of Zeus is marked by verbal echoes as parallel to Kronos' castration of Ouranos. The episode is rife with similar trick- and trap-related vocabulary, while Prometheus' smile (ἐπιμειδήσας) and the several uses of μήδεα (wits) refer to the severing of Ouranos' μήδεα (genitals) and the consequent punning etymology of Aphrodite's epithet (φιλομμειδέα/ φιλομμηδέα).[659] These parallels suggest that Prometheus' deception of Zeus, despite the poet's protestations, is like a castration, leaving Zeus (and the gods he represents) cut off from real hunger for meat, but nevertheless longing for it and bereft of it.

Prometheus successfully "castrates" Zeus of the ability to eat meat, but Zeus responds by punishing Prometheus *both* as an insubordinate son *and* as an oppressive father/king. Prometheus, who tricks and metaphorically castrates Zeus, is like Kronos in relation to Ouranos; Zeus, who causes Prometheus' body to be incorporated into the eagle, is like Ouranos in relation to his children. Indeed, Hesiod displaces the Iapetids from where they would be expected to appear in the genealogy in order to position Prometheus as a youngest son in relation to Zeus.[660] Meanwhile, Prometheus challenges Zeus in the arena of wits, "precisely where Zeus believes himself supreme," making himself "a rival, a very present threat inside the circle of Olympian

[658] Hes. *Th.* 521-534.
[659] See xxx in chapter 1.
[660] See Clay 2003: 106 and Hamilton 1989: 33-34.

gods."[661] He is not, then, *only* playing the role of an upstart child, but is also a contender for the same kingly honor and power that Zeus possesses. Zeus must not only be a patriarch, suppressing his children and maintaining the status quo through incorporation; he also needs to be like Gaia and Rhea, who have undone the kingships of Ouranos and Kronos by breaking, dividing, and invading—that is, mutilating—their bodies. But we have already seen that Zeus, the master of mixtures, is certainly capable of being at once a father and a mother. He has also learned the benefits of making this punishment symbolic and distancing it from himself: Prometheus' punishment can be eternal without embroiling Zeus in a centuries-long struggle.[662] His proxy, the eagle, will carry out this thorough and exacting punishment.

The repetitiveness and efficiency of the eagle recalls the repetitive violence of Ouranos and Kronos, who incorporated their children over and over, just as soon as each one was born. Similarly, the eagle eats the liver every day, and the liver regenerates by just as much as it has been consumed, "with mathematical precision."[663] Zeus has set up a sort of perpetual motion machine of cannibalistic violence. Eagle and liver form a complete symbiotic unit. Prometheus' immortal body is used against him in two ways: first, the regeneration of his eaten flesh makes it possible for this torture to go on forever rather than reaching its end when he dies or is fully consumed; second, his flesh nourishes the eagle, enabling it to spend its entire existence mutilating him.[664]

At the same time, this is one of the few times when humans play a significant role in the *Theogony*: the men who receive the meaty portion at Mecone, and Heracles, who releases Prometheus by killing the eagle. It is clear that in addition to the episode's significance in relation to divine power struggles and succession, it can also tell us important things about the human condition and relationship with the gods. Prometheus' crime is not just any challenge to Zeus' supremacy; it is an attempt to secure the right of eating animal meat for humans, with whom he seems to sympathize more than the other gods do.[665] The punishment, then, fits the crime very neatly: for exerting control over access to animal meat, Zeus turns him into meat for an animal.[666] As Vernant argues, by giving humans the right to eat meat, Prometheus defines the human condition "as mortals over against the Blessed Immortals."[667] As a consequence of Prometheus' advocacy, the human condition will be marked by hunger, and "the fabric of man's life is woven of the same material as the food which sustains it."[668] Men, who are made of flesh, will always hunger for flesh; Prometheus' punishment is a nightmarish inversion of that

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[661] Vernant 1981c: 64.

[662] As Hamilton points out, Zeus' competition with Prometheus is largely indirect; after the "battle of wits" at Mecone, "he then simply gives orders to his helpers, Athena and Hephaestus, just as his βίη when used is used indirectly, through the eagle" (1989: 32). This helps explain why Zeus deploys the eagle rather than consuming Prometheus' flesh himself; when Zeus does not stand to gain power by consuming a body, as he will with Metis, he makes use of cannibalistic violence on a more symbolic level, in line with the progression towards symbolic retribution described by Arthur (1982: 64 and 73).

[663] Mueller 2016a: 5.

[664] "Prometheus' experience of temporality, as Clay rightly implies, aligns him with the mortals he has championed. Yet it is not linear time, as lived by humans as they are born, mature, and die, that Prometheus experiences. Rather, through his continual regeneration and decay, he endures the cyclical temporality of the species as a whole. Prometheus is forced to enter the temporality of humankind—an immortal paradoxically caught and constrained by mortality" (Mueller 2016a: 4).

[665] Vernant 1981c: 64.

[666] Stocking 2017: 37.

[667] Vernant 1981c: 62.

[668] Vernant 1981c: 72.

condition, making him not the subject but the object of eternal hunger.[669] His punishment also resembles the worst possible humiliation for the lowly humans he seeks to elevate: the antifuneral, where one is left unburied after death to be devoured by filthy beasts.[670] For his excessive sympathy with humans, Zeus makes him both like and unlike humans, suffering a human death that is infinitely magnified by the burden of immortality.[671]

In this way, Zeus carries out his "forcible seizure of sovereignty" and "successfully establishes, over against the former régime, the foundations of a permanently viable authority which can never be overcome or shaken."[672] He is able to do so because he has understood and harnessed the exploitative potential of cannibalistic violence. Rather than continuing to act out the cyclical violence of earlier generations, first as a rebellious son, then as an oppressive father, he instead shifts between the roles of child, mother, and father according to the advantages he needs in opposition to a given foe. When it suits him, he consumes and digests a fecund maternal body, granting himself the associated powers; and when he needs to suppress the possibility of a rival, or even the possibility that someone might be accorded a privilege without his express consent and control, he contrives a punishment that synthesizes every kind of violence that has been used against the fathers and sons of past generations, even compelling the divine, immortal body, in the form of Prometheus, to betray itself.

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[669] See Clay 2003: 115.

[670] Redfield 1975: 169.

[671] Of course, his punishment does not actually end up being infinite, but is brought to an end by Heracles after centuries have passed (see again Hamilton 1989: 35). It is fitting that after his attempts to benefit humanity, a human would be the agent of his release; it is also fitting that Zeus allows this to happen only for the sake of his human son's fame. As Mueller argues, "As an advocate for humans within the Zeus-governed cosmos, Prometheus proleptically lives out in his own body the periodic self-renewal of the species as a whole. Prometheus is, in this sense, a figure of parable, his punishment capturing the biological immortality that will be the legacy of humankind. The mitigation of his suffering by Herakles prefigures, in turn, a different type of immortality: *kleos*, which is won not by the species but by individuals" (2016a: 5). That is to say, Prometheus' crime of attempting to bring humans closer to the gods resulted in a stricter division of humans and gods; his torture ends to increase Heracles' *kleos*, another benefit to mankind which at the same time marks humans as utterly and irreversibly separate from the gods. Heracles himself will gain immortality and be admitted to Olympus, but for most humans, *kleos* is the most that can be hoped for.

[672] Vernant 1981c: 62.

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