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STUDIES IN THE LESSER HYMNS
and Other Essays

BY
E. M. HARROWER

ἦκα δ' ἄρα σφ' ὑμέναιον ᾄδον —

BOSTON
MARSHALL JONES COMPANY
MDCCCXXI

TO MRS. L——

who kept the copybook, and her counsel

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PREFACE

The five studies gathered here were written across some twelve years, in the intervals of other work, and they have in common only a conviction: that the lesser documents of Greek religion — the small hymn, the local rite, the story told over a dance — deserve the same seriousness we give the great ones, and repay it better than is supposed. The great documents have been defended by every generation; the small ones have only ever been kept, mostly by accident, often by women, and scholarship walks past them because scholarship, like the tradition it studies, remembers best whatever announced itself loudest.

The fourth essay prints a text which is not elsewhere in print, and I am aware that its authenticity will be the only question some readers bring to it. They will find my own doubts set out with, I hope, more candour than such questions usually receive; I ask in return only that the poem be read before it is cross-examined, which is a courtesy we extend to every witness except the ones that matter.

My thanks are owed to Professor —— and to Dr. ——, who kindly read the proofs and saved me from errors; those that remain I have kept for my own. Neither is to be held responsible for the fourth essay's conjectures, from which each, with a delicacy I record gratefully, asked to have his name withheld. My debt to Mrs. L—— is of another order, and is acknowledged where she would have wished: on the page before this one, and nowhere in the reviews.

I anticipate the reviewer who will say that the fourth essay proves most what it asserts least. He is cordially invited to say so; I have left him room.

E. M. H.
Cambridge, Massachusetts
Eastertide, 1921

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IV

A HYMN TO ATHENA
FROM AN ITHACAN TRADITION

The text here printed rests upon a single witness, and that a humble one: a paper copybook among the papers of my friend Mrs. L——, who travelled in the Ionian islands in the eighties of the last century and who is lately dead. Where she had it she nowhere says; a pencilled note on the flyleaf, *from the schoolmaster at Stavros*, is all the pedigree it possesses, and I am sensible that it is not much. The hand is hurried, the accents where given are not to be trusted, and the copyist was certainly no metrist, as the notes below will show. I have corrected silently nothing; every departure from the copybook is recorded. For the rest, I print my own accents and punctuation, and I number the lines, which the copybook does not.

A = the copybook of Mrs. L——.

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Μοῦσά μοι ἔννεπε κούρον Ὀδυσσῆος θείοιο,
ὅς ποτ' ἀεθλεύων γλαυκώπιδι ἦνδανε θυμῷ·
κρύψε δέμας πέπλοισι καὶ ἦπαφε πάντας ἰδόντας,
οὐδὲ Διὸς κούρην λάθην ἄμβροτον, ἀλλ' ἐγέλασεν.
ἀγχοῦ δ' ἰστάμενος προσέφη Μέντωρ θεοειδής· (5)
“Τηλέμαχ', ἠῶθεν γλαυκώπιδός ἐστιν ἑορτή·
ἀλλ' ἴθι, μηδέ σ' ὑπερφίαλοι μνηστήρες ἴδωσι·
ἀμφὶ δέ τοι χροὶ βάλλεο εἵματα θηλυτεράων,
κρηδέμενυ δ' ἄρα κρᾶτα κάλυψον, μὴ τις ἴδηται.”

- ὥς ἔφατ', οὐδ' ἀπίθησεν Ὀδυσσῆος φίλος υἱός· (10)
 αὐτὸς δ' ἐς θάλαμον κατεβήσεται κηώντα·
 πέπλους δ' ἐκ χηλοῖο λάβεν, τοὺς Ἀντικλέεια
 αὐτὴ χερσὶ κάμειν πάρος, ἀγλαὰ ἔργα γυναικῶν·
 ἀμφὶ δ' ἐὼ χροῖ βάλλετο εἵματα θηλυτεράων,
 βῆ δ' ἵμεν ἐς χορὸν αἴψα, γυναικὶ δὲ εἴσατο πάντη. (15)
 ἦμος δ' ἠριγένεια φάνη ροδοδάκτυλος Ἥως,
 ἔνθα δὲ μηρὶ ἔκταν, ἐπεσσεύοντο δὲ λαοί·
 κοῦροί τ' ἀγρόμενοι καὶ παρθένοι ἀλφεισίβοιαι,
 δώδεκα μὲν κοῦροι, δυοκαίδεκα δ' ἦσαν ἀγαναί,
 ὀρχεῦντ'· ἐν δ' ἄρα τῇσιν Ὀδυσσῆος φίλος υἱὸς (20)
 παρθενικῇ ἰκέλη, λάθε δὲ σφεας εἰσορόωντας.
 πρόσθε δὲ νώνυμνος περικαλλῆς ἤρχετο μολπῆς·
 ἦ δὲ δικασπόλος ἦστο μέση σιγῇ τε καὶ αἰδοί,
 κρηδέμνω κεκαλυμμένη ἀτρέμας· οὐδέ τι θυμῷ
 φαῖνε νόον· τὴν δ' εἰσορόων βροτὸς οὐδέ τις ἔγνω. (25)
 ἦν γὰρ Ἀθηναίη κούρη Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,
 ἀθανάτη περ εὐόσα, δέμας δ' ἦϊκτο γυναικί.
 πρῶτα μὲν ἦκα κίουσα, Διὸς δ' ὡς ὄμβρω ἔχαιρε,
 τερπομένη ἰκέλη· δολόεν δὲ οἱ ἔπλετο ἔργον.
 αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' ἀπὸ κρήδεμνον βάλε, ῥῦψε δὲ πέπλον, (30)
 ἐκ δ' ἄρα πέπλων βῆ δέμας ἀθανάτοισιν ὁμοίως.
 στρωφᾷτ' ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα, θοοῖς δ' ἀνεπάλλετο ποσσίν·
 ὥς δ' ὅτε χεῖμα φυγοῦσα δι' αἰθέρος ὤρτο χελιδὼν
 ὥρῃ ἐν εἰαρινῇ· ὥς αἰόλα γούνατ' ἐνώμα,
 ῥεῖα μάλ', οὐδέ τί μιν κάματος λάβεν οὐδέ τις ἰδρώς· (35)
 Κρῆς γάρ μιν κρύβδην ἐδίδαξε χοροῖτυπῆσι.
 κάλλει καὶ χάρισι στίλβων ἐνὶ πᾶσι φαάνθη.
 θάμβος δ' ἔσχευ ἀπαντας, ὅσοι χορὸν ἀμφὶς ὀρώντο·
 αὐτὰρ ὁ κυδιόων θρόνον ἤλυθεν· ἐν δ' ἄρα θυμῷ
 γήθησεν γλαυκῶπις, ἐπεὶ μάθε κοῦρον ἑόντα, (40)
 ἐκ δ' ἐγέλασσε, χαμαὶ δὲ πέσεν κρήδεμνα φαεινά,

ἀθανάτη περ εὐῶσα μετὰ σφίσι πᾶσι φαάνθη.
 χειρί τέ μιν κατέρεξεν ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἔκ τ' ὀνόμαζε·
 “σχέτλιε, ποικιλομήτα, δόλων ἄτ', οὐδέ με λήθες·
 ἦ δὴ τοι σοῦ πατρός ἐνέστακται μένος ἡΰ.” (45)
 ὥς φάτο· Ζεὺς δὲ πατὴρ μεγάλ' ἔκτυπε σήματα φαίνων
 οὐρανόθεν, νεφέων ἀπάνευθε· χέεν δ' ἄρ' ἔραζε
 ὄμβρον θεσπέσιον· ψιάδες δὲ πυρὸς κατέχυντο,
 πῦρ ἄσβεστον· καίε δ' ἄρ' οὔτινα λαμπόμενόν περ.
 αὐτὰρ ὃ γ' ἐν ψιάδεσσι κυβίσταεν αἰθομένησιν, (50)
 ὕπτιος ἐν Διὸς ὄμβρῳ ἐκέϊτ' ἀτρέμας, μέγα θαῦμα·
 αἴγλη δ' οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἀπὸ χθονὸς ἴξε φαεινή.
 ἔνθ' ἄρα παρθένος ἦεν ἐνὶ σφίσι καλλιπάρης,
 τῇ γὰρ ὁμοιωθεῖσα πάρος λάθε πάντας Ἀθήνη·
 Τηλεμάχῳ δ' ἄρα κούρην ἐγγυάλιξεν ἄνασσα, (55)
 καί μιν φωνήσας' ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·
 “παρθένος εἰμὶ καὶ ἔσσομαι ἡματα πάντα, φέριστε·
 ἦδε δέ τοι πινυτὴ θαλερὴ κεκλήσεται ἄκοιτις.”
 ὥς ἄρα φωνήσας' ἀπέβη γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη.
 παννύχιοι δαίνυντο γάμον παῦροί περ ἐόντες, (60)
 ἦκα δ' ἄρα σφ' ὑμέναιον αἶδον, μή τις ἀκούσῃ.
 οὐδέ τις οὔνομ' ἄκουσε· γάμος δέ οἱ ἔμπεδος ἦεν.
 ἦ δ' ὑποκυσαμένη τέκεν Εὐχορον, ὄρχαμον ἀνδρῶν·
 ἐκ τοῦ δ' Εὐχορίδαι, τοὶ ἐν ἀμφιάλῳ Ἰθάκῃ
 εἴματα θηλυτεράων ἐσσάμενοι περὶ βωμὸν (65)
 δινεῖντ' ἔτι νῦν· σοὶ γὰρ χορὸς ἦνδανε κούρου.
 πολλὰ δ' ἄρ' ἄλλ' ἐτέλεσσεν, ἀτὰρ κλέος οὔ ποτ'
 ὀλεῖται.
 καὶ σὺ μὲν οὕτω χαῖρε, Διὸς τέκος αἰγιόχοιο·
 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ σείο καὶ ἄλλης μνήσομ' ἀοιδῆς.

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12 Ἀντικλῆεια A: de forma vide adnotationem — 15 αἶψα scripsi: νύκτα A, quod metrum respuit; vide adnotationem — 16 ἡριγένεια correxi: ἡριγένια A — 22 νώνυμος scripsi (cf. M 70): νώνυμος A, metro invito — 41 ἐέλασσε scripsi: ἐέλασε A — 50 κυβίσταεν A: de forma vide adnotationem — 66 δινεῖντ' A: fort. recte, cf. Σ 594.

Loci similes. 1 cf. hymn. Hom. V 1, Od. α 1 — 2 cf. Il. A 24 — 11 cf. Il. Z 288, Od. ο 99 — 13 cf. Od. ο 105, Il. Z 289 — 16 = Od. β 1, etc. — 18 cf. Il. Σ 593 — 20 cf. Il. Σ 594 — 27 cf. Od. ν 288 — 31 cf. Od. γ 468 — 34 cf. Il. B 471 — 37 = Od. ζ 237 — 43 = Il. A 361 — 44 = Od. ν 293 — 45 cf. Od. β 271 — 46 cf. Od. φ 413 — 48 cf. Il. Π 459 — 58 cf. hymn. Hom. II 79, Il. Γ 138 — 63 cf. Od. λ 254 — 64 cf. Od. α 386 — 68–69 = hymn. Hom. XXVIII 17–18.

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THE HYMN

(translated line for line)

Tell me, O Muse, of the boy, the son of godlike Odysseus,
 who pleased the grey-eyed goddess once, competing:
 he hid his body in robes, beguiling all men's eyes,
 nor yet escaped the deathless child of Zeus — she laughed.
 Now godlike Mentor, standing near, addressed him: (5)
 "Telemachus, at dawn the grey-eyed goddess holds her feast.
 Go thou; but let the overweening Wooers not see thee go.
 Cast round about thy body the garments of the women,
 and veil thy head, that none may catch thee out."
 He spoke; nor did the dear son of Odysseus disobey, (10)
 but went down himself into the fragrant chamber
 and took from out the chest the robes Anticleia
 wrought with her hands of old — bright work of women —
 and cast about his body the garments of the women,
 and went straightway to the dancing-floor, in all things seeming
 woman. (15)
 And when the early-born appeared, rose-fingered Dawn,
 then thigh-bones burned upon the altar, and the folk came
 streaming,
 and youths assembling there, and maidens winning oxen,
 twelve were the youths, and twelve the noble girls,
 were dancing; and among the maidens' line Odysseus' dear son, (20)
 like to a maiden, escaped the eyes of all who watched.
 Before them, nameless, one surpassing fair led off the song;
 then sat she in the midst as judge, in silence and in reverence,
 mantled beneath her veil, unmoving; nor did her heart
 show forth its mind; and no man looking on her knew her. (25)
 For she was Athena's self, the child of aegis-bearing Zeus,
 immortal though she was, in body likened to a woman.
 First stepping softly forth, one joyed as at the rain of Zeus,
 in seeming all delight; but guileful was the work in hand.
 Then on a sudden cast the veil away, and flung the robe, (30)
 and out of the robes he stepped, his body like the immortals'.
 He turned him here and there, leapt up on flashing feet;
 and as a swallow, fleeing winter, darts through the bright air
 in the season of the spring: so nimbly plied he his knees,
 lightly, with utter ease; no weariness took him, and no sweat — (35)
 a Cretan, in secret, taught him the beating of the dance —

and shining out in beauty and in grace he blazed among them all.
 And wonder seized on all who gazed about the dancing-floor;
 but he, exulting, came before the throne. And in her heart
 the grey-eyed one was glad, knowing him for the boy, (40)
 and out she laughed; to earth there fell her shining veils;
 immortal as she was, she stood revealed among them all.
 She stroked him with her hand, and spoke a word, and named him:
 "Wretch! subtle-scheming! glutton of guiles! thou hast not escaped
me. Truly thy father's brave spirit is instilled in thee." (45)
 She spoke; and Zeus the father thundered greatly, showing signs
 from heaven, though no cloud was near; and poured to earth
 a marvellous rain; and there came pouring down drops of fire,
 fire unquenchable — yet, blazing, it burned no man.
 But the boy went tumbling on among the burning drops, (50)
 and on his back in the rain of Zeus he lay, unmoving — a great
 wonder —
 and the bright glare went up from earth to the broad heaven.
 Now there was there among them a maiden, lovely-cheeked,
 in whose likeness Athena had before deceived them all;
 and to Telemachus the queen gave over the girl in hand, (55)
 and speaking winged words the goddess thus addressed him:
 "A maiden am I, and shall be, all my days, most noble youth;
 but she, discreet and in her bloom, shall be called thy wife."
 So speaking, grey-eyed Athena went her way.
 All night they feasted out the wedding, though they were few, (60)
 and softly sang for the two the wedding-song, lest any hear.
 Nor did any hear her name; yet was her marriage sure.
 And she conceived, and bore Euechorus, marshal of men;
 and from him come the Euechoridae, who in sea-girt Ithaca,
 clothed in garments of the women, round the altar (65)
 wheel to this day; for the boy's dance found favour in thy sight.
 And many another thing he did; but this fame shall never perish.
 And so farewell to thee, O child of aegis-bearing Zeus;
 and I shall remember thee, and yet another song.

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Note to ll. 28–31. Here the reader must be told what the Greek does, for no English can do it. From the twenty-eighth line the poet describes the dancer only by endings — *going softly, delighting*, and both in the feminine —

and by one small pronoun which in Greek has no gender at all. He asserts nothing; his adjectives merely agree, as adjectives must, with what the whole festival sees. We take the dancer for the veiled goddess because we have just been told of her, and the poet lets us. Then at the thirty-first line one adjective puts on the masculine, and we discover we have been deceived precisely as the crowd was deceived — by a dress, of which the grammar was part. Homer will change his subject unannounced, as every schoolboy who has cursed him knows; but I do not think Homer ever made the agreement of a participle into a disguise. That refinement belongs to a younger and more bookish age, and I shall make use of it below when I come to the question of date. In my English I have written *one* where the Greek writes nothing, and I count it the most faithful unfaithfulness in these pages.

Note to l. 62. “Nor did any hear her name.” I am aware that a critic will say: how convenient for the poet, whose heroine’s name is wanting in every tradition. I reply that the convenience may as well be the tradition’s as the poet’s; there are rites in Greece whose central thing is precisely what is not said. But I defer that argument to its place below.

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§ 1. The witness.

The provenance first, since it is the weakest part of my case and I would sooner state it than have it stated for me. A paper copybook; a hurried hand; a pencilled word about a schoolmaster at Stavros; an owner who can no longer be questioned. That is the whole chain, and it reaches back no further than the eighteen-eighties. Everything before that is inference, and I shall be candid about what the inference rests on.

It rests on the corruptions. A forger supplies a fair copy; a tradition supplies a damaged one. My copybook cannot spell ἡριγένεια, has lost a nu from νώνυμος and a sigma from ἐγέλασσε, and at the fifteenth line offers νύκτα where the metre demands a word of quite another shape.¹ These are not the errors of composition; they are the errors of transcription, and of transcription at more than one remove, for the itacism and the broken metre are faults of different ages of the ear. Somewhere behind the schoolmaster of Stavros there was at least one other copy, and behind that copy, someone who could not have written the poem and yet possessed it. That is not a pedigree; but it is the beginning of one.

¹I have printed αἰψα, which restores the verse at the least cost; but I confess the corruption puzzles me. νύκτα is not a word a sleepy copyist supplies out of nothing. It may be a gloss that has swallowed its text — some marginal note that the going was by night, which the sense indeed requires and the poet, with epic economy, declined to say. If so, the glossator understood the poem; it is the copyist who did not.

§ 2. The age of the poem.

It remains to ask the poem's age. One consideration I reserve for the end of this essay, where it may do the least harm; the rest can be taken as it comes. That it wished to travel with the Hymns, its last couplet declares; whether it was born among them is another matter. The reader who has come to the Hymns from Homer knows the feeling of the true archaic narrative: a certain looseness of weave; a story that bulges where the teller's interest bulged. This poem has no looseness anywhere. Its aetiology explains exactly and only what its story has furnished; its every repetition is answered; its climaxes arrive on schedule. That is not the fault of the poem — it is the perfection of it — but perfection of that kind has a date, and the date is not the seventh century.

The particulars point the same way. A hymn of the old collection announces its god; this one asks the Muse for a mortal boy, and the god must wait five-and-twenty lines to be named. The goddess declares her own virginity in her own mouth, *a maiden am I and shall be all my days* — a creed, where the old poets were content with an epithet. And the whole scene stands in a sly relation to Callimachus that I cannot believe accidental: in the *Bath of Pallas* the mortal who sees Athena unveiled is blinded for it; here the mortal before whom her veils fall to earth is caressed, praised, and married on the spot. A poet who inverts Callimachus has read Callimachus.

But the surest sign is the one I was forced to confess in my note upon the twenty-eighth line. This poet has made the agreement of his participles into a disguise:

his grammar wears the dress as long as the boy wears it. I know of nothing like it in the old poetry. Homer will change a subject silently and let the verb carry the burden — every schoolboy has cursed him for it — but that is negligence, and this is design; and design of a peculiarly *written* kind, for it lives in terminations that a listening ear might let slip past, and only a reading eye reliably enjoys. The device belongs to a younger and more bookish age. I said I should make use of that observation, and I have now done so.

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§ 3. The younger poet.

If younger, how much younger? Here the poem's language, so strangely pure, at last gives evidence — not by what it coins, for it coins nothing but two proper names, but by three small habits of use that Homer does not share.

The dancer at the thirty-second line ἀνεπάλλετο, in the imperfect. Homer knows the leap only as a thing complete — ἀνέπαλτο, thrice, and always the aorist. The continuous tense of that verb I can find nowhere in the old poetry; but the readers of Ludwich's Nonnus will know it there.² The judge at the twenty-third line is a δίκασπóλος who is a woman, seated in the midst of a contest of dancing; in Homer the word is a king's, and belongs to the giving of dooms — but Nonnus, again, will seat a god

²Nonnus is a sea I do not pretend to have sounded; I have fished it with Ludwich's indices, which is a different thing, and I ask the reader to weigh my parallels accordingly.

as δικασπόλος over a contest and think nothing of it. And thrice our poet says εἵματα θηλυτεράων, “the garments of the softer sex,” letting the comparative stand alone as a noun; Homer says θηλύτεραι only where γυναῖκες stands by to prop it. These are three trifles, and I would build nothing on any one of them; but they lean together, and they lean toward the fifth century or the sixth.

With that dating the poem’s method comes suddenly into focus, for it stands between two practices of that late world and borrows from both. On the one side Quintus of Smyrna, who tells new tales in old language with a free hand; on the other the cento of the pious empress, which tells its tale in nothing but Homer’s own verses, handled like the stones of a demolished temple. Our poet is nearer the cento than any reader will at first believe. Set the margins of my text before you: whole lines of the Iliad and Odyssey stand in this hymn unaltered, and the ending is the ending of the twenty-eighth hymn, the collection’s own farewell to Athena, worn like a mother’s ring.

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And here I must defend him from the word that is waiting. These takings are neither thefts nor patches but relics, and he handles them devoutly. When Athena strokes the boy’s cheek, the verse is the verse in which Thetis strokes Achilles — a goddess’s hand on a mortal boy who is about to astonish the world; the gesture carries its old tenderness into its new place, and was chosen to carry it. When she calls him *schemer*, *glutton of guiles*, the line is her own line to Odysseus in the thirteenth

Odyssey, given now to the son as one gives an heirloom. And when she tells him his father's spirit is in him, the poet has taken the verse she speaks — as Mentor, let it be noted, the very mask he wears at this poem's fifth line — in the second Odyssey, and has changed a single particle: there she says *if indeed thy father's spirit is instilled in thee*; here, *truly it is*. One small word, and a condition has become a verdict; the tradition's open question about this boy is closed in the tradition's own language. Whoever did that had the line by heart and knew to a hair what he was doing with it. This is not a poet who failed of originality but one who declined it, quoting his scripture as the devout in every age have quoted theirs.

For the rest, his Greek is Homer's to a degree that I confess I cannot parallel. There is scarcely a word in these sixty-nine verses that the old poetry does not know; he does not coin, he inherits; he is thrifty as Homer himself is thrifty, and husbands his phrases as Homer husbands them, using a thing twice rather than making two things. In an archaic poet that would be nature. In a late one it is abstinence — the strictest I know — and abstinence, as the Fathers teach, is a discipline of devotion.

Even his archaism is of this inherited kind, and I offer the observation to whoever may need it hereafter. The poem's hiatus is everywhere honest: where two vowels gape, the old lost consonant excuses them, as though the poet had read his Bentley sixteen centuries before Bentley. But look where the honesty lives. It lives, in nearly every case, inside phrases he had whole from Homer —

the gaps came to him already excused, inside the borrowed wording. He observed nothing; he transcribed observance. A grammarian's knowledge was not needed, only a lover's memory; and so what looks at first like the deepest learning in the poem is in truth the plainest proof of how it was made.

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§ 4. The remaining account.

There remains the account nobody prints and everybody thinks of: that the poem is modern, and was born in the copybook rather than preserved there. I will not pretend the thought has not kept me company; everything I have praised is what a fabrication would need, and the paper swears to nothing before the eighteen-eighties. But the corruptions are a scribe's, not a contriver's; and, more simply, I cannot find the motive. Forgery is a performance, and a performance requires an audience; this poem asked for nothing — no sale, no sensation, no name; a village copybook and silence. Of scholars now living with Greek enough to have made it I can perhaps name three, and I am tolerably sure that each of the three would sooner have signed it. So I let the account go — not refuted, for such things never are, but dismissed for want of anyone to profit by it; and I ask the reader to let it go likewise until my final page, for the poem deserves to be understood before it is suspected.

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§ 5. Notes on particular passages.

1. Μοῦσά μοι ἔννεπε κοῦρον. The frame is the hymnist's (Μοῦσά μοι ἔννεπε ἔργα, of Aphrodite), but no Greek ear could miss the other opening behind it, with κοῦρον seated where πολύτροπον's owner stood. The poet announces his subject and his impertinence in the same four words: the son in the father's place. The whole poem is in that substitution.

5. Μέντωρ θεοειδής. The epithet is stock; the wit is not. Every reader of the Odyssey knows who Mentor is when the need is great, and our poet counts on it — his fifth line and his twenty-sixth are the same person. Read so, the plot closes like a ring: the goddess proposes the disguise, presides over it veiled, judges it, is conquered by it, and laughs. She is the author of her own surprise; her laughter at the fourth line — before the story has begun — is the laughter of one who set the trap. I do not think the poet has left this to inference by accident. It is the *economy* of the joke that delights him: one mask lends the boy a second, and both are hers.

12. Ἀντικλέεια. The form is not in Homer, who has Ἀντίκλεια (λ 85), and I expect it to be doubted; let the doubter first scan the line. In Homer's seat the name stands at verse-end, where the tribrach's middle is saved by lengthening before -κλ-; in our seat no such rescue is possible, and Ἀντίκλεια simply will not go into the verse. The poet has done what the tradition did for the boy's mother — Πηνελόπεια beside Πηνελόπη — and opened the name with the epic ει. The coinage is not a liberty but

a necessity, and of the most reassuring kind: a forger transcribing the lexicon writes the impossible form; only a composer with the verse in his mouth discovers that he cannot.

That it is *her* robes the boy takes — his grandmother's, wrought with her own hands and laid up in the chest — is the sort of touch that argues a poet, not a compiler. The house of Odysseus keeps its women's weaving as it keeps its bow; and the young man goes to his adventure dressed in the work of the dead. There is a household piety in it that I find very fine.

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18–19. δώδεκα μὲν κοῦροι. Twelve and twelve, as on the dancing-floor of the Shield, whence also the *cattle-winning maidens*; and the student of ritual will think of the twice-seven of the Theseus ships, tribute and chorus at once. The equal file of youths and girls is the oldest furniture of Greek initiation; the number is the rite's, not the tale's.

21–25. The chiasmus should be observed: the boy *escaped the eyes of those looking on* (εἰσορόωντας), and of the judge *no man looking on* (εἰσορόων) *knew her*. The two disguises are cut from one cloth and sewn with one verb. So too the veil: the κρήδεμνον commanded at 9 is worn by the goddess at 24, cast off by the boy at 30, and falls from her at 41 — one garment, as it were, passed among the players until the last hand drops it. Our poet plots with properties, like a dramatist.

22. νώνυμος περικαλλής. The leader of the song has no name, and the poem will insist upon the namelessness

again at 62. See my note there, and § 6 below; the insistence is the poet's own.

33. *χελιδών.* The swallow has flown out of the Odyssey, and twice: the bowstring sings *like a swallow* under the beggar's hand at φ 411, and at χ 240 Athena herself, her greeting done, flits to the rafter *like a swallow* to watch the slaughter. Our simile remembers both, and means both: the son's contest answers the father's, and the dancer moves as the watching goddess moves. I know no other simile in the poem; the poet spent his one comparison where it would carry two freights.

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36. *Κρής γάρ μιν κρύβδην ἐδίδαξε.* The dancing-master is Cretan because dance is Cretan: Meriones the Cretan is *ὀρχηστής* even to his enemies (Π 617), and the Shield's floor itself is *like that which Daedalus wrought in broad Knossos for Ariadne*. But the word *κρύβδην* earns its place. The tradition nowhere taught us that this boy could dance; the poet must smuggle the skill in as the boy smuggles himself, and a secret Cretan master is his instrument. There may be more here than machinery: if a rite stands behind the poem (§ 6), a hereditary instructor, himself an outlander, is the sort of officer rites keep and stories forget.

39. *θρόνον ἤλυθεν.* The bare accusative of the goal is bolder than Homer's habit, but the old poetry keeps instances enough, and the boldness is of a piece with the rest of him. I keep the text.

46–52. The signs. A reader with the Gospels in his ear will start at *fire unquenchable* that *burned no man*, and I will not pretend I did not start myself. But the flame that plays about the chosen and does not consume is good Greek marvel: it streams from Achilles' head at Σ 206, Athena kindling it; it sits upon the brows of Diomedes at E 4; the god's fire leaps harmless about the thymele in the *Bacchae*. What is new is only the *rain* of it — fire falling in drops — and there our poet has gone to school to a terrible master, for at Π 459 Zeus rains *drops of blood* for Sarpedon his son. Blood-drops for the doomed boy; fire-drops for the blessed one. If the echo is deliberate, and I believe it is, it is the profoundest thing in the poem: the same sky, weeping the opposite weather. — For the boy motionless on his back in the wet, *a great wonder*: the posture is the fallen warrior's, ὕπτιος, and the poet knows it; he lays his dancer down in the attitude of the dead and bids him blaze there alive. The old epiphanies augment their subject — make him taller, brighter, more; this one *stills* him. I confess the taste of it seems to me younger than anything else in the hymn, and I have let it weigh in my dating.

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50. κυβίσταεν. The verb is the Shield's, where the two κυβιστητήρῃε whirl among the dancers; the form is nobody's, and I must defend it. It is an imperfect of the uncontracted class, built as δέδαεν and its kin are built, and metrically necessary in its seat. Homer would have contracted; our poet declines, manufacturing the archaism his ear expected. It is the one place I should say

his learning shows its seams — the pedant's error, made in the direction of devotion — and for that very reason I would not emend it. A scribe corrupts toward the commonplace; only the author errs toward the archaic. The form is the poet's autograph.

57–58. The theology deserves a moment's respect. The goddess has worn a living girl's likeness; discovered, she does not vanish nor punish, but disposes: herself to her maidenhood, *all my days*, and the girl — the very shape she borrowed — to the boy. Greece knew the divine likeness given away in marriage: Helen's phantom wed and warred over; the cloud that lay with Ixion in Hera's form. But those were frauds upon the bridegroom, and this is a gift. The boy beholds the goddess and receives, instead of blindness, her mortal double for a wife. Callimachus is corrected as by one who thought him ungenerous.

61–62. The wedding sung *softly*, *lest any hear*, stands the great scene of ψ 130 on its head — there Odysseus orders the *loud* false wedding, music to mask a massacre; here a true wedding is muffled to mask itself. The son's feast is the father's stratagem inverted, joy hiding where slaughter hid. And *no one heard her name*: the phrase belongs to a rite rather than to a romance. Greece kept nameless powers and unspoken words at the center of her most serious worship, and a bride whose name the song withholds belongs to that company. See § 6.

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63–66. Εὐχορος, Εὐχορίδαι. The eponym is transparent, as eponyms of guilds are — Εὐμολπος sang well before the Eumolpidae sang at Eleusis. That the name explains

the rite is no argument against the rite; it is how Greece wrote her institutional memory. Of the dance itself — men in women's garments circling an altar of Athena — the parallels are abundant and I need not go beyond the familiar: the two youths in women's dress who led the Oschophoria at Athens; the Argive Hybristika, when the sexes exchanged their clothes; the Ekdysia of Phaistos, the "Feast of Stripping-Off," with its tale of the girl made boy at the marriage-hour. Set beside these, our hymn reads less like an invention than like the words such a rite would keep for itself: the boy enters the chorus a maiden and steps out of the garments a bridegroom. Whether Ithaca ever danced it, I cannot show; I can show only that if she did, this is the story she would tell about it.

67. *Many another thing he did; but this fame shall never perish.* The hymnist's praeteritio, common form; but mark where the wager falls. The tradition kept almost nothing else of Telemachus, and the poet knows it — of all the many things, it is the dance he stakes eternity on. There are worse immortalities.

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§ 6. The occasion behind the legend.

Legends of this shape are commonly read, and rightly, as the shadow of a rite: the story is what the dance came to say about itself. So far I have read ours. But I would go one step further back, and I ask the reader's patience for it, because the step is not licensed by any method I can cite. Rites are begun. Somewhere behind the custom there is a first time, an evening when the thing was not yet a custom but an event; and it seems to me that this poem, unusually, remembers its evening. The details I mean are the ones that serve no doctrine — the secret dancing-master, the judge who led the singing first, the whispered wedding — details a rite does not need and a poet does not invent, which sit in the narrative like furniture from an older house.

Let me say plainly what I think the furniture implies, and then let the reader discount it as romance if he must.

There was a contest of dancing at a festival of Athena, and the two performers who mattered were already, before either moved, the two most gazed-upon persons of their little world — paired by the public gossip long before they were paired in fact, as such persons always are. The woman danced first. She was the finer dancer, and knew it, and I suspect she danced that night in some deliberate plainness, even — if the Hybristika's two-way exchange may guide us — in a young man's gear, as the boys would dance in the women's; the rite's symmetry argues it, and it would explain why the tradition, which forgets her name, remembers her *authority*: having shown

what the standard was, she sat down veiled in the midst to judge by it.

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The essence of the evening was that nobody had known the boy could dance. He had been at pains, I think, that nobody should — the poem's own word is *κρύβδην*, and a skill so carefully hidden is a skill being saved for something. He entered among the girls, indistinguishable; and when his turn came he began in the old manner, softly, charmingly, a shade quaintly — the very image of the decorous tradition he was one minute from overthrowing. Then the garments went one way and the boy another; and what followed was not a maiden's measure but a virtuosity with no name yet in that place, spent — this is the detail I trust most — not upon the crowd but upon one spectator. He carried the dance to the foot of her seat. The performance had one audience; the rest were witnesses. And the composure which it was the whole design of the evening to break, broke. The tradition's one unimpeachable fact about her is that she laughed; the veil that falls in the poem falls, I take it, for the sensation of that laughter — and I take leave to believe she came off her seat entirely.

Of the marvels I will say only this. The rain may well be weather: an autumn festival, a burst from a clear-seeming sky at the exact wrong moment, a dancer who did not stop — Greece has always known how to promote an accident into an omen, and a boy who finishes his dance drenched, flat on his back and laughing at heaven, has done the sky's work for it. The fire I have already

given to the poet and to Sarpedon. But I would not swear that the evening had no fire in it; festivals keep torches, and triumph is a great waster of them.

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The hymn weds them the same night. I do not believe it; tradition abhors an interval, and closes every distance between a cause and its effect. What I believe is what the poem's own muffled music implies: that the marriage, when it came, was conducted as far from the crowd as the dance had been carried into it — a handful of people, a song kept low, no name given out. The public, which had married them years before, was merely kept waiting for the fact; and the tradition, which never waits, moved the fact to the only night it cared about.

Such an evening would be told before it was ever sung. It would be told by everyone who stood there and then by everyone who wished they had; the telling would wear away every circumstance except the ones that mattered — the disguise, the laughter, the rain — until what remained was already very nearly a hymn, wanting only metre. A village would keep it as villages keep such things, in a dance done yearly and a story told over it. And at the last, centuries on, a bookish and devout man, whose Homer was a scripture and whose theatre was the pantomime — an art whose masters were expected to be both sexes in one evening, whose contests were judged from thrones, and whose partisans could empty a city's patience faster than a war — set the old local tale in the only Greek he loved. When he imagined a dancing-contest judged from a seat of honour, with an

adored performer and a house struck mad, he was not imagining the bronze age. He was imagining what he had seen; late poets always do; it is how we date them.

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One thing more, and I have done with reconstruction. Consider what this tradition kept of its two performers. Of him: the training, the trick, the triumph, the marriage, the fame — *this fame shall never perish*, and the poet was right. Of her: that she danced first, nameless; that she judged; that she laughed; that she was absorbed, first into a goddess, then into a wife whose name no one heard. The record kept her effect and lost her person — twice, once at each end of the poem. I do not say the tradition did this maliciously. I say it did this *ordinarily*; it is what the records of women are, a laughter and a namelessness with the credit standing elsewhere; and any woman who has spent her years among the records will recognize the handwriting.

§ 7. A last account, not examined.

I said above that I could name perhaps three men now living with Greek enough to have made this poem, and that each of the three would sooner have signed it. I have been asked — I have asked myself — whether there is not a fourth account which I declined to number: that the hymn was made by someone for whom signature was not among the possibilities; some scholar, let us say, to whom the age offers the reading of other men's proofs and the thanks of other men's prefaces; who, having written a poem about a performer nobody suspected —

about a triumph achieved in borrowed dress and pronounced sound work by the very authority it deceived — might have felt that to send it into the world unclaimed, and let the learned judge it as they judged the dancer, was not a fraud upon the tradition but an obedience to the poem.

This account I do not examine, because it cannot be examined; motives of that kind leave no corruptions in a copybook. I observe only that it is the single hypothesis under which every difficulty of this essay becomes a datum — the purity, the abstinence, the silence, the want of an audience — and that a hypothesis so convenient should always be distrusted, most of all by the person it would flatter.

The reader has my text, my parallels, and my doubts, which I have hidden from him no better than the poet hid his dancer. If he concludes that the hymn is younger than I have allowed, I shall not quarrel with him. I ask only whether the event it remembers is thereby less true.

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[*Tipped to the rear pastedown of the Widener copy, in a later hand:*]

Harvard College Library — Gift of the publisher, 1921. Classed under *Gr 1712.21*. Essays IV–V pp. 108–176 uncut until 1968 (noted at rebinding). Circulation record: charged twice, 1923, 1979.

[*The Classical Review*, June 1922, “*Books Received*,” one line:]

HARROWER (E. M.) *Studies in the Lesser Hymns*. Boston: Marshall Jones. — Five essays; the fourth prints, with translation and commentary, a hexameter hymn to Athena of doubtful provenance. Pp. xii + 180.