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Preface to Herodotus: The Prehistory of Prose in the Archaic Age

Fassberg, Teddy

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PREFACE TO HERODOTUS:

THE PREHISTORY OF PROSE IN THE ARCHAIC AGE

Teddy Jonathan Fassberg

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Abstract

Classical scholarship holds ancient Greek prose literature to have originated in the archaic period in the imposing shadow of Greek verse, primitive and derivative in form, and subservient in status. If this were so, the Greeks would have had little reason to begin writing prose. This dissertation is devoted to answering the question why they did, and argues that the traditional view of the rise of Greek prose is skewed by the western concept of prose. Archaic Greek society did not have a concept of "prose", and certainly didn't consider the prose it produced "prosaic".

The confused narrative of the rise of Greek prose results from a similarly confused understanding of the term "prose" in the western tradition, which is typically taken for granted. The introduction discusses the term and advocates taking a pragmatic approach to "prose", as a language used in situations of distance, concrete and abstract, rather than the traditional rhetorical understanding of it as *Kunstprosa*, language boasting rhetorical figures. In so doing it lays the groundwork for uncovering antecedent cultures of prose which render the composition and reception of archaic prose intelligible. Chapter 1 argues for the existence of vibrant traditions of oral prose which produced specimens of verbal art endowed with commanding authority. Chapter 2 studies the prose of the earliest Greek alphabetic writing, preserved in inscriptions, and finds it to furnish further evidence for the vitality of oral prose traditions in archaic Greece. Chapter 3 then proceeds to examine a particular kind of written prose which later came to be considered "literary", and makes the case that what was new in the sixth century BCE was not literary texts in prose, but the practice of attributing texts in prose – and verse – to authors. The language of these texts, in prose no less than in verse, was deeply traditional and highly authoritative. Finally, the epilogue points the way forward to a consideration of the question how the concept of prose later emerged, that is to say how ancient Greek prose came to be "prose".

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Acknowledgements

The Thursday after Thanksgiving, 2015, I took the shuttle to campus on my way to Latin literature survey, for a quiz on Pliny's letters. Some of the letters I had read, some – I admit – I hadn't. Those I hadn't I was quickly perusing, in case one came up on the quiz; among those which I had, I was particularly struck by 2.20, which consists of three anecdotes, the first of which – the commentary pointed out – Pliny narrated in 136 words, the latter two in 135. It seemed to me remarkable that Pliny would purposely strive for such an effect and, more importantly, that it was apparently meaningful to his audience. I mentioned this to Bryson Sewell, who interrupted my studying, and during our conversation it occurred to me that perhaps there was something to say about the concept of prose in antiquity. Naturally, one of the letters I hadn't gone over came up in the quiz; I managed to translate most of it, except for the word *nomenclator*, with which I was unfamiliar. I might have figured it out anyway, but could hardly imagine the concept. The word I would not forget, but the idea of ancient prose, having come to the conclusion that it was no good, slowly faded. It was only a year later, while boarding a plane home at the beginning of winter break, resigned to a dissertation about Polybius, that I thought of it again, but couldn't remember why I had dropped it. I spent some time that winter trying to recover the reason I had thought that it was not a good idea. I still have not found it.

I now assume the role of the *nomenclator*. I am very grateful to the Princeton Classics Department for giving me the opportunity to come here, which at no point over the past five years did I take for granted, and to its faculty, so many members of which have generously helped me in different ways during this time. Andrew Feldherr, Michael Flower, Barbara Graziosi, Johannes Haubold and also André Laks have been especially kind in taking an interest in my work. I am

also deeply grateful to the graduate administrators, Stephanie Lewandowski and Jill Arbeiter, whose warmth and attention has made so much, much easier. My dissertation is significantly better for the advice and insight of my fellow graduate students, Hanna Gołąb, Paul Touyz, Emily Hulme-Kozey, Brahm Kleinman, the aforementioned Bryson, Malina Buturović, Elizabeth Erikson, Sarah Johnson, Wintor Scott, Xiaoxi Zhang and Kyle Oskvig. I thank them for much else as well. It has been a pleasure to share work and some convictions with Tom Davies, and I want to acknowledge the kindness of Marco Santini, René de Nicolay and Luuk de Boer, who welcomed me into the European contingent as their continent a few decades ago, following their expulsion from Asian competition, accepted Israeli sports teams. (Luuk read every word here). For having the opportunity to come to Princeton, and for taking an interest in my work here, I am particularly indebted to my teachers at Hebrew University, Hannah Cotton, Deborah Gera, Yoav Rinon, Donna Shalev, Amiel Vardi and Uri Yiftach. I also profited from discussion with Hanan Cidor, Colin Dayan, Aminadav Dykman, Bernard Wasserstein, David Wasserstein, Ayelet Wenger, Avner Wishnitzer, Assaf Yacobovitz and Philip Zhakevich. For conversations not about prose, on this side of the Atlantic, I thank Lev Gaft and Hila Fishman, Noam Gidron, Joe Glynias, Laura Bustamente and Ed Posnett and Gabriella Ferrari.

My advisers each played an outsized role during my first few years in the program in shaping my interests and my understanding of what constitutes valuable scholarship, and what I learned from them stayed with me even when they spent time away from Princeton the past few years. Their support throughout has been very meaningful, and I am deeply thankful for the work they have put into my dissertation. Christian Wildberg urged me early on to be bold (I hope he does not regret it). Joshua Katz agreed to come on board without hesitation when the project took, as it were, a linguistic turn; I would not want to write on a topic on which he would not advise.

Whether recommending something to read or gently correcting something I wrote, Nino Luraghi with very few words imparted invaluable advice which radically altered the course of the project. I am above all grateful to Andrew Ford for giving me credit three years ago which I perhaps had not yet earned, and patiently waiting until my raw initial ideas developed. His scholarship has been a model, and his reading of my work especially generous and meticulous. It was also always fun.

My father indefatigably answered my questions on Semitic material, and with my mother I discussed the legal material; these were the very least of their countless contributions to my completion of the dissertation. For their encouragement and support I am grateful to my sister Sarah and Tom, but especially to Ya'ala and Carmi. I do not imagine Tel Aviv without Aviv, and I should give her credit for what I usually do not, patience which from a certain point of view is, if not epic, at least biblical. I am, finally, very grateful to my aunts and uncles and cousins, as well as Lenny Groopman and Yasmine Ergas, for making me feel more at home in the interim.

Before Princeton was my home for these six years it was my grandparents' for two years, one in the 70's and another in the 80's. My grandfather, Abraham Wasserstein, was a classicist, but passed away long before it occurred to me that I would want to be one. My grandmother, Maca Wasserstein, *née* Ecker, passed away the summer I began work on this dissertation. I dedicate it to their memory.

Abbreviations

AGL	Ceccarelli 2013, appendix 1.
Avezzù	G. Avezzù. *Alcidamante: orazioni e frammenti* (Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1982).
BAPD	Beazley Archive Pottery Database, published online at <www.beazley.ox.ac.uk>.
Buck	C.D. Buck, *The Greek Dialects* (Chicago: University Press, 1955).
CAG	H. Diels. *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*. 23 vol. (Berlin: Reimer, 1882-1909).
CEG	P.A. Hansen. *Carmina epigraphica Graeca*, i: *Saeculorum VIII-V a. Chr. n.* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1983).
Diehl	E. Diehl. *Anthologia lyrica Graeca.* 3rd ed. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1949-52).
Diels	H. Diels, *Poetarum philosophorum fragmenta* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1901).
DK	H. Diels, W Kranz. *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 3 vol. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1952).
DLE	*Diccionario de la lengua española*, *Real Academia Española*, published online at <https://dle.rae.es>.
Duden	*Duden, Deutsches Universalwörterbuch*, published online at <https://www.duden.de/woerterbuch>.
EG	M. Guarducci, *Epigrafia Greca*. 4 vol (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1967-78).
Ernout-Meillet	A. Ernout, A. Meillet. *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*. 4th ed. (Paris: Klincksieck, 2001).
Even Shoshan	*Millon Even-Shoshan* (Israel: ha-Millon he-hadash, 2003).
FGrH	F. Jacoby. *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Leiden: Brill, 1923-58).
Fornara	C.W. Fornara, *Archaic Times to the End of the Peloponnesian War*. 2nd ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1983).
GGM	C. Müller. *Geographi Graeci minores*. 3 vol. (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1855-61).
Gibson	J.C.L. Gibson, *Textbooks of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*. 4 vol. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971-2009).
GP	M. Gagarin, P. Perlman. *The Laws of Ancient Crete c. 650-400 BCE* (Oxford: University Press, 2016).
GVI	W. Peek, *Griechische Vers-Inschriften* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag 1955).
Hilgard	A. Hilgard, *Grammatici Graeci*. 3 vol. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1889-91).
Houaiss	*Dicionario Houaiss da língua portuguesa* (Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva, 2009).
ICS	O. Masson. *Les inscriptions Chypriotes syllabiques*. 2nd ed. (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1983).
IEG	M.L. West. *Iambi et elegi Graeci*, 2nd ed. 2 vol. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989-92).
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae* (Berlin, 1873-).
Jan	K. von Jan. *Musici scriptores Graeci* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1895).

KAI	H. Donner, W. Röllig (eds.) *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*. 3 vol. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1962-64).
Koerner	R. Koerner. *Inschriftliche Gesetzestexte der frühen griechischen Polis* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1993).
KRS	G.S. Kirk, J. Raven, M. Schofield. *The Presocratic Philosophers*. 2nd ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1983).
Kuznetsov	Большой толковый словарь русского иазыка (Saint Petersburg: Norint, 1998).
Larousse	*Larousse, dictionnaire de français*, published online at <https://www.larousse.fr/>
LM	A. Laks, G.W. Most. *Early Greek Philosophy*. 9 vol. (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2016).
LR	D.F. Leão, P.J. Rhodes. *The Laws of Solon* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015).
LSAG	J.H. Jeffery. *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece*, rev. ed., suppl. by A. Johnston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).
LSJ	H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, H.S. Jones. *A Greek–English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-40).
Lupu	E. Lupu, *Greek Sacred Law* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).
Merriam-Webster	*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, published online at <https://www.merriam-webster.com>
Meth	G. Tzifopoulos et al., Μεθώνη Πιερίας I: Επιγραφές, χαράγματα και εμπορικά σύμβολα στη γεωμετρική και αρχαϊκή κεραμική από το "Υπόγειο" της Μεθώνης Πιερίας στη Μακεδονία (Thessaloniki: Center for the Greek Language, 2012).
Milet I 3	A. Rehm. *Die Inschriften*, in *Milet. Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen seit dem Jahre 1899*, vol. 3, *Das Delphinion in Milet* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1914).
ML	R. Meiggs, D. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century BC*. 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).
MW	R. Merkelbach, M. L. West. *Fragmenta Hesiodea* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).
OCD	*Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 5th ed. (Oxford: University Press, 2016-).
OED^2	*Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).
OED^3	*Oxford English Dictionary*. 3rd ed., published online at <https://www.oed.com>
Ozhegov	словарь русского языка (Moscow: Soviet Encyclopedia, 1970).
Page	D.L. Page. *Greek Literary Papyri*. 2. vol. (London: Heinemann, 1942).
PCG	R. Kassel, C. Austin. *Poetae comici Graeci*. 8 vol. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1983-2001)
PMG	D.L. Page. *Poetae melici Graeci* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).
RE	A. Pauly, G. Wissowa. *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1894-1919).
RO	P. Rhodes, R. Osborne. *Greek Historical Inscriptions, 404-323 BC* (Oxford: University Press, 2003).
OR	R. Osborne, P. Rhodes. *Greek Historical Inscriptions, 478-404 BC* (Oxford: University Press, 2017).

Robert	*Le Grand Robert de la langue française*, published online at <https://gr.bvdep.com/robert.asp>.
Rose	V. Rose, *Aristotelis qui ferebantur librorum fragmenta* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1886).
Schibli	H. Schibli. *Pherekydes of Syros* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).
SEG	*Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum* (Leiden, 1923-).
SH	H. Lloyd-Jones, P.J. Parsons. *Supplementum Hellenisticum* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1983).
Smyth	H.W. Smyth. *Greek Grammar*. Rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956).
Suda	A. Adler. *Suidae Lexicon* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928-38).
TrGF	B. Snell et al. *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta*. 5 vol. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1971-85).
Treccani	*Treccani: dizionario della lingua italiana*, published online at <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/>.
Van Dale	*Van Dale Groot woordenboek van de Nederlandse taal* (Utrecht and Antwerp: Van Dale Lexicographie, 1999).
VER	H. van Effenterre, F. Ruzé, *Nomima: recueil d'inscriptions politiques et juridiques de l'archaïsme grec* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1994-95).
Voigt	E.M. Voigt, *Sappho et Alcaeus* (Amsterdam: Polak and Van Gennep, 1971).
Wehrli	F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles*, 2nd ed., 10 vol. (Basel: Schwabe, 1967-78).

Introduction

Archaic Greek literature conventionally consists of three literary forms. The earliest representatives of epic poetry, Homer and Hesiod, are generally dated to the eighth century or shortly thereafter. Their poetry is also considered to be the most prestigious in Greek literature. Lyric poetry makes its appearance in the seventh century. In contrast with epic, in which the speaker narrates events from which he himself is removed, Archilochus' speaker, for instance, relates stories in which he is intensely involved. Lyric poetry of the seventh century was thus thought to signal the birth of the I, the individual, subjectivity. Towards the end of the archaic period, in the sixth century, there is prose. Preserved in fragments of technical, scientific, philosophic works from Ionia, which at the same time was also the birthplace of science and philosophy, prose – in contrast with mythologically rich poetry – is associated with the advent of rationality. Seen against the conveniently staggered periodization of these literary forms, the history of Greek literature unfolds as a process of gradual development, from epic to lyric to prose, also tracing the outline of a broader cultural shift from *mythos* to *logos*.

A century ago Milman Parry and Albert Lord showed that Homeric poetry should be seen not as the beginning of Greek poetry, but as the culmination of a long tradition of purely oral poetry. Some fifty years ago scholars began to show that though the earliest lyric poetry preserved may date from the seventh century, lyric itself was no less ancient than epic poetry, and perhaps more so. It was therefore not derivative in relation to epic, nor necessarily less prestigious. It similarly followed that the birth of the individual could no longer be dated to the seventh century. Recognizing lyric poetry as traditional in nature, the lyric "I" was revealed to be not an individual, but rather a generic character.

This dissertation seeks to begin to do for prose what has been done for lyric poetry, namely to show that its belated emergence is illusory and that it was not derivative in form, nor inherently subordinate in status, least of all a vehicle of some emergent consciousness. Like Greek verse, it was a sophisticated linguistic form of great social significance with deep oral roots.

"Herodotus", declared Denniston of the earliest author of a fully extant work of Greek prose, "is an unaccountable phenomenon in the history of literature".[1] That statement, made in 1937 to an Oxford audience, might as well have been uttered, so to speak, πρώην τε καὶ χθές, the day before yesterday, for little has changed in the understanding of the early history of Greek prose in classical scholarship. That history, still today, is thought to have only begun in earnest in the fifth century. "In archaic Greece what's *authoritative*, what *matters*, is performed and recorded *in verse*", begins one of two important 21st-century books devoted to the "invention" of Greek prose, whose starting point is Herodotus; the other regards its use by the latter and by Plato, even in the fourth century, as implicated in the "status taint" of slavery.[2] As the prestige of poetry is associated with its highly developed technique, so the lowly status of prose is understood as a function of form: according to Dover, prose "'attained its proper nature' in Plato and Demosthenes".[3]

The deeply entrenched modern narrative of the rise of Greek prose, which considers pre-fifth-century prose primitive, is in fact ancient. Already Aristotle characterized the language of the earliest philosophy as stuttering (*Met.* 993a15). But if we consider Aristotle's narrative concerning the rise of Greek philosophy – as well as rhetoric – tendentious, we must also be careful regarding his characterization of its language.

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[1] Denniston 1952, 5.
[2] Goldhill 2002, 1, italics original; Kurke 2010.
[3] Dover 1997, vi.

That language simply does not fit the narrative for the rise of Greek prose. If archaic prose were entirely lacking in style and status, why would Pherecydes and Anaximander stake their claim to wisdom, to knowledge regarding the history and structure of the *kosmos*, in prose? The content of their compositions did not require prose: Hesiod had already presented the former in verse, as Parmenides soon would the latter. Assumptions regarding the lucidity of prose as opposed to the ambiguity of verse are anachronistic. Heraclitus demonstrates that in the sixth century prose could be just as ambiguous as verse, and it is not even clear that verse was perceived in the archaic age as inherently unclear.

More difficult is the question how they could have ventured to compose in prose. The genres of archaic Greek verse primarily owed their identity to the institutionalized occasions at which they were performed, which bestowed authority upon their distinct linguistic forms. Unless we are to posit a culture of prose reading in the sixth century, the "invention" of prose would entail the invention of social occasions. But in a society which had no occasion for prose, how could the use of a medium which had neither distinct form nor authoritative function even be conceived?

If the phenomenon of Herodotus' prose – along with Pherecydes' and Anaximander's – is unaccountable, there is a problem with the standard account and the framework within which it is situated.[4] Something is missing. In order to account for the use of prose in authoritative discourse, we must postulate earlier forms of prose, or at the very least a culture which would allow for its composition and reception. The subsequent chapters are devoted to reconstructing these antecedent cultures of prose, an archaic prehistory of prose which will render its history in the classical period intelligible and answer the question why the Greeks began writing prose when, given the presuppositions concerning its nature, they had – one might say – little reason to do so.

[4] This account, pervasive in classical scholarship, is laid out and analyzed in detail in ch. 3.

But what other prose could there have been? I do not propose to uncover any hitherto unknown texts of archaic Greek prose, but rather to argue that evidence for such prose, residing in texts which are well known, has been overlooked and misinterpreted. If there must have been earlier Greek prose, or some earlier form of language affiliated with it, then the problem lies in our understanding of "prose". That understanding, prior to any search for neglected evidence of prose in the archaic period, must first be interrogated in order that we have a clearer idea of what it is that we are looking for. We will see that it is not by accident that the narrative of the rise of Greek prose is incoherent.

It is strikingly difficult to find a definition of prose in scholarship, not just classical scholarship but generally, even in works noting its neglect.[5] The implication is that standard dictionaries will suffice. *Merriam-Webster* defines "prose" as follows:

> 1a: the ordinary language people use in speaking or writing.
> b: a literary medium distinguished from poetry especially by its greater irregularity and variety of rhythm and its closer correspondence to the patterns of everyday speech.[6]

Prose, then, is a language which can be both "ordinary" and "literary". The problem is that the two terms are not only somewhat vague,[7] but also appear contradictory. Construed as equivalent to poetry, it seems that what "literary" means here is specifically *belles-lettres* literature, which does not typically employ "ordinary language"; when it does, it does so self-consciously and in order

[5] It is not difficult to find characterizations of prose in comparison with poetry, such as Coleridge 1851, 48: "prose = words in their best order; – poetry = the *best* words in their best order" (italics original). More seriously, Bentham is said to have distinguished the two on the basis of poetic lines being consistently truncated (see Frye 1957, 263 and Godzich and Kittay 1987, xix). Other examples: Pound 1954, 26; Frye 1963, 21; Sartre 1966, ch. 1; the idiosyncratic Polivanov 1974 (1930), 350-351; Fraser 1970, 1-2; Gasparov 1996, 97;. These characterizations could perhaps form the basis of a definition, but they don't; tellingly, in these comparisons prose is typically only a foil to poetry. A rare exception is Quiller-Couch 1923, 48: "prose is memorable speech set down without constraint of metre and in rhythms both lax and various".

[6] Merriam-Webster, s.v.

[7] Frye 1957, 13: "we have no real standards to distinguish a verbal structure that is literary from one that is not". See also Todorov 1990, 1-12; for the history of the term "literary", Williams 1983, 183-188.

to capitalize on the incongruous effect of "ordinary language" appearing where it notionally should not. "Literary" prose is thus understood as the domain of language which is marked and thus not ordinary.[8] This leaves "prose", according to *Merriam-Webster*, in the unfortunate position of being both ordinary language and non-ordinary language.

The contradiction in *Merriam-Webster*'s definition is not incidental. The *Oxford English Dictionary* used to define "prose" as "the *ordinary* form of written or spoken language… esp. as a species or division of *literature*" (italics added).[9] The dictionary's editors evidently felt a certain unease regarding this definition, because "literature" was stricken from the most recent version of the *OED*'s definition of "prose":

> Language in the form in which it is typically written (or spoken), usually characterized as having no deliberate metrical structure (in contrast with verse or poetry).[10]

While the contradiction has been removed, it remains unclear whether there is one form in which "language is typically written or spoken", or two.

This ambiguity fits well with the most fundamental intuition regarding the definition of "prose", manifest in the dictionaries surveyed above, namely its opposition to verse. Understanding "prose" to be not-verse leaves two possibilities for understanding what it is, covering either the entire spectrum of non-verse language; or a more circumscribed part of the linguistic spectrum, such as that designated "ordinary", or "literary". It is this tension that Molière famously manipulated for comic effect in *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*: "for more than forty years", exclaimed M. Jourdain, "I've been speaking prose without knowing anything about it!"[11]

---

[8] Hanson and Kiparsky 1997, 20: "literary language is marked by a conventional stylization which differentiates it from ordinary language. Such an opposition of literary to ordinary language is found in virtually all societies".
[9] *OED*[2].
[10] *OED*[3], s.v.
[11] *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, act 2, scene 4.

Molière's joke indicates that this tension is not peculiar to contemporary English. Indeed, a survey of the cognates of "prose" in other European languages shows that this confusion is endemic to the western tradition more broadly. While authoritative French dictionaries echo the ambiguity of the *OED*, equivalent Spanish and Portuguese dictionaries characterize "prose" as *natural*, even as *conversa informel*, but Italian and Dutch dictionaries explicitly associate prose with literature, and Russian dictionaries do so emphatically.[12] This phenomenon will not be unrelated to the muddled views concerning the early history of prose.

That there was prose as "ordinary speech" in archaic Greece, and earlier, is trivial. But "ordinary language" is not what scholars mean when they speak, for instance, of poetry preceding prose.[13] The language of Plato and Demosthenes was not ordinary, even – or especially – when the former represented ordinary speech, nor was that of Herodotus or, in the sixth century, Heraclitus. It is prose as "non-ordinary" language which interests us and which we must attempt to understand more precisely. Accordingly, in the rest of this section, "prose" should be taken to refer to its understanding as non-ordinary language.

The paradigmatic example of non-ordinary language, we have seen, is literary language, perhaps because it is typically thought of as elevated and distinct from non-literary language. But of course there is literature which seeks to approximate non-literary language. What does set the language of literature – and not just the language of literature – apart, even the language of literature which specifically aims to use ordinary language, is the way that language is used.

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[12] S.v. in, respectively, *Larousse*, *Robert*, *DLE*, *Houaiss*, *Treccani*, *Van Dale*, *Ozhegov* and *Kuznetsov*. The definition in the German Duden is equivocal, but the examples it provides suggest that in German *Prosa* should not be associated with casual speech. In Hebrew the word *proza*, which came in to the language in the beginning of the 19th century, presumably through Russian, specifically denotes *belles-lettres* literature in contrast with nonfiction, and could hardly be used in reference to casual speech (Even Shoshan, s.v.). For advice and help with these dictionaries, in addition to some already mentioned in the acknowledgements, I'm also grateful to Einat Gutman and Ekaterina Pukhovaia.

[13] E.g. Colvin 2014, 134: "poetry came first, of course…". And see n. 28 for further references to this widespread conceit.

The crucial distinction belongs to the field of pragmatics. In pragmatic terms, if ordinary language is the language produced in situations of personal contact, non-ordinary language is used for impersonal contact. The distinction between the two rests on a continuum, the two poles of which Wulf Oesterreicher has conceptualized, respectively, as languages of immediacy and distance.[14] It is easy to see that language used *in praesentia* will necessarily differ from language employed *in absentia*: the extra-linguistic resources for elucidating the referent of "this" *in praesentia,* for instance, are not available to one writing a letter, or speaking on the phone.[15] Pragmatic conditions of distance thus necessitate fashioning different linguistic means to facilitate communication. While learning to communicate *in praesentia* is a natural process, learning to communicate at a distance is not; it relies on already-existing conventions, which *in praesentia* can be improvised and worked out spontaneously. The use of language of distance must be learned especially, even if it is not formally distinct.[16] Such linguistic means which have been developed for communication at a distance can then also be used *in praesentia,*[17] within a shared physical space, if within those pragmatic conditions a more formal form of discourse, one less personal, is considered more appropriate. "Prose" as non-ordinary language is thus those forms of language which are used to bridge concrete and abstract distance.

This distinction between languages of immediacy and distance is real, and variously encoded in the structures of different languages, potentially at all linguistic levels. In many languages there are no unique second-person singular forms in the pronominal and verbal systems of impersonal communication, in contrast with ordinary speech, while in Hebrew the third-person

[14] Oesterreicher 1997.
[15] On prose and deixis see Godzich and Kittay 1987, and the illuminating demonstration of what happens to ordinary speech converted to a language of distance in Rokem 2013, ch. 5. Also Ong 1982, 104.
[16] One may speak English as one's native tongue, one may even read it, but if one is not familiar with the practice of reading literature, even a book purposely written in colloquial English would be fundamentally unintelligible.
[17] *Pace* Rokem 2013, xvii, who sees prose as opposed to performance. Prose can certainly be performed; on the contrary, what is performed is typically prose. See Oesterreicher 1997, 207-209.

feminine future plural *tiqtolna* is absent from ordinary language. The lexicon is often divergent: there are words which appear exclusively in prose ("ineluctable"), and words which do not ("yeah") except as an "image" of colloquial language.[18] Certain syntactic structures are more typical of prose (absolute constructions), and anacoluthon stands out, while in ordinary language speakers hem, haw, stop, start, interrupt themselves and change syntax in mid-sentence. While the units of written prose and poetry are predicated on the syntax of the sentence or systematic rhythmical segmentation, respectively, the units of ordinary speech are more "associative", or "intonational".[19]

The distinction between languages of immediacy and distance can even take the form of diglossia, the use of independent though related linguistic systems for different purposes. From the perspective of Arabic, what Northrop Frye has called "the Jourdain fallacy"[20] – the conflation of prose with ordinary speech – would hardly occur. So great is the linguistic gulf between Modern Standard Arabic and the Arabic vernaculars that while the former, known as *fuṣḥā* ("the clearest [language]"), which has no native speakers, serves as a *koine* across the Arab world, not all Arabic dialects (*'āmmiyya*, "the common [language]") are mutually intelligible. Sanskrit functioned similarly in India of the first millennium BCE, as did Latin in the middle ages and, in modern Greece, Katharevousa.[21]

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[18] See Bakhtin 1981a and 1981b, and below.

[19] Less precisely, Frye 1963, 20-25; Tynianov 1981 (1924), 62; Bakker 1997, 47 with references to the work of Wallace Chafe. The case of oral poetry (and, I will argue, prose) is slightly different: in the case of oral poetry, information/intonation units will correspond to metrical units (Bakker 1997; Slings 1999 and 2000, 21-25); this distinction is not important at present, but will be later – I will address it in ch. 1. Frye 1963, 19, attempted to illustrate the difference by transcribing ordinary speech: "Y'know, I couldn' figure what happened, cause, jeez, well, I figured, y'know, I had that stuff cold – I mean, like I say, I'd gone over the stuff an' I figured I knew it, and – well, jeez, I do' know". See also Shklovsky 2012 (1917), 11, and cf. the interesting comparison made in Alter 1989, 79-81, between Samuel Johnson's style in conversation (as recorded by Boswell) and in written prose.

[20] Frye 1976, 802. See also his powerful refutation of the Jourdain fallacy at Frye 1963, 17-19 (a full list of references to his polemic against it can be found at Hamilton 1990, 268 n. 9).

[21] For Sanskrit see Pollock 2006, ch. 1, particularly p. 50, where he prefers "hyperglossia". For the "invention" of Latin in distinction from the Romance vernaculars, see esp. Wright 1982.

It is the association of specific linguistic forms with particular pragmatic conditions, and the distinction between discourses of immediacy and distance, that lends force to the use of ordinary language in *belles-lettres* literature. Ordinary language can never, however, appear in novels as anything but an "image of ordinary language", in Bakhtin's terms, employed as part of a discourse of distance.[22] Fourth-century (BCE) Greek orators, 13th-century Flemish aristocrats, modern novelists in different circumstances and for different reasons all found it advantageous to present artificial language under the guise of ordinary speech.[23] While the traditional approach to "prose", which identifies it on the basis of its use of figures of speech,[24] arbitrarily separates texts with figures of speech from texts without, the pragmatic approach accommodates both kinds and allows us to see what is common to them. Unlike speakers of ordinary language, who make no attempt to fashion their language in such a way that it be intelligible to anyone *in absentia*, the language of prose is typically impersonally intelligible, even if not necessarily universally intelligible. As discourses of distance, they do something different in the world; like poetry, their production constitutes a different kind of human activity from the use of ordinary language. What the traditional approach misses, not incidentally, is that all *prosa* is *Kunstprosa*.

Adopting a pragmatic approach to "prose" also allows us to see how the two seemingly contradictory meanings of "prose" – as both ordinary and non-ordinary language – could have merged. "Prose" can thus be understood as a non-verse language of distance, which is typically formally distinct from ordinary language, or pretends not to be.

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[22] Bakhtin 1981a and 1981b, and Lotman 1977, 98. See also Alter 1988, 97-110 (p. 94: "perhaps all literary use of language, however strong the illusion of mimesis, involves more working against the grain of ordinary language than we are willing to admit"). And see again Oesterreicher 1997, especially 204-206.

[23] Greek orators will be mentioned in the epilogue, and treated in depth elsewhere. See Spiegel 1993 for prose in medieval France. Hanson and Kiparsky 1997, 20: "its (prose's) apparent ordinariness has all the complexity of innocence after the fall; its nakedness is that of the lady in *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*" (cf. the metaphor of nudity in Jakobson 1987a, 89).

[24] E.g. Norden 1958 (1898), 16.

Having explicated the notion of "non-ordinary language" and the tension between it and "ordinary language", we briefly return to the primary intuition regarding "prose", that it is opposed to verse.[25] It would appear that "prose" is a concept defined negatively twice over: as non-verse, and non-ordinary. The two negations are not, however, symmetrical. In relation to ordinary language, we have seen, the language which the term "prose" delimits can be characterized positively, as a language governed by certain lexical, syntactical and primarily pragmatic norms. The same is not true when "prose" is juxtaposed with verse: "prose" cannot be defined independently of verse because it presupposes verse.[26]

The conceptual derivativeness of the term "prose" in relation to verse is reflected in its linguistic derivation: the Latin *prosa*, from which "prose" derives, comes from *prorsus*, ultimately from *pro-versus* ("forward, directly, precisely"): it is, in other words, verse that goes forward.[27] There is a widespread belief within the western tradition that verse precedes prose universally, even metaphysically.[28] The latter is then perceived as a copy, a *mimēma* (Strabo 1.2.6), and thus

[25] There is a cliché, most elegantly expressed in Nemerov's poem, "Because You Asked about the Line Between Prose and Poetry" (Nemerov 1980, 85), that the distinction between the two cannot be pinned down, e.g. Hegel 1975 (1842), 1007; Quiller-Couch 1923, 47-48; Lotz 1972, 1; Lanham 1974, 65; Finnegan 1977, 27. Eliot 2005 (1921), 164, rejects the attempt to distinguish the two. Frye 1957, 13, wrote that the distinction has not yet been made, but he presumably hadn't read Tynianov 1981 (1924), who argues for a clear distinction between the two on the basis of "the functional role of rhythm", as does Agamben 1995 on the basis of "the possibility of enjambment". See also Lotman 1977, 101-104. William Carlos Williams, complaining of Wallace Stevens' criticism of his use of prose, wrote: "the truth is that there's an *identity* between prose and verse, not an antithesis" (Williams 1957, 265, italics original).

[26] Cf. Lotman 1977, 94; Nagy 1990, 47; Hanson and Kiparsky 1997, 20.

[27] S.v. in Ernout-Meillet. The concept of prose of course did not have to reflect its linguistic roots, but it does. For other uses of the term, e.g. as antiphonal syllabic poetry in medieval France, see Gasparov 1996, 110-18, also Steele 2012. Prorsa was an aspect of the Roman goddess of childbirth Carmentis, presiding over the birth of babies emerging head-first. Cf. Jakobson 1987b, 114, for the association of prose with motion "forward", with contiguity, in contrast with poetry.

[28] Vico 1984 (1744), par. 460: "by a necessity of human nature, poetic style arose before prose style" (see also 409, 460-472). Quiller-Couch 1923, 50: "… you have been told – and truthfully told – by your manuals and histories, that when a nation of men starts making literature it invariably starts on the difficult emprise of verse, and goes on to prose as by an afterthought". This claim has a long history, going back to Pliny *NH* 7.205; and Isidore *Etymologiarum* 1.38. See also Flaubert 1980 (1830), 159 ("prose was born yesterday"); Hegel 1975 (1842), 973; Williams 1957, 265; Godzich and Kittay 1987, xi ("historical evidence shows that it is verse that precedes prose",

inferior. While poetry conventionally comes from the Muse, Hegel traced the origins of prose to the slave.[29] If poetry is inspired, prose is disenchanted: the modern world, German philosophy lamented, is prosaic.[30] This conception of prose underlies the use of "poetic" as a term of praise generally, not just for texts, in European languages across the board, and of "prosaic" to denote the mundane.

"Prose", then, is neither a natural nor a neutral category of language; it is a contingent concept peculiar to the western tradition. Not every non-verse language of distance should be considered "prose", because not in every culture will literary language be divided into two hierarchically ordered dichotomous categories. The Hebrew Bible distinguishes song, but it is not clear that the distinction between song and non-song corresponds to verse and prose.[31] It is significant that the identification of biblical verse goes back to Josephus, who referred to biblical hexameters (*Ant*. 2.346, 4.303). If Greek and Roman verse typically is easily distinguished from prose, two millennia after Josephus the boundaries of the category of "biblical verse" are still vague.[32] More attractive is James Kugel's suggestion that biblical language should be seen as

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and 197: "we know it [verse] to be developmentally first"); Spiegel 1993, 58; Nimis 1994, 392; Robb 1994, 260; Hanson and Kiparski 1997, 34; Graff 2005, 303; Mortensen 2017, 3. For Indo-European, Watkins 1995, 276. For Greek, Colvin 2014, 134 and 156. An exception is the 13th-century teacher of rhetoric Boncompagno of Signa (edition: Sutter 1894, 106; for the context of his views see Mortensen 2017, n. 71, with references).

[29] Hegel 1975 (1842), 387.

[30] E.g., Schlegel 2001 (1797), 37: "prose is the true nature of the moderns". Similarly, Foucault 2002 (1966), 49, and see generally Barck 2005, esp. 102-103. On Hegel's influential concept of prose see Rokem 2013, ch. 1, with a particularly lucid discussion of the concept of prose in the *Lectures on Aesthetics*; also Saussy 1993, 172-77, and Nancy 1996, ch. 2. For a short overview of work on the concept of prose Watkin 2008, 344-49.

[31] As will be discussed below, the mode of a text's performance must be distinguished from its form. Verse need not be sung, and song does not require a text in verse. Kugel 1981, 75 n. 24: "*any* text – the U.S. Constitution, the Manhattan telephone book, the warranty of a clock-radio – can be sung or set to music" (italics original). It can be argued that if verse is defined as a text which is systematically rhythmically segmented (cf. Tynianov 1981 [1924], Gasparov 1996, 1-2), any text set to music, or sung, would have to be considered verse, because of the rhythmic segmentation the music would impose upon it. But the fact that every text set to music would thus become verse demonstrates that song is irrelevant to the distinction between poetry and prose, because it neutralizes it. To call a sung text "verse" is a tautology.

[32] See, e.g., Harshav 2007, 599: "For many generations scholars have argued over the 'secrets' of biblical prosody… Such attempts seem pointless today since no exact regularity of any kind has been found and since rhythm need not be based on strict numerical regularity." Harshav is right to say that rhythm need not be based on strict regularity, but such rhythm is not the exclusive property of verse. The other criteria he discusses as "principles of biblical

operating on a continuum, rather than structured by a dichotomy.[33] It is similarly unclear that a dichotomy would accurately categorize the marked forms of classical Arabic in early Islam. What surely does not fit early Islamic literary culture is the hierarchical priority of verse. The Quran adamantly distanced itself from classical Arabic poetry, which was in meter, and its own non-metrical language is considered in the Islamic tradition to be superhuman (*muʿjaz*), itself constituting the proof for its divine origins.[34]

If the verse-prose dichotomy cannot be taken for granted for cultures outside the western tradition, the same is true for those which preceded it, even the Greek tradition which served, via Rome, as its literary model. "Prose", we have said, is a Roman word. The Greeks did not have a unique term for prose, and it is not self-evident that any of their terms which we understand as denoting "prose" is actually equivalent to it. It is an open question whether the Greeks had a concept of "prose".

Here we will focus on the Greeks of the archaic period and the place of texts which we categorize as "prose" in their society. Denaturalizing our intuitions regarding "prose" puts us in position to discern forms of prose where previously they may have been overlooked. For this purpose, one final implication of the western understanding of prose will be addressed.

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verse", parallelism and "sound", are not foreign to "biblical prose" either. Put simply, if biblical prosody constitutes a "secret", it seems that it would also constitute a phenomenon of a different order from Greek and Roman verse, at least. See, similarly, Geller 2012.

[33] Kugel 1981. Kugel's view is unorthodox, but I am unpersuaded by his critics on this point (e.g. Alter 1985, ch. 1) and have not found any proponents of the mainstream view to have articulated it convincingly (in large part because "biblical poetry" is usually taken for granted). Greenstein 2012 is an exception, who came to my attention late and which I will have to treat separately. Compare the Jewish concept of the author ,which also developed as a result of Jewish-Hellenistic contact (see Mroczek 2016, ch. 3).

[34] Cf. Plut. *de Pyth*. 17. The western hierarchy is similarly foreign to biblical language: is the third of biblical language which is considered verse in any way more prestigious, authoritative, inspired than the two-thirds considered prose?

Understanding "prose" as non-verse language of distance importantly does not distinguish oral from written language. It might seem the case that the differences discussed above between the non-ordinary language of prose and ordinary language map on to the distinction between oral and written language, but they do not.

Oesterreicher pointed out that the linguistic medium, which can be either phonic or graphic, must be distinguished from the "linguistic conception", which denotes a continuum ranging from the informal language of immediacy to the formal language of distance. What this distinction reveals is that not everything that is written and is not verse is prose, just as not everything that is prose is written. One might feel uncomfortable, for example, with the idea of lists as prose. Written messages exchanged by friends, which frequently are not impersonally intelligible, can easily use language very different from the language of newspapers, novels, etc. Conversely, even in the most literate of societies much prose is only experienced orally: who, besides professionals, reads the scripts of television shows, movies, even theatre?[35] The languages of distance discussed above all straddle the oral-written divide: Latin and Sanskrit prose are still used orally, for example in liturgy, and Modern Standard Arabic is not only the language of *belles-lettres* literature and newspapers, but also the language of newscasters. Importantly, it is not only read by newscasters from a text, but also produced spontaneously and freely on radio and television, or in public speeches.

The denial of oral prose, however, is deeply ingrained in the western literary tradition: it is presupposed by many of the varieties of the commonplace that poetry universally precedes prose, which presumably assumes that prose can only be written.[36] The lack of systematic thought about

[35] Martin 1984, 1746.
[36] See above for this conceit. Some, such as Frye, recognize oral prose while maintaining its belatedness. Jiménez Lopez 2014 recognizes oral prose, but denies it literary status. The confusion seems to be symptomatic and indicative of the lack of rigorous reflection on these concepts and their ramifications.

prose has engendered in the field of Greek literature implicit as well as occasionally explicit denials of oral prose.[37] More broadly, there is one tradition of argued explicit denial which goes back to Franz Boas and is most prominently represented by Dennis Tedlock. His work in the field compiling oral narratives among the Zunis of New Mexico convinced him, he wrote, "that prose has no real existence outside the written page" and, a few years later: "oral cultures no more have an oral equivalent to written prose than they have motor-driven pipe organs".[38] We have already seen that it is not justified to unreflectively impose the poetry-prose dichotomy on a foreign culture. It is similarly wrong to assume that findings regarding the Zuni necessarily obtain for all oral cultures. We might wonder whether they are even true for Zuni culture, when we consider Tedlock's reasons for categorizing the Zuni oral narrative as poetic: it is repetitive, he argued, it evokes emotions rather than describes them, and its content is fantastic rather than "prosaic".[39] His polemic derives, then, from a dubious conception of prose which is hardly defensible. It should suffice to note his discussion of a quote from a Zuni narrative: "his uncle went out hunting. Going out hunting he came along…". This kind of repetition, he claims, should be seen not as a "primitive" version of prose fiction, but as "poetic".[40] The classicist will immediately think of Herodotean prose.

To be sure, performances of oral prose are "more than prose",[41] but so are performances of poetry in relation to written poetry. Just as written and oral poetry both belong to the same

[37] Implicitly, Havelock 1963, 42-43; Wöhrle 1992; Nimis 1994; Finkelberg 1998, 195; Fowler 2001, 103; Patzer 2006. Explicitly: Müller 2006, 4-5; West 2007, 26; Laks 2007, 264; Asper 2007, 67-68 (*contra* 72!); Colvin 2014, 156.
[38] Tedlock 1972, xix, and Tedlock 1977, 513, respectively. Tedlock is followed by E.g. Clover 1986, 19-20; Reichl and Harris 1997, 1-16.
[39] Tedlock 1977, 513, drawing from Tedlock 1971, 129. Cf. the emphatic denial of the significance of content in Polivanov 1974 (1930).
[40] Tedlock 1971, 129-130.
[41] Tedlock 1972, xi. When scholars insist, similarly, that such performances are not "simply prose" (Clover 1986, 18, citing Isidore Okpewho), they appear to be motivated less by a careful consideration of the concept of prose than by the concern to defend the dignity of the object of their research lest it be considered "prosaic".

genus, so can prose appear in either of two forms. “Prose” and “verse” are linguistic categories distinguished on the basis of their form, set off from ordinary speech by their pragmatic use as languages of distance.

We now turn to evidence for oral prose in archaic Greek culture.

Chapter 1: Oral Prose

We have established that there is no reason to restrict prose *a priori* to the written medium. The purpose of this chapter is to search for evidence for Greek oral prose in the archaic period so that we may later be able to evaluate the significance of such evidence, if any, for Greek written prose. References to oral prose can be found in scholarship, and some genres of Greek oral prose have been studied in isolation, but there is no general study of ancient Greek oral prose and its importance as a cultural phenomenon.[1]

First, however, because it does not follow from the *a priori* possibility of oral prose that there was ancient Greek oral prose, the object of our inquiry must be more precisely defined. The term "oral prose" is obviously coined by analogy with "oral poetry", the underlying idea being that just as the earliest written Greek poetry is rooted in oral practices, so too the earliest written prose should have oral antecedents. It is hardly apparent, though, that those antecedents should be considered "prose", or what the evidence for such a claim might be. We will begin by exploring the concept of oral prose on the basis of the analogy with oral poetry, in order to orient ourselves in the largely uncharted waters of ancient Greek oral prose. We will then proceed to study the evidence we have for pure Greek oral prose, its uses and its forms.

The concept of oral prose

The term "orality" is used in a number of senses.[2] For our purposes "oral prose" will denote prose performed orally; in relation to the period with which we are concerned, the medium of its

[1] The need for further work has occasionally been noted, e.g. Risch 1985, 8; Russo 1997a, 51; Luraghi 2013, 92. Studies of specific genres of Greek oral prose will be discussed in the course of this chapter. For denials of the phenomenon of Greek oral prose, mainly implicit, see the introduction.
[2] Gentili 1988, 4; Thomas 1992, 6-7; Bakker 1997, ch. 1; Vatri 2017, ch. 1.

composition is largely irrelevant. Today we are surrounded by orally performed prose, in lectures, on television, etc., but the phenomenon with which we are dealing is of a different nature. Oral prose in literate culture tends to be modeled on written prose.[3] What interests us, however, is the form (or forms) of oral prose before written prose, which *prima facie* appears to be a different phenomenon.[4] If, as Dover claims, oratory was the most important model for the first writer of Greek prose,[5] what was the model of oral prose? If poetry marked itself off from ordinary speech through systematic rhythmic segmentation, how did the language of oral prose mark itself?

Prose, we have said, is non-verse language of distance. The most fundamental kind of distance is geographic and/or temporal separation. Absent the technology of writing, in pre-literate Greece there would be no means for transmission of given linguistic units verbatim *in absentia*, across time or space, unless they were memorized by some form of a messenger filling in for the original composer.[6] In oral poetry of the kind studied by Parry and Lord, composition is simultaneous with transmission, but Indo-European comparanda provide evidence for verbatim transmission of forms of poetry and prose.[7] We might hypothesize, then, two kinds of prose, prose which is memorized and which following Lord we may call textual, in the sense that it presupposes one underlying authoritative version, an original; and non-textual prose, which is not memorized

[3] Colvin 2014, 157; also Ong 1982, 105.
[4] Cf. Bakker 1997 and Slings 1999 on pure oral verse.
[5] Dover 1997, 59.
[6] More interesting, perhaps, than the suggestion that the Indic poet, the *kāru*, possibly cognate with Greek κῆρυξ (herald), was *also* a messenger (Mallory and Adams 1997, 436) is the idea of the poet *as* messenger (e.g. Theognis 769, or Pind. *N*. 6.57: ἄγγελος ἔβαν). Beekes 2003 argues κῆρυξ is actually derived from a substrate language, though his arguments regarding the semantic misfit do not seem compelling (see ibid., 114, and cf. Mondi 1978, ch. 3). Cf. Assmann 2011, 7: "the original setting of the text is the institution of the messenger"; and Benveniste 2016 (1969), 326-27, on the *skēptron* originally belonging to the messenger. On the figure of the κῆρυξ generally see the bold and illuminating Mondi 1978, which considers him to originally be "the embodiment of verbal skill" (14).
[7] See Finnegan 1977, 73ff., and Watkins 1995, 18, criticizing Lord, who conceded the possibility of such oral poetry in Lord 1995, 20-21. There was of course no reason to assume the Parry-Lord model would be universal; see, e.g., Reichl 2001 for the oral Turkic tradition, which differed in other respects as well. Cf. Ong 1982, 62-67.

but would be characterized by particular linguistic norms accommodating distance.[8] The significance of such distance would be that both kinds of oral prose would not be casually spoken but, as in the case of oral poetry, performed: textual prose would be re-performed, non-textual prose would be re-composed in performance. Their performance would constitute an occasion, and for each genre of oral prose, as for oral poetry, there would be a corresponding occasion. By "occasion" we mean a communally recognized context often marked by some form of ritualized behavior, which may include non-ordinary language; prose, along with poetry, is thus language the use of which constitutes an occasion.[9]

What we are looking for, then, is evidence for textual and non-textual oral prose performed occasionally. Before embarking on the search for such prose, it will be worth exploring the analogy with oral poetry further by considering the possibility of Indo-European roots: if the language of Greek oral poetry is fundamentally inherited from Indo-European *Dichtersprache,* what of Greek oral prose? This inquiry will allow us, first, to test its limits. In the event that the analogy will prove to have some evidentiary basis, Indo-European comparanda will suggest some properties which ancient Greek oral prose might have inherited. At the end of this section we will consider some other traditions of oral discourses of distance, which will provide means for envisaging some of the pragmatic possibilities of oral Greek prose.

Studies of Indo-European culture emphasize the importance of verbal art.[10] The significance of verbal art is reflected in the belief in the power of the spoken word, uttered properly, to express truth. By virtue of being true, such language could effect real change in the world. By

[8] For "textuality" and for this distinction applying to oral literature generally see Lord 1995, 20-21. See also Vansina 1985, 14-16 and 25.
[9] For the equation of genre and occasion I rely on Nagy 1994. For occasion and ritual see Nagy 1990a, 30-31. For performance and ritual consider the wonderful Hasidic story told by S.J. Agnon to Gershom Scholem, cited and discussed in Godzich and Kittay 1989, 10-12.
[10] See Watkins 1995, 179, on the impoverishment of Indo-European visual art in comparison with the sophistication of the verbal variety.

association, it was perceived as the "language of the gods", which in form was marked, in contrast with the unmarked "language of men". The gods spoke a form of language which in scholarship is typically referred to as "poetic" while men, save for a select few, didn't. Belief in the power of language was surely not unique to Indo-European culture, as the act of creation through divine utterance in *Genesis* 1 shows, but what is particular to Indo-European culture is that within human society such speech was marked off as the exclusive province of the poet, who alone knew how to articulate the "language of gods".[11] The poet was thus indispensable to Indo-European society and was, accordingly, its highest-paid professional, entrusted with the preservation and transmission of what amounted to "society's sum of knowledge".

It is therefore unsurprising that the oldest and most prestigious, at times sacred, Indo-European verbal compositions, Homer's epics, the Indic Rigveda, the Iranian Gathas, are all couched in the form of metrical poetry. Metrical poetry, it should however be noted, was not the only kind of poetry current in Indo-European society; much ritual language, Indic and Iranian and Anatolian and Italic and Celtic and also Greek, was composed in what has been misleadingly called "rhythmic prose" but should rather be considered, Calvert Watkins has powerfully argued, "strophic poetry".[12] Yet there was some early ritual language in Hittite and Luvian which was not in verse, neither metrical nor "strophic", and non-verse Hittite myths were performed in honor of the gods at festivals. In the Anatolian case we are not dealing with pure oral language, and non-Indo-European influence must be taken into account as well, but the Vedic ritual exegesis of the Black Yajurveda as well as the *brāhmaṇas*, *āraṇyakas* and *sūtras* were all in what we would consider prose. While the performative language of Vedic ritual was poetic, either metrical or "strophic", the language of Vedic exegesis was also, significantly, considered *śruti* ("heard"),

[11] E.g. Witzel 1997, 393.
[12] Watkins 1995, part III.

revealed by the gods.[13] The Vedic gods, that is, spoke prose as well. Prose was also the language of Hittite law, as well as the laws of the (Younger) Avestan Vidēvdād and the earliest Hindu legal text, the Gautamadharmaśāstra, and the Roman Twelve Tables.[14] The very survival of Vedic and Avestan prose is testament to the importance prose could possess, in light of the effort involved in its oral transmission, effort that *prima facie* would have indeed been all the greater for its being prose. If the poet was "by definition competent in all the areas where the word is, or is considered, operative",[15] it appears that "poets" were also in charge of prose as well, and that while all poetry may have been divine, not all non-poetry was non-divine.

Early Indo-European verbal art appears, then, not to have been structured by a dichotomy. It is instructive to use Greek and Roman literature as a foil and note that in their higher registers, at least, poetry and prose are generally not mixed;[16] this tendency may, however, be an innovation. Myles Dillon's hypothesis, drawing on Sanskrit and Irish material, that the original form of Indo-European epic was prosimetric has been discredited, but even his critics concede the antiquity of prosimetric traditions in Irish and Sanskrit. Hittite mythological texts were similarly mixed, and it has been argued that Greek epic narrative, in contrast with speeches, was originally in prose.[17] More generally, we tend to think of polymetric Greek forms such as tragedy and comedy as synthetic, and to see poems which suddenly change meters, even mid-verse, or abandon meter altogether as exceptions, but should such instances of fluidity perhaps be seen not as breaking with

[13] Jamison 1991, 10. Specifically, what Jamison terms *brāhmaṇa* and *āraṇyaka*-type texts.
[14] On the language of Indo-European law, see Roth 1976, 334-36. Regarding the Twelve Tables, to which Cicero referred as a "carmen necessarium" (Cic. *Leg*. 2.59), see ch. 2.
[15] Watkins 1995, 69, quoting (and translating) Campanile 1977, 32.
[16] Ziolkowski 1997.
[17] Dillon 1948 and 1975, 70-94, relying in part on earlier work by Hermann Oldenberg and Ernst Windisch. For criticism of this hypothesis with regard to the Rigveda see Witzel 1997; for criticism from the Irish side, Mac Cana 1997. See both for discussions of very early prosimetric compositions in the Indic and Irish traditions, respectively. See Watkins 1995, 52, for references to the Hittite material. For Greek epic, Kelly 1990, on the basis of the striking difference in the occurrence of correption in each (but cf. Finkelberg 1998, 155, on the sparsity of speech in the Epic Cycle, which Finkelberg considers more representative of the epic tradition than Homer).

tradition, but rather as resisting poetic standardization?[18] We will later see evidence that oral storytelling traditions on which Herodotus relied incorporated verse.

Employing Jakobsonian terminology, we can say that early Indo-European poetry operated on a scale of equivalence: poetic language could be more tightly regulated, i.e. by meter, or less so. What, then, was the relation of prose to that scale? Was it, beneath the threshold at which equivalence becomes "constitutive", a looser form of "strophic poetry", perhaps even descended from it, or were the principles of Indo-European prosaics foreign to the scale of equivalence? There is regrettably little systematic research on the language of the earliest Indo-European prose, Vedic and Avestan, *qua* prose.[19] Watkins implied that early Indo-European prose generally did not practice the disjunction of syntagmatic constituents, setting it off from the poetic variety, and presumably aligning it with ordinary speech.[20] The prose of the *brāhmaṇas* has been described as consisting of "little clauses and choppy sentences",[21] and perusing the Black Yajurveda and the Vidēvdād, for example, even in translation, one is struck by the absence of hypotaxis and the prevalence of parataxis. Predictable as these cursory observations may sound, they are not in fact trivial,[22] and we will see examples below that show their application to be limited and generically conditioned.

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[18] *Contra* Herington 1985, 75. Besides the *Margites* and Chaeremon's *Centaur* (Arist. *Poet.* 1447b22, 1460a1), Hipponax 23 and 32, Xenophanes B14, CEG 454 ("Nestor's cup") switch meters between verses, Hipponax 35 switches in mid-verse, on which see West 1982, 41; West 2003, 226; and Boedeker 2016, 60 (for such cases in dramatic song, West 1982, 136). Comic abandonment of meter will be discussed below. Similarly, regarding standardization of the hexameter, see West 1982, 35, which may partially account for "Homeric verse show[ing] a greater degree of prosodic licence than any other form of Greek poetry" (ibid., 38, and West 2018). For other irregularities, West 1982, 45, 47, 74. Other explanations for some of these instances have of course been proposed, but the same development towards greater regulation of metrical forms is attested throughout the Indo-European family, for which see e.g. West 1973b; Nagy 1974, ch. 1.

[19] It is particularly problematic that much of the Vedic which scholars call "prose" should actually be considered strophic poetry, as Watkins argued.

[20] Watkins 1995, 40.

[21] Lanman 1906, 393.

[22] See Vatri 2017, 9, on parataxis and hypotaxis, and p. 170 on disjunction. Marković 2006, esp. 144-45, provides reason to doubt that Greek oral prose would not have made use of hyperbaton. And see the discussion of the Greek

Research on Indo-European oral prose which has been undertaken interestingly reveals affinities with Greek oral poetry. Saul Migron argued that catena, the use of the *participium* and *gerundium coniunctum*, was a proto-Indo-European construction, showing it to be common in Vedic prose as well as Homer, but strikingly (perhaps incidentally) rare in the Rigveda, e.g.:

> tam **abhyatapat**. tasy**ābhitaptasya** mukhaṃ nirabhidyata.
> He caused him distress. Distressed, his mouth burst forth (*Aitareya Āraṇyaka* 2.4.1.4)

> … **ἀλείψατο** δὲ λίπ᾽ ἐλαίῳ…
> τῷ ῥ᾽ ἥ γε χρόα καλὸν **ἀλειψαμένη** …
> … she anointed herself richly with oil…
> and having anointed her beautiful skin with it… (*Il.* 14.171-175)

We should also, again, think of Herodotus, to whom we will return.[23] Watkins noted that another form of repetition typical of Greek oral poetry, ring composition, is frequent in Vedic prose, in which it "may function virtually as punctuation, as an index of topical paragraph boundaries".[24]

Another affinity between oral Indo-European prose and Homeric poetry concerns the use of formulae. Watkins remarked that Vedic, Hittite and Luvian prose are "every bit as formulaic as the poetry of a Homer or an Avdo Međedović".[25] Kevin O'Nolan undertook a systematic study comparing formulae in Homer and Irish oral prose, evidence for which is late and "impure" but especially valuable.[26] Studying Finn tales from the *Silva Gadelica*, ranging in date from 1200 to 1700, as well as living oral traditions of the Donegal folktales, O'Nolan showed that Irish oral storytellers employed formulaic language to narrate set type-scenes ("they made neither sea stop

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betrothal formula below. On hypotaxis in Vedic prose see Minard 1936. Cf. Gentili 1988, 48, on the prevalence of hypotaxis in archaic poetry.

[23] Migron 1991. Herodotus is briefly mentioned ibid., 79. We already mentioned Herodotus in a similar context in the introduction.

[24] Watkins 1982, 110.

[25] Watkins 1995, 41.

[26] It would appear difficult to maintain that the stylistic aspects of these Irish oral prose traditions result from the influence of written literature. O'Nolan's work on the Irish tradition is also interesting because it provides a counterexample to Lord's thesis that the advent of writing spells death for oral composition (O'Nolan 1978b, 25). For the exceptional archaism of Irish culture see Dillon 1948, also Watkins 1963, 212-13.

nor long pause until they reached…") or transitions ("until evening and the end of day came on them"). Shorter, synonymous and alliterative doublets (*bás 7 buanoidheadh*, "death and lasting doom", *triath 7 tighearna*, "prince and lord") perhaps served to regulate the story's rhythm. The Finn tales also featured epithets, which notably formed a system and were deployed on the basis of alliteration. The systematic use of formulae and epithets by oral storytellers demonstrates that they are not, as one might be tempted to think, the products of meter, nor are they dependent on it.[27] We will later consider the significance of the resemblance between Indo-European prose and Homeric poetry, and also return to the issue of formulaity and clarify in what it consists outside of poetry. We first conclude the survey of Indo-European material by noting that prose appears not to have been foreign to the very tradition which launched the study of oral poetry, Serbo-Croatian epic. The "cycles" of two Serbo-Croatian heroes, Marko Kraljević and Mujo Hrnjičić, included stories for which the guslar Salih Ugljanin knew no verse versions.[28] Parry, however, took little interest in this aspect of the tradition.

While ancient Indo-European traditions cannot shed much light on the pragmatic aspects of oral prose, other more recent traditions provide analogues which may prove helpful in approaching the Greek variety.[29] We here return to such genres as the narrative traditions of the

[27] O'Nolan 1969, and for formulaic doublets in Homer O'Nolan 1978a. Old Norse would appear to suggest another avenue for research on Indo-European oral prose, but as the extent to which the prose Icelandic sagas represent oral literature is controversial, we will not pursue the Norse case further here. For a concise overview of the debate between the *Freiprosa* and *Buchprosa* camps, including its interesting political dimensions, see Mitchell 1991, 1-7.

[28] Parry and Lord 1954, on song no. 7 see p. 359, on songs 8-9 see the notes and the prose version on pp. 366-70 and the much shorter verse version on pp. 116-18. What seems interesting here is that the prose and verse traditions are not separate, but part of one and the same tradition. Parry asked Ugljanin to versify the stories found in songs 8-9, which the latter did reluctantly; it seems to have come unnaturally to him. Kirk 1962, 94, interprets this as evidence of Ugljanin's lack of creative ability, but might his failure rather say something about the tradition, rather than about the individual guslar?

[29] The traditions discussed here of course present only a few out of very many possible analogues. It goes without saying that I am here relying on secondary literature dealing with cultures and languages in which I have no competence. In this literature one finds, as we have already seen, endemic confusion symptomatic of the lack of rigorous thought concerning prose and poetry. The purpose here is only to suggest lines of thought. None of these will later form the basis of arguments concerning Greek material.

Zuni mentioned in the introduction, which Tedlock argued should be seen as "dramatic poetry". We have seen there is reason for rejecting the dogmatic insistence on "poetry", but its characterization as "dramatic" is important. In analyzing their language, which does not substantially differ in grammatical form from the language of ordinary speech, Tedlock perceptively emphasized the significance, ironically, of pauses, the modulation of volume, and forms of marked phonological "distortion" such as stress shifts and vowel lengthening, as well as syntactic disruption.[30] Inuit West Greenlandic storytellers have been described as "stage-managers". They formulaically marked the beginning of the narrative (*Ilaanniaassiit*, "one day when as usual"), distinguished the different "actors" by adapting their voice, and made use of pauses in order to represent narrative time. The purpose was to allow the audience to feel that it was actually present as the events unfolded, to "experience" the narrative.[31] In certain African traditions, in which the narrators employed facial expressions as well as physical gestures and developed special linguistic means to represent the speech of animals (transforming clicks and initial consonants into labials, for instance, to represent the tortoise's lisp) or events (the onomatopoeic *kwata-kwata-kwata* for a chase, *seki seki seki* for a tortoise swimming) – performances in fact would rely on the participation of the audience, both as the addressee ("Suri – reply to me", began a 1964 Limba performance) and as a chorus in songs integrated into the performance.[32] The interplay of prose and poetry is, in fact, a particularly common feature of oral performances.[33] Another feature commonly found in these traditions is the use of formulae, notable

[30] Tedlock 1971. Sanskrit *om* is a famous instance of performative vowel lengthening known as *pluti*, and for a specifically Greek oral analogue see Katz 2013b, esp. 96-98, including n. 33, on the "hymnic long alpha", serving performers "as a paralinguistic way of getting their audience's attention" (Katz 2018, 11).
[31] Thisted 2001, and see the emphasis on pp. 184 and 195 on the language of storytelling as *Kunstsprache*. See also Ong 1982, 67-68, on the "somatic component" of oral communication more broadly.
[32] Finnegan 1970, ch. 12 and 13.
[33] Clover 1986, 14-15, 17. Ibid., 27, she writes: "so common and widespread is prosimetrum… in longer prose forms that it comes very close to being a universal of oral literature".

because here they are again divorced from meter.[34] They will be of great importance in our discussion of Greek material, to which we now turn.

There were in archaic Greece, as in any society, many speech genres. Our aim is first to show that the language of some of them was prose, i.e. non-verse language of distance. It is in the nature of this exercise that the oral texts in which we are interested are not directly accessible, and that our evidence largely comes from written texts.[35] Such evidence can consist in reference to oral speech, or in what ideally amounts to a transcript of it.[36] The first can at times be used to show that the speech genre under discussion was considered distinct from both ordinary language as well as verse, i.e. as what we have seen to be understood as "prose"; the second can on occasion serve to demonstrate that its language was distinct in its form. For all genres under consideration we will attempt to show that they were "prose" from both an emic and an etic perspective. Recognizing the limits of the evidence at our disposal, we will then attempt to divine aspects of its form, the occasion of its performance, and their implications.

As we are specifically interested in oral prose which did not come under the influence of writing, we will privilege earlier evidence. It should however be borne in mind that literacy developed gradually throughout the archaic and classical periods, and that the conventions of pure oral prose – just like the conventions of pure oral poetry, just like archaic culture itself – did not immediately disappear but continued to live on in different forms in the classical period, and

[34] E.g. Boas 1925, 309; Clover 1986, 17-18; Tedlock 1971, 123, 130; Finnegan 1970, 379-81 for opening and closing formulae, as well as "internal" formulae, more of which – referred to as "runs" in Irish storytelling traditions – are in Lord 1991, 22-23. For Vedic, see Jamison 1991, 34.
[35] Vatri 2017, 23, justifies speaking of "oral texts" (cf. Ong 1982, 13). For speech genres, primary and secondary, see Bakhtin 1986.
[36] Of course, the evidence will frequently fall short of the ideal, and aspects of its performance will inevitably be obscured. We will further consider what happens in the process of written textualization in ch. 2.

beyond.[37] As we are dealing with genres of speech, we are in any case dealing with highly traditional forms which could hardly vanish without a trace. Thus even evidence from Plato, used judiciously, can shed light on earlier periods. No argument, however, will be made to rely on any one such passage and, in any case, very little will depend on any one argument. Our broader aim is to consider the background against which written prose developed in order to put it in context which is generally lacking; the strength of the broader argument will lie in the accumulation of evidence and the picture which will emerge as it accumulates. We will conclude by comparing it with the traditional picture of archaic Greek verbal art.

We will proceed from the smallest units of prose to the largest ones, moving along a scale of textuality, starting with units which were committed to memory and re-performed before discussing those which were re-composed in performance. It would appear natural that the smallest units are textual, i.e. transmitted verbatim, while the larger ones are not, but as the masses of oral Vedic prose preserved plainly show, this correspondence should not be taken for granted. It is in fact striking that in comparison with Indic culture, for instance, we have no evidence for the transmission of textual Greek oral traditions of substantial length; and, that in comparison with early Islamic culture, which invested a great deal of effort in preserving the identity of the transmitters of certain oral traditions, Greeks attached to such practice very little value.[38] In Greek society, it seems, what texts entered memory did so incidentally, because they were short and valuable, but not through any concerted effort.[39]

We can now examine the evidence for a number of genres of Greek oral prose.

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[37] Cf. Gentili 1988, 19-21; Thomas 1989 and 1992. More generally see, Ong 1982, 26 and 119-21, and for a demonstration of the durability of ancient aesthetics consider, for example, Watkins 1995, 47-49, on "oats, peas, beans and barley grow".

[38] E.g. Murray 2001 (1987), 25-26. It is telling that what the *mnemon* was assigned to remember was not language (Carawan 2008). Cf. Gentili 1988, 5-8.

[39] Cf. Palmisciano 2014, 31.

Gnomic prose

In preliterate Greek culture there was, in fact, very little textual oral prose, as there appears to have been little textual oral poetry. The prose which comes closest, except for some ritual utterances which will be discussed below, is gnomic language, such as proverbs, maxims, apothegms, etc.[40] They were not necessarily re-performed verbatim, and a certain measure of re-composition would have been involved in their performance, but they were nonetheless closer to the pole of textuality, because the underlying "ideal type" with which they were engaging was linguistic, not merely thematic, as in the case of non-textual re-composition.[41] As such, some gnomic utterances provide us with a rare corpus of relatively unmediated Greek oral prose.

Gnomic language is of course found in abundance in archaic poetry.[42] We will later argue in greater detail that many such utterances are versified representations of social practices whose language was prose, but for now it is enough to note that at least some gnomic language was prose, inscribed as well as "literary".[43] These, however, were not "prosified" versions of ordinary speech; the Greeks clearly considered gnomic language to be special speech. They used a variety of words to mark such sayings as a separate category of speech, and though they may not delineate its boundaries as precisely as modern scholars would like, by the fourth century we find it formally

[40] The specific differences between these types, some of which are discussed by Russo 1997a, are immaterial for our purposes.
[41] The term "ideal type" is from Lardinois 2001, 96; precisely where such units fall on the scale is not particularly important, and was in any case variable within a certain range. See also Lardinois 1997, 215-17.
[42] Lardinois 1997, for instance, counts over 150 gnomic units in the *Iliad*.
[43] On literary representations of gnomic language representing social practice, Lardinois 1997, 229-30. The inscribed Delphic maxims will be discussed below. For some proverbs in Herodotus, see Russo 1997a, 53-55. Heraclitus will be discussed in ch. 3. Hippias is credited with a prose work of wisdom literature (Plat. *Hipp. Maj.* 286a). Russo 1983 presents a large number of prose proverbs, apparently culled from Leutsch and Schneidewin 1839-1851.

conceptualized as a genre unto itself.[44] The very fact of the preservation of such sayings is evidence of their special status, as is the activity of collecting them, which may be much earlier.[45]

The strongest indication of their emic distinctiveness is that they are consistently presented as separate from the speaker's own words, that is as quotations.[46] Consider the preface supplied by Theognis:

> Μοῦσαι καὶ Χάριτες, κοῦραι Διός, αἵ ποτε Κάδμου
> ἐς γάμον ἐλθοῦσαι καλὸν ἀείσατ᾽ ἔπος,
> "ὅττι καλὸν φίλον ἐστί, τὸ δ᾽ οὐ καλὸν οὐ φίλον ἐστί"
>
> Muses and Graces, daughters of Zeus, you who once,
> having come to Cadmus' wedding, sang a *kalos* saying:
> "what is *kalos* is *philos*, what is not *kalos* is not *philos*" (16-18)

And a few centuries later, the same proverb with a different preface, in prose:

> ἀλλὰ μὰ Δία, ἦν δ᾽ ἐγώ, οὐκ οἶδα, ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι αὐτὸς εἰλιγγιῶ ὑπὸ τῆς τοῦ λόγου ἀπορίας, καὶ κινδυνεύει κατὰ τὴν ἀρχαίαν παροιμίαν τὸ καλὸν φίλον εἶναι.
> By Zeus, I said, I don't know, but truthfully I myself am dizzy from the dead end we have reached, and it may be, as the ancient proverb has it, that "the *kalos* is *philos*" (Plat. *Lys.* 216c)[47]

Such quotations, examples of which can be multiplied, generally functioned as "wisdom speech", which according to Joseph Russo "expresses communal beliefs and norms for behavior through

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[44] It is a commonplace in scholarship on gnomic language that it was far more important to the ancient Greeks than to scholars studying them. For terminology, see Lardinois 1997, 214, and Russo 1997a. Aristotle defines *gnōmē*, for instance, at *Rhet*. 1394a21-26, and reportedly devoted an entire treatise to proverbs (D.L. 5.26, though cf. Athenaeus 2.56 60d-e). On his and others' studies of proverbs see Huxley 1981 and Kindstrand 1976. The parodic depiction of Diomedes' attempt at uttering gnomic language in *Il*. 10.224-226 implies consciousness of gnomic language as a special kind of speech with its own form very early – see Lardinois 2001, 104, and originally Martin 1989, 125. Hesiod also provides early evidence for such awareness, and perhaps collecting too, e.g. the lost *Precepts of Chiron*.

[45] Oher collections besides the *Precepts of Chiron* are listed by Porta 1999, 123-24. For gnomological collections in the fifth and fourth centuries, see Barns 1951. Aristophanes of Byzantium edited two books of μετρικαὶ παροιμίαι and four books of ἄμετροι παροιμίαι (Pfeiffer 1968, 208-209). An edition based on ancient collections is Leutsch and Schneidewin 1839-51.

[46] Russo 1997a, 53; Lardinois 1997, 220.

[47] The meaning is a bit different in Plato, who is using φίλον as a pun, but this is irrelevant for our purposes. Another verse version, a pherecratean, is sung by the chorus in Eur. *Ba*. 881 and 901, ironically on the occasion of the death of Cadmus' grandson: ὅ τι καλὸν φίλον αἰεί. Eur. *Phoen*. 814 (ὃ μὴ καλὸν οὔποτ᾽ ἔφυ καλόν) alludes to the Muses' song as well.

commonly understood, formally specific verbal forms".[48] Many were indeed communal in the sense that they had no recognized author. Others, as specimens of "wisdom speech", were accordingly attributed to figures such as Pythagoras or the Seven Sages, a canon which, like the genre associated with it, was relatively fixed while permitting limited variation, and also – we will see shortly – of remarkable antiquity.[49] The association of gnomic prose with the Sages is important for two reasons. First, what characterized the Sages, Richard Martin has shown, is that they were performers, and that their gnomic pronouncements were typically accompanied by gestures or actions. Gnomic language, involving non-linguistic ritualized behavior, was thus used occasionally, though its occasions were not of the institutional kind but rather "emergent".[50] Second, this association suggests not only that these Sages were not simply "poets", which Martin identifies as one of their distinguishing characteristics,[51] but also that Greek oral prose could be invested with substantial authority. Socrates began the discussion in *Lysis* above by suggesting they turn to the poets, "their father and leaders in wisdom" (214a), and so it would have been particularly apposite to end it by quoting the poetic proverb.[52] That he quoted a prose version of the proverb suggests that the poetic version was not necessarily its standard form; his use of prose is all the more striking in light of the proverb's attribution by Theognis to the Muses themselves. As the use of gnomic language typically involved a bid for authority, the use of gnomic prose – in *Lysis*, and generally – indicates that it was not necessarily less authoritative than its verse

[48] Russo 1997a, 50.
[49] E.g. Plat. *Prot.* 343a-b. On the Seven Sages and their association with such sayings see Martin 1993. For the sayings themselves see Stobaeus 3.1.173, citing from a collection by Demetrius of Phaleron, and Oikonomides 1987. For the Pythagorean Symbols, his *akousmata*, see Diog. Laert. 8.17. And see ch. 3 for the significance of their attribution.
[50] Martin 1993, 117-119; Russo 1997a, 50-51, defining emergent performance as "the optional and impromptu creative response to an important social and psychological situation"; and Lardinois 1997, emphasizing context and re-performance. Cf. Finnegan 1970, 407, quoting a Fante elder: "there is no proverb without the situation".
[51] Martin 1993, 113.
[52] For Plato's liberal and strategic habit of citing poetry, see Halliwell 2000. Plato was of course familiar with Theognidean poetry, quoting from it in *Gorgias*, *Meno* and *Laws*.

counterpart and that the "sum knowledge" of society was not expressed in strictly poetic language. Indeed, the most famous specimens of Greek wisdom, the Delphic maxims, were encapsulated in prose.

As is generally the case today, one could hardly pretend to present a proverb as one's own words, because gnomic language stands out in its artfulness.[53] Socrates' proverb, for instance, relied for some of its effect on quasi-rhyme (καλόν-φίλον). As a further example we will take the most famous Greek gnomic utterance, inscribed on the temple of Apollo in Delphi: γνῶθι σεαυτόν.[54] Apparently pedestrian in form, it is in fact the product of exquisitely delicate art, its structure iconically reflecting its content. The precept is reflexive, signifying an action which originates in a subject and is directed towards an object which is identical to it, yet in being acted upon is in some way transformed. The acoustic structure of the maxim corresponds to its syntax: the opening cluster, *nōt*^{h}-,[55] is echoed in the final syllable, slightly adapted and reversed: -*ton*. This same movement, forward then backward to the starting point, slightly adjusted, is true for the string of consonants as well as the sequence of vowels, both of which consist of five members. Within the outer frame of opening and closing /n/, /t^{h}/ pairs with /t/, enclosing /s/ in the middle. All five short Greek vowels are represented in this utterance, and their progression roughly traces the vowel diagram: starting with the middle back (long) /o/, moving forward to high front /i/, then backwards

[53] Russo 1983 provides a wealth of examples, and see also Russo 1997a, 54. Russo 1983, 125, and following him Lardinois 2001, 102, concede that many such utterances have no particularly artful structure, but Russo goes on to demonstrate their use of figurative language, which is a different – linguistically non-ordinary – means of achieving a similar effect. Cf. Finnegan 1970, ch. 14, emphasizing marked figurative language of African proverbs. It is enough, for the purposes of this argument, that some of these sayings are artfully structured. Aristotle fr. 13 (Rose) explicitly recognized this, attributing the preservation of ancient sayings to their form.

[54] On the maxim's echoes in classical literature, as well as its much later afterlife, see Wilkins 1929. See pp. 8-9 for ancient speculation concerning its author.

[55] For eliding /g/ cf. γινώσκω and γίνομαι, attested from the 3rd century BCE (Smyth §89), and in the Latin cognate *noscere* (also *nobilis, notus*, but *ignoscere, ignobilis, ignotus*). Early Modern English provides further examples of the transformation of the initial cluster /gn/, e.g. 'gnaw' and of course 'gnome' to /n/. The inverse of course would not be /ng/ but rather /ŋ/, which also easily becomes /n/, e.g. in varieties of the English gerund (sayin', runnin', etc.).

- /e/ then /a/, /u/, and finally back to middle (short) /o/.[56] This structure would be very familiar to an audience well-versed in oral verbal art: it is an instance of ring composition, practiced on exceptionally small scale. As an utterance, the two-word Delphic maxim is in this sense isomorphic with the entire *Iliad*, whose treatment of Achilles' initial wrath comes full circle at the end of book 24.[57]

For good reason, then, Russo describes such gnomic sayings as "the equivalent of complete little poems".[58] In fact, γνῶθι σεαυτόν is metrical: its last four syllables form a paroemiac close (⏑⏑-x), which has been called the oldest Greek meter.[59] Indeed, by omitting the first syllable from metrical analysis, γνῶθι σεαυτόν appears to conform with exceptionally archaic principles of versification, before metrical regularity, originally restricted to the end of the line, was regressively imposed on the entire unit.[60] André Lardinois has shown that the language of gnomic sayings (in verse) indeed has distinct Indo-European roots, evident in the use of the gnomic aorist, "epic" τε and the preposed relative clause.[61] If, on the other hand, the first syllable is included in the analysis, γνῶθι σεαυτόν forms an adonic, itself a conservative cola. But an adonic is not an autonomous

[56] Katz 2009, 79-84, discusses the propensity of Latin poets to begin their works with incipits encompassing the "vocalic gamut" (as well as the broader Mediterranean context of this technique); this prose example nicely complements his comments on the use of this technique in Greek in Katz 2019, 165 and 167-68, as well as Katz 2013a, 20-21 n. 50, citing Pindar *Ol.* 1.1: Ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ, with references.
[57] See Bakhtin 1986, for the equivalence of such units as "utterances", and Jakobson 1987c for analysis of similarly small-scale units. The reader will remember we have already noted the occurrence of ring composition in Vedic oral prose. On ring composition generally, Watkins 1995, 34: "this device, sometimes with more complex 'nesting' of recurrences, is an extraordinarily widespread compositional technique in the archaic Indo-European world"; and in the *Iliad*, on the correspondences between books 1 and 24, Macleod 1982, 32-35. For a two-word Greek phrase in which the second member of the pair similarly inverts the acoustic structure of the first, though in precisely the opposite pattern, excluding the first and last syllables, cf. the ritual cry τήνελλα καλλίνικε, on which see Porta 1999, 154-55. For an alternative view of ring composition see Bakker 1997, 119-121, with references to earlier literature.
[58] Russo 1983, 123.
[59] On the paroemiac close and its importance for the reconstruction of Indo-European metrics, see Watkins 1963. It is not clear that there is any justification for speaking of a "paroemiac meter", for which see Lardinois 2001, 103, quoting Hephaestion of the 2nd century CE, who was already suspicious of the term.
[60] West 1973a, 184-85, estimating this to have taken place prior to 1500 BCE; also Gasparov 1996, ch. 4.
[61] Lardinois 2001. One could see gnomic language in Homer as a "subgenre" of epic, with its own particular diction, equivalent to the "subgenre of similes" discussed in Martin 1997, esp. 152-53, or the linguistic differences between Homeric narrative and speeches (Kelly 1990).

poetic unit, unlike stichic meter; it is a building block of Aeolic stanzas or strophes. Similarly, μηδὲν ἄγαν can open a hexameter (e.g. Diogenes Laertes 1.41), but it does not independently constitute a metrical unit. The two may have originally been composed metrically, but synchronically they were not recognized as verse and, more broadly, among the Delphic maxims the paroemiac and meter generally is infrequent.[62] As it is not clear precisely what kind of poetry γνῶθι σεαυτόν could be, from an emic point of view, since it had no recognizably poetic occasion,[63] it might be better to say that synchronically, at least, prose could incorporate meter, or that it could be composed using meter.

We should already be wary of the temptation to call "poetry" forms which have properties traditionally considered "poetic". We have seen that oral Irish prose employed formulae, for example. Lardinois' work suggests that proverbs were similarly composed formulaically, by employing such constructions as (οὐ) χρή + infinitive, or ἄμεινον + infinitive.[64] "Formula" is more typically associated in classics with meter, but formulaicity – that is, the use of stylized speech units – is in fact characteristic of oral discourse, of language, generally.[65] Some have proposed, quite attractively, that formula begot meter, in which case oral prose could be said to have in fact predated metrical poetry(!)[66] – but we need not go that far. It is enough to say that we have no grounds to think that either poetry or prose necessarily preceded the other or was parasitical on the

[62] In the first two columns of the reconstructed 3rd c. BCE text of the Seven Sages' commandments in Oikonomides 1987 only 6 out of 35, approximately one out of six, have a paroemiac close. Note also that the form γνῶθι σαυτόν, e.g. in Plat. *Hipp. Maj.* 229e, no longer scans. Wilkins 1929, 1-2, interestingly notes that γνῶθι σεαυτόν, μηδὲν ἄγαν and the third maxim inscribed on the temple at Delphi, ἐγγύα πάρα δ᾽ ἄτη, can – with synizesis in ἐγγύα – form a hexameter, a practice paralleled on other temples; this suggests that indeed they were not synchronically perceived as metrical units themselves and that they needed to be combined to attain metrical form.

[63] Note also that it is a melic cola; arguing that it was synchronically recognized as poetry would thus entail that it be sung.

[64] Lardinois 2001. We will shortly meet the ἄμεινον + infinitive construction again.

[65] See Wray 2002 in depth, esp. 13, 101, 261. Also Gray 1971; Watkins 1995, 18; and Bakker 1997, esp. 157ff. with references to earlier scholarship.

[66] O'Nolan 1969, Nagy 1974, ch. 6, and Nagy 1990b, ch. 2, and see also Bakker 1997, ch. 8 (*contra* Nagy 1990a, 46-47). Contrasting views are cited in Russo 1997b, 241 n.8.

other, but rather that as far back as we can responsibly go there was a more fluid field of early Greek verbal art from which practitioners of both poetry and prose would draw artistic techniques and devices, some of which may have been associated more with one than the other, while others such as ring composition were used in equal measure in both. The status of meter, as the regularization of rhythm, would be slightly ambiguous: it was not an essential property of archaic verse, which indeed could also be non-metrical; there is thus no difficulty in it also not being the exclusive property of verse. The idea of meter in prose should not appear particularly odd to us when we consider the occurrence of clausulae in classical prose, which perhaps should be seen as traditional.[67] We will see further instances of meter in oral prose later.

Returning to the value of the *kalos,* we might now hypothesize the way in which gnomic language in preliterate Greece was generated. First there was a general notion associating the *kalos* with value. At a certain point that notion, hitherto expressed in various forms, became particularly associated with the words καλόν and φίλον. Quasi-rhyme would have presented itself as a convenient way of providing an artistic structure to express this traditional idea. With the help of formulae, the associated idea and words could then be versified or "prosified", according to the occasion and the capabilities of the speaker.[68] We find just such a process described in the case of Hipparchus, who erected herms with gnomic sayings in the hope that they would supplant γνῶθι σεαυτόν and μηδὲν ἄγαν:

> … τῆς σοφίας τῆς αὐτοῦ, ἥν τ᾽ ἔμαθε καὶ ἣν αὐτὸς ἐξηῦρεν, ἐκλεξάμενος ἃ ἡγεῖτο σοφώτατα εἶναι, ταῦτα αὐτὸς ἐντείνας εἰς ἐλεγεῖον αὐτοῦ ποιήματα καὶ ἐπιδείγματα τῆς σοφίας ἐπέγραψεν

[67] E.g. Arist. *Rhet.* 3.8. Similarly, Nagy 1990a, 20, points out that recitative is not necessarily monotonous, and can feature some ("reduced") melody.

[68] It is instructive that in this case rhyme would render meter superfluous for the purpose of crafting an artistic form for the idea, though it could of course serve other needs. Cf. Gasparov 1996, 34, claiming that proverbs and other sayings, whose brevity precluded them from employing meter, by developing other forms of linguistic marking became "the propagator of phonetic ornament in all forms of verbal art… thus, however odd this may seem to the modern mind, rhymed prose appeared earlier than rhymed verse".

> … of his wisdom, that which he learned (from others) and that which he himself discovered, he selected those specimens which he considered most wise, and after putting them into elegiacs he inscribed his poems as testimonies of his wisdom. (Plat. *Hipparch*. 228d)

A similar phenomenon of double prose and verse versions can be found in a genre which constitutes the ultimate form of gnomic language, expressing the wisdom of the gods. Greek oracular speech is typically thought of as poetic and as textual; it is doubtful whether either is true.[69] When Greek oracles expressed themselves verbally they most famously did so in verse, typically – though not exclusively – hexameter; indeed, Delphi, the most famous of the Greek oracles, was considered by some in antiquity the birthplace of hexameter.[70] Epigraphical evidence, however, particularly ample in the case of Dodona, contradicts the notion that this could have been true universally and casts grave doubt on the idea of the Pythia as poet.[71] Perhaps the earliest historical evidence for oracular speech, an early sixth-century inscription from Didyma, is in fact in prose.[72] It was identified as an oracle by virtue of the signature formula, λῷον καὶ ἄμεινον ("[it is] better and preferable [to…]"). The redundant phrase, introducing one of the two kinds of

[69] Flower 2008, 219, argues that oracular speech would have been transmitted verbatim. But cf. Maurizio 1997 for the view that oracles constituted a non-textual tradition and that there were no *ipsissima verba*, and from a different, broader point of view, Luraghi 2014, 247-250, summarized on pp. 250-251: "Autenticità in questo quadro significava conformità al contenuto del messaggio di Apollo, non coincidenza letterale con le parole proferite dalla Pizia". Similarly, Ong 1982, 57-68; Finkelberg 1998, 123; Thomas 1989, 47, is dubious of even a fifth-century concept of accuracy. Cf. Pelliccia 2003, and also Bers 1997, 15, pointing out that prophecy is almost always in *oratio recta* in Homer and lyric poetry.

[70] Paus. 10.5.7-8, Plut. *de pyth*. 17, Pliny *NH* 7.205 (but cf. Critias 88 B3 DK, attributing its invention to Orpheus, and Democritus 68 B16 DK, for Musaeus). For the use of other meters, see Fontenrose 1978, 237. Thus Nagy 1990a, ch. 6, takes it for granted that prophecy and poetry are related. From a comparative perspective, it is interesting that in Semitic traditions this is not self-evident: the Bible and its earliest Jewish exegetes sought to separate the two, and in early Islam the distinction between the two was insisted upon emphatically. See Kugel 1990 and Zwettler 1990, respectively. For Delphi as a fount of gnomic language more broadly, specifically in prose, see Tell 2007, 265-66.

[71] For Dodona, see an overview of the evidence in Luraghi 2014, 237-239, and for collections of the Dodona oracles see Lhôte 2006, and most fully Dakaris, Vokotopoulou and Christidis 2013. For Didyma, Fontenrose 1988.

[72] *Milet I 3*.178, R1 in Fontenrose 1988. It is oddly neglected by Dillery 2005, 225-26. For the great *rhetra*, generally thought to predate 600 BCE, see below.

traditional questions typically addressed to the oracle,[73] not only is representative of the formulaic nature of oracular speech but also attests to the artistic nature of the formulae themselves. With its opening and closing sonorants and mirroring /*o*/ vowels, alternating as in the case of γνῶθι σεαυτόν between long and short, *lōion* has a near-palindromic quality.[74] In addition to the semantic link, *ameinon* is tied to *lōion* also phonetically, via homoioteleuton (*-on*), which at the same time serves to again form ring composition with the opening *lo-*. For the purpose of such phonetic indexing it is of course important that this oracular formula not only is composed of lexemes but must be situated in the same syntactic construction, just as verse formulae will appear in a particular metrical environment. While partaking of the traditional poetics of ring composition, *lōion kai ameinon* is however distinct from verse formulae in strikingly allowing hiatus.[75]

Nino Luraghi has convincingly argued that there were no verse oracles even at Delphi, and that literary verse oracles constituted a separate tradition from the much shorter and perfunctory prose oracles.[76] For our purposes it is enough that some archaic oracles were composed in prose, as we have seen, but it is also significant that even if there were a verse/prose divide, it would not map onto the literary/epigraphic distinction. Even in Herodotus oracular speech can be represented as prosaic: Herodotus has the Pythia responding to Arcesilaus (4.163) and the Cretans (7.169) in extended prose speeches, speaking in prose to Croesus' messengers (1.91), and he also reports prose speech emerging from the *adyton* in Didyma (1.159). It is quite significant that as prestigious an oracle as the foundational Lycurgan *rhetra* (Plut. *Lyc.* 6), even if it came to be interpreted as an

[73] On the linguistic forms of oracular consultation and their stability, see e.g. Amandry 1950, ch. 14. This is true for the more recent finds as well, for which see Luraghi 2014, 238.
[74] The maxim was itself attributed to the oracle at Delphi. See Parke-Wormell 1956, PW423, or Fontenrose 1978, Q77, for the sources. It of course matters little whether it specifically qualifies as a "palindrome" or not; the point is that its structure is artistic.
[75] West 1982, 15: "hiatus after καὶ is rare [in verse]… it obviously tended to be pronounced rather quickly, and before a vowel almost automatically suffered correption or synecphonesis". This perhaps tells us something about the performance of prose.
[76] Luraghi 2014 and Luraghi forthcoming.

oracle as late as the fourth century, was reported in prose.[77] What is, however, interesting is that Tyrtaeus (4 *IEG*) was thought to have reported part of the *rhetra* in verse (elegiacs!); similarly, while Herodotus had the Pythia addressing Lycurgus, presumably as a preface to the *rhetra*, in verse (1.65), Xenophon reported her speech as prose (*Apol*. 15). Such doublets are not at all rare and raise the question: what was the motivation for versifying prose oracles?[78] And, for our purposes, what does this peculiar practice which Luraghi has described as a case of "cognitive dissonance" reveal about the contemporary conceptions of verse and prose?[79] Significantly, by the fourth century the dearth of verse oracles appears to have already been a source of concern in Greek society, long before Plutarch.[80] This is a curious cultural practice which deserves more attention, but what is important here is that at least some Greeks knew firsthand that oracles at least occasionally spoke prose, and that even literary representations of their speech as prosaic did not offend Greek sensibility. It was patently the case, then, that as in India in Greece too divine revelation could come, in real life as in literature, in prose.[81]

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[77] For a recent and in-depth study of the *rhetra*, denying the association of the Tyrtaeus fragment with it, see Nafissi 2010.

[78] There appears to be no reason to assume de-versification (as opposed to paraphrase) of verse oracles. It is worth noting that one and the same oracle can at times consist of both verse and prose: Demosthenes reported an oracle from Delphi, of uncertain date, which began in hexameter and ended in prose (21.52, followed by a corresponding prose oracle from Dodona).

[79] The broader context of verse oracles in fifth-century Greece importantly also includes oracles circulating freely, not moored to any particular occasion, which were collected and also performed by *chrēsmologoi*. Some material on this phenomenon can be found in Dillery 2005. Important, too, is the representation of oracles as hexametric in comedy (e.g. West 1982, 98). For the description of this practice as "cognitive dissonance", see Luraghi forthcoming. It is perhaps worth comparing this "cognitive dissonance" with a similar kind of "cognitive dissonance" which Dillery 2005, 224, diagnoses in relation to the Greek attitude to *post-eventum* oracles.

[80] FGrH 115 F 336 = Plut. *de pyth.* 19. For discussion of the fragment, see Luraghi 2014, 243-44. Luraghi suggests that it is most plausible to read this testimony as evidence of Theopompus' intervention in a debate among historians, but Theon's report on Theopompus suggests that this debate was not primarily historical: τοῖς μὴ νομίζουσι κατὰ τὸν τότε χρόνον ἔμμετρα τὴν Πυθίαν θεσπίζειν (ibid.). It seems to me more economical to reconstruct the debate as follows: everyone in fourth-century Greece knew oracles were typically given in prose, the question was whether any were given in verse, and Theopompus – who is not presented here necessarily as a historian, but as a specialist on "the oracle" – found little evidence for this. We should of course wonder exactly how much confidence we should have in Theon and Plutarch as sources on Theopompus. As Luraghi 2014, 247-48, notes, it is significant that during the fourth century *chrēsmologoi* also largely disappear from the scene.

[81] On the language of the oracle as divine, Maurizio 1998. Plutarch raises the question whether the Pythia's speech is in fact the god's speech, or rather a translated version of it which has been made intelligible to mortals (*de pyth.* 21-

Ritual prose

In order to better understand how prose oracles were composed we turn to the language the Greeks used to address the gods. It is a commonplace in scholarship that the structure of Greek religion, its non-specialized priests and its integration in the polis, did not encourage the development of "elaborate" ritual texts, and that what was done, the *drōmena*, mattered more than *legomena*, what was said.[82] One wonders, however, in light of the importance of verbal art in Indo-European society, whether this impression is not due simply to the relatively paltry remains of Greek ritual language. That the Greeks were not invested in its preservation, in the way they were in the preservation of other texts, should not necessarily be taken to signify that they were not invested in the language itself. This perception, I suggest, rather derives from two prejudices of modern scholarship, which following the template of the major modern monotheistic religions privileges "fixed" over "free" prayer and, understanding survival as exclusively correlated with significance, grants primacy to metrical poetry to the exclusion of other forms of verbal art.

Evidence for fixed Greek prayers, as for Greek ritual utterances generally, is indeed limited.[83] Fred Porta in a 1999 Harvard dissertation did the discipline the invaluable, unrecognized service of collecting a vast amount of material pertaining to the *ipsissima verba* of Greek ritual. His discussion of a rare candidate for fixed Greek prayer, an Athenian prayer for rain, is however representative and symptomatic. Marcus Aurelius identifies the following as an Athenian prayer:

> ῞Υσον, ὗσον, ὦ φίλε Ζεῦ,
> κατὰ τῆς ἀρούρας
> τῆς Ἀθηναίων καὶ τῶν πεδίων.

22). Would this view have been current in archaic Greece as well? In Theognis 807-808 the Pythia is said to σημήνῃ ὀμφὴν θεοῦ, which of course needs to be interpreted with Heraclitus (DK 22 F 93) in mind. But this would be equally true of verse oracles as well.

[82] Parker 1996, 54; more fully Henrichs 1998.

[83] Henrichs 2003, 43, and 58: "with few exceptions… the entire oral dimension of Greek religion… has vanished without a trace." The exceptions, I think, are more than few.

Rain, Rain, dear Zeus, upon the Athenians' fields and plains (Med. 5.7).

Porta shows that the first two lines, with certain not implausible adjustments, can be read as a dactylic hexameter, as can the final line, though less comfortably.[84] The same is true, Porta demonstrates with philological acumen, for very many ritual utterances. The problem is that he resorts to the tactic of fitting Greek ritual utterances into the Procrustean bed of traditional Greek meter with extraordinary frequency: utterance after utterance must be adjusted in some form or another, even emended, in order to fit this or that meter.[85] It seems far more likely, not to mention economical, to posit that Greek ritual poetics employed traditional rhythmic patterns without conforming to standard meters.[86] The surviving evidence thus has not been corrupted, nor is it deficient; rather, it represents a separate, independent poetics, one which in fact constitutes the Greek reflex of the aforementioned tradition of "strophic poetry" which Watkins showed can be found throughout the Indo-European tradition. Porta, then, reflecting the implicit perception that epic and perhaps also lyric traditions were all the verbal art pre-literate Greece had to show for itself, had it the wrong way round: approaching ritual language from the vantage point of metrical poetics, he sought to make specimens of ritual language fit literary models, rather than considering literary models and their perfectly tailored meters to be idealized versions of ritual language. Such idealizations come in forms large, such as full-fledged hymns,[87] or small, when playwrights fit Greek ritual utterances into metrical molds.

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[84] Porta 1999, 192-94.
[85] It is enough to survey the utterances in Porta 1999, ch. 3, for instance.
[86] Cf. Watkins 1963, 202-204. This goes well with the development of poetry out of song outlined in Nagy 1990a, ch. 1, esp. pp. 50-51.
[87] On the distinction between hymns which served for cult and idealized, "theatrical" or "literary" versions of the latter, see Furley and Bremer 2001, 37-40. The Homeric hymns, for instance, were "not cult hymns in any real sense" (ibid. 43). Might the much later hymns in prose suggest that it should not be taken for granted that their form is verse (cf. Porta 1999, 218)?

Occasionally, they did not fit: in Aristophanes there are ritual formulae which are incorporated *extra metrum*: σπονδὴ σπονδή εὐφημεῖτε εὐφημεῖτε (Ar. *Pax* 433-4) and εὐφημεῖτε εὐφημεῖτε (Ar. *Ach.* 237, 341).[88] These instances are striking because what we may call the metrical illusion of Greek drama, namely that all speech is metrical, is rarely violated.[89] When it is, the violation is not arbitrary. Aristophanes is not incorporating ritual utterances *extra metrum* in spite of their ill-fitting form, which could easily have been accommodated. (Tragedians, for instance, employed a single εὐφημεῖτε, though there is good reason to think the repetitive version was more representative of ritual practice). Comedians not only were allowed to indulge in such violations, they flaunted them: at *Birds* 864-88 and *Thesmophoriazusae* 295-311 Aristophanes departs from the metrical convention for what amounts to a staggering 20(!) lines of text. Both are prayers.

In *Birds*, Peisetairos instructs the priest to commence sacrificing to the new gods. The priest assents and begins with prayer, employing traditional formulae and structure as he calls a list of gods to attend the sacrifice.[90] One cannot explain Aristophanes' use of prose by dint of the difficulty of rendering a list in poetry, in light of the well-established tradition of catalogue poetry. The list is set in sharper relief by Peisetairos' regular interruptions of the priest's invitation, which are themselves in meter.[91] Indeed, at *Thesmophoriazusae* 331-34 we find an exhortation to pray, followed by a list of gods, in verse. While in *Birds* Peisetairos cuts the priest off, leaving us with only the traditional preface to prayer, earlier in *Thesmophoriazusae* Crytilla completes a prose prayer, parodying that which opened the Athenian assembly, uninterrupted:

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[88] Porta 1999, 42-44.
[89] Tragedy allows such violation only for the expression of heightened emotion, in very short spurts, primarily in order to represent the character's agitation; these expressions do, however, exhibit metrical regularity to a certain extent. See West 1982, 78.
[90] On the structure of prayers see below. Dunbar 1995, ad loc.: "… these 'bidding prayers' pronounced by the priest are in prose, as in real life".
[91] Note also the artistry of the list, as demonstrated by Dunbar 1995, 514, in reference to the "deliberate sound pattern" structuring the list at 882-888.

> εὐφημία ἔστω, εὐφημία ἔστω. εὔχεσθε ταῖν Θεσμοφόροιν, καὶ τῷ Πλούτῳ, καὶ τῇ Καλλιγενείᾳ, καὶ τῇ Κουροτρόφῳ, καὶ τῷ Ἑρμῇ, καὶ <ταῖς> Χάρισιν, ἐκκλησίαν τήνδε καὶ σύνοδον τὴν νῦν κάλλιστα καὶ ἄριστα ποιῆσαι, πολυωφελῶς μὲν <τῇ> πόλει τῇ Ἀθηναίων, τυχηρῶς δ᾽ ὑμῖν αὐταῖς. καὶ τὴν δρῶσαν καὶ ἀγορεύουσαν τὰ βέλτιστα περὶ τὸν δῆμον τὸν Ἀθηναίων καὶ τὸν τῶν γυναικῶν, ταύτην νικᾶν. ταῦτ᾽εὔχεσθε, καὶ ὑμῖν αὐταῖς τἀγαθά. ἰὴ παιών, ἰὴπαιών, ἰὴ παιών. χαίρωμεν.
>
> Observe ritual silence; ritual silence please! Offer your prayers to the Twain Thesmophorian Goddesses, to Wealth, to Calligeneia, to the Nurse of the Young, to Hermes and to the Graces, that this assembly and today's convocation be conducted in the finest and most excellent manner, to the great benefit to the city of Athens and with good fortune for you yourselves. And may she have the victory whose actions and whose counsel best serve the Athenian Commonwealth and the Women's Commonwealth. Be this your prayer, and for yourselves all good things. Ié Paion, ié Paion, ié Paion! Cheers to us![92] (trans. Henderson)

There appears to be no recourse but to interpret the highly marked departures from meter as an attempt to more closely represent ritual practice. It is remarkable that the everyday language of iambic trimeter was evidently felt to be inadequate for representing prayers.[93] Perhaps even more remarkably, iambs were not abandoned in favor of the hexameters of hymn, for example, "the most grave and solemn meter",[94] nor any other form of verse. Meter was rather abandoned altogether, which is especially significant: so inadequate was metrical poetry to represent prose that the playwright, whose task was to craft metrical language, in effect momentarily stepped aside and uniquely left language alone.[95] It appears then not to be a form of "poetic license" but rather an

[92] Austin and Olson 2004, ad loc.: "the prayer is doubtless modelled closely on the one pronounced by the Herald at the beginning of real assemblies".
[93] Arist. *Poetics* 1449a23-27: λέξεως δὲ γενομένης αὐτὴ ἡ φύσις τὸ οἰκεῖον μέτρον εὗρε· μάλιστα γὰρ λεκτικὸν τῶν μέτρων τὸ ἰαμβεῖόν ἐστιν· σημεῖον δὲ τούτου, πλεῖστα γὰρ ἰαμβεῖα λέγομεν ἐν τῇ διαλέκτῳ τῇ πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ἑξάμετρα δὲ ὀλιγάκις καὶ ἐκβαίνοντες τῆς λεκτικῆς ἁρμονίας. Also *Rhet.* 1408b. Cf. Faraone 2011, 197, regarding rare dactylic hexameters in comedy, parodying hexametric incantations, and West 1982, 98, for oracles, riddles, etc.
[94] Arist. *Poetics* 1459b33-34: τὸ γὰρ ἡρωικὸν στασιμώτατον καὶ ὀγκωδέστατον τῶν μέτρων ἐστίν.
[95] Even for Aristotle, who protests the equation of *poiēsis* with meter, though meter is not a sufficient condition for *poiēsis*, meter is a necessary condition.

obligatory comic convention, practiced by Archippus and reportedly Eupolis and others.[96] It is all the more marked considering that even when the comic author sought to portray a character's loss of control, the poet did not resort to prose but rather remained in meter: agitated, "breathless" speech in Aristophanes broke out of the confines of tetrameter but remained iambic or trochaic.[97]

It is thus striking that of all speech acts, it is specifically the sacred language of prayer for which comic convention violated the metrical illusion. According to at least one strand of Greek religious thought, prayers were meant to be simple: Pythagoras is reported to have advocated praying simply (ἁπλῶς, Diod. 10.9.8), a practice which Socrates is said to have followed (ἁπλῶς, Xen. *Mem*. 1.3.2).[98] The simplicity of Pythagoras and Socrates' prayers appears to consist primarily in their generality, in abstractly asking for τἀγαθά rather than specifying their wishes, but stylistic simplicity better suits the broader context of modesty common to both anecdotes. Both are told as part of the argument that ample financial resources are not a prerequisite for effective prayer. If anyone, then, can make requests of the gods in a worthy manner, the clear implication is that advanced linguistic resources, namely the specialized skills of poets, are not a prerequisite either.

Prose need not necessarily be more simple than poetry, of course. The stylistic simplicity ascribed to prayers rather lies in their conventionality. It is their conventional nature which allows

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[96] Eup. *PCG* 401 = Sch. Ar. *Eq*. 941: … ἐπίτηδες δὲ διαλελυμένως μιμούμενος τὸν πεζὸν λόγον. ἔστι δὲ πολλὰ καὶ παρ᾽ Εὐπόλιδι σεσημειωμένα. Sch. Ar. *Thes*. 295b: πεζῇ χρῶνται οἱ κωμικοί, ἐπειδὰν εὐχὴν ἢ ψήφισμα εἰσάγωσιν. Archippus fr. 27 will be discussed later.

[97] See West 1982, 93-94 and 131, for discussion and examples.

[98] See Porta 1999, 192, and for more on Greek attitudes to prayer, Pulleyn 1999, ch. 10. Interestingly, like Socrates and Pythagoras, Jesus too emphasizes simplicity before uttering the Lord's Prayer, see Matthew 6:7. He distinguishes his own prayer from those of οἱ ἐθνικοί, who are said to βαττολόγειν, which in conjunction with the πολυλογία ascribed to them at the end of the verse would appear to mean that they were wont to repeat themselves (by analogy with "stammering", see LSJ s.v. βαττολογέω). This fits well the idea of formulaic prayers developed below. Similarly, New Testament commentaries agree, when Jesus instructed his followers to pray οὕτως, he meant "in this way" not "in these words" (Albright and Mann 1971, 75; Davies and Allison 1988, 588, 599; Betz 1995, 370).

laypeople to produce them, too. There are different ways of understanding how public prayers were conducted, but there clearly were private prayers as well.[99] The *Timaeus,* for instance, where Socrates advises Timaeus to preface his discourse with an invocation of the gods, κατὰ νόμον (Plat. *Tim*. 27b), shows that prayers were a part of everyday life. Timaeus naturally acquiesced: "as all those who have even the slightest share of good sense always invoke the gods, at the outset of every undertaking, be it small or large" (ibid.). This scene demonstrates that the language of such prayers necessarily must have been able to accommodate spontaneous production on sundry occasions, and could hardly have been in any kind of systematic meter. The formulaic structure of prayers, which would enable their *ad hoc* production, is well attested in Greek literature: one starts by declaring the beginning of prayer, proceeds to invoke the gods, describe or flatter them, then explains why the gods' goodwill is deserved and finally makes a request. The following formula would produce a perfectly serviceable prayer:

1. ἄλλ᾽ εὐχώμεθα [gods in dative] καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις θεοῖς
2. κλῦθι/χαῖρε [vocative, perhaps doubled], [god's biography, with relative clause or participle, frequently superlatives]
3. [argumentum: *da quia dedisti*, etc.]
4. ἐλθέ/ἔρχεο καὶ νῦν δός [request][100]

These formulae can on occasion be adapted with great effort to fit standard Greek meters, but other times they simply cannot,[101] and these metrically heterogeneous units in any event do not form metrically homogenous poetry; they could occasionally be construed as "strophic poetry",

[99] Plat. *2 Alc*. 138b: … οὐκ οἴει τοὺς θεούς, ἃ τυγχάνομεν εὐχόμενοι *καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ*, ἐνίοτε τούτων τὰ μὲν διδόναι, τὰ δ᾽ οὔ … ("do you not think that the gods sometimes grant those things for which we pray, *in private and in public*, and sometimes do not?", emphasis mine). For public prayers, see Pulleyn 1997, 173ff.
[100] See, at length, Porta 1999, ch. 6, with variant formulae.
[101] E.g, in pouring libations, τίς τῇδε and πολλῶν κἀγαθῶν (Porta 1999, 57-58), or ritual cries such as μεγάλη ἡ Ἄρτεμις ἐφεσίων (ibid., 138-41) or ἄλαδε μύσται (ibid., 153-54).

but certainly not consistently, and this would indeed not fit the pragmatics of praying, which consisted of laypeople composing *ad hoc* prayers. It would be wrong, however, to see prose here as Godzich and Kittay saw it, as accommodating various forms of discourse, constituting a motley mix of poetic units; these are rather units of verbal art, at once metrical and prosaic. Prayers clearly demonstrate that prose was a form of *Kunstsprache*, composed of carefully crafted phrases like γνῶθι σεαυτόν, occasionally set in traditional rhythmic patterns. This language was not poetry because these rhythms did not combine to form one coherent rhythmical unit, neither metrical nor "strophic", but what we see here, again, is that metrical units were not foreign to prose.[102] Indeed, oral prose was no less capable of being metrical (not all poetry, we remember, employed meter), so long as that meter was not systematic and constitutive.

This discussion should also help us realize that the distinction between prayers which were "fixed" and those which were "free" was emically meaningless. In oral Greek culture – and we must remember that it remained in many respects oral long after the advent of writing – very little which was verbal was fixed, and what was, was only incidentally so.[103] Marked speech was neither fixed nor free, it was formulaic.

The same is true for other forms of ritual language in prose, which could range from virtually verbatim re-performance to re-composition more dependent on formulaic syntax. Ritual utterances such as the Chaeronia temple guard's cry – μὴ δοῦλον εἰσιέναι μὴ δούλαν μὴ Αἰτωλὸν μὴ Αἰτωλάν ("no slave nor Aetolian, male or female, may enter!") – probably exhibited little variation.[104] The metaphor employed by the Greek betrothal utterance, παίδων ἐπ᾽ ἀρότῳ ("for

[102] See also the embedded trimeter in Aristoph. *Birds* 1040-2 (Dunbar 1995, ad loc.). Cf. Bakker 1997, ch. 6.
[103] There is a temptation to understand Thucydides as referring to fixed prayers, when describing the public prayers held before the fleet set sail for Sicily as "customary" (εὐχὰς δὲ τὰς νομιζομένας, 6.32). The crowd was able to follow the κῆρυξ entrusted with leading the prayers because they essentially knew what he was going to say, not because the prayer was fixed, but because it was formulaic. Ferrari 2011 makes a similar case regarding the gold tablets.
[104] Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 16, and see Porta 1999, 276. The source is of course late, but the context shows that this utterance was highly traditional.

harvesting children"), shows remarkable stability, especially in its marked word order, in verse as well as prose, across Greek literature; its other components were probably more flexible.[105] The syntax of the *makarismos* was set, but its wording was certainly not: the relative clause identifying the one who was "blessed" naturally varied, as did the predicate, μάκαρ, μακάριος or ὄλβιος.[106] Of course, not all oral ritual language would have been in prose.[107] The oral traditions textualized in the Orphic gold tablets were in non-metrical "strophic verse", while spells, charms and incantations would have frequently been in hexameter.[108] Christopher Faraone argues persuasively for a tradition of hexametric incantations that goes back to the Bronze Age, but this tradition does not seem to tell the entire story: Faraone himself cites a very early prose curse.[109] The early-fifth-century public curses from Teos were in prose, the likes of which Lysias refers to as an "ancient and old custom" (τὸ νόμιμον τὸ παλαιὸν καὶ ἀρχαῖον, 6.51), as were the curses incorporated in the Amphictyonic oath.[110]

Curses were in fact an integral component of oaths. It is rarely noted in scholarship on Greek oaths that they were in prose; a recent study of their language surveyed oaths expressed in poetry and prose, without noting that most of its corpus consisted of literary representations of oaths.[111] Epigraphic evidence, however, points to oaths being sworn in prose.[112] There is in fact

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[105] See Porta 1999, 277-78.
[106] See the discussion in Porta 1999, 343-347, emphasizing its antiquity.
[107] It should also be noted that some of this language, the context of whose performance we do not always precisely know, may have been regularly sung, though this would affect only a small number of the texts we are discussing. On the relation between prose and song see again the introduction.
[108] For the gold tablets as strophic poetry, see Watkins 1995, ch. 26, and for their oral background Ferrari 2011, and Faraone 2011 and Faraone 2013 for the oral background of hexameter incantations.
[109] Faraone 1996, 111. *IG* 12.1.737, Rhodian tomb, early sixth century: σᾶμα τόζ' Ἰδαμενεὺς ποίησα *h*ίνα κλέος εἴη· Ζεὺ<δ> δέ νιν ὅστις πημαίνοι λειόλη θείη. For the close relationship between incantations and curses, Faraone 1996, 82, and in greater detail Faraone 1999, 49ff.
[110] For the *Dirae Teiae*, OR 102. The Amphictyonic oath is preserved in Aeschines 3.111.
[111] Sommerstein and Torrance 2014, ch. 5.
[112] E.g. ML 40, ML 45, ML 47, ML 52, OR 107, OR 146, etc. The most famous example of an oath whose *ipsissima verba* have been preserved is the Hippocratic Oath (for its relation to other oaths see Sommerstein and Torrance 2014, ch. 14).

no evidence for versified oaths; the many oaths in Homer and tragedy thus cannot be interpreted except as stylized, versified representations of prose.[113] It is thus telling that as in the case of prayer Aristophanes, when he wants to represent a heliastic oath at *Knights* 941, abruptly departs from meter. Our evidence of course postdates the advent of writing, but there can be no doubt regarding the antiquity of the ritual,[114] or that it was conceived as a distinct speech act: in the *Titanomachy* (fr. 13) Chiron instructs the human race how to take oaths, which in the *Theogony* (231-32) are personified as a god, Horkos.

The earliest attestation of the actual language of Greek oaths can be found at the end of a marble stele from Cyrene. The stele is itself from the fourth century, but the language inscribed upon it is clearly much older:[115]

> ἐπὶ τούτοις ὅρκια ἐποιήσατο οἵ τε αὐτεῖ μένοντες καὶ οἱ πλέοντες οἰκίξοντες καὶ ἀρὰς ἐποιήσαντο τὸς ταῦτα παρβεῶντας καὶ μὴ ἐμμένοντας ἢ τῶν ἐλ Λιβύαι οἰκεόντων ἢ τῶν αὐτεῖ μενόντων. κηρίνος πλάσσαντες κολοσὸς κατέκαιον ἐπαρεώμενοι πάντες συνενθόντες καὶ ἄνδρες καὶ γυναῖκες καὶ παῖδες καὶ παιδίσκαι· τὸμ μὴ ἐμμένοντα τούτοις τοῖς ὁρκίοις ἀλλὰ παρβεῶντα καταλείβεσθαί νιν καὶ καταρρὲν ὥσπερ τὸς κολοσός, καὶ αὐτὸν καὶ γόνον καὶ χρήματα, τοῖς δὲ ἐμμένοισιν τούτοις τοῖς ὁρκίοις καὶ τοῖς πλέοισι ἐλ Λιβύαν κ[αὶ] τ[οῖς μέ]νοισι ἐν Θήραι ἦμεν πολλὰ καὶ ἀγαθὰ καὶ αὐ[τοῖς καὶ γό]νοις.
>
> On these conditions a sworn agreement was made by those who stayed there and by those who sailed to found the colony, and they invoked curses against those transgressors who would not abide by it, whether they were those settling in Libya or those who remained. They made waxen images and burnt them, calling down the following curse, everyone having assembled together, men, women, boys, girls: "The person who does not abide by this sworn agreement but transgresses it shall melt away and dissolve like the images - himself, his descendants and his property; but those who abide by the sworn agreement -

[113] Similarly, Pindar and Aeschylus represent incantations in lyric meter, when we know them to have been composed mainly in hexameter or iambic trimeter, see Faraone 2011, 193.
[114] For a discussion of oaths in the *Iliad*, see e.g. Faraone 1993 and Berti 2006. See further, including its Indo-European roots, Benveniste 2016 (1969), 439-449 and 497-506. As an illuminating comparandum, see Porta 1999, 279-280, on the archaic language used in contemporary oaths in English, e.g. in court, and in the case of Greek see p. 284.
[115] See Faraone 1993, 61. Examples of other oaths which have much deeper roots are the Athenian ephebic oath and the oath of the Spartan sworn bands, for which see Sommerstein and Bayliss 2013, 13-29.

> those sailing to Libya and those staying in Thera - shall have an abundance of good things, both themselves and their descendants". (ML 5, 40-51, trans. ML)

The *ipsissima verba* preserved by the stele are specifically those of the conditional, or "automatic", curse which typically concluded Greek oaths.[116] The syntax of the curse distinguishes quite clearly between phrases which are formulaic, and would have lent themselves to re-performance, and those which are specific to the occasion. Among the former stand out the focalization of the two opposed actors, the person "who doesn't abide" and those "who do", followed by relative clauses sealed by phrases which ring formulaic, markedly structured by καί: καὶ αὐτὸν καὶ γόνον καὶ χρήματα, and in the second clause πολλὰ καὶ ἀγαθὰ καί etc. In contrast with this additive **καί** is the epexegetic καί (καὶ τοῖς πλέοισι ἐλ Λιβύαν καὶ τοῖς μένοισι ἐν Θήραι), in apposition to the initial τοῖς δὲ ἐμμένοισιν, which sets apart the relevant party syntactically, and in so doing also marks off what is particular to this oath from that which is conventional. Such oaths, independently composed though surely formulaic in form, would have been sworn, for example, by sixth-century Athenian litigants in a case of stalemate.[117] What facilitates the composition of oral prose in this case is the syntax we find in early inscribed oaths, typically stringing together clauses which are frequently isomorphic in structure. This can be shown quite clearly when, for example, we remove all particulars from the language of an oath imposed by the Athenians on the people of Chalcis during the second half of the fifth century, laying bare its formulaic structure:

> I shall not X either by A or B of any kind, either by word or deed. Nor shall I Y, and if anyone does Y, I shall Z. I shall M… (ML 52.21-26)[118]

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[116] Missing here are the invocations of the gods, which would have conventionally been uttered earlier. For the conventional structure of oaths, Sommerstein and Torrance 2014, ch. 5. For some of these formulae see Porta 1999, 279-93. We should also note that Greek oath-rituals, including their language, attest to demonstrable Near Eastern influence, for which see Faraone 1993 and Bachvarova 2007.

[117] Sommerstein and Bayliss 2013, 62, and more generally Sommerstein and Torrance 2014, 83-85.

[118] These lines in full: **οὐκ ἀπο[σ]τέσομαι ἀπὸ τοῖ [δ]έμο τοῖ Ἀθηναίον οὔτε τέ[χ]νει οὔτε μηχανεῖ οὐδεμιᾶι οὐδ' ἔπει οὐδὲ ἔργοι οὐδὲ τοῖι ἀφισταμένοι πείσομαι, καὶ ἐὰν ἀφιστεῖ τις κατερὸ Ἀθηναίοισι, καὶ τὸν φόρον huποτελὸ Ἀθηναίοισιν…**

This is of course the product of a partially literate society, but it is not hard to envision its oral forerunners, which would lend themselves to re-performance and -composition.

What is particularly striking about the Cyrene oath is the context of its performance. It has, in effect, two such contexts: the original one, in which the reported ritual was performed, as well as the oath's re-performance each time the inscription was read. Both contexts make clear that what we have here is indeed prose, language not merely directed at an interlocutor but rather fashioned as impersonally intelligible for a broader audience, even one significantly removed from it in time. For both audiences, however, this language did not perform its function alone; the verbal performance that constituted oaths as an occasion generally worked in tandem with other forms of ritual performance, notably sacrifices. As we approach the end of our discussion of ritual language and consider how easily prose worked with ritual, *as* ritual, we should see – as will already be clear from the preceding discussion of prayer – that there is no reason to accept the claim recently made by the *Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*, that prose had no "concrete performative religious context."[119]

A third, notional, audience of oaths was made up of the gods, who were witnesses to them. Here, then, after seeing that Greek gods expressed themselves in prose and were addressed in prose, we find a third form of divine contact with prose, in which the latter facilitates a channel of what Irene Berti has described as "contact with the sacred".[120] It is again striking that it is the language of prose which is used to establish the supreme authority of the oath, which was so formidable that it not only bound entire human communities but applied in the divine realm as well, as the gods would be punished for their violation (Hes. *Th.* 793-803).[121] It is also significant,

[119] Willey 2015, 69.
[120] Berti 2006, 205.
[121] Lycurgus, 1.79: "the power which keeps our democracy together is the oath". It is interesting in this context to consider Pausanias' description of the setting in which athletes and their retinue took their Olympic oaths. They

for reasons we will see later, that prose here is the language used by humans in the public sphere, presided over by the gods. The reason that prose is useful in the public sphere is clear: prose, in the Greek imagination, is no less capable of effecting change, of assuming a performative function. Its use in swearing binding oaths attests to the Greek belief in its efficacy in the present; its use for the expression of hypothetical curses betrays a belief in its efficacy in regard to the future as well.

The public use of prose might be important, too, as we return in conclusion to the question posed by the evidence for both oral verse and oral prose traditions of curses, and effective language more generally. As we are not specifically concerned with this genre, I do not want to further explore the precise boundaries between prose and verse curse traditions. The importance of their co-existence, at present, is that we again see that the borders between poetry and prose in oral Greece were not rigid. We should be skeptical, then, of the idea implicit in scholarship on Greek prose, that verse can do things which prose cannot: curses were evidently not set in hexameter because hexameter was exclusively considered to be effective language. Form, however, is significant, and we cannot simply brush aside the significance of their formal difference. We might tentatively suggest that the distinction was between the private and public use of effective language. Faraone argues that verse incantations were composed by poet-healers,[122] and the texts he discusses generally appear to serve the private ends of individuals. The prose curses which we have surveyed are of a public nature, and their composition did not require specialists.

We will return to this question in greater depth later. Moving along the spectrum of textuality, we now turn to long-form, non-textual oral prose.

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would stand beside Zeus Horkios, Pausanias writes, at whose feet was a bronze plate inscribed with elegiac verses whose purpose was to strike fear into their hearts (Pausanias, 5.24.11). There is no reason to think that their oath itself was in verse, but I find it interesting that prose and poetry are presented here as working together; that Pausanias notes that the poetry is specifically elegiac; and that while it is apparently prose which serves to legally bind them to their oaths, it is poetry which seems to ensure their adherence to them (as seen through the relatively late prism of Pausanias' view).

[122] Faraone 2011, 195.

Oratorical prose

The *Iliad* is a poem that is largely about prose. The war, the force, with which the poem is concerned is no less verbal than it is physical: nearly half of the *Iliad* is made up of direct speech,[123] which means that the language of much of the action in fact represents prose. *Pace* Nagy,[124] these speeches, by speakers who are not poets, though set in hexameter were meant by their composer to represent prose and were so understood by the audience. Demonstration of this will, in and of itself, also attest to the actual existence of such forms of oral prose in the same society, for which we will also see independent evidence.

Poetry in Homer was sung. Epic poetry, whether recited or sung,[125] through the figure of the *aoidos* was associated with song. Other recognizable poetic genres were also sung in the *Iliad*: the *humenaios* at weddings (18.493), the *thrēnos* at funerals (24.722), the Linus song in the field (18.570), paeans on the battlefield (22.391) and as part of ritual sacrifices (1.473), and there was also song at banquets (1.604). It thus appears that in Homer all poetry is sung.[126] Song in Homer is especially the preserve of specialists such as Phemius and Demodocus, who are set apart from their audiences in other ways as well,[127] but even when it is not they who are singing, song clearly

[123] Speeches make up 45% of the *Iliad*, and 68%(!) of the *Odyssey*, according to Schmid-Stählin 1929, 92.
[124] Nagy 1990b, 26-27 and Nagy 1996, 61 (and already Nagy 1979, 3) argues that through the Muses the bard channeled the *ipsissima verba* of the Heroic Age (cf. Havelock 1963, 109-11, arguing that the archaic ruler necessarily spoke in meter, and that Homeric hexameter is not merely conventional). While the bard is represented as conveying their exact words, this could equally be taken to signify that epic speeches are not direct quotations of the heroes but rather the heroes' speeches in the Muses' own words. None of the evidence Nagy adduces supports the specific argument that the Muses are reporting *ipsissima verba*. And consider the discussions regarding the Greeks' conception of verbal accuracy already referred to, Luraghi 2014, 247-250, and Finkelberg 1998, 123. Halliwell 2011, 56-57, argues against the image of the poet as "mouthpiece" of the Muse. García Teijeiro 2010, 35, asserts that Homeric characters spoke prose.
[125] See West 1981, 113-15, for the argument that it was sung, Nagy 1990a, 21-28, for the argument that it was recited but represented by way of "diachronic skewing" as sung.
[126] If Nagy is right that epic was recited (see above), as I think he is, the rhapsodes performing epic without singing would have been associated with the singing Homeric *aoidoi*, and the distinction between sung verse and non-sung verse would appear to have collapsed; it would then be particularly difficult to argue that Homeric heroes might be perceived as performing recited, non-sung verse, i.e. *rhapsōidia*. I am in any case unaware of any representation of recited, non-sung verse in Homer. It may also be worth noting, with Gentili 1988, 34, that there is no *aulōidia* in Homer.
[127] E.g, Walsh 1984, 15-16. Note also Nagy 1990a, 36 n. 102 regarding specialized song.

constitutes a special occasion. When Achilles sings (*Il*. 9.186-191), he does so to the lyre while seated; at the sight of the embassy he rises, which reflects the change in the pragmatics of his speech as he addresses his visitors.[128] When Odysseus takes over for Demodocus he notably is *not* said to sing, and is accompanied by no instrument; he is compared to a bard because he is not one, because the resemblance is not self-evident.[129] Song is thus represented in Homer as a pragmatically distinct action.[130] Clearly, then, the hexameters of Phemius and those of Odysseus would not have been perceived by an epic audience as representing the same kind of speech; the very fact that Odysseus is represented as speaking in hexameter is no indication that the audience would have imagined his character to have the capacity to speak hexameters. Rather, hexameter in Homer was a convention: everything was in hexameter, song and speech and narrative. Speech was similarly distinct from the language of narrative, both in its language as well as in the way Homer carefully delineated its boundaries, marking off speeches as self-contained units.[131]

It would thus be far more natural for the audience of Homeric epic and its composers to associate Homeric song with contemporary song culture, and similarly Odysseus' speech with contemporary speech genres.[132] Prose oratory from the fifth and fourth centuries would *prima facie* appear to provide very poor material for arguing for a tradition of oral prose oratory going back to

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[128] While amateur song is by no means infrequent in the *Iliad*, Achilles here really is almost bard-like. He is also the son of a goddess and displays exceptional linguistic virtuosity; for the latter, as well as his special relation to the composer of the *Iliad*, see Martin 1989, ch. 4-5.

[129] *Od*. 11.368, 17.518-21, also 21.406-9. See also Kirk 1962, 108-109, who hypothesizes a prose storytelling tradition which "may yet have had considerable thematic and even verbal fixity", and Edmunds 2002, 18-19. Goldhill 1991, 67, comments on the special relation of Odysseus and the composer of the *Odyssey*, which may be compared with Martin's argument regarding Achilles and the composer of the *Iliad*. Both Achilles and Odysseus are bard-like, but not bards (*contra* Goldhill 1991, 96).

[130] Like Achilles, Demodocus too is seated as he sings (8.65-66). To deliver prose one stands: see further regarding Thersites and Odysseus below. See Scodel 1998, though her focus is narrower and is restricted to narrative. See Finkelberg 1998, ch. 2, for the conception of song in relation to other activities in Homer.

[131] Griffin 1986, arguing for "two vocabularies" in Homer, one for speech the other for narrative, with an overview on prior scholarship on p. 36; again Kelly 1990; and Bers 1997, 10-18, on possible differences in performance as well as the demarcation of speeches.

[132] See Martin 1989, ch. 2, particularly 45, 85, also 225, and Scodel 1998, 176-77. Minchin 2002 employs psycholinguistic evidence to substantiate Martin's argument.

Homer, but it has recently been shown that there is impressive continuity between rhetorical practice in Homeric speeches and rhetorical theory in Aristotle, testifying to the existence of a longstanding systematic rhetorical tradition.[133] In light of the remarkable stability one finds in technique and conception, such a change in medium appears improbable. Forms of rhetorical argumentation in Greek verse abound, of course, but there appears to be little reason to see them as anything but versified representations of contemporary social practices.

Just as in Thucydides, for example, the language of classical oratory is represented as distinct from ordinary speech, so Homer too manifestly distinguishes marked from unmarked speech. It is enough to think of the distinctions drawn, for example, by Martin, between authoritative, public, marked *muthos* and private, unmarked *epos*; and by Bakker, between speeches which are "staged" as an epiphany and introduced by the hero's name and epithet, and those which are not.[134] What is important is that in Homer we find language structured according to the same scheme as that discussed in the introduction: there is ordinary unmarked speech, there is poetry (which in Homer is represented as sung), and there is marked speech which is not song, or poetry, i.e. prose. In epic the language used to speak publicly thus is clearly represented as a *Kunstsprache*, and it is inappropriate to use any other form of language when speaking publicly.

Odysseus more than once makes this clear. His rebuke of Euryalus in book 8 of the *Odyssey* shows that though the line between specialists and laypeople was not as strictly demarcated as in the domain of verse, a similar distinction applied to oratory: as *aoidoi* were taught songs by the gods, eloquence in speech (ἀγορητύς) was granted by the gods, even the Muses (Hes. *Th.* 80-103),

[133] Knudsen 2014. The correspondence between Aristotelian theory and Homeric practice is impressive because Homer does *not* serve as an explicit, programmatic model in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, see Knudsen 2014, 146-152.
[134] Martin 1989, ch. 1; Bakker 1997, ch. 7. Other such distinctions are not hard to come by: the scepter, for instance, similarly serves as a diagnostic device of "solemn" speech, for which see Combellack 1948 and below.

and one who excelled in speech was looked upon as a god (*Od*. 8.167-73).[135] Hence, like the battlefield, the *agora* was where men won distinction (*Il*. 1.490, 9.441), or had it denied of them. Thersites' thrashing by Odysseus signified his rejection as a public speaker, which is to say that he was rejected because he did not know how to speak prose. When Thersites is introduced in the *Iliad*, his qualities as a speaker are described first:

> Θερσίτης δ᾽ ἔτι μοῦνος ἀμετροεπὴς ἐκολῴα,
> ὃς ἔπεα φρεσὶ ᾗσιν ἄκοσμά τε πολλά τε ἤδη,
> μάψ, ἀτὰρ οὐ κατὰ κόσμον, ἐριζέμεναι βασιλεῦσιν,
> ἀλλ᾽ ὅ τί οἱ εἴσαιτο γελοίιον Ἀργείοισιν
> ἔμμεναι…
>
> Thersites alone continued to spread dissension without measure,
> Thersites who in his mind knew many disorderly words
> for challenging kings, recklessly and without order,
> rather (said) whatever seemed to him would be funny to the Argives (*Il*. 2.212-216).

Much is made of the description of his physical appearance, but it only comes after his characterization as a speaker, as does the reference to his social standing.[136] Then comes his speech which, as has been noted often, echoes Achilles' criticism of Agamemnon (1.148-71, 225-44). The difference between the greatest hero and the most pitiful of Homeric characters, both of whom express the same views, lies rather in the form of their speeches. This is reflected in the overwhelming amount of attention paid to Thersites' rhetorical qualities, and the abundance of terms used to characterize them. It would have been clear to Homer's audience that Thersites' performance was in no way pleasurable: the narrator describes him as screeching shrilly (ὀξέα κεκλήγων, 2.222) and shouting loudly (μακρὰ βοῶν, 2.224). His language itself was marred by "massive correption" and synizesis, Martin has noted, suggesting that the audience would have

[135] See Solmsen 1954 (ibid., 1: "'To be a speaker of words and a doer of deeds' is the most concentrated formulation of Homer's heroic ideal"). For *aoidoi* being taught song by the gods in the *Odyssey* see e.g. 17.518-19, 22.347-48.
[136] On the relation between Thersites' appearance and his speech see Lowry 1991, which is in some respects problematic.

received the impression that Thersites' speech was slurred.[137] Odysseus, the consummate speaker, the policeman of prose, responds by characterizing his speech as ἀκριτόμυθος, as lacking judgment, as inept at performing *muthos*, though also, most curiously, as λιγύς (2.246). Finally, after being forcefully made to sit, the people agree: Thersites is a λωβητὴρ ἐπεσβόλος, one who in throwing about his words commits an outrage. The multiple privative alphas in particular imply the existence of recognized standards for the language of public speaking: it should be measured and judicious, controlled and organized (not ἀμετροεπής, πολλά, ἀκριτόμυθος, ἐπεσβόλος, ἄκοσμα), thereby being socially responsible (not οὐ κατὰ κόσμον). By contrast, Thersites' ineffective (μάψ) and reckless speech, lacking in solemnity and decorum (λωβητήρ, γελοίιον), poses a threat to social order (ἐκολῴα, ἐριζέμεναι βασιλεῦσιν).

The correlation of prose and social order is key. Odysseus strikingly concedes that Thersites' speech is *ligus*, a term otherwise used to characterize the song of the Muses and the Sirens, the music of the lyre, the speech of Nestor. But that quality is not sufficient to authorize his speech.[138] It is significant that the beginning of the *Iliad* is concerned with a crisis of hierarchy and political stability, symbolized by Achilles' violently throwing down the *skēptron* (1.245). The *skēptron*, signifying the right to address the assembly, would be closely associated with the language of that institution, oratorical prose, which by implication is then associated with social order. Divine in origin – like oratorical prose – the *skēptron* is subsequently used by Agamemnon to deceive the people (2.100-109), and the army nearly disintegrates.[139] Thersites addressing the

[137] Martin 1989, 109-13.

[138] For the Muses, e.g., *Od*. 24.62 and Alcman 14a (for a full list see Maslov 2016, 430 n. 66); the Sirens – Alcman 30; the lyre – *Il*. 9.186, *Od*. 8.67; Nestor – *Il*. 1.248, 4.293. On *ligus* see also West 1992, 42, quoting from Ps.-Arist. *de audibilibus* 804a21. Ascribing sarcasm to Odysseus (e.g. Kirk 1985-93, ad loc.) is too easy a way out and offers little interpretive reward. The structure of his speech and its style, correption and synizesis aside (we might think of Thersites as a Greek Eliza Doolittle), are artful and effective (see Kirk 1985-93, 140; and, exhaustively, Roisman 2007, 432-33).

[139] For the significance of the scepter generally see Combellack 1948, emphasizing the "solemnity" of what may be called sceptered-speech; Benveniste 2016 (1969), 324-27, attributing it originally to the messenger (and see also

assembly without the *skēptron* signifies the low point of this process, the utter breakdown of authority, which is only re-established by Odysseus when, having taken the *skēptron* from Agamemnon (2.186), he forces Thersites to sit back down by beating him with it (mentioned twice, 2.265 and 268), then rallying the troops with his own powerful speech. He is followed by Nestor, after whose speech Agamemnon reorganizes the army and expresses regret over his power struggle with Achilles.[140]

Within this arc, between the assembly in which order broke down and that in which it was restored, Odysseus' act of policing public discourse is the turning point, reflecting the signal importance of prose: the ability to individually perform verse set off a small class of specialists from society, but the ability (or rather, legitimacy) to perform prose allowed the elite to separate itself from the lower classes.[141] Odysseus' son enables us to be more specific: "*muthos* is for men" (*Od.* 1.358-59), Telemachus reprimands his mother, asserting his manhood and upholding the status of prose as the preserve of elite mature males, like war (*Il*. 6.492-93, *Od*. 21.352-53).[142] Odysseus' adversative use of *ligus*, discussed above, demonstrates that physical deformity, social inferiority and rhetorical ineptitude are – or, in his and perhaps the audience's mind, should be – inextricably tied. The tension between the rival archaic conceptions of eloquence as god-given as opposed to eloquence as teachable is symptomatic.[143] A hint of the violence which was necessary

Mondi 1978, ch. 2); Gernet 1981, 188; and, recently, Unruh 2011, criticizing the interpretation of the scepter as "talking-stick", while yet maintaining that it "symbolizes one's right to express… authoritative speech" (290) and is "an emblem of the ruling class' exclusive right to public speech" (293). For its significance specifically in the Thersites incident see Rose 1988, 16; Thalmann 1988, 10-13; and Unruh 2011, 290-93.

[140] Cf. Thalmann 1988, 14-19, for a different reading of the Thersites incident as a turning point.

[141] Oesterreicher 1993, 271: "auch in primär mündlichen Gesellschaften das sprachliche Wissen letzlich ebenso klar sozial distribuiert ist wie in Schriftkulturen".

[142] See Clark 2001, with discussion of exceptions in which *muthoi* in Homer are attributed to women.

[143] For the conception of eloquence as god-given see Solmsen 1954; for eloquence as a teachable skill in Homer see Knudsen 2014, 4-14.

to dissociate the lower classes from prose, as it was to silence Thersites, is reflected in the "middling" Phocylides:

> καὶ τόδε Φωκυλίδεω· τί πλέον γένος εὐγενὲς εἶναι
> οἷς οὔτ᾽ ἐν μύθοις ἔπεται χάρις οὔτ᾽ ἐνὶ βουλῇ
>
> This too is Phocylides': what good is being of noble birth
> to those with grace neither in *muthos* nor in council (3 Diehl)

The political power of prose in oral society was crucial; Rosalind Thomas notes that the closest Greek word to "politician" was *rhētor*.[144]

Like the scepter (*Il.* 2.205-206), oratorical prose, as Hesiod describes it, was given to kings.[145] It could thus hardly be used to abuse them. Like Odysseus, Hesiod's king "ends even a great quarrel" with his skillful speech (ἀγορεύων) and is capable of turning things around even when the assembly is in disarray (*Th*. 86-90).[146] The Thersites incident echoed throughout Greek literature because of the deep resonance of the questions it touched on, namely who has the right to speak in public, and who doesn't, and what is the appropriate language for such speech.[147] The most prominent echo of this incident, which itself sent ripples through the literary tradition, is Solon's *Salamis* (1 *IEG*). The *Salamis* also marks the first time in Greek literature in which we find verse and prose forms explicitly contrasted,[148] and presented as a matter of choice:

> αὐτὸς κῆρυξ ἦλθον ἀφ᾽ ἱμερτῆς Σαλαμῖνος,
> κόσμον ἐπέων ᾠδὴν ἀντ᾽ ἀγορῆς θέμενος…

[144] Thomas 1992, 3. Cf. Vernant 1982 (1962), 49: "the system of the *polis* implied, first of all, the extraordinary preeminence of speech over all other instruments of power". On violence and authoritative speech see again the novel interpretation of the scepter's symbolism in Unruh 2011, 189-93.
[145] Again, Solmsen 1954, and explicitly in Combellack 1974. Cf. Roth 1976, 338, arguing that Hesiod misunderstood the older, traditional association of kings with the Muses. On the relation between the kings' scepter and that of the poet (Hes. *Th*. 28) see Laks 1996, 89-91.
[146] West 1966, ad loc., understands these lines somewhat differently, but see Verdenius 1972, ad loc.
[147] See Steiner 2014 for echoes of the Odysseus-Thersites confrontation, also through the *Salamis* tradition, in Archilochus, Critias, Demosthenes and Aischenes, etc.; Lowry 1991 associates Thersites with Solon and Tyrtaeus, among others. For the dense network of allusions to the *Odyssey* in the *Salamis*, see most recently Irwin 2006 and Steiner 2014.
[148] I emphasize, for reasons which will be made clear below, that the contrast here is not between the categories of poetry and prose, but rather between one form (elegiacs) which is verse and another which is prose.

> I have come to you myself, a messenger from lovely Salamis,
> composing song, a *kosmos* of words, rather than a public speech… (Plut. *Sol*. 8)

Tradition, as it was recorded by Plutarch, associated the *Salamis* with the following occasion:

> When the Athenians grew tired of waging a long and difficult war with Megara over the island Salamis, they passed a law that in future no one, on pain of death, was to propose in writing or orally that the city should lay claim to Salamis. Solon found the disgrace hard to bear and when he saw that many of the young men wanted to renew the war, but lacked the courage to do so themselves because of the law, he pretended to be out of his mind and word was passed from his household to the city that he showed signs of madness. He secretly composed elegiac verses and after practicing so as to recite them from memory, he suddenly rushed into the marketplace, wearing a little felt cap. When a large crowd had assembled, he mounted the herald's stone and recited the elegy which begins… This poem was entitled Salamis and contains a hundred lines, a very fine composition. When Solon had sung it, his friends began to praise him, and Peisistratus in particular urged and incited the citizens to obey his words. They therefore repealed the law and renewed the war, putting Solon in command of it (Plut. *Sol*. 8, trans. Perrin).

If this tradition should not be taken as historical, it is of course no less meaningful,[149] and puzzling. It raises a number of questions, such as the significance of Solon the lawmaker breaking the law, but the most pressing of them is, how does Solon's elaborate performance exculpate him, allowing him to earn the praise of Peisistratus and even the law's repeal? His performance consisted of numerous actions, and it is not clear which of them secured his impunity. Choosing among them has consequences for interpreting the choice between verse and prose forms. Cicero (*Off.* 1.30.108) and Justinus (2.7.9-12) attributed his impunity to his feigned insanity; as we are attempting to denaturalize our conceptions of poetry and prose, it is interesting and not trivial that elegiacs were considered appropriate to a madman, and prose was not. Modern scholars have argued that he was considered not to have broken the law because it was an act, and so it was not actually he who

[149] Irwin 2006. The tradition is attested as early as Demosthenes 19.252-53 and would of course be older, though not necessarily all its details.

committed the offense, or that addressing the people indirectly conferred immunity on him.[150] Was the poetry part of his costume, concealing his identity just as the costume gave him a different one? Did the very act of reciting poetry involve adopting the persona of someone other than oneself? Would this account for the – again – non-trivial convention of verse as the default form of drama (mime excepted)?[151] In contrast with Justinus, who remarks that Solon's verse would have surprised his audience, scholarly attention has largely been dominated by Solon's costume, but we have already seen that such elements should not be abstracted from the linguistic performance, but should rather be analyzed as part of a complex speech act. As a speech act, the question of the language employed can hardly be neglected, especially as Solon himself emphasizes it. What is ultimately striking is that verse is used here to circumvent the law, which is interesting – as we shall see, and as the *Theogony* has already suggested – because the language of Greek law was prose.

Here again we find confirmation that the medium of public speech was prose. The *Salamis* itself presents poetry in the *agora* as unusual, and we have already seen that public speech cannot be considered ordinary speech.[152] The Greeks systematically used para-linguistic means to mark the language of public discourse: performance of prose was done standing, holding the scepter (at least at times), as we have already seen, and *es meson*.[153] These all constitute "norms of distance", serving to mark the language used in such pragmatic circumstances as prose. That this language was prose and was marked is further attested in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, where the herald – presumably from the same stone which Solon would have mounted – interrupts Dicaeopolis' verse to announce

[150] Noussia-Fantuzzi 2010, 206; Stehle 1997, 61-63, is close to this position; Irwin 2006, 23. It is interesting in this context to note that Solon, according to an inscription cited by Diogenes Laertius (1.62), was actually from Salamis; Steiner 2014, 17 n. 21, suggests this detail may derive from the *Salamis* itself. Lowry 1991 argues that his cap granted him impunity, and see also his provocative ch. 9 on *mania* and elegy; Steiner attributes it to the adoption of Odysseus' persona.
[151] Cf. Herington 1985, 51-57.
[152] Note that it is not merely song but poetry which is presented here as marked in the *agora*. Ford 1988, 303, points out that the *Salamis* is performed without musical accompaniment.
[153] For speaking *es meson*, Detienne 1996 (1967), 90-99.

assembly formulae in prose (123). Similarly the decree seller in *Birds* declaims three laws in prose – interrupted, as earlier, by dialogue in verse – which he seeks to sell to Peisetairos (1035-50).[154] It is thus of great significance that the word used to designate prose in the *Salamis*, in contrast with *ōidē*, is *agora*. It has been argued that the opposition here is not between two forms of language but rather between two political institutions;[155] but the opposition between institutions is also an opposition between different forms of language, and the linguistic opposition is marked both in the poem and in the tradition. One indication of this is the difficulty in translating the phrase θέμενος ἀγορήν: does it mean simply to gather the assembly, as in Homer, or does it rather refer to the composition of a speech?[156] I would argue that for contemporary Greeks it meant both: the institution was inseparable from its language, and the former marked the latter just as the latter marked the former. Hence the verb ἀγορεύω in Homer, betraying the Greek recognition of *agora*-speech as special.[157]

It is interesting, however, that *agora* is also opposed to κόσμος ἐπέων. Would prose, like Thersites, lack *kosmos*? Before the late fifth century only poems are spoken of as a κόσμος ἐπέων.[158] The reason for this, I suggest, is not that anything without meter is necessarily unordered, but rather that metered speech has a more rigid order. Of course, if Solon were to deliver a speech he could not

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[154] That the decree seller is reading from a book is inconsequential; the traditional language of law was prose (this will be discussed in the next chapter). Note the archaic dative plural forms, as well as the ironic use of μέτροισι (1040) in prose, but cf. Dunbar 1995 ad loc. for embedded trimeter in some of the MSS.

[155] Ford 1981, 158-68.

[156] Noussia Fantuzzi 2006, 212-13, argues that ἀγορά cannot be understood here but as speech, and see also the discussion of the syntax and one commentator's doubts regarding ᾠδή. She perceptively suggests that Solon is here evoking Odyssean speeches, which he introduces by saying, καὶ τότ᾽ ἐγὼν ἀγορὴν θέμενος μετὰ πᾶσιν ἔειπον (*Od*. 9.171, 10.188, 12.319).

[157] Note that already in Homer it is not restricted to speech actually performed in the *agora*, e.g. Achilles' reference to Lycaon's speech on the battlefield (*Il*. 21.99). Also Steiner 1994, 188.

[158] Parmen. 28B8.52, Democr. 68b21, and see similar references in Noussia Fantuzzi 2006, 211. One can find speeches described in those terms at Eur. *Med*. 576 and Thuc. 3.67.6, but the sense of κόσμος there may well be different. The word ἔπεα does not seem significant for this distinction, see e.g. Finkelberg 1998, 123. See also the discussion of *kosmos* and song ibid., 124-126; also Ford 1981, 159-68, 197-204; Walsh 1984, 8-9; Halliwell 2011, 84-87.

play with the order of words at will, but free from the constraints of meter he would have significantly more freedom than in composing elegiacs. *Kosmos epeōn* thus signifies, from an emic point of view, a sequence of utterances whose internal arrangement is essentially fixed or, in any case, perceived as quite rigid.[159] That *kosmos* does not apply to prose should not, however, be taken to imply that prose is not aesthetically pleasing. The syntax of the *Salamis* suggests that the action involved in composing a speech (*themenos*) is not necessarily different from that required to compose verse. It is also worth keeping in mind Hesiod's description of prose as words or voice "flowing" (ῥέει) soothingly or sweetly from the king's mouth, off the sweet, divine dew poured on his tongue (*Th*. 83-84, 97), just as "voice flows sweet" from the Muses' mouths (*Th*. 39-40). This is not simply Hesiod's incidental flattery of a king in the audience;[160] from the tongue of Nestor, no *aoidos*, "voice flowed sweeter than honey" (*Il*. 1.249).[161]

Much more could be said about the representation of public speech in other genres of Greek literature, and perhaps one could recover fragments of purely oral Greek oratory, conventional phrases which would have served public speakers long before the advent of writing, as well as

[159] This suggestion has also been made in Walsh 1984, 135 n. 8.

[160] West 1966, 44. Classicists' discomfort with Hesiod's conflation of the Muses with prose appears symptomatic. Havelock 1963, 109, insists that Hesiod's king spoke in meter, "otherwise the utterance would not be the voice of the Muse". For discussion of the question of the Muses and oratory see e.g. Murray 2004, 368-72, insisting on the differences between orators and poets. The argument that there is no Muse of rhetoric (in the classical period and later) is largely irrelevant for the archaic period; her explanation for its absence, that rhetoric is *technē*, is vitiated by the conception of god-given eloquence as seen in Homer above. Thalmann 1984, 139-43, tries to bridge the gap between poetry and oratory, relying *inter alia* on Nestor. A distinctly different discussion of these relations can be found in Laks 1996, which also suggests that it was not Hesiod who innovated in associating the Muses with kings and judicial discourse, but rather Homer who dissociated them. The most recent general study of the Muses is Maslov 2016; it typically neglects their association with kings, but consider his suggestion that the Muses possibly "originated in Thrace as magical, semi-divine creatures, whose original domain was much broader than music and poetry" (p. 440)! More broadly, his study is important in pointing out the difference in the representations of the Muses in the Greek tradition; at different times, in different contexts, they could have signified different things.

[161] Ford 1992, 180, notes that only song or the singer or his voice are described as *thespis*, divine. But in Hesiod fr. 310 MW, where the Muses are said to make "man" (ἀνήρ) eloquent, is that man necessarily an *aoidos*? Nestor is described as godlike (ἀντίθεος) in *Theognis* 714, ostensibly in relation to his ἀγαθὴ γλῶσσα. The argument here is not, however, that prose and verse are exactly equivalent, merely that prose was aesthetically pleasing; the issue of the gods and prose we have already discussed. On Nestor see also the very late but provocative epigram of Nicarchus discussed in Combellack 1974.

other linguistic norms which would have characterized their prose. But we have said enough about public speech for now, and we will discuss the form of long-form prose in greater detail as we move to our final genre of oral prose.

Narrative prose

When Odysseus took over for Demodocus to relate *klea andrōn* he was not, we have already said, singing. Odysseus' narrative juxtaposes Demodocus' song, just as the oral traditions Telemachus gathers at the beginning of the *Odyssey* juxtapose Phemius' song. *Klea andrōn* were transmitted not only via verse;[162] as Aeneas explains, they hardly could be: "in the mortal tongue are many tales of many kinds" (*Il.* 20.248-249). Among these were narratives of more recent history, perhaps affiliated with genealogies, myths of more distant history, including *klea theōn*, as well as *klea thērōn*, fables and folktale, fairytale, etc.[163]

To be sure, not all of the above should be considered prose: some of the *klea* were told in verse, some in prose, others simply in ordinary speech.[164] The pragmatics of the Phaeacian banquet, the number of participants and their status, the presence of the royal couple and the mutual lack of familiarity all combine to suggest distance. It would be difficult to imagine that the stories Odysseus told were not perceived by the Homeric audience as performed in prose. The barbershop, on the other hand, where Greek men traditionally exchanged stories, does not imply such pragmatics.[165] This does not mean, however, that they necessarily did not tell traditional stories

[162] Ford 1992, 59-60, 101-118. On the representation of storytelling in Homer, see Edmunds 2002, 18-22.
[163] For genealogies, see Thomas 1989, ch. 3 and esp. 174, also Finkelberg 2005, 25, and in the *Iliad* Ford 1992, 63-67 and Scodel 1998, 174-180, and for a later example Plat. *Hipp. Maj.* 285d; for fable, e.g. Kurke 2010; for folk and fairy tales, Anderson 2000 and Hansen 2002.
[164] Already Nilsson 1932, 195: "All myths were not done into verses. Many of them lived in oral prose tradition…" (also p. 25, and Risch 1985, 8).
[165] E.g. Plut. *Nic*. 30, and see the evidence surveyed in Buxton 1994, 11-12. For another such site of storytelling, see Bremmer 2008 on the *leschē*. As another example, Thomas 1989, 101, surmises that family traditions were "passed down quite informally in casual conversation".

occasionally employing traditional language of narrative. Such linguistic norms would constitute a different kind of distance, a temporal distance, which would mark the stories as stories from another time, and their telling as an occasion.

One such occasion was the banquet, or symposium. An anonymous elegy attests to the role of prose at the latter:

> … χρὴ δ᾽ ὅταν εἰς τοιοῦτο συνέλθωμεν φίλοι ἄνδρες
> πρᾶγμα, γελᾶν παίζειν χρησαμένους ἀρετῆι,
> ἥδεσθαί τε συνόντας, ἐς ἀλλήλους τε φ[λ]υαρεῖν
> καὶ σκώπτειν τοιαῦθ᾽ οἷα γέλωτα φέρειν.
> ἡ δὲ σπουδὴ ἑπέσθω, ἀκούωμέν [τε λ]εγόντων
> ἐν μέρει· ἥδ᾽ ἀρετὴ συμποσίου πέλεται …
>
> … when we come together as male friends for such an affair
> we should laugh and play while conducting ourselves with *aretē*,
> we should enjoy each other's company, fool around with each other
> and make fun of such things which arouse laughter.
> But let seriousness follow, and let us listen to those speaking
> in turn; this is the *aretē* of the symposium ... (West 27.3-8)

Besides song there was surely much chatter among symposiasts, but the structure of symposium as it is portrayed here set aside time for formal discourse.[166] Indeed, the time that was set aside for it appears quite marked. If not, perhaps, as its peak, prose is in any event presented here as integral to at least a strand of the sympotic tradition.[167] Prose *was* a serious affair, not just in politics, in the

[166] Ford 2002, 33 n. 27, tentatively suggests understanding the playful discourse as song, adducing Plutarch *Cimon* 9. Bowie 1993 argues that some archaic poetry composed for the symposium would in fact be a stylized version of non-poetic sympotic speech. On the basis of a survey of symposia in Greek literature, he provides a long list of possible themes of non-poetic speech at the symposium. For detailed commentary on the elegy see Ferrari 1988, 219-25. These verses are attested relatively late for our purposes, circa 300 BCE, but as Ferrari demonstrates, their diction is highly traditional.

[167] Ford 2002, 33, understands ἥδ᾽ in line 8 as referring to all that preceded it, translating "this is excellence in a symposium". Bowie 1993, 359, understands ἥδ᾽ as referring specifically to the last item in the list, hence: "this is the best thing about a symposium". It is tempting to read these verses, emphasizing δέ in line 7, as a priamel. Ferrari 1988, 221-22, understands ἥδ as "polemically emphatic", arguing that it puts forth an image of the symposium which is opposed to the traditional one. It is enough for our purposes that prose was not foreign to the symposium and that there was a sympotic tradition in which prose played an integral role. See also Ferrari's references to discussion at the symposium in archaic elegy on p. 223.

public setting of the *agora*, but also in the greater privacy of elite homes. Like so much else at the symposium, speech served to display one's culture, to show that one was cultured.[168] It is thus also quite striking that this discourse itself had a marked structure (ἐν μέρει), reminiscent of poetic competition. The symposium's agonistic culture extended to verbal performance, in verse as well as prose, naturally encouraging attention to linguistic aesthetics. The *Symposia* of Xenophon and Plato bear out well the structure outlined in the elegy, with agonistic speeches held in turn, signaling something of a turning point in the symposium following lighter forms of entertainment.

The story of Odysseus infiltrating Troy, as told by Helen to Menelaus, Telemachus and Peisistratus, provides a particularly clear example of prose performed in a relatively intimate setting, at the end of a banquet, after everyone seems to have gone home. What stands out here, first, is the language used to frame Helen's story as a performance and, second, how close that language is to the language of *aoidē*. From Helen's preface it is clear that narrative *muthos* is meant to accompany feasting and that the audience is meant to enjoy it (τέρπεσθε, 4.238-239).[169] She then announces she "will recount things which are appropriate" (ἐοικότα γὰρ καταλέξω, 4.239).[170] The verb *katalegein* is elsewhere used by Odysseus to characterize the song ideally performed by Demodocus; if he manages to *katalegein kata moiran*, Odysseus announces (*Od.* 4.496-98), that will be proof of Demodocus' *thespis aoidē*.[171] Helen then further prefaces her tale with a *recusatio*: just

[168] Ford 2002, 28-31. Also stated concisely at Ford 1999a, 113, and see ibid. the more detailed discussion of Odysseus' preface to his long narrative beginning in *Od.* 9, to which we referred above. Competition in song and oratory is explicit in Herodotus 6.129.

[169] The same phrase is later used by Telemachus in summarizing his visit, 4.597-98, though presumably not in reference to Helen's story (on which see below); it is also found at *Il*. 9.643 and, in the context of a banquet, Hesiod fr. 274.2 MW. On pleasure as the product of poetry see Walsh 1984, ch. 1; Gentili 1988, 54- 55; Ford 1992, 49-56; Peponi 2012. Halliwell 2011, ch. 2, disputes the straightforward understanding of poetry as pleasurable; *terpein* is discussed on pp. 45-46.

[170] Heubeck 1988-92, ad loc. Also Goldhill 1991, 62. Cf. Finkelberg 1998, 148-149, which does not seem well-suited to the context. Note also Helen's use of the same word, *eoikota*, upon entering the hall and seeing Telemachus (4.141), and see Goldhill 1991, 61-63.

[171] On these terms see Finkelberg 1998, 124-129, Halliwell 2011, 86-87. Heubeck 1988-92, 209, doubts that this particular version of the story would be current, possibly weakening the claim in Finkelberg 1998, 129, that *kata moiran* is always associated with truthful narrative.

as the Homeric singer cannot name everyone (πληθὺν δ᾽ οὐκ ἄν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ᾽ ὀνομήνω, *Il.* 2.488), only the leaders of the ships, so she cannot tell all of Odysseus' exploits (πάντα μὲν οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ᾽ ὀνομήνω, *Od*. 4.240), only what he accomplished under disguise in Troy. After concluding her story, Menelaus affirms that she told the story appropriately: κατὰ μοῖραν ἔειπες (4.266).[172] Clearly, then, there was an art of storytelling: there was a time and a place for it, and there were appropriate themes and ways of framing a story and narrating it. Such protocol, which is implicit in Homer, is expressed explicitly centuries later in the Aristophanic tutorial on sympotic storytelling in *Wasps* (οὕτως διηγεῖσθαι νομίζουσ᾽ οἱ σοφοί, "thus the *sophoi* are used to telling stories", 1196) and its failure, which consisted in telling stories which were unsuited to the occasion (λόγους… οὐδὲν εἰκότας τῷ πράγματι, 1320-21). That in Homer the terminology for prose narratives so closely resembles that of verse narratives[173] suggests that in this case, too, there was an art of storytelling which was at least partly independent of medium.

When we consider what Helen's story was meant to accomplish (*terpein*) in the context of the sorrow which preceded it, we might wonder whether Hesiod, when describing song as providing solace (*Th*. 96-103), was presenting only part of the picture: perhaps it is storytelling about the past, in general, which by providing pleasure allows the audience to forget its own grief? Alongside pleasure, poetry – long before Gorgias – was also perceived as enchanting, as capable of casting a spell: Odysseus' speech can be found to enthrall his audience (*Od.* 11.333-34, 13.1-2), just like Phemius' song (*Od*. 1.337-40).[174] Magic curiously plays a role in Helen's story as well: before telling it she applies an Egyptian drug to the men's wine in order that they forget all sorrow. Plutarch and

[172] That Menelaus perhaps is being ironic, and did not in fact appreciate her story – see Heubeck 1988-92, ad loc., Goldhill 1991, 64 – has no bearing on this: his irony depends on the appearance of following protocol.
[173] *Katalegein kata moiran* for prose narratives can be found, e.g., in *Od.* 10.16. See further references in Finkelberg 1998, 128 n. 109-11. Cf. Ford 1992, 111-14.
[174] For the bewitching effect of poetry in Homer, e.g. Halliwell 2011, 47-48. For the similar use of language of enchantment in reference to prose practitioners of *sophia*, Tell 2007, 260-66.

other late antique authors interpreted her mysterious drug to be her story,[175] but it seems more plausible to understand her story as incapable of providing solace in itself, as incapable of enchanting her audience as poetry, perhaps, would. Should this be taken to signify that we were rash to equate prose with the power of poetry? None of the above should be taken to efface the etic distinction between poetry and prose, and disregard the power of music, as it was perceived by the Greeks, to affect its audience. But not all poetry was musical, and as all language has rhythm and some prose has meter, how distinct would the recitation of verse be from the declamation of prose?[176] Precisely because the distinctiveness of bards and song is so pronounced in epic, it is remarkable that Odysseus is likened to a bard and that poetry and prose are described as having similar effects. In any event, if Helen thought that her *muthoi* were good only for pleasure but not for enchantment, it turned out that the drug itself failed: Telemachus professed to feeling even greater pain than before (ἄλγιον, 292) and mercifully asked that an end be put to the stories and that he be allowed to sleep.[177] This is another example of a scene in whose interpretation the question of language, while it certainly does not hold the key exclusively, cannot be neglected either.

What surely is relevant to Helen's story is her gender. It is also relevant to the language she employs, as we have already seen, but apparently narrative *muthos* – unlike that employed by Penelope – was associated with women in certain contexts. Greek women were portrayed as carriers of such narrative traditions, passing them on to their children. These traditions were frequently described, quite literally, as "old wives' tales".[178] The attempt to denigrate them belonged to men, but such denigration does not imply that women's stories were necessarily different in content

[175] See Peponi 2012, 40-44, for the interpretations offered by Plutarch, Himerius and Eustathius, and for further discussion of this passage, with references to previous scholarship.
[176] Cf. Norden 1958 (1898), 31.
[177] Cf. the insistence of Laín Entralgo 1970, 24-30, specifically concerning the pleasure Machaon derives from Nestor's *muthoi* (*Il*. 11.643), that therapeutic speech in Homer achieves its aims without resorting to magic.
[178] See, with references, Bremmer 1987, 200-201; Buxton 1994, 18-21; Anderson 2000, 2. See also Thomas 1989, 109; Heath 2011, which includes poetry and Roman material; and Scobie 1979, 246-51.

from the most prestigious poetry (Plat. *Resp.* 377-78, 381c-e) or that their form was not aesthetically pleasing: Plato's Socrates ascribed "pleasurable storytelling" (τὸ ἡδέως μυθολογῆσαι, Plat. *Hipp. Maj.* 286a) to old women. The parallel Plato sets up, between the "greater stories" (*Resp.* 377c) of Homer and Hesiod and the "lesser" ones told by women is suggestive: if the former were told in a *Kunstsprache*, it stands to reason that the latter had one, in one form or another, as well. Men just didn't like to think of it as such.

Greek prose has also famously been associated, perhaps more in scholarship than by contemporaries, with slaves. Leslie Kurke in particular has argued for the importance of Aesop in the emergence of Greek prose. But she is concerned with fifth- and fourth-century texts, and while his legend is naturally earlier, Aesop himself does not appear in Greek literature before the second half of the fifth century.[179] While it is noteworthy that the Greeks associated fable with a slave, Aesop, the preceding discussion will have made clear that we can at most say that there was prose that was associated with a slave, which is not the same as saying that prose *in toto* was associated with slaves. We do not, after all, conclude from the association of the genre of iambos with the servile Iambe anything about poetry generally.[180] It is however important to note that the distinction between the high and the low does not necessarily map onto prose, because the fact that fables were low did not preclude them from being used by elites; what shows them to be prose is in fact their usefulness at the symposium, for instance, to prove one's status as elite.[181]

Another indication that they were prose is the reference to them in Aristophanes as *logoi* (*Av.* 651, *Pax* 129). While prose lies on a scale of what Oesterreicher called "linguistic conception", and surely there was much storytelling which was not done in prose, the use of such terms as *logoi*

[179] Kurke 2010. West 1984 surveys the traditions concerning Aesop.
[180] For iambos and Iambe, Rotstein 2010, ch. 6.
[181] Bowie 1993, 365-69.

suggests that some of these stories were told in marked language. That these were not incidental verbal aggregates but rather distinct forms of discourse, perhaps with their own diction, is implicit in such categorizations as *klea andrōn*, the more specific *ainoi*,[182] even *muthoi*. In Plato *logoi* are considered part of *mousikē* (*Resp.* 376e-377a).[183] While there is no evidence that the role of telling them constituted a profession, the term *logopoios* – by which Herodotus refers to Aesop in contrast, significantly, with Sappho the *mousopoios* (2.134)[184] – suggests that it may have been specialized to a degree.[185] Ernst Risch has elegantly demonstrated on the basis of its use in Homer as well as comparative and epigraphic evidence that ἐ(ν)νέπω – best known, ironically enough, from the *Odyssey*'s invocation – in fact served in early Greek to denote the act of "kunstvoll und feierlich berichten", which Risch explicitly identifies as prose, just as other Indo-European cognates of *sék^{w}- similarly denoted marked speech.[186]

[182] Edmunds 2002, 25, on *ainos*: "the only archaic genre of story-telling to which the Greeks gave a name".
[183] If the Muses are not necessarily to be taken as foreign to prose, we should also be suspicious of the term *mousikē*. First attested in Pindar (*Ol.* 1.15) and Epicharmus (91 *PCG*), West 1992, 225, thinks it may be the earliest attested word to be derived using the suffix *-ikē*, possibly coined in the late sixth century by Lasus of Hermione. But it is not clear that *mousikē* before the fourth century referred exclusively to the confluence of dance, music and text as, e.g., Murray and Wilson 2004, 1, maintain. The term is frequently used quite cavalierly in scholarship on archaic and classical Greece, as if it were entirely clear what it means, but the only systematic study of its use of which I am aware, Zaminer 1999, suggests it was more fluid; Ford 2004, 314, points out that even in the fourth century, in Aristotle's *Politics*, the term can refer to both music and text, or just music. It is thus not entirely surprising – though this is from the fourth century – that we find among the categories of *mousikoi agones* at the Great Amphiaraia competition in prose; see Rotstein 2012, 110-12, for details and discussion. (That sophists competed at festivals is of course well established, see e.g. Buxton 1994, 39-40, and Tell 2007, esp. 254; the question is whether their competitions would be considered *mousikoi*. We will further explore this later).
[184] For discussion see Kurke 2010, ch. 10, though its connotations are not important for our purposes. I will not discuss this term here, because the terminology of *poiein* is largely foreign to archaic poetics. While the semantics are not traditional, the categorization itself might be. It also might not; the existence of narrative prose traditions does not depend on this. Hecataeus is also referred to as a *logopoios* by Herodotus (2.143, 5.36, 5.125), and while he attests to having been a *logographos* (fr. 1), this does not preclude him from also being an oral *logopoios*; the one time Herodotus refers to his writing, Kurke observes (p. 377), he does not use the word *logopoios.* We should also note – in light of the claims of e.g. Nagy 1990a, ch. 8 – that the term *logios* did not denote a prose specialist, for which see Luraghi 2009.
[185] Storytellers in antiquity are comprehensively studied in Scobie 1979, but the evidence discussed there is mostly Roman and very late; evidence for classical Greek storytellers, itself much later, can be found ibid., 235-236. The survey in Trenkner 1958, 16-22, is more suggestive of storytelling culture in classical Athens, elements of which may have been traditional.
[186] Risch 1985.

While archaic Greek poetry abounds with references – a λέγεται here, a λέγουσι there – to oral traditions which cannot be understood as references to texts, to the language of these traditions,[187] the highly sophisticated narrative art of the first fully preserved Greek prose text, Herodotus' *Histories*, makes clear that narrative prose did not originate in the fifth century.[188] Much has been done to pick out oral elements of Herodotus' text, which could perhaps be used to reconstruct the traditional language of Greek narrative, but we will limit ourselves here to more general features of this *Kunstprosa*. One we have already mentioned twice: Herodotus' characteristic use of the *participium coniunctum*, we saw above, is already found in Homer; its parallel use in Vedic prose suggests that Herodotus need not have been under Homeric influence in making use of it.[189]

The second feature far predates Herodotus, too. Jacob Wackernagel, famous for his work on the second position in the Indo-European sentence, briefly noted in his celebrated lecture "Indogermanische Dichtersprache" that an existential verb in the first position marks the beginning of a story, as for example in *Cypria* fr. 1: ἦν ὅτε μυρία φῦλα κατὰ χθόνα πλαζόμενα… ("there was a time when myriad races <of mortals> wandered over the land…"). The ancient scholion to *Wasps* 1182 attests that the use of narrative-initial ἦν was conventional. Examples, in poetry and prose, in Greek and other Indo-European languages, are numerous and not limited to εἶναι and its cognates, e.g.:

ἦλθέ τις ἐς Κολοφῶνα γέρων καὶ θεῖος ἀοιδός

[187] E.g. Scodel 2001, also Edmunds 1990, 6-7.
[188] Luraghi 2013, for example, shows on the basis of Aly 1969 (1921) and Murray 2001 (1987) that Herodotus was working with fully formed already existing stories, not independently synthesizing scraps of information. Trenkner 1958 could be said to make a similar argument regarding the content of classical literature, in that much of it attests to popular oral storytelling traditions. It is worth mentioning in this context Trenkner 1960, which along with arguing for the paratactic "style καί" of at least some classical written narrative also argues that the latter reflects the style of contemporary (and earlier) oral narrative; she may well be right, but to the extent that I understand the argument I do not find it compelling.
[189] See again Migron 1991. For its use by Herodotus, Müller 1980, 61-63.

> There came to Colophon a certain old and divine singer (*Margites* fr. 1)

Or the fable in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*:

> ἔθρεψεν δὲ λέοντος ἶνιν … οὕτως ἀνὴρ …
> Just so there was a cub of a lion reared by a man… (717-19)

This construction is frequently employed by Herodotus, from the very beginning of his narrative:

> ἦν Κανδαύλης, τὸν οἱ Ἕλληνες Μυρσίλον ὀνομάζουσι, τύραννος Σαρδίων, ἀπόγονος…
> There was Kandaules, whom the Greeks called Mursilos, ruler of Sardis, descendant of… (1.7)[190]

Risch took Wackernagel to claim that this was originally a phenomenon of prose later borrowed by epic poetry, but it is enough for our purposes that this technique was not restricted to verse, but was rather part of the common store of oral verbal art.[191] It is all the more marked given the general tendency of the unmarked Indo-European verb to come at the end of the sentence. We might mention that other attested narrative-initial formulae sought to engage the audience, as in some of the African traditions surveyed above.[192]

We conclude our survey of oral prose genres, from the short and textual to the long and non-textual, back where we began, with the formula. The Greek novels of the imperial period would appear to be of little use for the purposes of studying early Greek prose, but among those extant the *Ephesiaca* attributed to a Xenophon of Ephesus has long stood out for its form. Its aberrant style was generally accounted for by positing that it was an epitome of a longer work, or simply the product of a "wretched scribbler". James O'Sullivan has argued, however, that what has been understood as deficient literature is actually oral storytelling, textualized.[193] On the basis

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[190] For the translation of ἦν as existential predicate, not copula, see Slings 2002, 55.
[191] Wackernagel 1943 (1932) seems only to say that it is not "limited" to verse. See Risch 1985, 8-9, with further examples, as well as Watkins 1995, 25, for more Indo-European examples and 35-36, with examples of other sentence-initial verbs besides the existential εἶναι and its cognates. See García Teijeiro 2010, 46-51, for examples from Herodotus as well as other Greek authors.
[192] Anderson 2000, 4, provides a few examples.
[193] O'Sullivan 1995.

of a meticulous study of the text O'Sullivan extensively demonstrated its formulaic nature. The *Ephesiaca* begin:

> Ἦν ἐν Ἐφέσῳ ἀνὴρ τῶν τὰ πρῶτα ἐκεῖ δυναμένων, Λυκομήδης ὄνομα.
> There was in Ephesus a man, one of the most prominent there, by the name of Lycomedes (1.1).

We again find here story-initial ἦν,[194] followed by a formula employed to introduce characters on five other occasions.[195] Similarly expressed formulaically is the act of falling in love (ἐρᾷ… σφοδρὸν ἔρωτα, 6 times), of falling to the ground (προσπίπτει τοῖς γόνασιν αὐτοῦ, 7 times), of consolation (θαρρεῖν παρακαλῶν, 8 times), of loss of composure (οὐκέτι καρτερῶν, 7 times, alongside οὐκέτι φέρειν δυνάμενος, 4 times), of promising (ὑπέσχετο πολλά, 8 times), of setting sail (διανύσας πλοῦν, 10 times), etc. The recurrence of these formulae gives a good idea of the story's plot; as in Homer, the verbal formulae correspond to themes, or type-scenes, composed of theme-elements, which can be elaborated or condensed as needed. O'Sullivan, on the basis of the analogy with Homer, similarly managed to account for certain kinds of inconsistency and implausibility as the result of oral composition. We thus find evidence of an oral prose storytelling tradition whose form and method of composition are strikingly similar to those of Greek oral poetry storytelling, of epic.[196] This should not be surprising: we have already seen that there were Irish oral prose traditions which employed formulae and epithets. O'Sullivan in fact compares the *Ephesiaca* to Irish oral prose traditions from the *Silva Gadelica*, and claims that the latter are less formulaic

[194] It appears significant that none of the other extant ideal Greek novels begin thus. This is particularly notable in that Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* and Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* both begin – like the *Ephesiaca* – with a place name, and yet in Longus the first verb is preceded by two adverbial phrases, a participle and a direct object, and in Achilles Tatius the first verb comes after approximately 30 words. In Chariton and Heliodorus the main verb comes at the very end of the sentence,

[195] Also at 2.13.3, 3.9.5, 5.1.4, 3.2.1, 3.2.5. For the occurrences of other formulae see appendix IV in O'Sullivan 1995.

[196] O'Sullivan 1995, ch. 4.

than the former.[197] This again suggests that mastering the language of oral Greek storytelling required, if not professionalization, still a degree of specialization.

Insofar as the hypothesis of its oral origin explains its form far better than its competitors, the *Ephesiaca* also attest to the exceptional durability of pure oral prose practice.[198] This practice, predicated as it is on the formula, exhibits impressive affinity with the practice of oral poetry, thus validating the tentative analogy with which this chapter began: that oral prose and oral poetry operated in the same cultural space, as analogous forms of *Kunstsprache* which were employed in archaic Greek society in the service of occasionally overlapping functions, utilizing often similar means. This is reassuring; were oral prose an entirely different animal, we would have cause to be suspicious. What we have found, then, is in effect more of the same: more forms of the oral literature with which we were already familiar, but these forms combine to create a richer, more complicated, more diverse, more exciting picture of that literature and of the culture to which it belonged. We can now take a step back to observe the picture which has emerged.

Conclusion

This long survey of oral prose genres has necessarily been selective. More of course could and should be said about many of these genres, as well as others, and in the following chapters we will return to them, but our purpose here has been to establish the existence of this phenomenon and point to its significance, both in itself and as a context for the later development of written prose. This survey consisted, basically, of one persistent move: appending a name familiar to us, "prose", to objects which are also familiar: proverbs, oaths, prayers, oracles, speeches, stories. What is unfamiliar, of course, is joining them. It is not by chance that the name "prose" and these genres

[197] O'Sullivan 1995, 76.
[198] Cf. Gentili 1988, 21, for the durability of oral practice in lyric poetry down to the Hellenistic period.

have been kept apart: they carry associations which necessarily clash. When we think of prose we cannot but hear its ubiquitous adjectival derivative, "prosaic", in the background; when we think of oracles, proverbs and oaths, on the other hand, we rightfully think of their authority and prestige. In the following chapters we will examine the extent of the continuity between what has been referred to as "oral prose" and what we more usually think of as "prose", that is written prose, but already at this stage we have established that alongside verse there were other ways of marking language in oral Greece, other discourses of distance.

Yet scholarship on the culture of the archaic period simply ignores prose, as if verse were all there was. "Poetry, recited or sung", began the Sather lectures a few decades ago, "was for the early Greeks the prime medium for the dissemination of political, moral, and social ideas".[199] How could it not be? "In a world without a book trade", a recent *Companion to Greek Rhetoric* declares, "ideas needed to be in verse in order to survive".[200] The idea of performed prose, even very recently, appears to lie beyond the horizons of the classicist's imagination.[201] But prose did not begin with the slave; it was the language of kings. In the Greek imagination it was even the language of gods. Among other consequences of these findings, views associating prose with secularization, with ushering *out* the archaic age, become much more difficult to defend.[202]

One reason that prose has not been recognized as a phenomenon *of* the archaic age, that these genres have not been purposefully been called "prose" before, is that they have not been considered from the point of view of their language, their actual language and not just its literary representation.

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[199] Herington 1985, 3.
[200] Carey 2007, 238, also Thomas 1992, 64, echoing Havelock 1963, 42: "… preservation in prose was impossible" (which is of course emphatically contradicted by Vedic).
[201] E.g, McGlew 2015, 79; Bocksberger 2017, 166; and, again, Willey 2015, 69.
[202] Cf. Detienne 1996 (1967) on the "secularization of speech" and thought. A distinction between poetry and prose is implicit in Detienne's distinction between "magicoreligious speech", which is quite explicitly identified as poetry, and "dialogue-speech", which is the language of the *agora*. Goldhill 2002 argues that fifth-century prose signifies a "profound shift" (p. 5). All this will be dealt with in greater detail in the following chapters.

Another is that they have not been considered collectively. What we have seen, however, is that these non-poetic linguistic forms from an etic point of view were unified, by virtue of similar compositional techniques and shared formal features. From an emic point of view matters are different. A distinction between poetry and prose presupposes the category of "poetry", which in archaic Greece did not exist. There were poetic genres, but not poetry. They were marked not by meter, as "strophic poetry" plainly demonstrates, but by their occasional use. Hence, it stands to reason that there would not be a sharp distinction between poetry and prose, especially as meter was neither an exclusive nor a universal property of verse. Indeed, there was in the archaic period no Greek word for prose, and the word for utterance, *epos*, did not distinguish the two. There were different forms of artistic speech, some with meter (some of which we would call prose), some without (some of which we would call poetry); some would be sung, some would be recited, and some would be declaimed. We have already asked, how distinctly would recited verse differ from declaimed prose? If recited verse could be sung, but didn't have to be, and declaimed prose typically would not be sung but of course could be,[203] how distinctly would their linguistic difference be perceived? There was melic poetry, stichic poetry, "strophic poetry", and there was also prose, but there were no clearly defined emic categories exactly corresponding to the above and distinguishing them from each other; it is thus easy to understand why the Muses, whose identity itself was fluid, could be associated with prose, too.

From an etic perspective, too, oral prose cannot be cleanly separated from oral poetry. Ring composition was neither a poetic nor a prosaic artistic technique; it was a shared feature of oral Greek verbal art, as we have seen, one among many. No picture of that art could thus be complete without

[203] Again, Kugel 1981, 75 n. 24: "*any* text – the U.S. Constitution, the Manhattan telephone book, the warranty of a clock-radio – can be sung or set to music" (italics original). That song would turn such a text into verse does not affect the argument here. Defining "prose" as that which is never sung, for that very reason, is a tautology.

oral prose. Because of the importance of verbal art, neither could any picture of archaic Greek culture. What this survey of select speech genres has shown, then, is that there was a robust, vital and vibrant culture of oral prose, which was both authoritative and prestigious, and for good reason: it was not necessarily any less artistic than oral poetry, nor of lesser antiquity. Dover was wrong then to ask, "how did Greek prose, with a long history of poetry behind it, evolve during the fifth and fourth centuries until – to borrow the expression used by Aristotle of mid-fifth-century tragedy – it 'attained its proper nature' in Plato and Demosthenes?"[204] First we must ask: what part did the long history of oral prose play in the development of written prose?

[204] Dover 1997, vi.

Chapter 2: Written Prose

The first specimens of alphabetic Greek writing date perhaps as early as the ninth century BCE.[1] It is difficult to know when exactly the Greek alphabet was developed, and where it happened, but there is some consensus that it was the result of intense contact between seafaring Greeks and Phoenicians.[2] This landmark occurrence should not be taken for granted: what moved speakers of Greek to adopt and adapt the Semitic script? What kind or kinds of language, if any, did they seek to commit to writing? We will first look at the motivations ascribed to the Greek harnessing of the technology of writing and place it in its Mediterranean context, then proceed to study the evidence for early Greek written prose, the majority of which is typically absent from conventional accounts of its history.

The advent of Greek writing

Ancient sources generally do not directly address the Greeks' motivation for developing the alphabet, perhaps because it had already come to be taken for granted, but the figures with whom Greek tradition associates its advent can teach us something about how its context was

[1] Janko 2017 observes that what appears to be the earliest Greek alphabetic text, from Gabii, near Rome (also the site of the earliest Latin inscription), should perhaps be dated no later than 825. On the gap between this earlier *terminus ante quem* for the invention of the Greek alphabet and the dates of the next earliest inscriptions, see Węcowski 2017, 326-27. For early Phoenician and Aramaic inscriptions in the Aegean, as early as 900, see Amadasi Guzzo 1987, and Bisi 1991 (also Janko 2017, 146, and the discussion in Theurillat 2007, 332-35).

[2] Others have plausibly argued for an Aramaic origin, e.g. Driver 1976, 266-67, and Marek 1993. The significance of this is that the Greeks could not be said to have "invented" the alphabet, as the graphic representation of vowels would not have been their own innovation, but rather an extension of the Aramaic practice (see also Colvin 2014, 72). Regarding the Greek habit of referring to the letters as *phoinikeia grammata*, Driver 1976, 267, remarks that the Greeks may have not clearly distinguished Levantine peoples. (Colvin 2014, 78, notes that the argument advanced by others, that *phoinikeia* actually meant "red", has met little acceptance). Others have argued for a proto-Canaanite source, but have failed to persuade. Bourguignon 2010 conveniently surveys scholarship on the origin of the Greek alphabet from 1989 to 2009, and Wilson 2009 is an excellent, concise overview. For the monogenesis of the Greek alphabet, the argument that it could only have been created once, Powell 1991, 10-12; Luraghi 2010, 72; but cf. Csapo, Johnston and Geagan 2000, 105-107. Waal 2018 recently attempts to revive the argument for a much earlier date for the Greek adoption of the alphabet.

imagined.[3] The alphabet's introduction to Greece was frequently associated with Cadmus, first in Herodotus (5.58), apparently in contrast with his Milesian predecessors.[4] While it is not hard to understand the association of Cadmus with what were known as *phoinikeia grammata*, also *Kadmēia grammata*, it is interesting that Herodotus associated the latter, obliquely, with votive texts, quoting three Greek *epigrammata* in hexameter (5.59-61).[5] In Diodorus Siculus, the association of Cadmus and the introduction of the alphabet to Greece with votive texts is more explicit (5.58). But Diodorus elsewhere attributed the discovery or invention of the alphabet (γραμμάτων εὕρεσις, 5.74), to the Muses, along with "the verbal composition which is called poetry". Alcidamas argued that Orpheus learned the alphabet from them, quoting the latter's supposed epitaph to prove it (*Od.* 24). Musaeus was naturally also cited as an inventor of the alphabet.[6] Linus, who famously gave his name to a kind of song, was credited by Tacitus with the invention of 16 letters, along with the figure of Cecrops, who was not affiliated with a particular

[3] For a meticulous study of traditions regarding the origins of the Greek alphabet, see Jeffery 1967, also the exceedingly exhaustive Schneider 2004 and from a different perspective, Ceccarelli 2013, ch. 3 (and the convenient appendix 2). They do not take an interest in the question discussed here. Calame 1993 analyzes the language of some of these traditions to argue that writing was "une sorte de simple métaphore… de la parole poétique" (p. 797).
[4] Cf. schol. Dion. Thr. 183 (Hilgard 3.183), which has Hecataeus, Anaximander and Dionysios favoring Danaos. The radical Mavrojannis 2007 argues for the value of Herodotus' testimony as historical evidence, and for his language again Calame 1993 and Nenci 1998.
[5] Incidentally, though all three texts he quotes are hexameters, he only identifies the latter two as such. (On these inscriptions see most recently Hornblower 2013, ad loc.). It is also of some interest that Herodotus there attributes the adaptation of the Phoenician alphabet specifically to Ionians. Cadmus is also associated with letters by Ephorus *FGrh* 70 F105, Aristotle fr. 501 (Rose), Timon of Phlius fr. 61 (Diels), Joseph. *Ap*. 1.10, Hyginus *Fab.* 277 and also Lind. Chron. *FGrH* 532 B. For a general study of the figure of Cadmus, see Edwards 1979. For the use of *phoinikeia* in Greek see Powell 1991, 6 n. 6. For the alphabet and votives, including discussion of this passage and the inscription of the Lindos chronicler, Willi 2005.
[6] Again, schol. Dion. Thr. 183 (Hilgard 3.183 = Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 F20). The same source mentions Mnaseas attributing its invention to Hermes (also Diod. Sic. 1.16.1, Hyginus *fab*. 227, and see other references in Jeffery 1967, 156 n. 22 and more below in regard to Thoth), who is also credited by the Homeric hymn to him with inventing the lyre. Notably, Cadmus was also reported to have invented the lyre, according to Nicomachus of Gerasa (fl. c. 100 CE, *excerpta* 1 (Jan)). For the association of Orpheus and writing see Steiner 1994, 194-201, and briefly for Musaeus, ibid. 196.

kind of language (*Ann.* 11.14). Other poets said to have invented individual letters include, strikingly, the historical figures of Epicharmus and Simonides.[7]

The only tradition which can be confidently traced back to the archaic period attributed the invention to Palamedes, who was no singer or poet.[8] Gorgias presented Palamedes' letters as an "instrument of memory", and Euripides as "cures for forgetfulness". Memory was the mother of the Muses, as Prometheus notes while himself taking credit for writing (*PV* 640-41), but the context in these three fifth-century sources is far removed from carefree dancing atop Mount Helicon.[9] Palamedes and Prometheus' circumstances are grim as they lay out their defense speeches but, more importantly, memory here is not serving the purpose, for instance, of *kleos* but much more concrete ends. In Gorgias' speech and in *Prometheus Bound* writing appears as part of a catalogue of inventions of great practical value,[10] and Euripides cites three kinds of texts: a letter, a will and a contract. There is no reason, as we will soon see, to think that these genres were

[7] In addition to Tac. *Ann.* 11.14, see also Pliny *HN* 7.16.192, citing Aristotle, and Hyginus *Fab.* 277. Cecrops was a civilizing figure more generally (cf. schol. Ar. *Plut*. 773: νόμους πολλοὺς ἐφεῦρε). For Linus see West 1983, 56-67. There are interesting connections between Linus, Cecrops and Cadmus. Cecrops was half-man and half-snake, and Cadmus was turned into one (like Cecrops, Cadmus too invented other things as well – see Edwards 1979, 32-33). Linus was traditionally from Thebes (e.g. Paus. 9.29), which Cadmus of course founded, and which is where Herodotus saw the *kadmēia grammata* (5.59). Herodotus also reported that the Linus song was sung in Phoenicia (among other places, 2.79; cf. Powell 1991, 13, on Thebes as the site of the alphabet's invention). Diodorus (3.67) has Linus adapting the letters which Cadmus imported; Zenobius has Cadmus killing Linus (Cent. iv. 45). Willi 2013 is a particularly insightful attempt to account for Epicharmus and Simonides. *Pace* Svenbro 1993 (1988), ch. 5, Skamon of Mytilene (*FGrH* 476 F3) credits Actaeon with naming the letters "Phoenician" on account of his daughter Phoenice; it is not clear whether he credits him with the invention of the letters themselves.

[8] Stes. fr. 213 *PMGF* (=schol. Dion. Thr. 183). See Jeffery 1967, 152. Palamedes was apparently called the "nightingale of the Muses" (Eur. fr. 588 *TrGF*), but this again seems rather to point to the Muses' versatility (see also fr. 580). Fr. 588 *TrGF* appears to associate Palamedes with them because of his *sophia*. See also Powell 1991, 233-36, raising a number of intriguing points, and Ceccarelli 2013, 72-88. Mavrojannis 2007 argues that Palamedes was originally Phoenician.

[9] Eur. fr. 578 *TrGF*, Gorg. fr. 82 B11a.30 DK, also (again) Alcid. *Od.* 22, schol. Eur. *Or*. 432, Hyginus *Fab.* 227. Note that in *PV* there are some questions regarding the text, specifically μνήμη (cf. Ceccarelli 2013, 66 n. 26). It is quite stunning to find that where memory to a certain extent facilitated oral poetry, now writing can facilitate memory (cf. Calame 1993, and more generally on the representation of writing in *PV*). Memory also looms large in elegiacs attributed to Critias, who explains the invention of letters by virtue of their being ἀλεξίλογα (B2.9 *IEG*, and see Ceccarelli 2013, 65). Simonides' inclusion in these traditions in this context is striking. For the association of writing with memory see also Steiner 1994, 101-104, and for further references in fifth-century literature Yunis 2011, 231.

[10] On these catalogues, and the significance of their inclusion of writing, cf. Kurke 1999, 249-53, esp. 251.

associated with verse. The Platonic myth of the invention of the alphabet, attributed to the Egyptian god Thoth, might be considered a pointed response to the sophistic traditions.[11] Here too writing is one among a number of practical inventions, *technai* (275c7), concerning whose potential benefits (ὠφελία, 274d9) the divine king Thamus inquires. The context in which its use is imagined is didactic; the language of the sophistic education Plato is thinking of is not poetic. What we find, then, is that while later traditions generally consider writing in the abstract and attribute its invention to legendary poets, the earlier ones conceive of writing as a primarily practical skill. Because the uses to which writing is put are not necessarily associated with poetry, its *prōtoi heuretai* are not poets; they are *sophoi*, and verbal dexterity is only one aspect of their *sophia*. We will later see this split between earlier and later traditions to be characteristic.

Modern theories concerning the impetus for Greek writing fall into similar camps. The context of the Greek-Levantine contact which gave rise to the Greek alphabet is usually presumed to be mercantile.[12] The earliest evidence of Greek writing appears, however, not to evince commercial concerns, except perhaps the assertion of ownership.[13] Texts asserting ownership, which are numerous, have also been interpreted as votive and, accordingly, as the original motivation for inventing a Greek alphabet.[14] The surprising proportion of hexameters among

[11] *Phaedr*. 274-278 (also *Phil*. 18b-c). The site of Thoth's conversation with Thamus, remarkably, was (Egyptian) Thebes. Thoth was identified with Hermes who, as we have seen, was also credited as the inventor of writing (see Yunis 2011, 227, on whether Plato knew of Thoth's identification with Hermes). Nightingale 1995, 149-54, reads the Platonic myth as related to the myth of Palamedes' demise; and see ibid. 149, n. 32, for references to discussions of its relationship with Prometheus.

[12] E.g. Harris 1996, 60-61, Ruijgh 1998. See Lombardo 1988 for discussion of the commercial case, and Powell 1991, 181, for succinct criticism. For a defense, Csapo and Johnston 2000, 104. Woodard 2010 argues for a mercenary context. Röllig 1998 and Krebernik 2007 briefly suggest a didactic, scholarly context, and see also Burkert 1992, 29. Against these more formal contexts, López-Ruiz 2010, 31-34, pushes for a less impersonal, maybe even domestic, context.

[13] Johnston 1983, very briefly; discussed at greater length in Lombardo 1988, 173-75 and see also the comments in Ceccarelli 2013, 28, and Wilson 2009, 549. Cf. Węcowski 2017, 322.

[14] Willi 2005 argues for the importance of votive texts (he is anticipated in this by Robb 1978), and Lippolis 2014 for cult more broadly (also Steiner 1994, 61-63). But cf. Powell 1991, 145, and Wilson 2009, 551, who argue that among the earliest specimens of Greek writing, dedications are relatively late.

specimens of early writing has on the other hand prompted the claim that the alphabet was developed for literary purposes, by which scholars mean poetry, perhaps specifically Homer's.[15] This theory in its most extreme form is widely discredited; it is indeed hard to see why one would write down the *Iliad* if there were very few people or even no one to read it. We will later see that the same fallacy blithely underlies the common narrative of the rise of prose.

It would seem better to take the impressive proportion of verse among early inscriptions not as an indication of the cause of writing but as a symptom of its use in certain, perhaps elite, contexts. This could fit well with the suggestion that prestige was an important factor in the invention of the alphabet, as well as the context of Orientalization.[16] The Mediterranean context here is important because it would be surprising if the motivation for Greek writing were not in some way inspired by the culture whose writing system they adapted; moreover, as the Greek alphabet spread, not only among Greeks but also to other cultures, foreign practices which Greeks encountered would have suggested different possibilities for its use. The Greeks learned not only the alphabet from their Near Eastern contacts: along with it came techniques for learning to read and write, instruments of writing (e.g. the Semitic *deltos*) and even the graphic layout of the text.[17] One reason for this may be that Levantines and Greeks were not two separate groups, but rather early writers of Greek were bilingual and possibly used related scripts for other languages.[18] It has indeed been argued that some of the earliest Greek writings, as we will see below, were modeled

[15] Notably Powell 1991, following Wade-Gery 1952, 11-14. Robb 1978 argues that Greeks would have emulated Phoenician votive texts by writing Greek poetry, elaborated in Robb 1994. See e.g. Woodard 1997, 253, for criticism of Powell.
[16] Węcowski 2017 emphasizes the context of the elitist symposium. Others contest the association of the alphabet with the elite, e.g. Robb 1994, 13; Langdon 2015; Clay, Malkin and Tzifopolous 2017, 4-5. Cf. Ceccarelli 2013, 29.
[17] Wendel 1949; Millard 1984, 307; Burkert 1992, 29-33, demonstrating the existence of a "continuum of written culture in the eighth century which stretches from the Euphrates to Italy" (31), and also West 1997, 25-27. Hurwit 1990, 181, suggested that the decorative function of inscribed language also betrays eastern influence. Cf. Davies 2005, 294.
[18] López-Ruiz 2010, 31-39, especially emphasizes the possibility that the earliest writers were bilingual, also Mavrojannis 2007, 302.

on Phoenician prototypes,[19] and one wonders what impact Greek and Mediterranean writings on perishable materials might have had on our understanding of Greek writing and literature. Before turning to the Greek evidence for early writing, a map of Mediterranean writing in the first half of the first millennium BCE will be briefly sketched.[20]

On Cyprus the syllabary which may have mediated the invention of the Greek alphabet was most prominently used for proprietary and votive purposes, and also on some sixth-century graves and coins, and Roger Woodard has speculated that it may have served for poetry.[21] Cyprus was itself under Assyrian, then Egyptian, then Persian rule, and by the ninth century BCE there was a Phoenician presence on the island.[22] Early Phoenician writing, in evidence throughout the Mediterranean, was used for votive purposes, as well as for monumental inscriptions, and from the eighth century there is also graffiti with commercial content. There is some controversy over whether they also wrote down what is generally, unhelpfully, called "literature".[23] But if

[19] Pfohl 1969, 9-10, on which see more below, and Asper 2007, 77, more generally; also van Berchem 1991, on contracts.

[20] For Greek travel and contact in the Mediterranean in this period see Burkert 1992; Morris 1992, esp. ch. 5; West 1997, ch. 1 and 12; Boardman 1999; Luraghi 2006, suggestively, on mercenaries; the conservative van Dongen 2007; López-Ruiz 2010, ch. 1, on Phoenicians; Hawkins 2010 and van Dongen 2013, on Asia Minor; Bachvarova 2016, emphasizing festivals; and Ulf 2009, for methodology. There is little reason to think, with Powell 1991, 1, that foreign "literate culture" could have no impact on Greek society; such influence would not require Greeks to read foreign languages, and that capability in certain contexts would not necessarily be particularly surprising. This sketch is not meant to be exhaustive, and hardly could be; in the interest of economy I elide distinctions between the materials used for writing, between script and language (e.g. Aramaic inscriptions in Phoenician script), etc. No discussion of Greek culture in the archaic period can afford to be isolated from the Mediterranean context (cf. Burkert 1992, 1-6), and I know of no equivalent survey. It is interesting that later Greeks, as Steiner 1994, 135, shows, liked to think of themselves as using writing very differently from eastern cultures. Ch. 1-2 ibid., also Ford 1992, ch. 4, serve as a corrective to the notion that when writing appeared in Greece it appeared as entirely foreign and novel.

[21] Woodard 1997 brilliantly argues for the Cypriot syllabary as an intermediary. See Palaima 1991 for early Cypriot writing. Woodard 1997, 254-56, suggests that poetry might have been written using the syllabary, pointing out that there is no *a priori* reason metrical poetry could not be accommodated by a syllabary. *ICS* 264 attests to this. Millard 1991, 111, notes that Greek inscribed seals are rare in comparison with the Levant.

[22] Bourguignon 2010, 133, suggests the Greeks first used the alphabet to write Phoenician, only then adapted it in order to write Greek.

[23] Millard 1991 presents a convenient overview of the uses of early Phoenician writing. See recently Quinn 2017, 60-61, on the question of a Phoenician literature. She excludes "technical writing" from the category of literature, which indicates the narrowness, or at least the ambiguity, of its scope. Ibid., 47-48 she discusses the case of Philon of Byblos' *Phoenician History*, which has been thought to have preserved Phoenician mythology. Cf. West 1966, 24-28; West 1994, 293-302; López-Ruiz 2010, ch. 3.

"literature" was foreign to the Phoenicians, it was not foreign to the region. Balaam's prophecies in the Deir ʿAllā inscription and fragments of *Ahiqar* from Elephantine attest to Aramaic "literature" on scrolls, and the Hebrew Bible similarly provides evidence for written Hebrew "literature" in the first half of the millennium.[24] Other Northwest Semitic writing served proprietary and votive purposes, for commemoration of people and events, administration and law, international treaties and correspondence, and perhaps also magic.[25] The limitations of cuneiform-literacy notwithstanding, Greeks might also have encountered the Akkadian originals;[26] as Assyria, and significant numbers of Assyrians, reached the shores of the Mediterranean, they brought with them cuneiform. Their inscriptions were mainly royal or administrative.

Moving northwest, Hieroglyphic Luwian was used until the end of the eighth century for monumental inscriptions and also for correspondence and administration.[27] The inscriptions of the Phrygians, whose alphabet is in some form related to the Greek, were mainly dedicatory or proprietary.[28] In the west, the Etruscans used an adapted version of the Greek alphabet to write various kinds of funerary, proprietary and votive inscriptions, as well as *tesserae hospitales*.[29] The

[24] On the Balaam inscription, Millard 1984, 307 and, more recently, van der Toorn 2007, 176 with references (whether its language is Aramaic or a related dialect has no bearing on the argument here); on Ahiqar, e.g. Burkert 1992, 32-33 (and, intriguingly, 122-23). See more broadly Wendel 1949, 93-94, and Haubold 2013, 9, with references. For Hebrew see, e.g., van der Toorn 2007, ch. 7-8. Lord 2000 (1960), 156 (see also p. 133), suggested that the impetus for writing down Homeric epic might have come from Palestine or the library of Nineveh, and Janko 1998, 12, asserted that knowledge of Levantine epics must have been involved.

[25] E.g. Davies 2002 (note the Greek mercenaries mentioned on an ostracon from Arad, ibid. 278) and 2005.

[26] See Burkert 1992, 95 (criticized e.g. by Bachvarova 2016, 55 n. 8). For Akkadian in the Levant, see van Dongen 2007, 35-36. One need not necessarily be able to read cuneiform or hieroglyphs in order to recognize the use made of them and be inspired to make the same use of the Greek alphabet, as in Willi's scenario for the influence of Phoenician votives (Willi 2005). Cf. Feeney 2016, 206-208.

[27] Hawkins 2000, vol. 1, 2-3, and Bachvarova 2016, 11 and 311, with references. See also Waal 2011. Remains of early Carian graffiti (including bilingual graffiti with Greek) were found in Egypt. There are also some early Lydian tombstone inscriptions. Thracian was inscribed on some coins. Old Persian cuneiform, developed towards the end of the period under discussion, was primarily used for royal inscriptions.

[28] Brixhe and Lejeune 1984, ix. Van Dongen 2013 recently argues that the Phrygian alphabet was adapted from the Phoenician, not the Greek, and see also Papadopoulos 2016. Lemaire 2017, 113-14 concurs; Janko 2017, 151-55, maintains Greek priority.

[29] Stoddart and Whitley 1988, 767-71; Wallace 2008, ch. 10. Wallace sees no reason to doubt the existence of an Etruscan "literature" (ibid., 8). Cf. Feeney 2016, 201-203.

Etruscan alphabet was later taken over by other local cultures in Italy. Among the meager earlier remains of their writings, which include Latin ownership, craftsmanship and dedicatory inscriptions, the "sacred law" of the Latin *Lapis Niger* stands out, as do poetic Faliscan inscriptions such as the Ceres epigram.[30]

Finally, in Egypt, whose hieroglyphs effectively spawned the Semitic alphabet and had a long and rich history behind them, a number of scripts were used in this period for a variety of purposes, everyday and official and literary. Literacy was limited, and there is also some question as to the extent of the exposure of Greeks in Egypt to mainstream Egyptian culture. On the other hand, the restriction of writing rendered it highly prestigious, and it was in any event part of the landscape.[31] It has in fact been argued that Greek alphabetic numerals, first attested in the sixth century, were derived from an Egyptian model.[32]

Its Mediterranean context now at least partially in place, we may now turn our attention to the Greek case. It is not only the possibility of foreign influence which is of importance, but also its absence.

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[30] On the poetic qualities of early Italic poetic inscriptions, including slightly later South Picenian poetic epitaphs, see Watkins 1995, ch. 10, and Mercado 2006, ch. 11 and 13. Sixth-century Pre-Samnite inscriptions are primarily proprietary (but note Ps 20 in Rix 2002). Seventh/sixth-century inscriptions in Messapic, North Picene, Venetic, Sicel and Elymian, are few, short and tend to be dominated by names. The same is true for sixth-century Lepontic inscriptions, the oldest attested Celtic, which were mainly funerary. For overviews and references see Weiss 2009, ch. 2; Fortson 2010, ch. 13.

[31] To reiterate the point made above for contact with cuneiform, that literacy was limited does not mean writing was for the illiterate invisible or meaningless. Few could read the *Book of the Dead*, but like the Mesopotamian *Song of Erra* it nevertheless circulated widely as a cult object (e.g. van der Toorn 2007, 26). For Greeks in Egypt see again van Dongen 2007, 37-38. The influence of Egyptian writing could also come second-hand, via the Levant (see Davies 2002, 280). See Vasunia 2001, ch. 4, for the Greek perception of Egyptian writing.

[32] Chrisomalis 2003. Cf. however Katz 2006, 172 with references in n. 37, regarding the limited role Egypt played in Greek Orientalization and, in particular, the case of the sphinx, who arrived in Greece via the Levant.

Once the Greeks started writing in alphabetic script, as in the eighth-century Levant they did not stop.[33] Four hundred years later, there were libraries and archives and literature dependent on writing and literature explicitly written for readers and a general explosion of written documents, and oral culture – if not entirely superseded – had come under heavy attack. In the intervening centuries, Greeks set to writing different kinds of language in the service of various purposes. At times writing was used exclusively for its material properties, as a cult object or for decoration,[34] but when writing was used to transmit specific content or, in Jakobson's terms, when an alphabetic "code" was employed to convey a "message", [35] it will have involved two parties, an "addresser" and an "addressee". We can distinguish four basic kinds of texts on the basis of the relationship between the two:

1. Texts from an individual addresser or a group of individuals, to a specific, individual addressee or addressees (e.g. as typically in epistolography).[36]
2. Texts from (an) individual(s) addresser(s) to an unspecified addressee, or rather an unspecified audience, the individual identity of whose members is immaterial to the addresser (i.e. a "public"). An example of this is graffiti.
    a. When the addresser is named, we will in some cases call him or her an author.

[33] This should not be taken for granted: "if the birth of the alphabet can be dated to around the 18th-17th century BCE… the spread of alphabetic writing was anything but spectacular; there was no explosion in its use, nor any wildfire-like uncontrollable expansion" (Lemaire 2017, 106-108, 112-13). See e.g. Theurillat 2007, 336, for the "exponential increase in writing" in Eretria during the eighth century.

[34] Thomas 1992, ch. 5. See the brief discussion, with references, of nonsense inscriptions and abecedaria in Wilson 2009, 550. For the former see Immerwahr 2006. For examples of the latter see Powell 1991, 152-57, and for extensive discussion Woodard 2014. On the interaction between writing and decoration, and writing as decoration, Hurwit 1990 and Osborne and Pappas 2007.

[35] Jakobson 1987a, 66.

[36] The addressee can also be identical with the addresser, as when one writes a shopping list for oneself. The purpose of such writing is communication between two separate parties: individual A at time X, and individual A at time Y. As Willi 2005, 166, points out, the addressee need not be human; as in the case of votive texts, the audience can be divine.

3. Texts from a public (i.e. [an] addresser(s) whose identity is not individualized), to a public (e.g., a stop sign).
4. Texts from a public to an individual, such as an electric bill.

The significance of these distinctions is reflected in the history of Greek writing. The earliest Greek texts, from the eighth century and perhaps earlier, were composed by individuals (categories 1 and 2).[37] Fully public texts (with public addressers and addressees, category 3) are first attested from the seventh century, presumably because it took some time for writing to gain acceptance as a form of public communication. The fourth category largely falls outside the chronological boundaries of our discussion, during which widespread sufficient literacy could not be taken for granted. This chapter will be concerned first with individually composed Greek writing (categories 1 and 2), then publicly composed writing (3). We will not be concerned in this chapter with authored texts (category 2a), which are in fact situated between category 2 and 3, as an author is a public kind of individual whose name refers not to an individual but rather to a persona which does not necessarily correspond to an individual. Such texts will be treated in the next chapter.

Frequent among the earliest finds are names inscribed on objects, used to declare ownership or craftsmanship, or to commemorate their dedication to a god or to another human as a gift. There are also graffiti (in the modern sense), which perhaps also represent a form of commemoration.[38] In the seventh century epitaphs become more common, and in the sixth there

[37] This would appear to be true also for specimens of writing consisting of single letters, for which see Wilson 2009, 550, and would not be refuted by texts which were preserved in fragmentary state.

[38] Particularly useful are the collection and survey of early inscriptions in Powell 1991, ch. 3 (and see some corrections in Wirbelauer 2004, 193-94 n. 26), and the list of categories in Wilson 2009 (Harris 1996 offers a similar taxonomy). Svenbro 1993 (1988), ch. 4 argues for the singular importance of the name as the impetus for writing (cf. Hartog 1988, 285). The Greek gods' disregard for writing (Henrichs 2003, 38-41), suggesting the perception of writing as a distinctly human activity and associating it with mortality (Svenbro 1993 [1988], 156), is an attractive way of accounting for the prevalence of writing as commemoration. The Egyptian god Thoth provides a striking contrast to the Greek gods (Vasunia 2001, 151-55).

is evidence for curses as well as epistolography. Particularly notable, on the one hand, is a context of cult in which many objects and texts appear to be situated and, on the other, the agonistic, perhaps playful, use to which others are put.[39]

The language of these writings is poetry, prose and, significantly, as in the case of the obscene graffiti from Thera, a linguistic form distinct from both.[40] Where did the language of these writings come from? A long line of thinkers, starting with Plato (*Phaedr*. 276a8-9) and Aristotle (*de Interp*. 16a) and extending through Rousseau, de Saussure and beyond saw writing as speech transcribed, in effect as a copy of speech.[41] Others have contested the reductive view of writing, and insisted on its status as a fundamentally different linguistic medium which is not dependent on speech.[42] Indeed, the earliest writing, in Sumeria and Egypt, was not intended to record language, let alone speech.[43] While second-millennium Greek writing was linguistic, the sole surviving genre of that literature, lists, ostensibly does not record speech. In alphabetic Greek lists appear surprisingly late,[44] but it should not be taken for granted that the earliest alphabetic Greek

[39] Johnston 1983; Steiner 1994, 61-63; Theurillat 2007, 336; and Lippolis 2014 emphasize cult. For agonism see the erastic Theran inscriptions, Nestor's Cup, etc., and for playfulness see Węcowski 2017 on the sympotic context.
[40] See Powell 1991, 171-80, for the Theran inscriptions. If prose is a language of distance, obscenities should not be considered prose, as they do precisely the opposite: they violate distance and impose on its addressees an uneasy intimacy.
[41] De Saussure 1922, 44-55, and for Rousseau see the analysis of Steiner 1994, epilogue. Goody 1977, 77, also attributes this position to the linguists Sapir, Bloomfield and Hockett. Schol. Dion. Thr. 182 and 186 also mention the interpretation of *phoinikeia (grammata)* as a Boeotian form of *phōnikeia*, hence as "images of the written voice".
[42] Derrida 1967; Benveniste 2012 (1968-69), 127-35; Goody 1977, 77-78 and 124 ("not simply a visual representation of the oral"); Ong 1982, 85; Powell 1991, 69; Thomas 1992, 56; Feeney 2016, 34-35 ("writing is a symbolic tool in its own right"); and cf. Olson 2009, arguing for a more nuanced approach. According to Foucault 2002 (1966), 42-43, 47, in the 16th-century *episteme*, writing was privileged over speech. Svenbro 1993 (1988) analyzes the archaic Greek case ("not until silent reading was conceptualized – possibly as early as the late sixth century B.C. – could writing be regarded as representing a voice", p. 5), and cf. Calame 1993 and Bakker 1997, ch. 2.
[43] Assmann 1994, 18, also Goody 1977, 79-80. Vasunia 2001, 171, notes that even with regard to later Egyptian literature it is "in general… difficult to trace oral counterparts".
[44] Ceccarelli 2013, 30, dates them to the fifth century, but would the Athenian archon list (ML 6) not have been based on a written record? See Thomas 1989, 287-88 (and ch. 3), for discussion. Jeffery thinks lists were inscribed "at least as early as the sixth century" (LSAG 59-61). Cf. perhaps also Powell 1991, 132-33. The belatedness of written lists is also *prima facie* surprising because of their role in oral poetry. For Near Eastern lists see van der Toorn 2007, 119-21, with references. Cf. Goody 1977, ch. 5, who attached great significance to lists as a prototypical genre of early writing.

texts are transcripts. They might, for instance, be translations: Gerhard Pfohl argued that the language of early Greek writings, particularly epitaphs and votives, was indebted to the formulae of Phoenician inscriptions.[45] It would not necessarily be surprising to find that the language of early Greek epigraphy grew out of Semitic roots, but it is enough, however, to consider early Greek hexametric inscriptions to realize that it could not have grown out of them exclusively. While the syntax of the openings of the Mantiklos and Nikandre inscriptions ([donor] ἀνέθηκε [god]) may be originally Semitic, their meter and diction (the epithets ἑκηβόλος, ἀργυρότοξος) are firmly rooted in the traditional language of Greek hexameter poetry.

As we proceed to study the earliest Greek written texts, in addition to the questions posed in relation to the language studied in chapter 2 – which sought to distinguish prose from ordinary speech on the one hand, and poetry on the other – we must now consider the relation of these texts to oral speech. To the extent that these texts are transcripts, we will ask whether they present us with the result of what Oesterreicher has called *Verschriftung*, language which in being transcribed has undergone a medial change but whose conception is unchanged, or *Verschriftlichung*, language which in being transcribed has undergone both medial and conceptual change.[46] To the extent that they are not transcripts, we will inquire whether their language is a translation; or rather borrowed from a different Greek genre, oral or written; or perhaps a completely novel use of language with no oral counterpart. Finally, we will ask what consequences these considerations have for the forms of early written prose, and for their use and significance.

[45] Pfohl 1969, 9-10 (suggested cursorily in Friedländer 1948, 7 n. 1, also Norden 1939, 292-93). Day 2010, 7 n. 24, suggests Semitic influence on votives on the basis of Amadasi Guzzo 1989-90. There is little reason, however, to restrict Semitic influence specifically to the Phoenicians and exclude, for example, Aramaic.

[46] Oesterreicher 1993. On the distinction between medium and conception see the introduction. Also fundamental for this study, from a different point of view, is Calame 1995, as will become clear below, with the distinction between utterance and enunciation, and the interaction between pronouns.

Individual to public: ownership and craftsmanship inscriptions

Most prominent among the surviving earliest Greek writings are ownership inscriptions. The following are the best-preserved among them:[47]

> ϙοραϙō ημι ϙυλιχς (Rhodes, late eighth century)[48]
> I am the kylix of Korax [i.e. Crow]
>
> νεστορος : ε̣[ιμ]ι̣ : ευποτ[ον] : ποτε̄ριον... (Pithekoussai, 735-720)[49]
> I am the cup of Nestor, good to drink from...
>
> ταταιε̄ς ε̄μι λε̄ϙυθος... (Cumae, 675-650)[50]
> I am the lekythos of Tataie…
>
> θαριō ειμι ποτε̄ριον (Athens, c. 650)[51]
> I am the cup of Tharios.
>
> δολιωνος ε̄μι ϙυλιχςη (Smyrna, end of seventh century?)[52]
> I am the kylix of Dolion.

Against the geographic spread, chronological range and orthographic variety, the structural and rhetorical uniformity of these texts is remarkable. They attest to the existence of a linguistic norm, a form of standard language for asserting ownership in writing, which consists of the owner's name in the genitive, followed by εἰμί and the owned object. It should go without saying that Greek speakers had at their disposal ample resources to claim ownership in a variety of different ways, lexical, syntactic, etc. Yet the structure of these inscriptions is constant. Such syntax is also typical of oral poetry – in the *Iliad* one similarly finds "possessions" introduced in

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[47] For a recent list of early ownership inscriptions (in a sympotic context, which he claims is typical) see Węcowski 2017, 311-12 n. 7. I follow the convention in *LSAG* and other publications in limiting editorial intervention to spacing between words and macrons and the like. (The attempt to combine macrons and accents would result in a terrible mess).
[48] *IG*^{2} 919; *LSAG* 347, pl. 67 (1); *EG* I, 328-29; Heubeck 1979, 126; Powell 1991, 137-38, with n. 43 on the final letter; Wirbelauer 2004, 194, reads a tau, beginning a new word.
[49] *SEG* xxvi 1144; *CEG* 455 (with the date mistaken); Heubeck 1979, 109-16; Powell 1991, 163-64 (with many further references).
[50] *IG* xiv 865; *LSAG* 238, pl. 47 (3); Powell 1991, 166.
[51] *LSAG* 69, pl. 1 (4); *EG* I, 137; Powell 1991, 140.
[52] LSAG 345 (69), pl. 66 (69).

the nominative, preceded by the name of their owner in the genitive[53] – suggesting that the language of Greek ownership does not represent casual, ordinary speech. Additionally, these ties significantly weaken the potential case for the influence of the language of Semitic ownership inscriptions.[54]

Their sympotic, ludic context is a further indication that such language was special,[55] as is its form. Consider, for instance, Korax's spectacularly mellifluous kylix. "Korax" is probably not the name of the kylix's owner;[56] aesthetic concerns will have thus played some part in its composition, and attention to its acoustic structure reveals it to be breathtakingly intricate, a form of ring composition squared.[57] Further proof that this language is special is that it can serve as a preface, as on Nestor's cup and Tataie's lekythos, to lines of verse:

> νεστορος : ε[ιμ]ι : ευποτ[ον] : ποτε̄ριον
> hος δ' αν τōδε πιε̄σι : ποτε̄ρι[ō] : αυτικ̣α κε̄νον
> hιμερος haιρε̄σει : καλλιστε[φα]ν̣ō : αφροδιτε̄ς
> I am the cup of Nestor, good to drink from; whoever drinks this cup, immediately him the desire of beautifully-crowned Aphrodite will seize.
>
> ταταιε̄ς ε̄μι λε̄ϙυθος hος δ' αν με κλεφσει θυφλος εσται
> I am the lekythos of Tataie; whosoever steals me will go blind.

[53] E.g. *Il.* 6.460 (Ἕκτορος ἦδε γυνὴ), 7.89 (ἀνδρὸς … τόδε σῆμα). It is noteworthy that the examples here from the *Iliad* are clearly marked – scholion bT 6.460, for instance, characterized the former as "epigrammatic" – and thus would certainly be associated with a *Kunstsprache*. Clay 2016 argues that the latter is evidence of Homer's awareness of writing.

[54] For early Semitic ownership inscriptions see for instance the Phoenician clay cones from Byblos (Gibson III, p. 12), and the Hebrew potsherds from Hazor (Gibson I, p. 18).

[55] Węcowski 2017.

[56] Masson 1973 discusses the name, which is rare (among few others, it is attributed to Archilochus' traditional murderer). See also *SEG* xxxiv 1299.

[57] This unit, independently of what may have followed, is book-ended by two sequences of identical structure (kVSVk, where V stands for vowel and S for sonorant), which in themselves are instances of ring composition, as both begin and end with a /k/ and are split by sonorants (/r/, /l/) which are flanked by pairs of vowels of which the first is rounded and the second unrounded, together nearly running the gamut of vowels (only /e/ is left out, but can be found in ημι). Cf. Fantuzzi and Hunter 2005, 285: "… there are very few non-epitaphic or non-dedicatory inscriptions of the archaic period to which it might perhaps be possible to attribute aesthetic ambitions…".

Together, prose preface and verse curse form a composite work of art. Some scholars have been tempted to argue that the ownership prefaces to Nestor and Tharios' cups and Tataie's lekythos are themselves verse. How are we to distinguish prose from poetry when dealing with such short texts, especially when much longer, later inscriptions have been a cause of controversy? We must begin by acknowledging that while it might not be easy to find incidental hexameters, scanning any prose text would yield random dactylic or choriambic sequences.[58] On the other hand, it would be unwise to consider a trimeter inscription that does not obey Porson's law prose; non-standard verse, even bad verse, is still verse, and certainly not prose.[59] But no one would say that a random string of dactyls in Herodotus is poetry, because it is clear that such sequences cannot be considered in isolation from what we may call, in Saussurian terms, their syntagmatic context. The problem is what to do with texts which are fragmentary, or simply too short to supply a meaningful syntagmatic context. I suggest that such decisions can only be made by taking into account the paradigmatic context of such texts, i.e. their genre. It is not enough to show that a text scans, or doesn't; one has to explain what sense a text makes as poetry or prose, in relation to a specific genre of poetry or prose.

What is interesting about Nestor and Tataie's prefaces is that they are clearly separate, in form and function, from the verse curses which follow them. It would have in fact been very easy for "Nestor" to assert his ownership in dactyls. It would only have required the omission, or postponement, of the adjective εὔποτον. He was evidently not concerned with dactyls. This was not a matter of Nestor's personal taste; a bipartite structure, composed of an ownership statement distinct from hexametric ritual language, was standard.[60] Watkins and others have claimed that the

[58] Cf. Dover 1997, 160-71..
[59] Concisely put by Todd 1939. Oswald 2014 speaks of "metricizing" texts.
[60] Cf. Faraone 1996, 98-104; Węcowski 2017, 316 on LSAG 434 (B), p. 73,4; and also the recent Hakesandros inscription from Methone (Meth 2).

first line of Nestor's Cup forms a "slightly irregular" iambic trimeter but, as we have said, such prosodic pleading is not enough. I do not think a good case can be made for a norm of ownership trimeters.[61] This does not mean that some of our fragmentary ownership inscriptions may not be metrical, but in the event that this could be shown it would raise a different set of questions and in any case would not undermine the existence of a norm of prose ownership inscriptions. The use of the ownership formula in prose was, indeed, widespread and well-established: it moved between genres and social classes, equally at home on ludic sympotic vessels as on graffiti epitaphs of "sub-aristocratic" herders':

> Εργοτιμο ειμι μνε̄μα[62]
> I am the remembrance of Ergotimos.

The most remarkable feature of these inscriptions, which further attests to their marked nature,[63] is their use of personification. For this there is no Semitic parallel, indeed no precedent. We might consider first-person Semitic epitaphs as possible precursors,[64] but there is a difference between a first-person inscription on an object, and a first-person inscription which identifies itself as the object, as a "speaking object". This practice has been interpreted as the expression of

[61] Watkins 1976, 34-37, with others, but see, emphatically, Hansen 1976, 35-40 (Powell 1991, 165 n. 116, with Janko, agrees). Powell reads Tataie and Tharios' inscriptions above as dactylic, but dactylic scansion simply doesn't work in the case of Tataie, as Powell's own scansion makes clear. Incidentally, we might note that it does not work well for Tharios' Attic inscription above, in which the alpha should be understood as short, for if it were long we should expect an eta (unless Tharios were not Athenian), though we must take into account that names are allowed special prosodic dispensations (West 1982, 27, but cf. Most 2018a, lii). But Nestor's Cup's disregard for dactyls casts doubt as to whether we should consider such short sequences as intentionally dactylic. The scansion of the one other ownership inscription which Powell reads as dactylic – ερπετιδαμο παιδοπιλας οδε (p. 138) – is similarly shaky. First, Powell's construal of the first name as "people-leader" (which he himself admits is otherwise unattested) is less plausible than "beast-tamer" (ἑρπετόν + δαμ-), in which case the alpha in the root δαμ is short. Secondly, Wirbelauer 2004, 194, reads the inscription differently, removing it from the category of ownership inscriptions. That Korax's kylix is prose has not, to my knowledge, been contested.

[62] Langdon 2015, 50 (no. 3), and see also inscriptions 1,2,4,5,7,10, all sharing the same syntactic structure. In fact, this formula was so deeply rooted that it even traveled across languages and cultures: for its use as an ownership formula in Etruscan and Italic epigraphy, most plausibly understood as indebted to Greek practice, see Wallace 2008, 156-64, for Etruscan, and Agostiniani 1982.

[63] Schmitz 2010, esp. 30.

[64] Pfohl 1969, 10 (also Wachter 2010, 252). For first-person epitaphs see *KAI* no. 24, 26, in Phoenician, and the famous Mesha stele, in Moabite.

animistic views or as a way of attracting attention to the object and establishing its presence,[65] but as an act of communication it seems most plausible to interpret it as the addresser's attempt to vicariously establish his or her[66] own presence in order to bridge the distance between themselves and their addressee(s). The addresser did so by transforming an object into the addresser, effectively collapsing Jakobson's distinction between addresser and medium.

The forms of oral prose surveyed in the previous chapter, while all accommodating concrete distance, were primarily concerned with notional distance. It is easy to understand why: all those speech acts – proverbs, oracles, speeches, stories, etc. – were performed *in praesentia*. Oral performers generally, bards as well as public speakers and storytellers, etc., had then no need to fashion their language so as to bridge concrete – spatial or temporal – distance; they rather sought to establish notional distance in order to impress their authority on the audience, and were not necessarily concerned with the re-performance of that text, if at all. They achieved such authority by resorting to a linguistic norm which was distinct from ordinary speech and manifestly artful, a form associated with an elite and sanctioned by tradition. That language was naturally impersonal – as we most prominently saw in the case of proverbs, and as is true in a different way for the bard dependent on the Muses – in contrast with the personal-ity of early Greek writing, what Jesper Svenbro called its "egocentrism".[67] The archaic Greek public speaker might use the first person, but he would not do so in order to establish his presence, because for oral performers absence was not a problem. Conversely, the primary concern of "egocentric" writing was to establish presence: before the owner of a drinking cup, afraid that it would be lost during a

[65] For animism, Burzachechi 1962, 53; for presence, Svenbro 1993 (1988), 41-43. On "speaking objects", in addition to the collection in Burzachechi 1962 and the discussion in Svenbro 1993 (1988), see also Pucci 1988, specifically on statues; Thomas 1992, 63-65; cf. Wachter 2010. These objects were quite literally per-son(us)-ified.
[66] The owner of the aforementioned aryballos, Tataie, was at least ostensibly a woman, perhaps a *hetaira* (see Węcowski 2017, 318-19).
[67] Svenbro 1993 (1988), 29. For the contrasting attitude of epic bards, see Calame 1995, and note his important insistence ibid., ch. 1, that this difference is not to be explained by virtue of writing itself.

symposium,[68] could stake his claim for authority as an owner, he first had to facilitate the act of communication which would allow him to make that claim. Personification served as one strategy for overcoming concrete distance.

We thus find the language of the earliest Greek writing shaped by fundamentally different concerns from the oral speech we studied in the previous chapter: while oral language was concerned first with notional distance and only incidentally with concrete distance, written language had to overcome concrete distance and only secondarily established its authority. This explains, then, why the personifying language of early written Greek, though simulating speech, though meant to be read aloud, nonetheless did not derive directly from speech, and did not represent a simple transcript.[69] It was a new use of language, and a new kind of prose. It was thus altogether fitting that its speakers were different: while humans expressed themselves by means of ordinary language or oral prose or poetry, at least this form of emergent written prose was the language of inanimate objects and *not* humans.[70] These objects not only were represented linguistically as having agency – ironically, considering that they announced their ownership – by serving as "sound-producing machines" they also acted on the humans with whom they interacted. But though they were personified and their language was "egocentric", these speakers were nevertheless inanimate and thus, in a different sense, im-personal. Other sympotic objects, without using the first person, also gave humans instructions (χαῖρε καὶ πίει εὖ) and similarly prompted

[68] This is a scenario envisioned by Węcowski 2017 in an attempt to explain why we find ownership inscriptions on domestic objects. But of course such inscriptions did not merely serve the purpose of a lost and found.
[69] Svenbro 1993 (1988), 30 in particular, and ch. 2-3 more broadly, also Derderian 2001, 77. This is not to say that the Greeks never personified objects prior to writing, but rather that if for instance there was some kind of drinking game in which such objects were personified, their oral personification did not do the same work that written personification did, namely bridge concrete distance and in so doing make a claim for ownership. Regarding the performance of written texts, setting the silent reading debate in broader context, see Johnson 2000.
[70] It should of course be noted that "speaking objects" featured poetry, too. The argument here is not that prose was the exclusive language of these objects, but rather that these objects were the addressers of these kinds of prose.

oral performances.[71] These instructions came from no one, even if not from no-thing, and it is important that even those objects which did employ the first person were nonetheless *things*, and while some of these things had human owners, they were not represented as ventriloquizing humans. Because these utterances did not come from any-one, because they were not mortal and ephemeral, they were fit for establishing rules. The speaking objects we have discussed indeed outlived their owners.

While bridging concrete distance, personification thus also served to establish notional distance, a technique interestingly paralleled in contemporary poetry.[72] The authority of the ownership formula is helpful in accounting for its diffusion throughout the Greek world. Standardized language aided society in distinguishing legitimate owners – it was not simply enough for one to assert that a given object was one's possession, one had to do it in the right way, in a socially recognized way – and allowed them to assert their authority as such. But its authority alone cannot explain how this linguistic norm, so imaginative and distinct, was already relatively widespread and established at such an early stage. Nor, I think, are Greek networks a sufficient explanation: whoever first gave voice to an object, wherever it first occurred and whatever precursors it may have had, this practice evidently took root in fertile soil.[73] We will return to this later.

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[71] Hurwit 1990, 194-96, and Slater 1999, on *kalos* inscriptions and inscribed sympotic objects more broadly. These inscriptions used standard language which was subject to the same rules which otherwise regulated the symposium. Cf. the discussion of sympotic prose in ch. 1, and Slater 1999 on their status as formulaic and performative, i.e. special, language (note p. 159 n. 47, which points out that in graffiti one finds *kalos* alongside *katapugōn*, but one never finds the latter painted on a vase).

[72] Calame 1995, e.g. 77: "in the whole of archaic Greek literature, from Homeric poetry to Pindar, the utterance of the enunciation is characterized… by the projection of the *I* of the narrator onto a higher authority". (By "literature" Calame here of course means poetry!).

[73] See note 69 above. For Greek networks generally, Malkin 2011, and specifically in the context of writing, Oswald 2014, ch. 4-5. Networks will be of some importance to the discussion of epistolography later (see e.g. Wilson 1997-98, also on the Pech Maho tablet). Harris 1996, 65-67, suggested a relation between the rise of writing and colonization.

Prose was also used to stake a different kind of claim to objects. A tombstone off Thera bears the inscription:

> αγϙυλιον τονδε τον θοϙον εποιε̄[---] (Anaphe, 700-675)[74]
> Ankylion set up this seat(?).

Here, and elsewhere, the verb ποιεῖν may refer to the person to whom the object is indebted for its existence in a rather abstract sense,[75] but it could also serve to designate more particularly its maker.[76] Like the ownership formula, artisan signatures were also standard, and prosaic, and innovative.[77] First, again, came the name of the artisan, then the object (possibly as a first-person singular object pronoun) and usually a third-person singular form of ποιεῖν or γράφειν, or other such variants. The earliest dipinto, on a Late Geometric krater, reads:

> [---]ινος μ’ εποιε̄σε̣ (Pithekoussae)[78]
> -inos made me.

An aryballos dated to approximately 650 declares:

> Πυρος μ’ επιοε̄σεν Αγασιλε̄ϝο (Eretria?)[79]
> Pyrrhos the son of Agasileos made me.

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[74] Powell 1991, 144. Powell unnecessarily attempts to make it fit dactyls.
[75] Following Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 160 n. 205, who argues that the meaning of ποιεῖν here is to “set up”, not “make”, and see also Guarducci 1961, 157-58. The verb τιθέναι worked equally well (e.g. ML 3), and ποιεῖν could also be used to the same effect in verse (e.g. ML 4).
[76] It does not matter for our purposes whether the subject of ποιέω made the vase or was the owner of the workshop. See e.g. Cook 1971, Robinson 1972, and most recently Hurwit 2015, 157-58.
[77] Pfohl 1969, 10; Hurwit 2015, ch. 2. Though *KAI* no. 8, in Phoenician, should not be hastily dismissed. Allen 1888 cites a number of verse craftsmanship inscriptions, but their number is small; his study does not allow one, if I am not mistaken, to see whether any are early. Svenbro 1993 (1988), 25 n. 75, claims Phrasikleia’s (tendentiously reconstructed) craftsmanship inscription forms a iamb plus a reizianum, but that, we have shown, is not enough; one must show that such a combination was generically meaningful. For artisan signatures, see recently Osborne 2010 and Hurwit 2015 in depth. See Marcadé 1953-57 for a corpus of signatures from Delphi and Delos. Calame 2005, 93, calling attention to the use of the third person, compares artisan signatures to contemporary poets’ seals, which will be discussed in the next chapter.
[78] Powell 1991, 128. According to Hurwit 2015, 71, it is generally dated between 720 and 700. Osborne and Pappas 2007, 136, comment on the inscription’s interaction with other decorative elements on the krater.
[79] LSAG 83-84, 88 no. 22. Note the artisan’s name in the genitive, at the beginning, and how his patronym at the end forms ring composition.

Et cetera. The claim of craftsmanship could of course be made differently, one could think of myriad ways in which it could be made, not necessarily verbal, and it is significant that it generally wasn't. This is again a reflection of the value of the notional distance embedded in this linguistic form. The prestige that accrued to the simple craftsman's formula is evident in the long history of its use in Greco-Roman art. Its generic distinctness, as in the ownership inscriptions above, is particularly apparent when it interacts with other speech genres, as in a sixth-century Athenian epitaph:

> [σ]ε̄μα τοδε Χσενοφαντε πατε̄ρ σο̄ θε̄κε θανοντι̣
> Σοφιλος hο̄ι πενθος θε̄καις αποφθιμενος
> Αριστοκλε̄ς εποιε̄σεν[80]
>
> This tombstone, Xenophanes, your father set for you in death,
> Sophilos, upon whom in perishing you set grief.
> Aristokles made (it/me?).

Here the distinction is stark. Two people are involved in erecting the tombstone, but their involvement is couched in divergent linguistic forms: the person dedicating the tombstone (τιθέναι) is commemorated in verse, the person who made it (ποιεῖν) – in prose.[81] Certainly, this formula could be employed in verse, but those verses tend to feature various flourishes, such as dedications. In any event there was a norm of prose artisan signatures, and that norm appears to have constituted the default form.

Conversely, the language of votive inscriptions and perhaps epitaphs was normally verse. Hansen's *Carmina Epigraphica Graeca* catalogues nearly 180 verse epitaphs across the Greek world down to 400, and 250 verse votives (and, tellingly, only 35 which are neither). Importantly, neither votives nor epitaphs were simple transcripts, though they were rooted in oral practices (and

[80] Pfohl 1967, no. 46. See also nos. 25, 35, 37, 42, 53, 61, *CEG*
[81] Cf. on the sculptor-dedicator balance Osborne 2010, 246-47. Cf. Kaczko 2012, §13, on the typographic distinction between the two parts, also Hurwit 2015, 122-35, in greater detail and more complexity.

perhaps had Semitic precedents, too).[82] It is particularly impressive how stable the language of dedication was, showing little variety in space or time.[83] Its heavily formulaic language, we have seen, allowed even isolated pherecrateans to at least be associated with hexametric poetry.[84] The language of epitaphs underwent some evolution throughout the archaic period and was formulaic to a lesser degree, leaving its composers room for more individuality and creativity.[85] But while there clearly was a norm of verse epitaphs, there were also prose epitaphs, such as the herder graffiti mentioned above. The difference between archaic verse and prose epitaphs is that the latter are short, and tend to be primarily informative, though not necessarily devoid of emotion or lacking art.[86] It is tempting to assume that verse epitaphs are an indication of wealth and elite status in contrast with prosaic epitaphs, but while inscribing texts could be costly there is no evidence to suggest that inscribing verse was more expensive than prose, and it is well known that interpreting graves as indicators of social status is risky.[87] If verse epitaphs were indications of prestige and

[82] For votives see Day 2010; Furley 2010; Trümpy 2010 emphasizes the connection with choral lyric; cf. Wachter 2010. For epitaphs see Day 1989; Derderian 2001, ch. 2, on the relationship of epitaphs with oral mourning practices, claiming that they were not "transcripts", but rather a "new type of communication at the gravesite which supplements rather than replaces [oral] lament" (p. 76); also Trümpy 2010. Trümpy 2010, 174-75, emphasizes similarities between the two genres. For an interesting bird's-eye view of epigram, broken down according to genre, length and date from 750 to 400, see Bowie 2010.

[83] Lazzarini 1976, 170; Trümpy 2010, 171.

[84] The language of votives is exhaustively studied in Lazzarini 1976; for their metrical nature see the neglected Moranti 1972. From Lazzarini's catalogue it is clear that the vast majority of votive inscriptions, anchored by the dactylic verb of dedication ἀνέθηκε, should be considered affiliated with the hexametric tradition; a minority consists of very abbreviated forms of the full formula. Some of these might be considered distinct from that tradition, but their proportion is negligible. Some of these votives (and epitaphs) are publicly-composed, but for the sake of convenience are treated with their individually-composed counterparts here.

[85] See *GVI* for epitaphs, broken down into categories of formulae. Day 1989, 17, argues the earliest epitaphs were in prose, seeing later verse epitaphs as versified elaborations of them, but offers no support for this claim. There is a hexametric epitaph from approximately 700 (*IG* IV 358; *LSAG* 127, pl. 18 (6); Powell 1991, 143), and probably another one from the first half of the seventh century (*IG* XII.7 422; *LSAG* 293 pl. 56 (15); Powell 1991, 144). On the rise of elegiacs as the dominant meter of epigram see e.g. Wallace 1984.

[86] On the language of archaic prose epitaphs see González 2009. See also the remarks of Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 160-62, and earlier in that chapter the discussion of the prose *oimoi* epitaphs – one would assume they would have been perceived as emotional – which she argues were atypical. Note the ring composition and homioteleuton in a prose sixth-century epitaph from Cumae: hυπυ τēι κλινēι τουτēι λēνος hυπυ (*IG* XIV.871; Buck 11).

[87] E.g. Bodel 2001, 46: "with epitaphs, the problem is essentially one of distinguishing commemorative practices from demographic and social realities", also Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 289-90. Cf. Derderian 2001, 69-76 (for an idea of the cost of inscribing a text, Chaniotis 2012, 102; for some discussion of the process of commissioning verse epitaphs and the identity of their composers see Petrovic 2007, 64-65, and Tsagalis 2008, 52-56, though what

wealth, surely Phanodikos of Proconnesus, the generous benefactor of Sigeum, would have had one, but his was in prose.[88] The distinction between verse and prose epitaphs must have been different, then. Without a reliable corpus of prose epitaphs this question cannot be answered, but it is worthwhile considering some possibilities.

Some contemporary funerary legislation reflected distinctions between different kinds of death.[89] We might consider the possibility, raised in the previous chapter to account for the split between co-existing norms of prose and verse curses, that the distinction was between private and public use. The archaic grave monument itself, Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood noted, served to mark special deaths, or unfulfilled lives: up to half of them, according to her calculations, were for the young, and most of the others were for people who died at sea, or abroad.[90] We might very tentatively entertain the notion that prose epitaphs were considered more appropriate for unexceptional deaths.[91] Another possibility that must be kept in mind, however, is that there is no consistent distinction to be uncovered, that – as Sourvinou-Inwood argues – epitaphs were responding to new needs, and that there was no one longstanding tradition regulating the use of either poetry or prose with regard to commemoration of the dead.

Individual to individual: epistolography

Epistolography presents a surprising contrast to other individually-composed texts. The earliest letter, from Berezan, dates from the second half of the sixth century.[92] The rolled-up

evidence there is relatively late). Wallace 1970 argues that the distinction between verse and prose traditions is geographic (cf. Trümpy 2010, 175).

[88] LSAG 371 no. 43-44, concisely discussed in Guarducci 1961, 165-68.

[89] Cic. *Leg.* 2.26.64-65, and see extensive references at Arrington 2015, 51 n. 151.

[90] Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 286-88, and see the detailed breakdown pp. 294-96.

[91] But cf. the stele of Keramo (LSAG 76 n. 8); and EG III 171-72 (Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 160, considers Selinous atypical, however).

[92] For the purpose of discussing the language of early Greek letters it is best to focus on actual letters, not literary representations of letters in, for instance, Herodotus and Thucydides (more on them below). See Ceccarelli 2013, 8-

outside surface of the lead sheet makes use of the traditional ownership formula in specifying its addresser and addressees:

> Ἀχιλλοδώρō τὸ μολί-
> βδιον παρὰ τὸμ παῖδα
> κἀναξαγόρην.
> Achillodorus' piece of lead, to his son and Anaxagoras.

It is already apparent that the writer is transcribing what he would typically hear, in spelling the accusative singular article with a partially assimilating *mu* instead of *nu*, and the crasis of καί.[93] Yet the beginning of the message, inscribed inside the rolled-up sheet, is manifestly not a transcription of Achillodorus' own words:[94]

> ὦ Πρωταγόρη, ὁ πατήρ τοι ἐπιστέλλει. ἀδικεῖται
> ὑπὸ Ματασυος. δουλοῦται γάρ μιγ καὶ τοῦ
> φορτηγεσίου ἀπεστέρεσεν. ἐλθὼμ παρ' Ἀναξαγό|(<-)ρην
> ἀπήγησαι· φησι γὰρ αὐτὸν Ἀναξαγόρεω
> δοῦλον εἶναι μυθεόμενος· "τἄμ' Ἀνα<ξα>γόρης ἔχει
> καὶ δούλους καὶ δούλας κοικίας"· ὁ δὲ ἀναβῶι τε
> καὶ οὔ φησιν εἶναι οὐδὲν ἐωυτῶι τε καὶ Ματασ<υι>
> καί φησιν εἶναι ἐλεόθερος καὶ οὐδὲν εἶναι ἐωυτ<ῶ>ι
> καὶ Ματα{τα}συ<ι>· δέ τι αὐτῶι τε κἀναξαγόρῃ, αὐτοὶ
> οἴδασι κατὰ σφᾶς αὐτούς. ταῦτ' Ἀναξαγόρῃ λέγειν
> καὶ τῇ γυναικί. ἕτερα δέ τοι ἐπιστέλλει· τὴμ μητέρα
> καὶ τούς ἀδε<λ>φεός, <ο>ἵ ἐσσιν ἐν Ἀρβινάτηισιν, ἄγειν ἐς τὴμ πόλιν·
> αὐτὸς δέ γ' ὁ νεωρὸς ἐλθὼμ παρά μιν <ἰ>θύωρα καταβήσεται.
>
> Protagoras, your father sends instructions to you. He is being wronged by Matasys, for he is enslaving him and has deprived him of his cargo-carrier [or: of his position as a carrier; or: of the shipment]. Go to Anaxagoras and tell him the story, for he [Matasys] asserts that he [Achillodorus] is the slave of Anaxagoras, claiming: 'Anaxagoras has my property, slaves, both female and male, and houses.' But he [Achillodorus] disputes it and denies that there is anything between him and Matasys and says that he is free and that there is

10 for a definition of "letter" and 32-35, for discussion of "poetic epistles" in lyric poetry (Alcaeus fr. 130b is thematically strikingly close to AGL 1 and 5) and other possible evidence of letter-writing. See the rest of ibid. ch. 1 for a survey of the remains of archaic and classical epistolography, and also Eidinow and Thomas 2010. For the Berezan letter see also VER 2.72, and for commentary Trapp 2003, 195-98, and in great detail Bravo 1974.

[93] It is thus striking that the final *nu* in μολίβδιον is retained, again indicating the syntactic independence of the ownership formula (cf. Trapp 2003, 198). Regarding the identity of the actual writer, as opposed to the addresser, see Ceccarelli 2013, 47. It is not particularly important for our purposes.

[94] Due to technical difficulties involved in representing the original orthography long epsilons and omicrons have been normalized; for the original orthography see Ceccarelli 2013, 335.

> nothing between him and Matasys. But what there is between him and Anaxagoras, they alone know. Tell this to Anaxagoras and the (his?) wife. Besides, he sends you these other instructions: take the (your?) mother and the (your?) brothers, who are among the Arbinatai, to the city. The ship-guard himself [or: Euneoros himself], having come to him, will go directly down [or: down to Thyora]. (trans. Ceccarelli)

Achillodorus' letter is not simulating a conversation between himself and his addressees, as we saw the inscribed "speaking objects" do in employing the first person, but rather one between a messenger and an addressee, with direct speech converted to indirect. This was a conscious choice: in lines 5-6 Achillodorus quotes Matasys. While "speaking objects" were designed so as to remove the distance between the original addresser and the addressee(s), Achillodorus' letter highlights his addressees' separation from him.[95]

The different strategy employed here can be understood as a function of different pragmatic circumstances. "Speaking objects" primarily sought to overcome temporal distance: at the beginning of the evening Nestor had his cup and by the end of it he might not, but it will at most have traveled to the other end of the table; Phrasikleia's body was at least presented as lying directly underneath her tombstone, but by the time it was erected she could no longer speak. Achillodorus, on the other hand, at the very edge of the Greek world, was mostly concerned with bridging a geographic divide. Indeed, the tone of Achillodorus' letter, like many other early letters, is urgent – he is not at all concerned with a distant future, only with the very near one in which he needs something done promptly.[96] His letter, ironically, was never meant to be a *ktēma es aei*.[97]

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[95] The conversion of a first-person message to third-person can be found in Homeric messenger speeches, while in Homeric hymns and Herodotus such transformation does not always take place (Ceccarelli 2013, 104-13). For the ancient Greek view of epistolography as a language of distance, Ceccarelli 2013, 88-89.

[96] Eidinow and Thomas 2010, though their insistence that letters originated in contexts of "crisis" is an exaggeration (see, e.g., AGL 8, and 39 quite explicitly).

[97] Incidentally, it appears also to have never reached its destination (Trapp 2003, 195). Of course, some temporal distance will inevitably be involved in epistolary transmission. Achillodorus' message is in the present tense, in effect drawing out the present so that it may encompass the entire, undetermined span of time between its composition and reception. Later, letter-writers will employ the "epistolary aorist", composing their letters in the knowledge that their present will be their readers' past. See Ceccarelli 2013, 9-10, 38-39 and 45.

Other, later letters shift, in the manner of Hecataeus, Herodotus and Thucydides, from the third person to the first person midway through the text.[98] Among these we should also include those which appear to use the first person from the beginning, as Apatourius' early letter from Olbia:

> Λήνακτι Ἀπατούριος· : τὰ χρήματα σισύληµαι ὑπ᾽ Ἡρακλείδεω…[99]
> To Leanax, Apatourios: my goods have been seized by Herakleides…

Here the use of the first person, in contrast with Achillodorus' vocative opening, is facilitated by the addresser referring to himself in the third person, framing the message as direct speech of which he is the source. On the other hand, the use of the second person in early Greek letters is consistent. Thus, early Greek letters are based on one of two models: Achillodorus' letter represents a message delivered by a messenger, while Apatourius' is delivered in person. Here we are closer to the strategy employed by the "speaking objects", staging the delivery of a message in person. There is no personification, however, for these objects on which the letters are inscribed are of no importance in themselves, and the third-person framing device cannot be entirely dispensed with.

But if letters in general, and early Greek letters in particular, were conceived as transcripts,[100] they were not actually transcripts. Some of them, at least, bear clear traces of *Verschriftlichung*. Even putting the conversion of direct speech to indirect aside, a closer look at the language of Achillodorus' letter reveals that its language is not ordinary. The text appears at first to lack art or sophistication, with many of its sentences short and choppy, and indeed there is no reason we would expect Achillodorus to fashion a particularly polished text, but between the

[98] See AGL 39, 41, and 23, the Emporion letter (with Ceccarelli 2013, 42-43). Cf. Svenbro 1993, 149-50, who refers to Bacchylides 5.11 as well.
[99] Ceccarelli 2013, 338, see ibid. for the original orthography.
[100] E.g. Ceccarelli 2013, 56, 331, and see p. 57-58 for the distinction between "messenger reports" and "spoken language".

informative first few lines and the instructions of the last few comes an impressively crafted passage. First, as already noted, instead of reporting Matasys' speech indirectly he quotes him, highlighting its violence and brazenness, and then comes a very long sentence strung together first by τε καί, twice, and then three times καί on its own, underscoring the accumulation of offenses. This would also have stood out visibly: lines 6-9 all begin with καί. Prominent within the sentence is the chiastic inversion of εἶναι οὐδὲν (7) and οὐδὲν εἶναι (8), and also noteworthy is that among the many repeating words in lines 6-9, colorless verbs and pronouns and conjunctions, one word distinguishes itself by appearing only once: ἐλεόθερος (free).

One might hypothesize that the genre of the messenger speech itself used standard language, and hence Achillodorus' letter might be a product of *Verschriftung*. But though its language is not ordinary, it is also not formulaic.[101] The familiar opening and closing epistolary formulae emerge relatively late, and it is only in the fourth century, Paola Ceccarelli shows, that epistolography becomes a genre.[102] If there was a genre of messenger speeches, it did not leave much of a mark on early Greek letters, at least those extant.

And yet, while the language of early Greek letters was not formulaic, it was nevertheless making some attempt to be standard. It is true that in early letters deixis is at times quite opaque, and that Achillodorus for instance relied on his son's prior knowledge of his affairs to know whom he was referring to[103] but still, these are not personal marks on warriors' helmets, as in the *Iliad*.

[101] There are some exceptions, such as the conditional structures in AGL 12 and 23, reminiscent of the formulaic language of oaths discussed in ch. 1.

[102] Ceccarelli 2013, ch. 1, esp. p. 18. The question of foreign roots is thus largely irrelevant for the variegated early material, which cannot be treated as a unified corpus. Ceccarelli 2013, 129, citing earlier scholarship, denies Persian influence. Setting aside the possibility of local influence, the same presumably applies to Semitic epistolography as well, which at around the same time features longer and more stylized texts employing distinct formulae, with no equivalent for the Greek use of the third person.

[103] Thus, the reader of Achillodorus' letter receives no indication that the subject between lines 1-2 shifts from Achillodorus (ἀδικεῖται) to Matasys (δουλοῦται, see Trapp 2003, ad loc.) and that of φησι in line 4 is similarly opaque. Note AGL 7, where the deixis is particularly complicated.

This is no private language. It should not be taken for granted that 2500 years later, far removed from their language and culture and the particulars of their lives, we can still broadly understand messages exchanged by close acquaintances. This is due less to the ingenuity of modern scholars, mainly exercised by the deixis, than to the ancient composers' concerted effort to craft language which could traverse distance and stand, to a certain extent, on its own. It is easy to overlook the structure of this message, which is composed of sentences whose syntax is flawless.[104] And it is no accident that there is no slang in early Greek letters. We thus find ourselves with an odd artifact: personal communication which is impersonally-intelligible.

On the other hand, the absence of a formulary signifies that the standard language of early Greek letters, designed to overcome geographic distance, was not concerned with establishing abstract distance. It is not hard to understand why: early Greek correspondence took place on the margins of society,[105] and its practitioners were writing to frequently intimate acquaintances about often pressing matters. Establishing their authority was not their immediate concern, and because early Greek letters were concerned with the ephemeral, they also had no need for a language of tradition.

Here we find an important distinction between prose and poetry. It may be intuitive to assume that these far-flung traders did not compose their messages in poetry because they had no motivation for doing so, and in any event lacked the aptitude to do so, but intuitions are not a good guide: we have already seen that the division of labor between prose and poetry is contingent and variable, and we should remember that the very fact that these traders knew how to write came as

[104] See the introduction on the difference between the units of ordinary speech and prose.
[105] Ceccarelli 2013, 99. Ceccarelli is skeptical of how much official correspondence there would have been, in which one would expect more hierarchical distance, before the Hellenistic period. Of the 11 cases of correspondence in Herodotus none are between Greeks, in Thucydides letters mark "dysfunctional" communication and elsewhere they were an object of suspicion (ibid., ch. 4, 265-71, 293).

a surprise to scholars.[106] Even if some of them could not compose verse, the deeper reason for their composing prose is that poetry was, by virtue of its meter at least, always traditional and thus occasional. Prose, on the other hand, did not have to be traditional, it could break free of formal strictures while still remaining standard and was thus suitable for the incidental, ephemeral and practical. If one wanted dry fish to be brought home (AGL 8), one may well have wanted that information to be transmitted cleanly and simply, unencumbered by layers of tradition which inevitably adhered to any traditional *Kunstsprache*. If we oppose cyclical and linear conceptions of time, verse – whose principle is responsion – can be seen as particularly appropriate for representing the structure of cyclical time, which connects events which are not chronologically contiguous, while prose, whose structure does not in itself provide for closure and can run on and on, better suits the progression of linear time, consisting of ephemeral, unconnected occurrences.[107]

Because prose could break free from traditional, public forms of language while yet accommodating distant communication, it was also fit to serve as the language of personal communication, a standard language in which one could express oneself as an individual.[108] It is thus possible to see epistolary prose as related to the prose of ownership, insofar as the function of the latter was also individuation. But there are important differences. First, while ownership prose operated in the public sphere, and was thus concerned with notional distance, epistolary prose was absent from the public sphere, and therefore unconcerned with it.[109] It is not that certain forms of

[106] Wilson 1997-98. We must remember that it is only from the point of view of the modern western literary tradition that writing a business letter in verse would appear odd; in India dictionaries were written in verse, see note 112 regarding law, etc. It is anachronistic to assume that prose was the obvious medium for such messages.
[107] On linear and cyclical conceptions of time, using different terms in a different context, see recently Taylor 2007, 54-61 and 195, building on the work of Benjamin, Auerbach and Benedict Anderson.
[108] Calame 1995, 73: "formulaic language is the very means by which group feelings are collectively expressed".
[109] For the applicability of the distinction between private and public in ancient Greece see e.g. Arrington 2015, 8-13.

prose were not weighted down by tradition, then, as poetic genres were; it was rather that, as we saw, "prose" as a category did not exist, and the various forms of what we consider "prose" would not have been grouped together under the umbrella of a unified category. Of course, there was no "poetry" either, but systematic meter rendered poetic genres distinct, which was less true of the variegated forms of Greek prose, enabling some of them to serve as a medium of the non-traditional.

The absence of a category of "prose" similarly accounts for the second, seemingly paradoxical, difference: while the language of epistolography was personal, the egocentric idiom of ownership – to a certain extent, at least – was impersonal. The reason for this difference stems from their differing pragmatics: both were composed by individuals, but epistolary prose was addressed to individuals (category 1), and ownership prose was not (category 2). Having surveyed some of the main uses of individually composed writing, we now turn to publicly-composed writing (category 3).

Public to public: law

While verse genres composed by individuals came to serve collectives such as the polis in the course of the seventh century, the early genres of individually composed prose, because ownership and craftsmanship statements were so fundamentally individual, were not similarly appropriated by any public. The earliest attested document composed in the name of a polis, however, was in prose.[110] During the second half of the seventh century the eastern wall of the temple of Apollo Delphinios in Dreros, Crete, was inscribed with the following language:

[110] Coldstream 1977, 301-302; Jaeger 1945, 115, asserts a strong relation between the polis and prose. Thomas 1994, 40, notes the appropriation of verse genres by the polis. Oswald 2014, 263-87, discusses the uneven development of public epigram (cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 279-83, who sees the non-egocentric epitaphs as representing the voice of the community). Regarding the craftsmanship formula, we might note that, as we have seen, it could also be used

> ἆδ’ ἔϝαδε | πόλι | ἐπεί κα κοσμήσει | δέκα ϝετίον | τὸν ἀ-
> ϝτὸν | μὴ κόσμεν | αἰ δὲ κοσμησίε | ὁ[π]ε δίκακσιε | ἀϝτὸν ὀπῆλεν | διπλεῖ | κἀϝτὸν
> ἄκρηστον | ἦμεν | ἆς δόοι | κὄτι κοσμησίε | μηδὲν | ἤμην. *vacat*
> * ὀμόται δὲ | κόσμος | κοὶ δάμιοι | κοὶ ἴκατι | οἱ τᾶς πόλ[ιος]. *vacat* [111]
>
> The following has been decided by the polis: when one has been *kosmos* for ten years the same man shall not be *kosmos*. If he does become *kosmos*, whatever judgments he gives, he shall owe double, and he shall lose his rights to office for as long as he lives, and whatever he does as *kosmos* shall be nothing.
> The *kosmos* and the *damioi* and the Twenty of the polis swear (to this).

Six other laws, at least four of which also employed the "enactment" formula with ἔϝαδε, shared the eastern wall of the temple, and other such laws inscribed during the period under discussion have been found in nine other cities in Crete, most famously Gortyn, and throughout the Greek world, at Chios, Elis, Eretria, Argos, etc. The language of these laws – an aspect frequently overlooked[112] – is prose. It was a standardized, very specific kind of prose, which frequently took the form of an utterance with opening and perhaps closing formulae enclosing the content of the law. The latter was couched in casuistic form, typically consisting of conditional or quasi-conditional sentences in which the protasis ("if x") preceded the apodosis, leading in turn to further conditional sentences in which, for example, the protasis would be the negation of the previous protasis ("if not-x"), or other questions arising from the original statement would be addressed, and so on until the legislator was satisfied that the law was sufficiently comprehensive. We find this structure already in the earliest written law, from Dreros above:

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by those who were related to it in a more abstract way, for example as donors, as in Menekrates' cenotaph (ML 4), which the *demos* is said to have made (ἐποίει).

[111] SEG xxvii 620, ML 2, Koerner 90, VER 1.81, GP Dr 1. I have omitted the unclear interlinear text transcribed in VER 1.81 as θιοσολοιον. See the above editions for details.

[112] Gagarin 1981, 153 n. 6, perceptively points out that this very early prose is largely neglected in studies of Greek prose, and see more below. Gagarin 2008, ch. 2, surveys certain aspects of early Greek inscribed laws. For the texts see Koerner, VER, GP. It of course should not be taken for granted that laws are written in prose: some Germanic, Indic, Irish law was in verse (Roth 1976, 335; West 2007, 70-71). Note also Mac Cana 1997, 111-13, on Irish "evidential" verse as being of greater authority and "evidentiary" status than prose.

> When/if x, then y. But if (εἰ δέ) not x, then z.

This scheme is easily elaborated, as in column iv.23 of the Gortyn "Code" (ML 41), which can be represented as follows:

> If o or o', and if c or c' or c'', then p. But if not c or c' or c'', rather b or b' or b'', then p. But if not b or b' or b'', rather s or s' or s'', then p. But if not s or s' or s'', then...[113]

The regimented structure of the *kosmos* law, consisting in what in effect are logical operators expressed in formulaic language, is made particularly apparent by the dividing lines used in the inscription.[114] Aiming for clarity and precision, legal prose employed numerous means to render its structure transparent, both linguistic and paralinguistic. Among the latter, the aforementioned dividing lines served to clarify the syntax; a special graphic symbol separated the final sentence, specifying those who were to swear to the law, from the law itself. Similarly, asyndeton was frequently used to indicate the macro-structure of the text, signaling a shift between the different parts of the law, as in the transition from the introductory "enactment clause" (ἆδ' ἔϝαδε πόλι) to the content of the law itself.[115] Word order was a means to regulate the micro-structure, as clause boundaries here are consistently marked by sentence-final verbs (in contrast with ἔϝαδε). Regular word order makes its disruption significant: the one verb which is not sentence-final is ὀπῆλεν, rendering the following adverb διπλεῖ marked; the structure of verb followed by numerical adverb, signaling the boundary of the first apodosis of the second sentence, is then inverted at the boundary of the third and final apodosis: μηδὲν ἧμην. Chiasmus here, as

[113] Where o stands for the death of a property owner, p for taking hold of the property, c for the existence of the owners' children and their descendants, b for relatives on the side of the parents' brothers, s for relatives on the side of the parents' sisters, etc.
[114] Gagarin 2008, 48, claims they "follow no strict rules", but they respect not only the integrity of lexical units but syntactic units as well (except perhaps between κοι and ϊκατι in the final line; GR Dr 1 does not have a dividing line between them). Cf. the intricate syntactic analyses in Wachter 1999.
[115] For more on asyndeton, with references, Gagarin 2008, 48-49.

elsewhere, is employed to mark the end of a sentence.[116] Another micro-structural device which we have already encountered is the conjunction καί, here frequently in crasis, which combines with the repetition of κοσμεῖν to create strong alliterative effects: κα κοσμήσει δέκα… κὅτι κοσμησίε… κόσμος κοὶ… κοὶ. Such repetition, Michael Gagarin has pointed out, is not merely aesthetic or, rather, its aesthetic function should not be separated from its indexical function.[117] We conclude our linguistic analysis of the Dreros inscription by returning to its marked formulaic beginning, ᾗδ’ ἔϝαδε, in which the elision furnishes another instance of repetition: *(h)āde-w-ade*. This sequence has not been arbitrarily extracted from the text: in the original inscription a dividing line set it off from the others, marking its status as a meaningful unit.

Such carefully composed formulaic language, standard across the Greek world already in the archaic age, could hardly have developed *sponte sua* and must antedate its written textualization.[118] The question regarding "oral law" need not detain us; what is important is only that these laws were diachronically related to oral precursors and synchronically worked in tandem with oral legal language.[119] As "innovative" as the act of writing these laws may have been, as "radical" as they themselves may have been, their language must necessarily have been supported by substantial, authoritative tradition in order to be at all effective, let alone function as a response

[116] Cf. the use of chiasmus in Draco's homicide law, analyzed in Gagarin 1981, 153-61, and in an early law from Elea, pointed out (for different purposes) in García Teijeiro 1985, 94. Cf. the pervasive use of chiasmus as a structuring device in Biblical Hebrew (Mirski 1993 [1956]).
[117] Gagarin 1981, 156.
[118] Cf. Hölkeskamp 1992, arguing that these laws represent the end of a (political) process, not the beginning. Gagarin 1986, 126-29, argues against Near Eastern influence in shaping Greek law, but acknowledges ibid., 136, that the idea for inscribing it may have come from the Near East. But cf. Westbrook 2015.
[119] Thomas 1995, 2005. On the "oral law" debate see e.g. Gagarin 1986 *contra* Thomas 1995 *contra* Gagarin 2008, ch. 1. We might consider the language of the Lycurgan *rhetra*, already mentioned in ch. 1, as one such precursor (cf. Gagarin 1986, 53-54 n. 9 and Nafissi 2010, 108-110). For a possible written precursor to written laws, see Gagarin 1986, 56, on the *thesmia*, documented results of court cases which may have predated Draco; one can easily imagine them as a transcript of a judge's verdict. More broadly see Gernet 1981, ch. 7, on Greek "prelaw", and note pp. 173-74: "the formula… is essential to the birth of the law".

to the crises that some have reconstructed as the background to their legislation.[120] Were it not, were prose-laws a new phenomenon, we would expect experimentation, evidence for which is entirely lacking.[121]

What is in any case agreed is the role the laws played in the formation of the polis and in establishing its identity.[122] Though individually composed early genres prose were not appropriated by the public, we find some continuity between individually and publicly composed genres: like the former, the language of law served the purpose of individuating the polis, both against parties from within as well as without. Prose, already in the seventh century, was the language of the polis: ᾗδ' ἔϝαδε πόλι…

It was, appropriately, also the language used between poleis. When the Sybarites and their allies concluded a treaty with the Serdaioi in the second half of the sixth century, they did so in prose:

> ἀρμόχθεν οἰ Συβαρῖ-
> ται κ' οἰ σύνμαχοι κ' οἰ
> Σερδαῖοι ἐπὶ φιλότατ-
> ι πιστᾶι κ' ἀδόλοι ἀε-
> ίδιον· πρόξενοι ὸ Ζε-
> ὺς κ' Ὸπόλον κ΄ ὦλλοι θ-
> εοὶ καὶ πόλις Ποσειδα-
> νία.[123]
>
> Agreement was made by the Sybarites and their allies and the Serdaioi for friendship faithful and without guile forever. Protectors: Zeus and Apollo and the other gods and the city Poseidonia (trans. Fornara)

[120] Hölkeskamp 1995, Ruzé 2017. For "innovative" and "radical", see Hölkeskamp 1992, 102, and Thomas 2005, 56, respectively.
[121] Regarding Charondas' "verse-laws" see below.
[122] Gagarin 1986, 141; Hölkeskamp 1995, 72-81; Thomas 2005, 41-49; Gagarin 2008, ch. 3.
[123] ML 10, VER 1.42, SEG xxxi 357. For some fifth-century treaties, see VER, part 2B. In the inscription the omega in ὦλλοι is written as an omicron.

The treaty, probably the earliest one preserved, begins with an enactment clause analogous to that from Dreros and similarly ends with a list of "guarantors", including gods and a polis, and its language makes extensive use of κ(αί) and homeoteleuton (*oi*). Both parties agreed that their friendship was to last forever (ἀείδιον), and though it didn't – Sybaris was sacked in 510 – it is remarkable that their agreement involved no ritual action important enough, at least, to be memorialized in writing (in contrast with the Cyrene charter [ML 5], discussed in ch. 1); prose evidently carried sufficient authority, on its own, to consummate and eternally validate the treaty.

The polis' prose constructed its authority by fashioning itself as distinctly impersonal. We earlier saw how the language of inanimate objects similarly established rules in ways which gained authority by being impersonal, but the language of the law did so differently. In legal and diplomatic prose there is no use of the first or second person: the polis did not speak to anyone in person, it was not interested in engaging in conversation;[124] it also did not speak *as* a person, or a collective of people, though it easily could, far more naturally than a kylix. It employed the third person exclusively, first introducing itself as the source of the text, but – in contrast again with "speaking objects" – it was not an agent: the verbs used to attribute the legal language to it are typically impersonal (ἔϝαδε, ἔδοξε). It then turned to speak of others in the third person, but not of other individuals, identified people as in *thesmia*, but rather in the abstract. The polis, as it represented itself through the language it used, was not composed of individuals and did not interact with individuals.

While the forms of written communication we have surveyed thus far sought to bridge distance, the prose of the polis was mainly concerned with establishing it. It did not need to

[124] Cf. Humphreys 1996, 5, in close proximity to a discussion of prose laws: "prose was associated… with a certain sense of dialogue and of the problem of gaining the reader's assent to a text". References here to the polis' speech are a form of shorthand and refer also to inscriptions in which reference is made to the *demos* or *boulē*.

overcome spatial distance, because it did not travel: the inscription "monumentalizing" it was displayed *es meson,*[125] precisely in the place to which its text referred and over which it sought to exercise its authority. Nor was it worried about temporal distance. Materially, its "monumentalization" ensured that it was visible to all at all times; the only threat to its durability was the vandalization of the text, an anxiety to which the text frequently attended by making its own threats against the vandals. Linguistically, by discussing events in the abstract, and deflecting attention from its temporality by employing an "enacting" verb in the unmarked, indeterminate aorist, the law presented itself as timeless.

Its presence secure, polis prose was free to present its composer as removed and inaccessible. The Greeks themselves perceived law as a language of distance which was fundamentally impersonal: the legendary *nomothetai* came from afar, or in any event from outside the establishment, and the survival of their *nomoi* depended on their distancing themselves from their compositions. Thus Solon had to go into exile, and Charondas and Lycurgus had to die in order to secure their laws. The *nomos*, in Svenbro's words, had to be auto-nomous.[126]

If *nomos* in the polis was *basileus*, king, then prose was the language of kings. The impressive authority of prose, already in the seventh century and by implication much earlier, flatly contradicts the narrative commonly found in classical scholarship, which considers the authority

[125] Hölkeskamp 1992, 100-102.

[126] Svenbro 1993 (1988), 135. On the outsider in Greek culture in general, Martin 1992, and on lawgivers as outsiders, Gagarin 1986, 58-60. For Solon see already Hdt. 1.29, for Charondas e.g. Diod. 12.19.1-2, Lycurgus – Plut. *Lyc.*29. Draco also met a bizarre death abroad (Suda s.v. Δράκων), and Zaleucus blinded himself in one eye in order to defend the integrity of the law (e.g. Ael. *VH* 13.24), later dying in battle on behalf of the city (Suda s.v. Ζάλευκος). Their premature deaths ensured that they could not abuse the power they had won, or compromise their laws. Cf. Szegedy-Maszak 1978, 208, noting that the lawgiver's departure is an integral part of the lawgiver's legend: "… it might even be said that the hidden hero of the legends is codified law itself; once the code is self-sustaining, the legislator becomes superfluous". This pattern is also interesting in the context of the relationship Derrida 1972, following the *Phaedrus*, seeks to establish between writing and patricide: here the son does not kill the father, rather the father kills himself on account of his son. We might here mention Solon LR fr. 4a (=Diog. Laert. 1.59): "upon being asked why he hadn't legislated against patricide, he (Solon) replied, because he had not expected (it to occur)".

of fifth-century prose to be a novel development forced to overcome "status taint".[127] Within the history of prose which we have been gradually reconstructing, the authority of prose should not be particularly surprising: we have already seen that oral prose was the language of kings, and more importantly of public discourse and poli-tics. In this context we should stress the relationship of the language of the law with the divine: it was frequently inscribed on temples and engaged in various forms of contact with the gods.[128]

The ancient Greeks were far less troubled by the authority of prose, or its presumed lack thereof. Regarding the language of law, the epigraphic evidence and the literary tradition are agreed.[129] In chapter 1 we noted that Martin's claim, that the Seven Sages were identified as poets, is suspect; it is similarly significant that the legendary lawgivers of Greece were not markedly associated with verse as *nomothetai*.[130] There are two qualifications, which raise issues of broader importance. One exception to this rule is Charondas of Catane. According to Athenaeus, Hermippus of Smyrna in the third century BCE wrote that Charondas' laws were sung at Athenian drinking parties,[131] and according to Strabo, the Mazaceni of Cappadocia, who made use of Charondas' laws, employed a law-chanter (νομῳδός, 12.9).[132] Rosalind Thomas has argued that there is a "surprising amount of evidence for early laws being sung" and that "nothing could be

[127] Goldhill 2002, Kurke 2010; the authority of legal prose was noted in Harris 1989, 51.
[128] Hölkeskamp 1992, 100-102; Thomas 1995, 72-73; and, of course, the "sacred laws" (for archaic "sacred laws" see e.g. those cited in Harris 1989, 51 n. 26, and Lupu 4). Note also that some lawgivers claimed to have received their laws from the gods, or the oracle (whose language was discussed in ch. 1) – see Gagarin 1986, 60 (also Ruzé 2001, 716). Cf. Humphreys 1996, 5: "prose was associated with impersonality and with a permanent validity conferred by human decision rather than divine fiat".
[129] Gagarin 1986, ch. 4, sees the literary and epigraphic evidence as dovetailing; Thomas 1995, 71, and 2005 disagrees; see also Osborne 1997.
[130] Again, Martin 1993, 113. Cf. Ruzé 2001, discussing the role poetry plays in lawgiving traditions (including Solon's *Salamis*, discussed in ch. 1), ultimately in isolation from legal language (Ruzé 2001, 716: "… le législateur s'apparente au poète, quand il n'en est pas un"). For critical studies of the traditional biographies of legendary lawgivers see already Arist. *Pol*. 2.9 (with Osborne 1997); and more recently Szegedy-Maszak 1978 and Hölkeskamp 1999, 44-59.
[131] Hermippus fr. 88 Wehrli = Athen. 14.619b.
[132] For a discussion of this passage, Svenbro 1993 (1988), 116-22.

more natural".[133] I have no principal objection to the idea of early laws being sung, though the evidence she cites for an archaic Greek practice, consisting of reports from Aelian, Strabo, Plutarch and Clement and some folk-etymology from pseudo-Aristotle, seems tenuous.[134] It is not insignificant that Cicero spoke of the Twelve Tables as a *carmen necessarium* (*Leg*. 2.59), but none of this means that the laws themselves were verse: to this day the laws of the Hebrew Bible are regularly sung in synagogues, but who would argue for Leviticus as verse? Linguistic form, we have already seen, is not exclusively correlated with mode of performance. It is also not entirely clear that the *nomōidos* was actually singing, accompanied by a musical instrument, in the manner of an *aoidos* in Homer, as opposed to reciting it in the manner of a *rhapsōidos*.

There were *nomothetai* who were also poets. The most prominent among them was Solon, who was famous also for his poetry, parts of which are concerned with his laws.[135] Plutarch reports a tradition according to which Solon published his laws in verse (*Sol*. 3), but as in the case of Charondas the tradition appears to be late.[136] Modern scholars have also searched for explanations as to why Solon would not have composed his laws in verse too, but there is no sign that Greeks of the archaic and classical periods, and even much later, found it at all odd that Solon would

[133] Thomas 1995, 63. See further references ibid., and also the discussion in Ruzé 2001.

[134] It is also worth noting that Athenaeus' language, ᾄδοντο δὲ Ἀθήνησι καὶ οἱ Χαρώνδου νόμοι παρ᾽ οἶνον, gives reason to think that he found it somewhat surprising (καὶ). It may not be irrelevant that Hermippus was known for "sensationalism" (OCD, s.v. Hermippus). See Gagarin 2008, 34-35, for further criticism of Thomas' interpretation. It is tempting to suggest that the homonymy of *nomos* – as law and as a musical term – gave rise to the etymologizing explanation that laws were sung, as in pseudo-Aristotle, *Problems* 19.28.

[135] Pittacus, according to Diogenes (1.79), composed elegiacs but, significantly, also a prose treatise on law. Thaletas belongs to this tradition somewhat tangentially: according to Plutarch he did the work of a lawgiver through his lyric poetry, inspiring obedience to the laws but not actually composing them (*Lyc*.4; cf. Strabo 10.4.19, calling him νομοθετικός).

[136] It seems most plausible to interpret it as a biographical tradition derived from a poetic fragment (31 *IEG*; cf. Lefkowitz 2012, 50: "nothing in Solon's surviving poetry resembles the laws in subject or in style"). *Pace* Nousia-Fantuzzi 2010, 521, Plutarch's language suggests that before the laws were put (ἐντείνας, and see the similar use of the same word earlier in that passage, and also in Plat. *Hipparch.* 228d, quoted in ch. 1) into verse, they were couched in a different linguistic form. For unrelated reasons, Nousia-Fantuzzi is skeptical of the distich's authenticity. West 2007, 70, takes Plutarch's sources at their word (even if authentic, these verses need not have been followed by verse).

compose laws in prose and poetry about his laws.[137] That he did, and that ancient Greeks found no trouble believing that he did, is a powerful demonstration of the authority of prose already in his time and later. It is perhaps not insignificant that the saying πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἀοιδοί (fr. 29 *IEG*) was attributed to Solon.

The figure of Solon is a fitting place to conclude our survey of early Greek individually and publicly composed writing. He brings us back to the beginning of this chapter, where we saw that in the archaic and classical periods "masters of language" did not necessarily confine themselves to poetry, but rather had a diverse repertoire and composed with skill and flair in the idiom appropriate to the occasion. As an early named composer of prose, Solon also points forward to the subject of our next chapter, author-ized prose. But first some concluding remarks on the unauthored forms of early written prose surveyed in this chapter.

Conclusion

The previous chapter attempted to reconstruct the culture of oral prose in archaic Greece, focusing on a number of prominent prose genres: oracles, ritual language such as prayers, oaths and curses, and oratory and storytelling. None of these formed the basis for the discussion of the earliest written prose in this chapter, which was primarily devoted to ownership and craftsmanship inscriptions, to epistolography and to law. There is, to be sure, an element of arbitrariness in the absence of overlap in the two chapters, but it is only partly incidental: written prose was a new phenomenon, it was a new kind of language. It was not merely the transcription of oral performance, because the early Greek written prose surveyed here – in contrast with at least some written Greek poetry – was not merely a record of speech. Greek written prose did things – it

[137] Robb 1994, 132-33. For the fragments of Solon's laws, see LR.

asserted, it announced, it communicated, etc. – just as Greek oral prose did things, but it did them differently. Oral prose, as well as poetry, was necessarily performed in proximity to its audience, and in order to establish its authority had to create notional distance – hence, for example, the attribution of the bard's song to higher authorities such as the Muses. Written prose, by contrast, was intended primarily to bridge concrete distance – some genres with more of an emphasis on space, others on time – hence, for instance, the substitution of an absent human addresser with a "speaking object". The strategies employed in order to overcome concrete distance could involve notional distance as well, but they did not have to.

In spite of the novelty of written prose, however, continuity was crucial. The language of the earliest prose we have seen to be well developed and highly distinct. It could not simply have come out of nowhere, with regard neither to its form nor its function. As for the latter, most of the genres we have examined we have found to be invested with substantial authority; it is difficult to imagine how their language could be authoritative if it were not in some way traditional. The same is true with regard to its form, and it is here that we see the importance of the Mediterranean context of writing: the general lack of influence of Semitic epigraphy on the language – as opposed to perhaps the uses – of Greek writing is an indication that the roots of this language lie in the Greek tradition.[138] That tradition, we saw in chapter 1, was abundantly rich.

We can also understand why, in spite of the fundamental differences between oral and written prose, the language of oral *Kunstsprache* would be particularly useful for the purpose of writing prose, as oral *Kunstsprache* provided a convenient vehicle for overcoming distance, which the new technology enabled. What was good for notional distance could also serve the purpose of overcoming concrete distance and, indeed, already had; all Greek speech genres by definition,

[138] *Pace* Asper 2007, 77, which in fact pays no attention to the language of the inscriptions.

those studied in the previous chapter and many others, constituted enduring traditions. Looking back to chapter 1, we now see that we are justified in speaking of "oral prose", for both Greek "oral prose" and "written prose" were languages of distance. To be sure, not all forms of writing were necessarily descended from unified linguistic traditions. The practice of writing epitaphs may well have developed not because of the emergence of writing but in response to other needs. If that is true, composers of epitaphs, lacking one distinct tradition which naturally lent itself to transcription, would have instead drawn from diverse linguistic traditions, both in poetry and in prose, creating a mixed corpus for which perhaps no criterion can be found. But this sets the language of laws, or of votives, in sharp relief: here we must postulate deep-rooted traditions in order to account for their uniformity.[139] So much was variable and diverse in early Greek writing: the epichoric alphabets, fashions of writing on pots, the epigraphic habits more broadly – but the language, in many genres, was not.[140] If written prose then was new, prose was not. The Greeks did not haphazardly write things in either poetry or prose, nor did they compose in one medium or the other because it was natural in a given context to do so. They knew what they were doing when they wrote prose. We will see the importance of this continuity in chapter 3, as well.

We find further continuity in the relationship of written prose with poetry, oral as well as written. As was the case with oral prose, we again find that the same formulae can be employed both in poetry and in prose, as in the case of the ownership formula in evidence in the *Iliad* and on prose-speaking kylixes. We should thus still be thinking not of trans-medial imitation but rather of a general store of verbal art, variously deployed in different genres and media. Some of these

[139] Cf. Oesterreicher 1993, 276: "eine konzeptionell vollwertige Schriftsprache setzt nämlich immer einen langwierigen Ausbau-Prozeß voraus, der als das Hineinwachsen eines Idioms in die konzeptionelle Schriftlichkeit begriffen werden muß".
[140] For the orthographic variety in epichoric alphabets, Luraghi 2010; for fashions of writing on pots, Osborne and Pappas 2007, 151; for the diversity of Greek epigraphic habits, Bodel 2001, 11-13.

genres were well defined, as we have seen, while the boundaries of others were more porous. Since inscribed language would in any case be recited or declaimed, but in this period not sung, the distinction between recitation and declamation may have been facile, to some even invisible. This is perhaps reflected in the contemporary practice of inscribing and writing verse, like prose, in continuous lines.[141] The language of the written texts of the archaic period in any event provides no evidence for the existence of the categories of "poetry" or "prose"; indeed, we find prose being at once particularly well-suited for the non-traditional as well as for the traditional, serving both as the medium of personal communication as well as the idiom of impersonality, and most notably the polis.

One broad distinction between poetry and prose does, however, suggest itself. It has been argued that already in the eighth century there were "poetry books";[142] no one has made such a claim for prose, and not by accident. The prose studied in this chapter in fact is rarely studied as prose and is generally omitted from studies of its history on the basis of the assumption, occasionally made explicit, that "inscriptional prose" is a phenomenon distinct from "literary prose".[143] If we only now, on the threshold of chapter 3, reach the point at which histories of prose usually begin, it is because the broader context of prose is wholly missing from them: as it is only in literate societies that oral prose could be modeled on written prose, though the latter is typically

[141] Turner 1971, 14, for bookrolls, and LSAG 235-36, for inscriptions, where Nestor's Cup is noted as the exception; one can very occasionally find punctuation demarcating verses, but such punctuation is hardly systematic and if there was a norm of typographically distinguishing prose from poetry it was certainly not universal. We have already noted that contemporary Greeks were not indifferent to typography (n. 81), and cf. more broadly Johnson 2000. Kaczko 2012 argues for a dialectal distinction between prose and verse inscriptions, the latter's dialect having come under the influence of the poetic tradition, as opposed to the unadulterated dialect of dedicatory prose inscriptions. We have seen that the latter category is problematic but, more importantly, only anecdotal evidence is marshalled to support the argument; prose inscriptions are used, as usual, merely as a foil, and are not studied in themselves.

[142] Burkert 2008, 57 (and in earlier publications), on the basis of the layout of the verse on Nestor's Cup (West 1997, 26).

[143] E.g. Denniston 1952; Goldhill 2002 and Kurke 2010 narrate the "invention of prose" with no attention to epigraphic evidence; etc. Bloch 1975 compares the two and finds them irreconcilable. García Teijeiro 1985 is an exception, though the texts he discusses are relatively late.

considered prototypical, so “inscriptional prose” should not be seen as a phenomenon on the margins of “literary prose”, because it is rather authored prose which is a subset of written prose. Written prose, we have now seen, thrived and played a significant role in Greek culture long before the first prose author came onto the scene.

Chapter 3: Authorized Prose

There was, we have seen, a great deal of prose in archaic Greece, both oral and written. Yet the former and much of the latter are typically absent from histories of Greek literature. The reasons for the neglect of oral prose have been discussed, and having explored the analogy between oral prose and oral poetry in chapter 1, we are in better position to consider its role in the history of Greek literature. The neglect of much of the written prose discussed in chapter 2, however, is not unique to prose, for much written poetry – specifically inscribed poetry – receives little attention in histories of Greek poetry. The reason for this, for the categorization of only some written prose and poetry as "literature", is that "literature" in the western tradition is strongly associated with authorship.[1]

The equation of literary history with the history of authored texts is not new. It in fact goes back to the Greeks, and is indebted to the famous Greek predilection for the *prōtos heuretēs*. Such traditions structured not only the history of Greek poetry, but also prose. One tradition, attested in Pliny's catalogue of inventors (*NH* 7.205), which can be traced back to Theopompus (*FGrH* 115 F71), proclaimed Pherecydes of Syros the *prōtos heuretēs* of prose. This tradition lived on in late antiquity and through the middle ages and the early modern period, eventually making its way into the mainstream of modern scholarship, most prominently in the work of Wilamowitz.[2] Another such tradition, with both ancient and modern adherents, granted priority to Anaximander.[3]

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[1] Williams 1983, 185; Maslov 2015, introduction and ch. 1. Cf. Nehamas 1986, 686: "to say that a text is authored… is just to say that it can be given a literary interpretation".

[2] For the ancient and medieval tradition, see Jacoby 1947, 20 n. 22, and West 1971, 1-2 n. 3. In the early modern period Pherecydes is cited as the inventor of prose by Condillac 1947 (1746), vol. 1, 80. Among modern scholars: Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1926; Lilja 1968, e.g. 30; Fränkel 1975, 243-45; Schibli 1990, 4; Fowler 1999, 14. Kleingünther 1933 discusses the roots of the typically Greek interest in the *prōtos heuretēs*.

[3] For ancient references and discussion, see again Jacoby 1947, 20 n. 22, and West 1971, 1-2 n. 3. Among modern scholars see Jaeger 1945, 154 and 1947, 67; Greene 1951, 39; Kahn 1994 (1960), 6, 240; Patzer 2006, 100. West, ibid. declares the question "neither soluble nor important"; but see the perceptive suggestion by Yunis, mentioned in Laks

There was an ancient tradition of a different kind, the influential Aristotelian tradition which traced the history of prose not as a history of authored texts but as a history of style, yet it too traced the origins of that style to a specific author, Gorgias. It is instructive that Eduard Norden, who was himself wary of traditions headed by such figures,[4] in his own magisterial history of prose resisted the Aristotelian tradition merely by pushing its origins to other authors, to sixth-century Ionians, though he was well aware of other forms of prose.[5] Wolf Aly tried to push the origins of prose further back, outside the confines of what is considered "literature", yet he too traced the origins of prose to, in effect, an author, Draco. It is telling that Aly considered Draco's law an "absolute Anfang".[6]

A history of prose that begins with any one author, even a history that views such figures and judgments with healthy skepticism, by virtue of its structure inevitably tends to be not so much a history of prose as a history of prose authors. In the case of archaic Greece, the two are not equivalent, but it is only to the latter that classical scholarship has paid any attention. Before attempting to place it within the broader history of prose we have been sketching, we will begin by analyzing the structure of the established narrative of the rise of Greek prose – of Greek authored prose – in its different variations, and consider their implications.

The effect of restricting the phenomenon of prose to authored prose is to sever it from un-authored prose. The advent of prose is thus dated to the sixth century, and situated in Ionia.[7] A

2007, 257 n. 42, that Pherecydes was reconstructed as earlier because the genre of his work was less obviously related to later prose genres. There were in antiquity some other candidates as well: Alcmaeon, considered the first to compose a *phusikos logos* (DK 24 A1-2), and Cadmus of Miletus (Strabo, 1.2.6).

[4] Norden 1958 (1898), 31, 41; we will return to this point below. For the Aristotelian narrative see *Rhet*. 3.1.8-9.

[5] Norden 1958 (1898), 16-30. Norden in fact considered prose to have predated poetry (ibid., 31).

[6] Aly 1929, 18.

[7] Prose as a sixth-century phenomenon: Jevons 1886, 81 ("the very idea that it was possible to compose prose was unknown to the latter part of the sixth century"); Denniston 1952; West 1966, 13; Lilja 1968; Kannicht 1988, 2; Dover 1997, vi; Slings 2000, 15 ("Greek prose only started to develop, very slowly, in the second half of the sixth century"); Silk 2009, 17; Vatri 2017, 61; Cross 2018, 12. For Ionia as its birthplace: Meillet 1965 (1913), 229; Friedländer 1948, 8-9; *LSAG* 327; Pfohl 1972, 12; Wöhrle 1992; Asper 2007.

consequence of the dissociation of authored from unauthored prose is that the former is rendered new,[8] hence subordinate in relation to the well-established traditions of Greek poetry. Because the Greeks are new at prose, it is natural when comparing early fragments to the masterful prose of fifth- and fourth-century authors to assume that they do not yet know what they are doing; what is not new, but rather familiar, is interpreted as poetic "borrowing" or "influence", an attempt to establish authority for an incipient literary form by imitating the most authoritative form of expression of the day. Prose is thus at once both primitive and derivative.[9] Because its origins are not autonomous, it also has no authority.[10]

If prose is new, the question then arises: how was it invented? And why, if it lacks authority, would anyone use it? One answer offered to these questions is that the technical, scientific, themes of early prose texts were naturally – from a modern western point of view – suited to prose.[11] It has conversely been proposed that prose came to serve literary purposes incidentally, accidentally.[12] Though opposed to each other, both answers, significantly, are allied in trying to dismiss the novelty of prose as of little significance, as if there is no need for explanation or, if

[8] Jaeger 1945, 191, and 1947, 67; Cole 1991, 29; Wöhrle 1992; Robb 1994, 260; Finkelberg 1998, 195; Kahn 2003, 144; Hubbard 2004, 80; Whitmarsh 2004, 107; Graff 2005, 303-304; Patzer 2006, 61; Granger 2007a, 403-404; Cross 2018, 15. Though their positions are more nuanced, Schadewaldt 1982, 23, and Asper 2007, also maintain that literary prose in the sixth century was new. Kennedy 1989, 184, dates "literary prose" to the middle of the fifth.

[9] Prose as primitive: Jaeger 1945, 347; Denniston 1952, 5 ("no technique at all"); Lilja 1968, 100 ("insufficient skill in narrating a story"); Bloch 1975, 136 ("keine Gewandtheit"); Fränkel 1975, 347 ("how far prose lagged behind poetry in fluency and elegance"); Powell 2002, 119 ("stumbling attempts at prose"); Gorman 2004, 82 (cf., perceptively, Bakker 2006a, 93-94, also Dover 1997, 58). As derivative: Zarncke 1890; Norden 1958 (1898), esp. 30-41 (but cf. Norden 1913, 368 n.1); Pearson 1939, 17; Denniston 1952, 2; Immerwahr 1966, 48; Lilja 1968, ch. 1; de Romilly 1975, 9-10; Havelock 1982, 187; Schadewaldt 1982, 31; Nagy 1989, 8; Kennedy 1989, 184; Wöhrle 1992; Dover 1997; Craik 1998, 12; Most 1999; Schiappa 1999, 108; Bers 2010; Colvin 2014, 161 (cf. the skeptical Meillet 1965 (1913), 232). Primitive and derivative: Andersen 1987, 43; Bravo 2001, 86-89. Jacoby 1912, 2748-50, contests the idea that it is derivative by denying its status as literature.

[10] E.g. Havelock 1963, 46 ("poetry… reigned supreme"); Schadewaldt 1982, 23; Goldhill 2002; Patzer 2006, 61-62, 95; Kurke 2010. Asper 2007, e.g. 77, is a rare exception.

[11] E.g. Lesky 1966, 219; Kahn 1983, 119-21; implicitly, Bowie 1985, 33; Floyd 1992, 251; Netz 2004, 246; Fowler 2013, xii.

[12] Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1907, 121-23; Jacoby 1912, 2748-49; West 1971, 5; Havelock 1983, 80. Asper 2007 argues that the advent of prose, originating as commentary which was to accompany diagrams, was in effect both natural and incidental. Against Wilamowitz's claim that the early books were *hypomnēmata*, Turner 1952, 17 and Pfeiffer 1968, 29.

there is one, that it is not particularly meaningful. Removed, however, from the particular question of why Pherecydes or Anaximander wrote prose, seen within the broader trajectory of Greek literature and culture, the apparent choice to compose in prose could not but be seen as dramatic. Its novelty, in the face of the deep-seated traditions of authoritative poetry, is interpreted as a turning away from poetry, as an attempt to establish autonomy from tradition, as a rejection, even a rebellion.[13] Within the history of Greek literature, when coupled with the narrative of decline of poetry in the late classical age, the emergence of prose suggests a fundamental transition, a sea change, from poetry to prose.[14] In the sphere of Greek culture more broadly, the advent of prose even if not necessarily couched in the form of a naïve *muthos*-to-*logos* narrative is still, especially in light of its association with the presocratics, construed as heralding a new form of consciousness related to rationality.[15]

The ambitious, far-reaching, claims supported by this narrative demonstrate the height of the stakes, but we will here focus on the basis upon which the narrative rests. Its weakness lies in the answers offered to the question of why the Greeks began writing prose, why that putative *prōtos heuretēs* first authored a work of prose. The attempts to effectively dismiss this question, viewing its emergence as either natural or incidental, betray an unease and, ultimately, the lurking, unacknowledged recognition that this narrative does not in fact make sense. For if it is true that

[13] Sinclair 1934, 155-58; Jaeger 1945, 115; Burkert 1972a, 239; Vernant 1982 (1962), 119; Cherniss 1977, 15; Mansfeld 1983, 27; Long 1985, 245; Harris 1989, 50; Wöhrle 1992; Humphreys 1996, 4; Wright 1998; Osborne 1998; Slings 2000, 12; Goldhill 2002; Kahn 2003; Whitmarsh 2006, 359; Granger 2007a, 430; Laks 2007, esp. 257, 265 ("rupture… quasi épistémologique"); Asper 2007, 92 ("Provokation"); Kurke 2010; Sassi 2018, 82: "this choice must have represented… a deliberate detachment from the literary tradition, which until then had been consistently poetic".
[14] Norden 1898, 30; Snell 1953, 94, 114 (also 117); Zuntz 1972 (1939), 37; Jaeger 1945, 243-44, 296, and 1939, vol. 2, 8-10; Havelock 1963, 214 and 1982, 21; duBois 1982, 1; Schadewaldt 1982, 28; Burkert 1985, 125; Thesleff 1990, 111; Cole 1991, 28-29; Calame 1995, 14 and 2004b, 232; Kahn 2003, 152; Thomas 2003, 162; Graff 2005, 304; Granger 2007a, 413; Zimmermann 2011, 260; Maurizio 2013, 103; Cross 2018, 30.
[15] Meillet 1965 (1913), ch. 11, esp. 229, 246; Snell 1924, 8, and 1953, 229; Havelock 1963, 46-47; Humphreys 1975, 99; duBois 1982, 137; Schadewaldt 1982, 24, 27; Burkert 1972a, 239, and 1985, 305 ("philosophy indeed begins with the prose book"); de Romilly 1975, 20; Wöhrle 1992; Bertelli 2001, 79; Bravo 2001, 85; Patzer 2006, 95-101; Asper 2007, 91; Granger 2007a, 404; Zimmermann 2011, 260-61; Jiménez Lopez 2014; Sassi 2018, 171. Cf. van der Eijk 1997, 98.

prose is new, and thus almost by definition lacking in authority, why would Anaximander and Anaximenes express their views on the structure of the cosmos, no less, in prose? How could Pherecydes hope for his prose to vie with Hesiodic hexameters? If we choose to see the composition of these works in prose as strategic choices on the part of their authors, we are imputing absurd reasoning to them.

The very idea that prose was a choice is a problem.[16] The problem is not only to explain why one would choose a medium lacking in authority for which no technique has yet been developed, over a medium hallowed by tradition, often claiming the sanction of divine inspiration and refined over generations. The problem is, how does one choose something that does not exist? If prose as a signifying practice does not exist, then it would be difficult to posit that it would be the natural medium for certain kinds of material. It is in any event anachronistic to associate prose with, say, lucidity as opposed to the ambiguity of poetry.[17] On the other hand, as we are speaking here of the invention of a medium, of a signifying practice, the argument from accident, that these texts constituted some kind of informal notes not meant for any form of publication, appears insufficient.

How does a medium, a signifying practice, come into existence? Genres develop from other genres.[18] In archaic Greece genres are tantamount to occasions of performance.[19] The invention of

[16] The recurrence of the reference to composing in prose as a "choice" is rampant. A few examples from this century: Bertelli 2001, 79; Kahn 2003, 155; Patzer 2006, 19; Asper 2007, 78; Laks 2007, 264; Granger 2007a, 416; Fowler 2013, xii; Cross 2018, 12; Sassi 2018, 78, 82; Andolfi 2019, 12. Cf. Osborne 1998. In striking contrast, archaic or classical texts do not frame their form as a matter of "choice"; it is taken as matter of course. On the Salamis elegy see again ch. 1, and cf. Pope's explanation in the introduction to *An Essay on Man* why he preferred verse, also *Orlando Furioso* canto 1, stanza 2, and *Paradise Lost* 1.16.

[17] Kahn 1983, 119-20, on the transparency of prose; Mansfeld 1983, 27; Sassi 2018, 82, on its "directness and unambiguousness" (cf. ibid. 83, paradoxically); it is implicit in Asper 2007, 83 ("daß Prosa geradezu als *Erläuterungsmedium* entstanden sei", italics original), and already in Nilsson 1905, 180. Cf. again Hanson and Kiparsky 1997, 20: "its apparent ordinariness has all the complexity of innocence after the fall; its nakedness is that of the lady in *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*".

[18] Todorov 1990, 15; Maslov 2015, 42-46.

[19] E.g. Ford 2002, 10 n. 21 with earlier scholarship.

a genre would thus entail the invention of a social occasion.[20] Improbable as the invention of such an occasion would be, the invention of a signifying practice – prose is not a genre, rather there are genres *of* prose – is all the more unlikely.[21] Suggesting, then, that a Pherecydes or Anaximander wrote the first work of prose, is in effect no different than suggesting that the Greek alphabet was developed in order to write down the *Iliad*. For whom? If there was no market for prose, how could anyone even conceive of producing prose texts?[22] There is no way to account for the purposeful production of prose texts but to posit the existence of occasions of prose, as well, which is to acknowledge the social significance of prose in archaic Greek culture.

The problem, then, is the premise that prose in the sixth century was new. But that premise is not a modern whim, and in view of its longevity cannot simply be dismissed out of hand. The ancient traditions are in fact instructive, as their insistence on the *prōtos heuretēs* points to the origin of the misconception regarding the advent of prose. There *was* something new about Greek literary culture in the late archaic age, but that thing was not prose – it was authorship.

Prose authors

Prose, we have seen, is a linguistic form used in situations of distance. It goes without saying that authors, today, are merely a subset of those who produce it. An author is not simply one who composes verse or prose. Concrete people compose poetry and prose; an author is rather a persona which may be related to a certain person, but in any event does not fully correspond to

[20] Palmisciano 2014, 23: "no poet in the archaic and classical age ever invented a genre" (but, ibid., "the only literary genres actually invented in the archaic and classic age were those of prose"). Granger 2007a, 429: "Herodotus, or some unknown prose predecessor, had to forge these new venues for 'pre-publication' of prose literature through performance…". Patzer 2006 similarly denies the existence of such occasions.
[21] Improbably, Asper 2007, 98-100.
[22] Cf. Havelock 1963, 293: "writing is not a technique like swimming which can be indulged with complete satisfaction by the isolated individual in a pond of his own choosing". Compare in Mroczek 2016, ch. 3, the case of Ben Sira, the first Jewish author (incidentally, as a result of Hellenistic influence).

one. An author, in the acute analysis of Alexander Nehamas, is an "interpretive construct".[23] It is thus evident that a history of authors provides at best a partial picture of the history of prose (or poetry), as the concept of an "author" is contingent and culturally conditioned. Poetry as well as prose sayings and laws were attributed to Solon in antiquity, but while he was certainly considered an author of poetry, at a later point in the tradition he was evidently excluded from the ranks of prose authors.[24] At a certain point the *nomothetai* were apparently considered authors, and later were not.

The existence of an author behind and before a text should not be taken for granted, since the function of the author is dependent on an interpretive practice. In fact, especially with regard to ancient literature, it is perhaps the presence of the author which requires explanation, rather than its absence: none of those who might be said to have composed *Gilgamesh* in its various instantiations was recognized as its "author", and the same is true cross-culturally for many other ancient works as well. The names of archaic Greek epics, identified geographically or thematically, suggest that they were not originally associated with an author, either, including the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. That is until Homer, who could hardly have composed both epics, was "invented".[25]

West puts forth the interesting suggestion that epic was perhaps unique in its resistance to authors, but we should take into account the possibility that the lyric poetry which has survived

[23] Nehamas 1986, 686: "Writers are actual individuals, firmly located in history, efficient causes of their texts. They often misunderstand their own work and are as confused about it as we frequently are about the sense and significance, indeed the very nature, of our actions. Writers truly exist outside their texts. They have no interpretive authority over them. An author, by contrast, is whoever can be understood to have produced a particular text as we interpret it. Authors are not individuals but characters manifested or exemplified, though not depicted or described, in texts. They are formal causes. They are postulated to account for a text's features and are produced through an interaction between critic and text."

[24] Cf. Plat. *Phaedr*. 278C, where Socrates refers to him as an author of prose texts. For Solon as an author of laws, exceptionally in the western tradition, Maslov 2015, 51-52. For Solon's reception in the classical period, see *Trends in Classics* 2015, vol. 7.1.

[25] Burkert 1987, West 1999, Graziosi 2002 for the invention of Homer, *contra* Kivilo 2011. See Burkert 1972b, 75, and West 1999, 365, regarding the titles of Greek epic works, with other examples of ancient author-less works (though West is wrong to cite the *Mahabharata* as an example).

from the archaic period survived because it was authorized, through its authorization, which enshrined its status as literature, and that at least some of what didn't survive was lost because it was not attributed to an author who might facilitate its transmission.[26] Even if a Hesiod composed or wrote the *Theogony*, other works attributed to him – whose provenance was already doubted by scholars in antiquity – evidently had no author originally, or at least no author firmly enough associated with it. The corpora associated in antiquity with Hesiod and Theognis, for example, neither of which are likely to have been composed by a single person, bear witness too, then, to a process of "author-ization" which took place during the archaic period.[27] This process was likely related to the roughly contemporary practice of collecting texts – poems, perhaps especially *hypothēkai* (Theognidea), sayings (the Seven Sages), oracles, fables and legends (the Life of Aesop).[28] Such collecting might either encourage their attribution to a single author, or itself be the result of the construction of an author. Concurrently, as authoritative texts came to be assigned authors, it perhaps also came to be thought that authoritative figures need texts in order to substantiate their claim to authority.[29]

It is in any event clear, as West pointed out, that the function of the author was in the throes of significant change in the sixth century. In literature that is dated earlier there are no references to external authors, but suddenly in the sixth century we find Heraclitus and Xenophanes and

[26] West 1999, 365; Maslov 2015, ch. 1, and on epic cf. p. 77. Cf. Thomas 2003, 183, on the fate of unauthored works in the fifth century.

[27] Another good example, for a clearly mythological figure, is the Orphic corpus (see West 1983, ch. 3). On the Hesiodic corpus, exhaustively, Cingano 2009. On the Theognidean corpus, West 1974, ch. 3, and Nagy 1985, and cf. Hubbard 2007, which makes the intriguing argument that Theognis is a concrete individual who makes the bold move of taking credit for his poetry rather than attributing it to legendary poets. In accepting Friis Johansen's dating of the poem to the late sixth-century at the earliest (ibid., 198), Hubbard's view is however compatible with the dating of individualized authorship to the latter sixth century.

[28] Edmunds 1997, 43-46, discusses common characteristics of these collections, demonstrating that they are related. Kurke 1990 discusses *hypothēkai* traditions, attributed to different figures of authority. On Aesop see more below; West 1984 points out earlier fables, not attributed to individual authors. For oracles, Hdt. 7.6. Collecting need not presuppose writing.

[29] Cf. Mroczek 2016, ch. 4, and 186-87, for mythical figures who are turned into authors in the Second Temple period, e.g. Enoch, Noah, Abraham.

Simonides and others speaking of Homer, Hesiod and Stesichorus.[30] It is one thing for a singer to proclaim a poem his or hers; it is another for it to be recognized as such by others, and for him or her to be recognized by them as an author. In this sense, the function of the Greek author in Greek literary culture properly emerges in the later archaic period.

If the epic and lyric "I" was generic, as were perhaps some early authorial self-references, many of these third-person references to authors treat them not merely as generic figures, but as concrete individuals. It is perhaps at this time that composers, instead of attributing texts to mythological authorities, claimed their compositions for themselves, but it is in any event in this period, Nagy observes, that we can discern a difference in the biographies of archaic poets, shading from the purely mythological to the partially historical.[31] Iconographic evidence also bears out the dating of the individualization of the author to this period.[32] Multiple factors will have played a role in this transformation, above all the transition from a purely oral literary culture to one increasingly engaging with writing,[33] but what is important is that by the latter part of the sixth century texts in certain genres have come to be seen as the compositions, inevitably, of concrete individuals.

The process of author-izing texts, as well as figures, in the latter sixth century was not confined to poetry.[34] We have already mentioned the sayings, attributed to the Sages, and other

[30] West 1999, 377-79, emphasizing that we are not dealing here simply with an argument from silence.
[31] Nagy 1990a, 412.
[32] For Sappho, Alcaeus, Anacreon, see *BAPD* 510, 4979, 204129, 200207, 200522, 201684.
[33] Others: processes of textual fixation and objectification, an increasing distinction between composer and performer, a proliferation of genres, and the growth of literary research. For fixation and the distinction between performer and composer, see Burkert 1987; Nagy 1990a, ch. 2 and 12; Graziosi 2002, ch. 1; Beecroft 2010 (Nagy 1996a, 215: "the greater or smaller the degree of *mouvance*, the smaller or greater respectively is the distinction between composer and performer"). For objectification Ford 2002, and for the text as something to be owned, Nagy 1990a, ch. 6, especially by tyrants. For literary research, Ford 2002, 139-46, with West 1999, 379-80. See Maslov 2015 for the proliferation of genres. Mroczek 2016, esp. ch. 2, is illuminating for the contrast with the very different functions of authorship in Second Temple Judaism which, she argues, were unrelated to authority.
[34] The relationship between prose (and poetry) and authorship is not entirely incidental. Poetry and prose are languages of distance, and authorship in ancient Greece has been interpreted as a result of distance between the text and its composer, or even more concretely as a result of spatial distance, as texts spread in the process of panhellenization.

authorized collections of prose texts. Heraclitus' attack on earlier and contemporary *sophoi* strikingly juxtaposes figures associated with verse and prose:

> πολυμαθίη νόον οὐ διδάσκει· Ἡσίοδον γὰρ ἂν ἐδίδαξε καὶ Πυθαγόρην αὖτίς τε Χενοφάνεά τε καὶ Ἑκαταῖον. (DK 22 B40)[35]
> Much learning does not teach intelligence, for it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, and also Xenophanes and Hecataeus.

In setting himself up as their rival, Heraclitus, a producer of deliberately fashioned texts, implicitly identifies them too as producers of texts, as authors, grouping together composers of verse (Hesiod and Xenophanes) and prose (Hecataeus). Heraclitus' arrangement, in symmetrical pairs, suggests that Pythagoras should be seen as a prose author: whether Pythagoras wrote or not is irrelevant, he produced *symbola*, or *akousmata*, in prose.[36] Simonides in his poetry refers to a number of other poets, but also to figures who were not traditionally identified as poets, but rather as sages. It is interesting that his references to Homer, Stesichorus and Orpheus are all admiring,[37] while that to Pittacus is polemical (a point to which we will return):

> οὐδέ μοι ἐμμελέως τὸ Πιττάκειον νέμεται,
> καίτοι σοφοῦ παρὰ φωτὸς εἰ-
> ρημένον· χαλεπὸν φάτ᾽ ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι. (*PMG* 542.11-13)
>
> Nor does Pittacus' saying, though spoken by a wise man, ring true to me. He said it was difficult to be good.

See in this regard Boterf 2017 on the marked identification of authors via toponyms. As an authorial seal could serve to fix a corpus, authorship also facilitated traversing temporal distance. Calame 2004a, 23, argues that the function of the author is to distance the text from the reader.

[35] Throughout this chapter for presocratics I cite the reference in Diels-Kranz's edition (DK), but the text follows the more recent edition of Laks-Most (LM).

[36] Ion of Chios is intriguingly said by Diogenes Laertius (8.8, also in Clem. Alex. *Strom*. 1.131) to have stated that Pythagoras composed poems, which he attributed(!) to Orpheus, but this testimonium is an exception and, in any event, he was most distinctly associated with the *akousmata*. For more on the *akousmata* see Burkert 1972a, 166-90, esp. 188-89. In addition to LM, the texts are also gathered in Giangiulio 2000, 131-45. Other interpretations of Heraclitus' arrangement are summarized in Zhmud 2017, 175-77; compare the symmetrical arrangement of authors in Alcidamas, discussed below.

[37] Simon. Eleg. 20.13-15 *IEG*, and 11.15-18, 19.1-2 obliquely to Homer, along with *PMG* 564, which mentions Stesichorus as well, and *PMG* 567 for Orpheus, obliquely.

Pittacus' saying here is naturally presented in metrical form, but the intervening φάτ᾽ makes clear that the verse is not itself a precise quotation, and that if it is meant to present χαλεπὸν ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι – with φάτ᾽ excluded, as at Plat. *Prot*. 343d6 and, explicitly, DL 1.76 – as the precise wording, then the saying is apparently not metrical.[38] We have already seen how easily such sayings could shift shape and medium. Pittacus is explicitly identified here as the original producer of this text, that is as its author – indeed, in the context in which it was preserved, Plato's *Protagoras* (339c), as an "interpretive construct". This is well brought out in the discussion of Simonides' poem in the *Protagoras*, which through a dramatized confrontation between Simonides and Pittacus (ibid. 343-46) also sets up an opposition between their texts, a poet's song (ᾆισμα) and the saying (ῥῆμα) of Pittacus, who is associated with the Sages, one of whose distinguishing features is the use of "short, memorable sayings" (343a-b) discussed in chapter 1.[39]

Intertextual third-person references to authors can only take us so far in tracking the process of authorization.[40] A portrait of Sappho appears on a late sixth-century hydria, which fits the timeline of authorization well, but in literature the earliest extant reference to her as an author (μουσοποιός), is in Herodotus (2.135);[41] it is accompanied by a reference to a prose author, Aesop (λογοποιός, 2.134), already mentioned above. Herodotus refers to both as if they are well known, and their

[38] For the meter see Budelmann 2018, 216, on the basis of West 1982, 66; see Budelmann, ibid. for references to discussions of the poem.

[39] See most recently Ford 2014 on Plato's staging of the discussion of Simonides' poem, arguing that it is staged seriously. It is true that Pittacus was credited with elegiacs, but he was also said to have composed a legal treatise in prose (DL 1.79); for his sayings see DL 1.76-79. And see more on the Sages below.

[40] Other sixth-century references to verse authors: to Hesiod, Stes. 269 *PMG*(?), Xenophanes DK 21 B11 and 12, Heraclitus DK 22 B40, 57; to Homer, *HH* 3.173, Xenophanes DK 21 B 10 and 11, Heraclitus DK 22 B42, 56, 105; to Archilochus, Heraclitus DK 22 B42; to Xenophanes, Heraclitus DK 22 B40; to Xanthus, Stesichorus *PMG* 229(?); to Kleoboulus, Simon. *PMG* 581(?). Simonides' references to Homer, Stesichorus and Orpheus were cited above. Many of these are referred to as authors in fifth-century sources, but many other prominent early poets, in contrast with minor comedians who happen to be abused in Aristophanes, only show up in our sources much later, e.g. Callinus, Semonides. Alcaeus may have mentioned Thales (fr. 448 Voigt), but from Himerius' report there is no way of knowing if he did so as an author.

[41] There are some doubtful earlier references to her, see Kivilo 2010, 170-72. For the hydria, *BAPD* 510. For her early reception, Yatromanolakis 2007.

reputation as authors will naturally go back further,[42] as will that of others, especially the lawgivers. Herodotus speaks of Solon as an author of poetry (ἐν ἔπεσι αἴνεσε, 5.113), but also of prose texts, laws whose composition he strikingly describes as an act of ποιεῖν (1.29),[43] and a saying characterized as divine (1.86). The language used to refer to that saying (τὸ τοῦ Σόλωνος … εἰρημένον), is impressively close to Simonides' reference to Pittacus' apothegm (τὸ Πιττάκειον… εἰρημένον). Herodotus also refers on multiple occasions to Hecataeus, already identified by Heraclitus as an author above, as a λογοποιός. Hecataeus, however, took care of his authorization on his own at the beginning of his work (FGrH 1 F1). Just as composers of verse could identify themselves as authors, so could composers of prose, like Alcmaeon (DK 24 B1), and later the famous historians.

If surviving inter- and intratextual references to authors can reveal the late archaic process of authorization only partially, mainly for generic reasons, still they are sufficient to show that both prose and verse texts played a part in it. Surveying the group of early prose authors identified by our sources, we find the same mix – or perhaps a spectrum – of historical individuals and mythologized legends. It is interesting that among the latter, the distinction between legendary verse authors and legendary prose authors to a certain extent maps on to the distinction between poets and sages. Martin denied this distinction, strongly asserting the sages' association with poetry.[44] His argument relies on reports by Diogenes Laertes, which are of two kinds, traditions

[42] West 1984, 119, and *passim* for the construction of his biography, a process which he sees as analogous to the construction of Homer's. See ibid., 129, for a portrait of Aesop which perhaps predates Herodotus (for references to iconographic evidence of Aesop see Kurke 2010, 59 n. 21).
[43] The pregnant, consistent use of ποιεῖν as well as θεῖναι (also 1.29) renders unlikely the possibility that the νόμοι to which Herodotus refers are not perceived as linguistic entities. Cf. Solon's use of θεῖναι in the Salamis elegy discussed in ch. 1.
[44] Martin 1993, 113-15.

direct and indirect. Nagy describes the former as quotations of "poetry attributed" to the sages,[45] but Diogenes never identifies them as poetry, but rather as song (ᾠδόμενον). They are very short *skolia*, songs whose versification is frequently "a little lax".[46] *Skolia* are, in fact, typically anonymous, perhaps because they were not sophisticated enough as works of art to necessitate or justify assigning an author to them. Indeed, any participant in a symposium would be expected to be able to compose, or at least re-compose, *skolia*.[47] Attributing *skolia* to the sages does not seem then to suggest that their versifying abilities were held in particularly high esteem. The act of attribution itself may be, for our purposes, late: some scholars think they were composed in the Hellenistic period.[48]

The indirect traditions credit some of them with hundreds of lines of poetry, none of which – in spite of their supposedly great prestige – survive.[49] What is at issue, though, as Martin notes, is their representation as poets. But that representation too may be late, perhaps even a hoax by the notorious Lobon of Argos.[50] More importantly, however, when we turn away from Diogenes, Martin's focus, we find them in Plutarch's *Banquet of the Seven Sages* citing poetry, but always the poetry of others, not their own.[51] More significantly, in Herodotus none of the sages appear in

[45] Nagy 1990a, 333 n. 99. See DL 1.35, 61, 71, 78, 85, 91, each devoted to a different sage, edited in *SH* 521-26. See Martin 1993, 114 n. 20 for references to discussions of these texts. See Nagy 1990a, ch. 1, for the distinction between song and poetry.
[46] West 1982, 59 n. 75. I have attempted to analyze the meter of these *skolia*; Thales has a hexameter, Kleoboulos has a dactylo-epitrite, and one finds some Aeolic cola, some symmetric cola, but others appear quite difficult to analyze.
[47] See, for instance, the practice *skolia* in Aristophanes, *Wasps* 1220-50. This aspect is emphasized in the most recent treatment of *skolia*, Martin 2017.
[48] *SH*, p. 255, *contra* Snell 1966 (1954), 118. According to *IEG* 2.47, they date to the fourth century.
[49] DL 1.34 (Thales), 1.78 (Pittacus), 1.85 (Bias), 1.89 (Cleobulus), 1.97 (Periander), 1.112 (Epimenides, also credited, like Pittacus, with prose). *IEG* 2.47: "notitia de longioribus carminibus… ficta e nihilo videtur". Regarding Athenaeus' reference to Periander as an elegiac poet (632d), see *IEG* 2.95, noting the erroneous reference to Phocylides as an elegiac poet. Periander is one sage to whom no *skolia* are attributed by Diogenes.
[50] *IEG* 2.47, and see West 1983, 55-56. In addition to "unprincipled rogue" (ibid.), he has also been considered by scholars an "evil-minded forger" or a "harmless joker" (Bolton 1962, 25, and see West 1983, 44 n. 25 for references).
[51] We should remember that if Page, vol. 1, no. 127 indeed represents a fragment of a banquet of the sages in hexameters (for which see Snell 1966 [1954]), this does not mean, as we already saw in ch. 1, that those sayings were necessarily understood as poetic, etc. Cf. Thales' dedication of the famous tripod of the Sages to Apollo, represented by Callimachus in verse (iamb. 1.) though, Diogenes himself reports (1.29), it is actually in prose.

the narrative as poets, save for Solon – and even his role as poet is minor – nor does Herodotus identify any of them as poets.[52] Chilon appears to be have been represented as an author of prose by Alcidamas, in a catalogue which consists of three poets, Archilochus, Homer and Sappho, followed by Chilon, Pythagoras and Anaxagoras.[53] Given that the latter is obviously a prose author and we have seen the former to be strongly associated with prose, and considering that the first three were distinctly known as poets and that the composition of Alcidamas' catalogue shows some care, it stands to reason that he was aiming for symmetry. It is significant that the Spartans' reverence for Chilon there is presented as an act of *philologia*, a term we should understand as related to verbal production, but not of verse.[54] Diogenes appears to have had a particular proclivity for poetry,[55] but even in his work, with the exception of Solon the reports of the sages' poetry are not integrated in any meaningful way into their biographies. The proof of their wisdom, in Herodotus' narratives as well as Diogenes' biographies, lies primarily in their prose, in their artful apothegms and the advice they gave, in situations of marked distance, to rulers. It is significant that one of these advisers in the *Histories* is a prose writer, Hecataeus,[56] and also that the variable canon of sages also included Pherecydes and Acusilaus, figures distinctly associated with prose (DL 1.13, 42).

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[52] Thales: Hdt. 1.74-75, 170; Chilon: 1.59, 7.235; Pittacus: 1.27; Bion: 1.27, 170; Anacharsis: 4.46, 76-78; Periander: 1.20, 23-24 (as Arion's patron), 3.48-53, 5.92, 95. Solon composes poetry at 5.113, but is primarily represented as a sage and lawmaker at 1.29-34 and 86 and 2.177. Solon was also exceptional among the sages (Plat. *Tim.* 20e1), and of course was credited with the composition of prose as well.

[53] Alcidamas fr. 10 Avezzù = Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1398b10-20.

[54] Cf. esp. Plat. *Leg*. 641e regarding Spartan aversion to φιλολογία, as opposed to βραχυλογία. As Chilon had a reputation for the latter (DL 1.72), φιλολογία here should not be understood as necessarily associated with πολυλογία (as in Plat. *Leg.* 641e), but is rather closer, as in LSJ (s.v. φιλολογία, φιλόλογος), to an affinity for discussion and learning, perhaps even literature (as translated in Graziosi 2002, 153). Which is to say, the Spartans appreciated texts attributed to Chilon.

[55] Mejer 1978, 46-50. Nietzsche incidentally thought that Diogenes' own poetry was the *raison d'être* of the entire work, an opportunity to republish his poetry after its initial failure (Most 2018b, 620-21). W.R. Paton unkindly considered them "perhaps the worse verses ever published" (quoted in Gutzwiller 2018, 561 n. 3, with other assessments of his poetry).

[56] Hdt. 5.36. For the motif of the adviser in Herodotus, Lattimore 1939. There is a late tradition associating Heraclitus, if somewhat perversely, with the tradition of advising rulers (DK 22 A3 = Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 1.65.4).

Martin further cites as evidence for their poetry Anaximenes' pronouncement, reported by Diogenes (1.40), that the sages all applied themselves to poetry (ἐπιθέσθαι ποιητικῇ).[57] It is unlikely that Anaximenes used the term ποιητική, which would be more characteristic of the fifth century. More importantly, however, scholars in quoting this report tend not to take into account its context, sandwiched as it is between two hostile references to the sages: Damon of Cyrene denounced them, while Dicaearchus denied their right to be called either *sophoi* or *philosophoi*. It might thus appear that the thrust of Anaximenes' reported remark is that the sages were not *sophoi*, like him and his colleagues, instead they busied themselves with poetry.

What would be interesting here, then, is the claim that poetry is not the language of wisdom. We have already seen traces of antagonism from the other side of the trenches, in the form of Simonides' abuse of Pittacus, which stood in contrast to his admiration for poets. Pittacus was famously the target of another poet's abuse, Alcaeus, and elsewhere Simonides attacked a different sage, Kleoboulos, perhaps as an author, and not necessarily one of verse (*PMG* 581).[58] Heraclitus, on the other hand, specifically castigates *aoidoi* (B104), and in particular Hesiod (B57), as stupid, while exceptionally praising the sage Bias (B39).[59] It appears that there may in fact be some evidence for an "ancient quarrel" between discourses later associated with philosophy and poetry.[60]

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[57] Martin 1993, 114. Cf. ἐπιτιθῆται τῇ ποιήσει in Eupolis *PCG* 392.5, in a context which seems quite removed from wisdom.

[58] Following the suggestion in Ford 2002, 107, that Kleoboulus' stele was, significantly, inscribed. The association of Midas' epigram with Simonides' poem, reported by Diogenes – but even he distances himself from it (1.89-90) – strikes me as clever, but fanciful (cf. its anonymous citation in Plat. *Phaedr*. 264d).

[59] DL 1.88 strengthens the impression that this sentence has not been taken out of (a vituperative) context, not only in the judgment Diogenes expresses, but also in the resemblance between the apothegm he attributes to Bias there and DK 22 B104 (cf. Finkelberg 2017, 211 n. 11).

[60] The modern scholarly consensus is that Plato essentially invented such a quarrel (*Rep.* X 607b-c). See most recently Most 2011, with references to studies with similar conclusions ibid., 2 n. 2. The texts discussed above in any event need to be taken into account in discussions of the "ancient quarrel", which for over a century have tended to conclude that there is no evidence for such a quarrel. If there was no "philosophy" before Plato (e.g. Nightingale 1995), in looking for evidence for the quarrel we cannot limit ourselves only to those figures whom Aristotle later identified as part of a reconstructed philosophical tradition.

There is no need to insist that all Seven – or Hermippus' Seventeen – Sages were prose authors, or that we can easily distinguish sixth-century groups vying for authority in the discourse of wisdom, especially as the concepts of poetry and prose in the sixth century were far from being fully developed. But it is significant, in light of the view of poetry's exclusive authority, that the figure of the author of prose texts was a legitimate contender in the discourse of wisdom, certainly enough to antagonize at least some poets. Indeed, early figures associated with prose texts were accorded no less importance in the Greek tradition, and were treated with no less reverence than early figures associated with verse: like many early poets, prose authors could also receive posthumous cult.[61] And biographies were constructed for them, along with the texts which were attributed to them, just like those of their verse colleagues.[62]

A death tradition, a hallmark of ancient biographies, is attested for Pherecydes already in Aristotle. The disease which felled him, phthiriasis, or louse disease, associated him with Alcman (Schibli F32), and also brings to mind Homer's death.[63] It also features a connection with Pythagoras, who was said to have cared for him; Heraclides Lembus, in the second century BCE, reported their deathbed encounter, as Pherecydes showed him his literally denuded finger through the opening of the door, in the pathetic detail befitting a literary luminary (Schibli F27). His dying words, "it is clear from the skin", were even said to have become proverbial (Schibli F26). It is

[61] Prose authors who were recipients of cult: Pherecydes, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Bias, Chilon, Aesop, and Anaxagoras. Cf. Nagy 1979, ch. 18, on the relations between poets' biographies and cult, and the appendix to Clay 2004, cataloguing evidence for such cult. See ibid. for Bias and Chilon; Nagy 1979, ch. 18, for Aesop; DL 1.118 for Pherecydes; Chitwood 2004, 88, for Pythagoras and Heraclitus; Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1398b10-20, for Anaxagoras.

[62] For the construction of poets' lives, see Lefkowitz 2012 (1981), Kivilo 2010, and specifically Homer's, Graziosi 2002 (Kivilo 2011 is also useful).

[63] Grau 2010 discusses the deaths of Greek *sophoi* and provides a typology of them. For an interesting discussion of phthiriasis see pp. 364-67. For Homer's death, DK 22 B56. Homer is not the only one to die of phthiriasis, but Pherecydes was independently associated with other poetic figures as well, e.g. in a Spartan tradition Terpander (Plut. *Agis* 10.6).

particularly impressive that he has many death traditions[64] – in Plutarch his skin functions in the opposite role, surviving after his death (Schibli F23) – attesting to the interest his figure attracted.

Pherecydes' life itself was remarkable: "many wonderful stories", wrote Diogenes, "are told about him" (1.116). If poets were granted special access to the past through the revelation of the Muses, the gods granted Pherecydes knowledge of the future: he predicted the sinking of a ship, an earthquake, and outcomes of war. Heracles revealed himself to him in a dream, and his death was reported by Aelian to be an act of revenge on the part of Apollo.[65] Pherecydes was indeed known as a theologian, but the language of religion is believed by scholarship to have been poetry. It is important that Pherecydes' soothsaying, ultimately, is a speech-act, one performed in prose.[66] Pherecydes in fact claimed to have had some knowledge of the very language of gods, specifically that the divine name for table, as opposed to the mortal "τράπεζα", was θυωρός.[67]

"Prosaic" lives were thus constructed for Pherecydes and other sages, as performers of prose, just as the lives of their verse counterparts were structured by performances of poetry.[68] Different kinds of authors, as we will see below, were charged with authorizing different kinds of

[64] See Schibli F25-37. Note that one of the traditions has Pherecydes hurling himself from Mt. Korykius in Delphi, the site of a cave of the Muses. See Schibli 1990, 8-9, for details. Plutarch's account concerning the preservation of his skin is curiously reminiscent of the tradition about the Spartans preserving Epimenides' (DL 1.115; see Bremmer 1993).

[65] Schibli F16-22, 37a, 55. Cf. the case of another early prose author killed by a god, Aesop.

[66] Cf. the discussion of oracular prose in ch. 1.

[67] See West 1971, 16, and Schibli 1990, 66-67, esp. n. 41, for discussion and references.

[68] We cannot here attempt a full comparison of the lives of poets and prose authors. One complicating factor is that the two categories are not easily isolated. These authors were not simply composers of poetry or prose. It is important that not every biography of a figure credited with a work of prose is the biography of a prose author; in the lives we have examined, however, the role of prose is constitutive, not incidental. Other notable biographies early prose authors include that of Aesop, mentioned above and discussed in detail in Kurke 2010. Kurke there extrapolates from his lowly status to the status of prose, but just as Xenophanes' criticism of poets represents a debate that is internal to poetry (e.g. Most 2011, 4), so Aesop's subversiveness cannot simply be construed as representing prose, as the authority of the Sages whom he seeks to undermine was itself associated with prose. (For a different criticism of that extrapolation see again ch. 1). Pàmias 2015 compares the construction of Acusilaus' biography with Hesiod's. Chitwood 2004 studies the biographies of Heraclitus and Democritus as they appear in Diogenes, and discusses the lives of philosophers generally (see also Mejer 1978, 90-93).

prose texts, but the template of the legendary "prosaic" life was so deeply rooted that it could also shape the biography of historical authors.[69]

Having established the category of the archaic prose author, we conclude our discussion of it by noting its significance. If authorized texts are a phenomenon of the late archaic period, it follows that we have no reason to think that authorized prose texts, which would come to be considered "literary", were not composed earlier, just as some authorized sixth-century poetry is in fact a sixth-century version of much older poetry. Norden pointed out long ago that figures who are conveniently considered to constitute beginnings in fact frequently mark endpoints.[70] This is a lesson that classical scholarship has since embraced, holding Homer and Hesiod to be heirs of long traditions, but has applied selectively. We should thus take into account the possibility that the case of Pherecydes and Anaximander, as representatives of deep-rooted prose traditions, is no different.

We now turn to the texts attributed to the different kinds of early prose authors, starting with those considered the earliest, those of the two rival prose *prōtoi heurētai*.

Pherecydes' transcript

In spite of his status as prose *prōtos heuretēs*, Pherecydes of Syros, which though part of the Ionian Cyclades is closer to Athens than to Miletus, is a problem for the history of prose no less than for the history of philosophy.[71] A number of substantial fragments of *ipsissima verba* survive from his cosmogonic-theogonic work, which is commonly read against Hesiod, as

[69] See West 1991 on Hecataeus, who will be discussed below.
[70] Norden 1958 (1898), 31, 41.
[71] For the importance of Ionia to narratives of the development of prose see e.g. Wöhrle 1992 and Asper 2007. On the question of his place in the history of philosophy, DL 1.13-15 and Laks 2007, 257-61.

dramatically departing from him in both content and form.[72] Its opening is preserved by Diogenes Laertes, importantly quoted by him from Pherecydes' book itself:[73]

> Σώζεται δὲ τοῦ Συρίου τό τε βιβλίον ὃ συνέγραψεν, οὗ ἡ ἀρχή:
> Ζὰς μὲν καὶ Χρόνος ἦσαν ἀεὶ καὶ Χθονίη ἦν· Χθονίῃ δὲ ὄνομα ἐγένετο Γῆ ἐπειδὴ αὐτῇ Ζὰς γῆν γέρας διδοῖ. (DK 7 B1)
>
> The book which the Syrian wrote is preserved. It begins: "Zas and Chronos were always, and Chthoniē was too. But Chthoniē's name became Earth after Zas gives her earth as a present."

If these are the first words of Greek "literary" prose, they appear to have come to their author effortlessly.[74] He employs hypotaxis as well as parataxis, narrative alongside – in the second fragment – dialogue. The apparent simplicity of his language belies his use of elaborate structuring devices. The first two sentences are tied together by μέν and δέ, but also by a form of catena, polyptotic catena, with Chthoniē closing the first sentence – performed perhaps without hiatus – and opening the second. Both sentences are also symmetrical, each containing two clauses which themselves are isomorphic: in the first sentence subjects precede the predicates, in the second an indirect object in the dative is followed by the subject. The acoustics of the first will be discussed momentarily, but first we will note the indexical use of alliteration and echo, perhaps chiastic echo, in the second: ***ege**neto **gē**... **gē**n **ge**ras*. This care for linking is even more apparent in fr. 2:

> [αὐ|τῶι ποιοῦσιν τὰ ο[ἰ]κία | πολλά τε καὶ μεγάλα· |**ἐπεὶ δὲ ταῦτα ἐξετέ|λεσαν** πάντα καὶ χρή|ματα καὶ θεράποντας | καὶ θεραπαίνας καὶ | τἆλλα ὅσα δεῖ πάντα, | **ἐπεὶ δὴ πάντα ἑτοῖ|μα γίγνεται**, τὸν γά|μον ποιεῦσιν. **κἀπει|δὴ τρίτη ἡμέρη γί|γνεται τῶι γάμωι**, τό | τε |Ζὰς ποιεῖ φᾶρος μέ|γα τε καὶ καλόν, καὶ | ἐν αὐτῶ[ι]… (LM D9)

[72] *KRS* 56-57; Schibli 1991, 133: "Pherekydes, in short, meant to provide an alternative version to the *Theogony*". Also Kahn 2003, 143-44; Patzer 2006, 99; Granger 2007b, 139; Cingano 2009, 99; Vatri 2017, 61; Sassi 2018, 52 (and already in antiquity, Achilles Tatius [Schibli F64]). The attempt to read Pherecydes as reacting specifically to Hesiod is itself rash, since there were other theogonies current in Greece in the archaic period. See West 1966, 12-14, and in detail West 1983. Theogony should be seen as a subgenre of cosmogony, which the latter may include, but does not have to. I will generally use "cosmogony". (Cf. López-Ruiz 2012, 31).

[73] Diogenes quotes the openings of Alcmaeon (8.83) and Diogenes of Apollonia (9.57) as well. Jacoby 1947, 21, thinks the report derives from Callimachus' *pinakes*, simply ignoring that Diogenes Laertes says that his book was preserved (1.119). It is important that one of the lines in the papyrus is numbered 600, which gives an idea of the length of the work, for which see West 1971, 6-7.

[74] West 1971, 6: "he told his tale easily and artistically".

> For him they make buildings, many and great. When they completed these things, all of them, objects and servants, male and female, and other things which are necessary, all of them, when everything is ready, they perform the wedding. And when it is the third day of the wedding, Zas makes a robe, great and beautiful, and on it…

Here too we find isomorphic syntactic units, each beginning with *epeide/ē*, which signals the beginning of a new unit, the coming of a new detail in the narrative, but first a turning back to the previous unit, recapitulating its content with the help of a pronoun (ταῦτα), repetition (τῶι γάμωι), etc. The author's primary concern, it is by now clear, is to help the audience follow the narrative. Its structure, which privileges information units over the syntax of the sentence, implies that its written form is secondary: it was composed for oral performance.[75]

West argues that this would generally be true for this period, and that the written text functioned as an aide-mémoire, "primarily valuable to the author himself".[76] But if it was a text that was meant for performance, then it would be valuable not specifically to its author, but rather to its performer. Its language, we have already seen, is the language of the performance itself. The question is, what kind of performance? Let us return to its opening.

Pherecydes' first sentence is striking both for what it features, and for what it lacks. It begins as a hexameter, but the meter then breaks down.[77] Surely we are not to imagine that the audience would have been surprised, at the first performance or at subsequent re-performances, to find the hexameter breaking down in the first line or, by extension, that this cosmogony would not be told in hexameters. Nor should we be surprised that it prominently featured some spondees and dactyls: we have already seen that some meter is not foreign to prose. It would seem that marked

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[75] *Pace* Laks 2007, 264. For the distinction between information units and syntactic units and its importance for identifying oral language see the introduction, and Bakker 1997 and Slings 1999. On (*epei)de/ē* signifying cooperation, see Bakker 1997, 74-80.
[76] West 1971, 5. Also Vatri 2017, 61.
[77] Lilja 1968, 31; Dover 1997, 160-61; Bers 2010, 457-58.

rhythms are an appropriate way of beginning a performance, and that Pherecydes felt comfortable employing them to introduce his. Indeed, there is little reason to think Pherecydes would not have felt comfortable performing a non-verse theogony. Acusilaus, perhaps in the sixth century, composed theogonic material in prose. Theogonic prose circulated under the names of the legendary poets Epimenides and Eumelus, and Aristeas of Proconnesus and Abaris, both established in the fifth century as authors of verse, were credited with prose theogonies.[78] Already in the sixth century, Pherecydes' work was probably not unique.

Pherecydes' first sentence suggests as much, not only in the apparently casual way in which it deploys meter but also in what it does not do. It is remarkable that it simply begins to tell the story, without any framing whatsoever. The hexametric poetry of Homer and the Homeric hymns, the epic cycle as well as Hesiod and, importantly, probably the Derveni Theogony,[79] begins by informing the audience what it is going to do, as did the early letters we examined in chapter 2, as do other early prose authors.[80] If Pherecydes were himself seeking to effect a literary revolution, or even take part in one, we would expect some gesture to that effect, at the very least in order to orient his audience. Yet the opening of his work suggests, on the contrary, that no such introduction was necessary, that the audience would understand what was being done and that there was nothing special about it. This is a language of distance *par excellence*: there is no deixis which relates this narrative to the occasion of its performance. In Benveniste's terms, there is no *discours*, only

[78] For Acusilaus' date, Fowler 2013, 623-24. For the prose of pseudo-Epimenides, see Fowler 2013, 649-52, arguing that the prose fragments are not all paraphrases of the poetry attributed to him; for pseudo-Eumelus, West 2002, 118. On Aristeas and Abaris, West 1966, 12-14, and in detail West 1983, 39-61, particularly 54-55, and also Bolton 1962, 31-32. Was Democritus ("Dromocrites"?) also attributed a theogony (DK 68 B301)? See also Plat. *Laws* 886b-c: Εἰσὶν ἡμῖν ἐν γράμμασι λόγοι κείμενοι… οἱ μὲν ἔν τισι μέτροις, οἱ δὲ καὶ ἄνευ μέτρων, λέγοντες περὶ θεῶν.

[79] I am, to be clear, referring not to the Derveni papyrus, but to the poem reconstructed on its basis, see West 1983, 82-84, for the reconstruction of the first line, which is accepted by other scholars.

[80] Race 1992 classifies the ways in which Greek poetry begins, including lyric poetry. In antiquity, with remarks on poetic proems, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* 3.14, also *Rhetoric to Alexander* 29.1. Cf. Ford 1992, 18-19, on beginnings. Mansfeld 1995 discusses what he considers intentionally ambiguous presocratic incipits, but the intention he imputes to them clearly does not apply to Pherecydes.

histoire: the narrative begins as a disembodied report, not interacting with the audience, not even acknowledging it.[81] Its impersonality, along with its knowledge reaching back to primordial time, invest it with supreme authority, even though the performer apparently does not vouch for its divine sanction.[82]

To be sure, some such proem may have dropped off in the course of the text's transmission, perhaps as the result of editing by the likes of the Pergamene scholar Crates. On the other hand, such tampering typically leaves traces.[83] More importantly, some Greek poetry made no explicit attempt to orient its audience.[84] Moreover, in contrast with the works of Ion of Chios (DK 36 B1), Philolaus (DK 44 B1), perhaps Heraclitus (DK 22 B1), which begin with the particle δέ, Pherecydes' syntax gives no reason to suspect that this is not the beginning of the text.[85] We should be particularly skeptical of West's contention that the proem would have included the name Pherecydes,[86] in light of the survival of numerous *sphrageis* from this period. For a text supposedly making an ambitious bid for authority, in a writing culture which from its inception was dominated by the impulse to inscribe names and marked by "egotistic" agonism – this is striking.

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[81] Benveniste 1966, 238-42, and in the 1971 English translation, 206-209. Bakker 1999, 2, points out that the distinction between them corresponds to a distinction between present and past. Pherecydes' opening is fully in the past, not the present; the representation of the earth, and what appear to be the well-known figures of Zeus and Kronos in their prior instantiations as Zas and Chronos, may have worked to a similar effect (Schibli 1990, 135-39). It should be emphasized that we are concerned here only with the opening; the use of φασιν, in DK 7 B2, marks an intervention by the narrator, who shares with the audience a viewpoint in the present. The same goes for the use of the present tense in DK 7 B5. Attention will be paid to their significance below.

[82] Laks 2007, 264, points out its important absence. We will return to this below. And cf. again Calame 1995, 77: "in the whole of archaic Greek literature, from Homeric poetry to Pindar, the utterance of the enunciation is characterized… by the projection of the *I* of the narrator onto a higher authority".

[83] On the proems to the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, as well as the *Iliad*, and Crates and other scholars' treatment of them, see West 1966, 150 and West 1978, 136-37.

[84] See the discussion of discursive and dramatic openings in Race 1992.

[85] On this phenomenon, Burkert 1972a, 252 n. 68. On the opening *men*, see below.

[86] West 1971, 9. Jacoby 1947, 23 n. 21, concurs.

Pherecydes' cosmogony was not, however, alone in beginning its story about the beginning of the cosmos at that narrative beginning. In fact, beginning *in primas res* appears to be a convention of Mediterranean cosmogonies. Compare, for instance, *Genesis*:

בראשית ברא אלוהים את השמיים ואת הארץ...

When in the beginning God created the sky and the earth… (1.1)

Or *Enuma Elish:*

e-nu-ma e-liš *la na-bu-ú šá-ma-mu*
šap-liš am-ma-tum *šu-ma la zak-rat* (1.1)
When, above, the sky had not been named, and below the earth had not been named.

The beginning of *Enuma Elish* is significant because other non-cosmogonic Mesopotamian works such as the epics of *Gilgamesh* and *Anzu* do begin with *discours*, while like *Enuma Elish* the creation story in *Atrahasis*, and also the *Theogony of Dunnu*, begin with *histoire*.[87] The parallels between Pherecydes and *Genesis* are particularly impressive: both begin with a supreme god, earth and time, or an explicit reference to time, both from the beginning are concerned with the act of naming, and both will later feature a snake (DK 7 B4). It is well known that Pherecydes' work generally bears the imprint of intense interaction with near eastern traditions, and that Mediterranean cosmogonies were in conversation with each other.[88] Pherecydes' conformity with this convention is in line with his treatment of the material, which in some respects has been considered more traditional than Hesiod.[89] From the generic, Mediterranean point of view, it is rather Hesiod's poem, with its multiple proems, which is, in a sense, unconventional.[90]

[87] For a comparative study of how Mediterranean cosmogonies begin, unconcerned with the question under discussion here, see López-Ruiz 2012. Translations of these texts can be found in Dalley 1989. Note also the beginning of the alternate creation story at *Genesis* 2.4.
[88] For Pherecydes, West 1971, ch. 2; *KRS*, 71; Schibli 1991, 132; Sassi 2018, 53. For Hesiod's ties with near eastern traditions, e.g. West 1997, ch. 6 and Rutherford 2009. On the cosmogony as a Mediterranean genre, López-Ruiz 2012, esp. 46-47, and Haubold 2013, ch. 1.
[89] Fränkel 1975, 244-45; Laks 2007, 265. Also, perhaps, *KRS*, 71.
[90] In other ways as well, see López-Ruiz 2012, 39, 43. In a different sense, these proems do conform with the Mediterranean convention, for which see below.

There is in fact a Greek cosmogony attributed to a figure far earlier than Hesiod, Linus, whose cosmogony begins *in primas res* (DL 1.4):

> ἦν ποτέ τοι χρόνος οὗτος, ἐν ᾧ ἅμα πάντ᾽ ἐπεφύκει
> There was once that time, in which all things grew together

We do not need to believe in the antiquity of this cosmogony to recognize its importance in demonstrating that Greek cosmogonies could begin, simply, in the beginning. The mock-cosmogony in Aristophanes' *Birds* is particularly instructive in this regard. It begins:

> Χάος ἦν καὶ Νὺξ Ἔρεβός τε μέλαν πρῶτον καὶ Τάρταρος εὐρύς (693)
> First there were Chaos and Night and Dark Erebos and wide Tartaros

That beginning is preceded, however, by an address to the audience, which includes a brief preview of the content of the cosmogony (685-92).[91] Yet the transition between the two is marked, indicating that they are not homogeneous. The transition is signaled both by the shift from *discours* to *histoire*, as well as the change in register, moving from the general invective towards humans, and in particular Prodicus in line 692, to the stately, impersonal beginning of the cosmogony. The proem here, and by extension in the practice which Aristophanes is parodying, appears to be impromptu and ad hoc, detachable from the cosmogony proper. This is precisely what the aforementioned Crates thought of the opening hymns of Hesiod's *Theogony*, as well as *Works and Days*, for which reason he sought to athetize them. It is therefore significant that the *men* which introduces Hesiod's cosmogony (*Th*. 118), which in hexametric poetry frequently follows proem-like passages, also appears in Pherecydes' text.[92]

[91] We might note here, following the comments on this matter in chapter 1, that the cosmogony is in anapests, signifying that cosmogonies in Greece, as we have seen, need not necessarily be in hexameters, which are found in comedy for specific genres (West 1982, 98). For another mock-theogony, see Cratinus *PCG* 258-59 from his *Chirones* (incidentally, there is some debate regarding 258, whether it should be Χρόνος or Κρόνος).
[92] See West 1966, 192, with other Hesiodic and Homeric parallels. See further, Bakker 1997, 80-85.

It thus appears that from the point of view of genre Pherecydes' work is not, in fact, missing a proem, and that we should not consider it incidental that its beginning is especially unhelpful for fixing the occasion of its performance. Rather, its composition suggests that it was designed for re-performance. On what occasion(s)? West has pointed out a number of parallels between Pherecydes' narrative and Greek rituals: the battle between the armies of Chronos and Ophioneus, who agreed that whoever fell into Ogenos would be the loser, mirrors a ritual battle of ephebes in Sparta, attested to by Pausanias (3.14.8-10) and Lucian (*Anarchasis* 38); Chronos wore a crown after achieving victory (DK 7 B4), as in the Septerion festival at Delphi, which celebrated the defeat of a different serpent, Python; and the enrobed tree (DK 7 B2) has parallels in other festivals such as the Theban Daphnaphoria.[93] The text itself (DK 7 B2) explicitly engages in aetiology, with regard to the *anakalyptēria*, the ritual removal of the bride's veil.

West goes on to explain these parallels as a literary representation of such rituals, with which Pherecydes was acquainted.[94] Here we should question the other party to the performative context which West reconstructed: what audience would be interested in such stories, divorced from context? It is precisely the text's absence of explicit contextualization which indicates that it was inevitably contextualized, like the archaic Greek poetry mentioned above which did not trouble itself with orienting its audience because it was performed, for example, at a symposium. As in the case of its Mediterranean counterparts,[95] that context was ritual; it would have been embedded in it in such a way that the need for an introduction was either obviated or taken care of

[93] West 1971, 69-74.
[94] West 1971, 74-75 ("a literary curiosity"). Kahn 2003, 154, also considers it distinctively "literary". West 1966, 15: "there is no evidence that the ritual in question, which survived only in Sparta, was accompanied by the recitation of Pherecydes' or any other theogony… but the connexion is there. A myth like that retailed by Pherecydes and a ritual like that surviving at Sparta must originally have belonged together".
[95] West 1966, 14, refers to the "close association" of theogonies with ritual in other traditions, surveyed ibid., 1-12, including *Enuma Elish*, and other Akkadian cosmogonies in connection with incantations (ibid., 2); see also his own reconstruction of the Eudemian Theogony in West 1983, 174-75. Regarding the lack of a clear ritual association for Hesiod's *Theogony*, West 1966, 15, and Vernant 1982 (1962) 116-17.

ad hoc, as in *Birds*. The audience was in any case not interested in the text in itself, but only as part of the ritual. Pherecydes' theogony was thus not a narrativized representation of ritual, it was a ritual narrative, a text to be performed at a ritual.

As a ritual text it could easily serve a New Year festival, in the manner of *Enuma Elish*, or – in light of its aetiological remarks – a wedding ritual.[96] The use of prose in ritual should not surprise us, in light of the survey of its use in chapter 1. This prose does not signify secularization;[97] the ritual context sanctioned the text's special knowledge, which was hardly the possession of any human. The reason it has no *sphragis* is because it anteceded the process of authorization, or was at least originally foreign to it. It was a traditional text of oral prose, re-composed in re-performance, which like so many specimens of oral Greek poetry was at some point committed to writing for reasons we usually cannot recover. Here the appropriate comparandum might be Alcman's partheneia;[98] Pherecydes' text may have been copied by Pythagoreans.[99] Pherecydes is

[96] Burkert 1985, 228, notes the influence of Near Eastern New Year festivals. A wedding ritual would go well with the cosmogony: like Chronos (B4) the groom before the *anakalyptēria* also wore a wreath, and like Zas to Chthoniē he gave his bride gifts (themselves called *anakalyptēria*), which resulted in a change of her name. We know that a different mythological *anakalyptēria*, Persephone's, was incorporated in ritual in Sicily (schol. rec. Pind. *Ol.* 6.160; cf. Diod. Sic. 5.2.3) and in the Locrian colony of Hipponion (Str. 6.1.5). The use of φασιν (B2) suggests that the text may have served the function of commentary. The Derveni Theogony, perhaps performed in connection with the rituals described in the papyrus, inspired commentary (of a different sort), of course, but the oral style of Pherecydes' text might make us think of other sixth-century figures. Theagenes, whose commentary on Homer we know to have specifically engaged with theomachy (DK 8.2), may well have accompanied a poetic recitation (for Theagenes as performer, see Ford 1999b, 33-34 and 37 with nn. 12 and 15 for references; especially interesting is the possibly parallel use of allegory and etymology). Two scholars have recently, separately, suggested that the other sixth-century composer of theogonic prose, Acusilaus, was also in effect a commentator (Toye 2016 and Andolfi 2019, 31-32). Similarly, in *Birds*, the chorus appears to shift from cosmogony proper into commentary (702-36), which reverts to *discours*, as in the preface, explicating the significance of cosmogonic history for the audience. I'm grateful to Johannes Haubold for discussion of this material.

[97] *Pace* Laks 2007, 264; Granger 2007a, 430. Cf. Calame 2004b, 242, who argues neither Pherecydes' work nor Acusilaus' should be seen as signifying secularization.

[98] Ford 1993, 73, suggests that perhaps the family responsible for the rite preserved the text of the Louvre Partheneion. And note ibid.: "Comme c'est souvent le cas quand les mots d'un texte survivent à la disparition du contexte original, la 'poésie' d'Alcman a fait l'objet d'interprétations allégoriques". The parallel reception of Pherecydes' text is suggestive (for the interpretation of Pherecydes as allegorizing, see Tate 1927, cf. Schibli 1990, 99-100 n. 54).

[99] West 1971, 7.

then the name of a legendary sage to whom, like other seers – Orpheus, Musaeus, Epimenides etc. – a cosmogony was attributed.[100]

Anaximander's anthology

It is remarkable that Pherecydes' chief contender as prose *prōtos heuretēs*, Anaximander, effectively has no biography.[101] But while Pherecydes is considered an outlier, a trailblazer with no followers, Anaximander is regarded as the founder of a particularly persistent genre, the *peri physeōs*.[102] If it is easy to dismiss Pherecydes' prose as a failed "experiment", it would appear more difficult to explain the wild success of Anaximander's.[103] Hence, betraying some anxiety over this "absolute Anfang", scholars either seek to understand his decision to compose prose as inspired by the authority of prose laws, or the community of prose-writing architects, or explain it away as incidental, as commentary which happened to accompany his map and naturally took the form of prose.[104]

Meager though it is, Anaximander's extant prose suggests otherwise. Only one substantial fragment of *ipsissima verba* is preserved, in Simplicius' sixth-century CE commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*.[105] It is not entirely clear where Simplicius' words end and where Anaximander's begin, and it would seem that Anaximander's language was at least adapted to the

[100] It would appear that his pairing with the text is implicit in Aristotle, *Metaph*. N4 1091b8-10 = DK 7 A7.
[101] The only biographical anecdote Diogenes has is the curious story of his singing (2.1), on which see Riedel 1987 and Wildberg 2018, 281-83.
[102] Kahn 2003, 145-46; Laks 2007, 256. For the history of the genre, Laks 2018, 2-5.
[103] Sassi 2018, 84.
[104] Sassi 2018, 82-93, relies heavily on law as a model, also Osborne 1998, 30; Hahn 2001 emphasizes architects' writings; Patzer 2006 and Asper 2007 argue for prose as commentary, also Havelock 1983, 80. Mansfeld 1983, 27, is unafflicted by anxiety, seeing the turn to prose as motivated by the desire for *Faktizität*.
[105] *CAG*, vol. 9, p. 24.13-25.

syntax of Simplicius' report.[106] All we can really have confidence in is the lexemes Simplicius reports Anaximander as using, and his having done so metaphorically: that they, perhaps the elements,[107] gave justice and retribution to each other for their injustice (διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας), according to their obligation and the order of time (κατὰ τὸ χρεών… κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν, with less confidence that these *verba* are *ipsissima*). Scholars have justly found his use of metaphor striking. No less significant, however, is that for his audience this metaphor, *qua* metaphor, would probably *not* have been striking. Figurative language appears to be a consistent feature of Anaximandrean style: he likened the sun to the wheel of a chariot, with an opening like the nozzle of a bellows (B4), the stars to a wheel of fire (B2), earth to a stone column (B2), and said that a sphere of fire surrounds earth like bark around a tree (A10).[108]

Such imaginative language is presumably not what scholars envisage when they suggest that Anaximander's prose served as commentary. It does not appear to be at the service of a diagram which it supposedly accompanied, it rather calls attention to itself. Similarly, such language would not seem to fit comfortably in a tradition of "technical prose" with, for instance, writings of architects.[109] In any event, a "technical" function would not, in and of itself, explain the prosaic form: some "technical" literature in this period was apparently composed in verse, as, for example, in Sanskrit.[110] Nor was such language typical of the laws we surveyed in the previous chapter.

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[106] For analysis, and a maximalist view, Kahn 1994 (1960), 168-78, which is close to West 1971, 81-82; *contra* the minimalist text of LM 6 D6. See also Seligman 1962, 66-71, with references to earlier discussions. Cf. Havelock 1983, part 2, for a nihilist view. Most recently see Mansfeld 2011, and cf. Wildberg 1993, 195 with n. 27.

[107] See West 1971, 82 n. 2, for references to discussions of what "they" refers to.

[108] There is more metaphoric language in the reports of Anaximander's philosophy; I have limited myself above to similes, all considered in DL and LM *ipsissima verba*. Cf. Most 1999, 351; Sassi 2018, 86; also Wöhrle 1992, 40-42.

[109] Hahn 2001, ch. 2; Kahn 2003, 146; also Asper 2007, 80-84. More below on this technical literature, and its questionable affinity to Anaximander and other philosophical figures. It is possible that Anaxagoras, in the fifth century, was credited in the Greek tradition as the first writer to incorporate diagrams in his text (the dubious DK 59 A1.11=DL 2.11; see Netz 2004, 271-72).

[110] See Nilsson 1905, on the *Gēs periodos* and *Astronomy* attributed to Hesiod, a "Nautical Astronomy" attributed to Thales or Phocus of Samos, an astronomical poem attributed to Cleostratus of Tenedos, and perhaps *Kataploi* describing harbors. See also Kahn 1983, 122 n. 10.

Anaximander's prose is perhaps related in some ways to such prose precursors, but they surely did not serve as formal models for his composition.

Aristotle, tendentiously conflating conceptual and linguistic clarity, claimed that the language of the early *physikoi* "stuttered" (ψελλιζομένη).[111] Yet Anaximander's figurative flair betrays confidence and attests to facility. His prose was neither primitive nor, Charles Kahn has shown, derivative in relation to poetry.[112] It does not appear to be reliant on the aforementioned possible prose models, either: Anaximander's bold and regular use of figurative language suggests that he had no need to go looking for a model, but rather that he was quite at home. What is supposedly the earliest "literary" prose appears to already belong to a tradition. Anaximenes' language was similarly rich in similes:[113] he likened the movement of bodies around the earth to the turn of a felt cap around one's head (A7), claimed that the sun was flat as a leaf (A15), that the stars were stuck in the sky like nails (A14), and that the earth covers the air like a lid, with the air resembling water in a clepsydra (A20). Before him, among the few remains of Thales' thought is a report according to which he claimed that earth floats on water like wood (A14), or a boat (A15).

It is not clear, however, how this tradition of flamboyantly figurative language – famously considered "poetic" – fits the vessel by which it was transmitted, which indeed seems better suited to technical-minded commentary. Diogenes Laertes reports that Anaximander "prepared a summary exposition of his views" (τῶν δὲ ἀρεσκόντων αὐτῷ πεποίηται κεφαλαιώδη τὴν ἔκθεσιν, 2.1).[114] This

[111] Arist. *Met.* 1.10, 993a14-17.
[112] Kahn 1994 (1960), 168-70. *Pace* Jacoby 1912, 2748, and Havelock 1983, 14, with regard to primitiveness and Wöhrle 1992 and Most 1999, 351, with regard to derivativeness. Cf. Laks 2007, 255-56 n.33.
[113] *Pace* Thesleff 1966, 91 n. 6.
[114] Most scholars agree that *ekthesis kephalaiōdēs* characterizes the style of his book, not a summary derived from his book or some other source (Burkert 1963, 133 n.2; *KRS* 102; Most 1999, 349; Laks 2007, 256; Granger 2007a, 415-16; *contra KRS* 102; Riedel 1987, 4; Wildberg 2018, 282). It has been doubted whether such a book even existed, but it is now clear that there was a book attributed to him, circulating at least as late as the second century BCE (Blanck 1997a, 1997b, and more recently Battistoni 2006). There is some consensus that continuous prose treatises are a phenomenon of the fifth century (Thesleff 1966; Most 1999; Asper 2007, 94), so Diogenes could easily be describing the original text attributed to Anaximander, which in any event would have probably consisted of "headlines". There was

would make for an odd "book", not only by our standards but evidently by those of Diogenes' source(s).[115] This should not be surprising: recent work on other nascent literary cultures, even later literary cultures related to the Greek, has stressed the need to be wary of discussing their texts in terms we take for granted, such as "books" or "publication".[116] To understand what kind of book this was, and what kind of tradition this was in which the Milesians composed highly figurative prose, we must try to reconstruct the context of their activity.

What already Diogenes' predecessor found striking was the text's lack of independence: like Pherecydes' text, this text too could not stand on its own. Though as a summary it served as a surrogate for his views (τὰ ἀρέσκοντα), Diogenes' source evidently found it to be only partially capable of filling in for them. Those views, in turn, it appears, would originally have been expressed in oral form.[117] In reconstructing the tradition of Milesian prose, we should thus take into account two possible contexts, oral and written. It is instructive here, also because of the text's oddity, to consider the case of early Islamic culture. For the transmission of scholarship in this period the distinction between oral and written is useless. Transmission was "aural": notes taken down by students in lectures were initially used alongside them as an aid, then began a move towards systematization through collection and classification (*taṣnīf*) of the texts, and only at the end of the

moreover a long tradition of using *kephalaia* and words related to it, ultimately going back to Hesiod and eventually achieving the status of a technical term, in order to refer *inter alia* to pithy formulations of the views of *sophoi* (see Ford 1994).

[115] He himself did not have access to the text. On the basis of DL 2.1.2 I understand that Diogenes read in Apollodorus Anaximander's date, and assumed that he had it gathered the information from the book itself. Apollodorus, however, was not Diogenes' only source: he explicitly mentions Favorinus, and could easily have gleaned the other details from other sources. I will henceforth use the singular in referring to Diogenes' source.

[116] See most recently Larsen 2018, on the gospels in the first two centuries CE. Cf. Thomas 2003 on publication in fifth-century Athens.

[117] It is here important that the text gave Diogenes' source the impression that it was written by Anaximander himself. His source evidently had no reason to think that this was a summary of Anaximander's own written work, prepared by someone else.

eighth century, 150 years after the Quran, came the next book, Sibawayhi's grammar, called, appropriately, *The Book* (*al-kitāb*).[118]

The striking style of Milesian prose indeed suggests performance. In addition to the use of vivid imagery, other elements of style which can be recovered from the fragments well suit public performance: scholars have characterized Anaximander's probable use of chiasmus (περιέχειν ἅπαντα καὶ πάντα κυβερνᾶν, A15) as "hymnodic" or "hieratic", and noted the "assonance and accumulation" in Anaximenes (ἀέρα ἄπειρον ἔφη τὴν ἀρχὴν εἶναι, ἐξ οὗ τὰ γινόμενα καὶ τὰ γεγονότα καὶ τὰ ἐσόμενα καὶ θεοὺς καὶ θεῖα γίνεσθαι, A7).[119] It is thus not insignificant that Diodorus of Ephesus is reported to have said that Empedocles imitated Anaximander in "cultivating a dramatic air and wearing ceremonial clothes", nor that Anaximander was said to have engaged in song (DL 2.1).[120] We might think of the sundials, clocks, maps and globes which he is reputed to have invented functioning as props in his performances.[121] There is no need to believe the reports regarding these inventions; their significance lies in their construction as biographical details for an author of oral prose. In light of Anaximander's biographical ties with his putative teacher, Thales, himself an author of oral prose famous for performance, predicting eclipses, diverting rivers and much more, Anaximandrean performance should not be surprising.[122]

[118] See Schoeler 2009.
[119] For Anaximander, Jaeger 1947, 30-31, and Granger 2007a, 425; for Anaximenes, Thesleff 1966, 91 n. 6.
[120] DL 8.70. On Diodorus see FGrH 1102, which is skeptical and thinks Anaxagoras was meant rather than Anaximander, but does not take into account the plausibility of Anaximander performing. Making use of flashy costumes was not unusual (e.g. West 1971, 214 n. 1; Tell 2007, 252). On the significance of the report of his singing, Riedel 1987 and Wildberg 2018, 281-83.
[121] Cf. Thomas 2000, 250-52, for practical demonstrations in fifth-century performances. This evidence should be taken seriously precisely because it is later, like the reports on Anaximander. Cf. DK 24 A10, on Alcmaeon as possibly the first to perform a dissection.
[122] See DK 11, and Martin 1993. We might also think of his famous fall into a well as a performance (cf. Nightingale 2004, 23-25).

Such performances were put on in the fifth century at festivals, in schools and theatres, by "sophists" and "hippocratics".[123] They may well have considered themselves, and been considered by their audiences, part of the same tradition as the "presocratics": Heraclitus refers to his *logos* as being performed orally (DK 22 B46, also B1), and alludes to oral performances in which he heard rival *logoi* (B108). The ancient Greeks considered such a tradition of performance to be of great antiquity: sages were said to have displayed their wisdom at panhellenic festivals, and Hesiod apparently related the story of a contest of wisdom between Mopsus and Calchas.[124] The symposium suggests itself as another occasion for contests of wisdom, *pace* Humphreys' suggestion that such discussions would have been "sober".[125] These performances could thus be private, as most scholars prefer – no doubt influenced by the association of "philosophy" with dry rigor – to think,[126] or public. We need not limit ourselves to one possible occasion.

These occasions could accommodate writing, in much the same way we find evidence for the use of texts in fifth-century performances.[127] In Platonic reconstructions of philosophical occasions we find texts being used by the performers, as when Zeno is portrayed reading his own work to an audience on the margins of a mid-fifth-century Panathanaea, and upon request repeating the first "hypothesis" (*Parm.* 127). A performance might of course be based on a text which was not itself present, but will have been memorized, as Lysias was said to have done (*Phaedr*. 228a, also

[123] Rutherford 1995, 110-11, gathers references for sophists' performances, and Tell 2007, 252-57, for their presence at festivals. On the hippocratics, e.g. van der Eijk 1997, 93-97, and more broadly, Lloyd 1987, 90-102 and Thomas 2000, 249-57, and 2003, 173-80. For the potential of these labels to mislead, see e.g. Nightingale 2004, 29-30, with references.

[124] Plat. *Prot*. 343a, Plut. *Solon* 4, DL 1.40, and see again discussion in Tell 2007, 258-60, and on Sages' performances in Martin 1993. For Mopsus and Calchas, Hesiod fr. 278 MW = Strabo 14.1.27. We have already seen that the hexameters Hesiod represents them as saying need not signify that they were perceived as poets. On Greek competition, Lloyd 1987, 85-88.

[125] Humphreys 1975, 100. Sassi 2018, 91-92, constructs such an occasion for Anaximander. And see the discussion of sympotic oral prose in ch. 1.

[126] E.g., in addition to Humphreys 1975, 100, already Nilsson 1905, 184, and also Long 1985, 246; Kannicht 1988, 2; Thesleff 1990; Osborne 1998, 30; Nightingale 2000, 162; Bertelli 2001, 79.

[127] Thomas 2003, 164-73. See also Cole 1991, ch. 5; at p. 89 it is suggested that *epideixis* did not mean to "show off" one's talent, but rather a pre-existing, written text.

Menex. 236c), or someone else might read out the text, as when Socrates overhears a reading of Anaxagoras' work (*Phaed.* 97b8), and a slave reads a dialogue to Euclides and Terpsion (*Theaet.* 143a-c). We also find members of the audience preparing their own copies, or versions, of such texts: the dialogue read to Euclides originated in notes (ὑπομνήματα) taken on the basis of a conversation with Socrates, which he continued to revise until he was satisfied that he had what amounted to a transcript. Some performers gave copies of their speeches to their students,[128] as was the case of Lysias' text in the *Phaedrus*; Zeno's original text made it into the hands of someone who perhaps was not even a member of an audience (*Parm.* 128e).

It is not at all implausible that these scenarios, or scenarios like them, could have taken place earlier. We have already seen – herder graffiti, letters from Pech-Maho and the Black Sea – that there is reason to doubt the impression of very restricted literacy in the archaic period. Choral and dramatic texts must have been used as scripts in this period.[129] In the fifth century prose texts were also used in this way.[130] Given the extensive use of oral prose in the archaic period, seen in chapter 1, it is likely that this practice in the fifth century was not novel. In light of the uses early writing was put to, surveyed in chapter 2, it would be unwise to assume that all texts were universally used only as scripts.[131]

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[128] For didactic purposes, Arist. *SE* 34, 183b38-39, and also on the basis of Aristotle's testimony, Cic. *Brutus* 46-47.

[129] E.g. Svenbro 1993, 182, and Feeney 2000, 9: "it takes only thirty seconds' thought to see that you cannot get twelve or fifteen people to sing the same (exceptionally complex and challenging) thing for fifteen minutes without a script. The same goes for Attic drama, which is inconceivable without scripts". There is a consensus that lyric poetry must also have been committed to writing: e.g. Knox 1985, 4; Ford 2003, 20. We have already noted the claim made for eighth-century poetry books (Immerwahr 1990, 18-19; West 1997, 26; Burkert 2008, 57 and earlier publications).

[130] Thomas 1992, 91-92, and 2000, 254.

[131] It is important here to distinguish different kinds of texts: Ford 2003, 21, explains why it is unlikely that melic scripts had readers, for example, but also demonstrates the ways in which they differ from stichic texts, let alone prose texts. In the context of Heraclitus, who will be discussed shortly, it might be worth noting that it appears that two kinds of copies were made of the Avesta, one as a script for private use, and the other as a "ceremonial" copy in the royal treasury (Shaked 2003, 66). Consider, too, the number of scripts which must have been in existence. Knox 1985, 5: "when, in the last quarter of the fifth century, evidence for a book trade does appear in Athens, the sheer bulk of earlier literary production which was available for reproduction suggests that these texts had been circulating in a respectable number of copies. When the Alexandrians came to edit and arrange in 'books', i.e. papyrus rolls, the poetry which had come down to them from the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., they produced six books of the Spartan

It is significant, then, that Heraclitus accuses Pythagoras of making use of texts not simply as scripts already in the sixth century, evidence which, Jaap Mansfeld remarks, is generally neglected in discussions of early literacy.[132]

> Πυθαγόρης Μνησάρχου ἱστορίην ἤσκησεν ἀνθρώπων μάλιστα πάντων, καὶ ἐκλεξάμενος ταύτας τὰς συγγραφὰς ἐποιήσατο ἑαυτοῦ σοφίην, πολυμαθίην, κακοτεχνίην. (B129 = DL 8.6)
>
> Pythagoras, son of Mnesarches, of all people cultivated inquiry the most, and by picking out those writings made his own wisdom (or: by making selections, made those writings his own wisdom), his great learning, a base art.

Heraclitus' accusation can only be understood in the context of the circulation of such texts, a practice perhaps novel and controversial but nonetheless to some degree already recognized.[133] The writings of Heraclitus himself, which include quotes from other authors, suggest that their author was if not well-read, at least well-acquainted with texts.[134] Another target of Heraclitus' attack, Hecataeus, a self-professed writer, provides further neglected evidence of early literacy (we will come to the mythographers below).[135] Finally, Heraclitus' fragments themselves strengthen the case for a mixed oral-written context: while some have been taken as evidence for an oral context, others point to a written one, and Kahn has observed that those fragments which attest to

choral poet Alcman…" etc. Also Ford 2003, 20. And see Wesenberg 1983, 46, on the use of texts for practical purposes in architecture, to which we will soon come.

[132] Mansfeld 1990, 448 n. 14.

[133] Cf. the tension between oral and written transmissions of wisdom Hubbard 2007, 208-12, argues are implicit in Theognis 27-28 (which he would consider roughly contemporary with Heraclitus).

[134] See Mansfeld 1990, and more broadly Ford 1997, 94-95. Kahn 1983, 111, and 2003, 148, and Laks 2007, 254 agree with Mansfeld's interpretation of the fragment.

[135] Might the *polumathiē* through which Heraclitus associated him with Pythagoras (B40, quoted above) imply that already in the sixth century learning was perceived as a result of reading? (Cf. B35, where Heraclitus apparently approves of *polumathiē* in itself). It is no surprise, given his intense work on the mythographers, that Robert Fowler has a very different view of early Greek literacy (e.g. Fowler 2006, 49). On their use of texts, see Thomas 1989, 181-84.

an oral context could well be interpreted as conventional.[136] Deciding between oral and written contexts would not only be arbitrary, then, it would be fundamentally mistaken: texts in the Milesian tradition occupied both.

We may now return to the question of the form of these texts, among them Anaximander's "book". Heraclitus' attack on Pythagoras, alleging that the latter derived his *sophia* from texts, from *syngraphai*, is further useful for elucidating their nature. It is accepted that *syngraphai* refer to texts in prose;[137] but to which *syngraphai* was Heraclitus referring? Wilamowitz considered this question an "excruciating difficulty". Kahn, dismissing Burkert's suggestion that these were Orphic writings,[138] argues that the reference cannot simply be to Pherecydes, Anaximander and Anaximenes, but rather must also be to works of technical prose, which would have included descriptions of temples, and astronomical and geographic works. Kahn thinks that such technical works gradually became more "literary", shading into the kind of prose we find with Pherecydes and the Milesians.[139]

The little we know about the architects' works suggests that they were of a highly practical nature, in effect serving as building plans.[140] It thus appears doubtful that they could be of use to Pythagoras, or that they would engender texts which had no practical application.[141] It is not

[136] For Heraclitus' orality, West 1971, 5, and Havelock 1983, 10. *Contra* Kahn 1983, 115-18, and Laks 2007, 253-54, on B129 and Dilcher 1995, 129-32, insightfully on B48. Cf. Ferrari 1984, 197-98, and on "pseudo-orality", Fowler 2001, 109.
[137] Kahn 1983, 111-12, and Dover 1997, 183-84. For the authenticity of this fragment, originally doubted by Diels and Zeller but now accepted, see Burkert 1972a, 130-31, with references in nn. 63-64; Mansfeld 1990, 444; Huffman 2008, 20 n. 4.
[138] Burkert 1972a, 131, and Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1931-32, vol. 2, 188 n. 1. On Pythagorean Orphica, see West 1983, 7-15, and on other Orphic writings ch. 1 generally, and note the particularly interesting mention of Pherecydes on p. 20.
[139] Kahn 1983, 111-14, and 2003, 149-52. Burkert 1972a, 416, agrees that there must have been sixth-century Ionian technical writings on astronomy and the calendar. The most recent discussion of the identity of these *syngraphai*, with references, can be found in Huffman 2008, and Zhmud 2017, 179-82.
[140] Wesenberg 1983.
[141] It is worth keeping in mind that the purpose of early Greek maps, such as those associated with Anaximander and later Hecataeus, was "to impress rather than to inform" (Netz 1999, 60). Brodersen 2012 similarly emphasizes the

implausible that from the works of architects and other specialists Pythagoras might be thought to have gleaned arcane information which he could then impressively present as his own. But that knowledge of Pythagoras which circulated in the earliest stages of his reception, we remember, came in the form of *akousmata*.[142] It is therefore significant that the method by which Pythagoras is alleged to have constructed his wisdom appears specifically suited to composing *akousmata*: he is picking out texts (ἐκλεξάμενος ταύτας τὰς συγγραφὰς), he is anthologizing.[143] Such gnomic sayings would have appeared to Heraclitus to be useful to Pythagoras, and would have made him look wise, just as the wisdom of the sages was encapsulated in the pithy sayings attributed to them. What has provoked Heraclitus' ire, then, is that Pythagoras' *akousmata*, perhaps especially in presenting themselves as unwritten, masquerade as original when in fact they are not his. The reason it so angers Heraclitus is, of course, that he himself composes what amount to *akousmata*, which he emphatically claimed as his own.[144] It is with those *akousmata*, with the genre of *akousmata*, whose written form was that of the gnomic anthology – not with doubtful mathematical insights – that Heraclitus was competing.

I plan to devote greater attention to the term *syngraphē* elsewhere, but here it should be enough to take it as a generic term for a written text, one particularly suited to gnomic anthologies.

"scholarly" context of early maps. Jacob 1988, 281, argues that Anaximander's map was never meant to be put to any use.

[142] Burkert 1972a, ch. 2, esp. 166, 188-89, 208-210 and 215-17. See p. 109 n. 64 for references to the earliest sources on Pythagoras. On the relation of the *akousmata* to Hesiod's "purity prohibitions", bolstering the claim for their antiquity, see extensive references in Currie 2007, 166 n. 18, also 194 n. 170. It is tempting to think that Heraclitus would be insinuating that Pythagoras' mathematical knowledge was derived from technical treatises, but there is little evidence for Pythagoras' association with science early on. See Burkert 1972a, 401-15. Cf. Kahn 2001, 14-38, which I find less convincing. The reliance ibid., 17, on the ἱστορίη which Heraclitus attributes to Pythagoras (B 129), to argue that Pythagoras was associated with science, misses the point made in Burkert 1972a, 210. Netz 1999, 272-75, and Huffman 2008 strongly concur with Burkert, in different ways.

[143] Cf. Huffman 2008. Regarding the force of the demonstrative ταύτας, West 1983, 8, suggests that its use is "contemptuous", adducing a parallel in B5; Huffman 2008, 34-35, agrees, and discusses the problem at greater length. Regarding the accusative with ἐκλεξάμενος, Mansfeld 1990, 447 n. 11, adduces a parallel use in Xen. *Mem*. 1.2.56.

[144] E.g. B101. See also LM 9 P4-5. Huffman 2008, 33, 45, elegantly argues that Ion of Chios and Herodotus similarly depicted Pythagoras as incorporating the views of others into his teaching.

This works well when we juxtapose Pythagoras and Anaximander, for Pythagoras' *akousmata* seem to function much like Anaximander's "summary exposition" would have. Pythagoras' students were divided into two camps, the *mathematici* and the *acusmatici*. The *acusmatici* were those who were exposed only to the *akousmata*, i.e. to "a collection of *dicta* without explanation".[145] Anaximander's highly stylized theses would have required supplementary argumentation in much the same way, and his text would have been useful, to him and/or to his students, as an aid to performance, whose language it partially preserved.[146] The Greeks produced texts for performance, as the inscriptions studied in chapter 2 demonstrate, but the texts in the Ionic tradition seem more versatile, suitable not only as aids to performance, but also for various forms of private use.

In the classical period, the use of literary anthologies for related didactic purposes was common.[147] How easy it is to blame such shortcuts to wisdom on the sophists, but there would rather appear to be continuity between Anaximander's "summary (κεφαλαιώδης) exposition" and the poetic *kephalaia* to which Plato refers, culled (ἐκλέξαντες, *Leg*. 811A) in the manner which Heraclitus attributed to Pythagoras (ἐκλεξάμενος, B129), the difference being that Anaximander's *kephalaia* derived from one author. Already in the archaic period, anthologizing is represented in Heraclitus' attack on Pythagoras as the constitutive element in the "making of one's wisdom" (ἐποιήσατο ἑαυτοῦ σοφίην), and by extension, through apposition, as equivalent to *polumathiē* and, strikingly, *kakotechniē*. Anthologizing was a *technē*, and Pythagoras was not the only one suspected of abusing it. At roughly the same time Onomacritus was accused by Lasus of practicing what

[145] Burkert 1972a, 195. See LM 10 T16-19, for testimonia concerning the *mathematici* and *acusmatici*.
[146] Cf. Most 1999, 349 on Anaximander's work: "presumably, a book circulated under his name in which, in discontinuous sections, individual doctrines were asserted without full supporting argumentation". See Thesleff 1966 for the general absence of argumentation from early prose.
[147] On "anthologizing culture" see Ford 1997, 90-101, suggesting some evidence for archaic anthologizing, and in the classical period Ford 2002, 194-97 and 2003, 29-30.

amounted to *kakotechniē* by making tendentious selections (ἐκλεγόμενος, Hdt. 7.6) from a collection of oracles attributed to a venerated authority, Musaeus.

Understanding *syngraphē* as anthology naturally fits its name well: it was composed by bringing together different texts in writing.[148] Understood thus, we are no longer left with a distressing dearth of candidates to fill the role of Pythagoras' *syngraphai* – we find ourselves comfortably situated in late archaic and classical Greek culture which, we saw in chapter 1, trafficked heavily in gnomic utterances, in verse and prose, and was actively engaged in collecting them: *hypothēkai* as in the Theognidea, the sayings of the sages, oracles and Aesopic fables, also some hippocratic texts.[149] As we saw above, the act of anthologizing – from the larger body of one author's language, or several – goes well with the process of authorization, either by solidifying an aggregate through attribution to a single author or, alternatively, solidifying the construct of an author by attributing more texts to him or her. There is thus no reason to exclude verse texts from the extension of the term *syngraphē*.[150] There was in essence no difference between committing poems to writing or these short prose texts which were, after all, in the words of Russo, "little poems".[151]

As in the case of Pherecydes, Anaximander's *syngraphē* may be an authorized oral-derived text, attributed at a later stage to an earlier figure. That figure in the Greek tradition was not much of a figure at all: we have already mentioned that he had no biography. Bereft of biography but

[148] Cf. again Kahn 1983, 111-12; Dover 1997, 183-84.
[149] *Pace* West 1971, 112-13 n. 2. See again Edmunds 1997, 43-46. For the Hippocratic texts, see Barnes 1983, 99-100. Ford 1993, 65-66, suggests that early poetry books were in effect anthologies, Ford 1997, 93-101, that even Homer could be treated as gnomic anthology. See also Mansfeld 1990, 444-45. For an ancient testimonium, Xen. *Mem*. 1.6.14. Asper 2007, 84, cursorily considers the possibility that Anaximander and Heraclitus' texts are gnomic collections, but doesn't attribute much significance to it. Cf. also Granger 2004, which helpfully juxtaposes Heraclitus' utterances with those of the sages, and some in verse too.
[150] See also Dover 1997, 184, with some exceptions and, in detail (not all of which is accurate), Huffman 2008, 36-41. Given the lack of evidence for a concept of prose, or poetry, in the archaic period, it would in fact be surprising if in the sixth century *syngraphē* distinguished one from the other.
[151] Russo 1983, 123.

equipped with a convenient name ("Lord of the Maeander") which it is tempting to construe as generically referring to Milesian wisdom, he may remind us of Theognis; though evidence for Anaximander's dates is very tenuous and the earliest reference to him is by Aristotle, he would appear to have a better claim for historicity, and for the text attributed to him, than Pherecydes.[152] Other authors of *syngraphai*, however, had different profiles. The category of the *syngraphē*, anthological written texts originating in oral prose traditions, would include the work of Heraclitus: its affinity with the language of oracles, aphorisms, also law, is manifest.[153] It would likely also comprise other texts emerging from Ionia or affiliated with Ionic traditions, such as those attributed to Anaximenes, Alcmaeon, some of those attributed to Hippocrates, and other presocratics and *logographoi*, perhaps also the technical treatises mentioned earlier.[154] This category was not soon superseded; it may apply to some Aristotelian texts.

Somewhat later, however, in Anaximander's own Miletus, we find in Hecataeus a different kind of author, one expressly identifying as a writer.

[152] For the parallel with Theognis, Hubbard 2007, 204-205. For Anaximander's dates, see Davies forthcoming, who shows that evidence for his dates is more tenuous than usually recognized. I thank Tom Davies for discussion pertaining to Anaximander.

[153] Elegantly explored in Sassi 2018, 103-108. Barnes 1983 vigorously contests the idea that his book was not continuous; *contra* KRS 184, Granger 2004. On the book's reception and circulation, Finkelberg 2017, ch. 1. Cf. Mouraviev 1999-2011, vol. IV.A.

[154] We cannot here treat all these authors in detail. Our purpose is to reconstruct the context in which they worked. Burkert 1963, 133 n.2, thinks the characterization of Anaximenes' *lexis* as ἁπλόος and ἀπέριττος (DL 2.2), implies that he in contrast with Anaximander wrote continuous prose; cf. Thesleff 1966, 91 n. 6. Alcmaeon is thought to have written in Ionic, for which see below. Kannicht 1988, 2, takes Alcmaeon's seal as evidence for the esoteric audience of his work; Thesleff 1990, 114, thinks it was fabricated, cf. Burkert 1972a, 222 n. 21 and also Thesleff 1961, 80 (Corcella 1996, 298-99, wonders if there is a connection with Egyptian didactic texts). Acusilaus will be discussed below. For the aural context of the hippocratic texts, see e.g. van der Eijk 1997, esp. 91-108 (also on Aristotelian writings), and recently Cross 2018. Perhaps also Theagenes?

Hecataeus's script: preface to Herodotus

We close our survey of archaic authored prose by turning to the other prose author to suffer Heraclitus' abuse. Heraclitus' rivalry with Hecataeus is apparent in the bold, aggressive gesture with which he began his own *logos* (DK 22 B1), echoing Hecataeus in the proem to his *Genealogies*:

> ῾Εκαταῖος Μιλήσιος ὧδε μυθεῖται· τάδε γράφω, ὥς μοι δοκεῖ ἀληθέα εἶναι· οἱ γὰρ ῾Ελλήνων λόγοι πολλοί τε καὶ γελοῖοι, ὡς ἐμοὶ φαίνονται, εἰσίν. (FGrH 1 F1)
>
> Hecataeus the Milesian speaks thus: I write what follows as seems to me to be true; for the tales of the Greeks, as they seem to me, are many and laughable.

Much has been said about Hecataeus' allusions to Homer and Hesiod, by which he sets himself up as their rival.[155] From a pragmatic point of view, the proem is striking for being double, for employing double deixis: Hecataeus is first announced, in the third person, as the author of the forthcoming (ὧδε) *muthoi*; there is then a shift to the first person, in which the forthcoming (τάδε) *logoi* are presented as written.

The form of the first introduction is clearly based on the traditional language of prestigious heraldry and epistolography in the Mediterranean and further east, going back more than a millennium.[156] The shift from the third to the first person will be familiar to us from the early Greek epistolography surveyed in the previous chapter. Hecataeus thus presents himself as a figure of authority addressing his audience from afar. Hence, as has often been noted, the use of the toponym, Μιλήσιος;[157] mention of the ῞Ελληνες later on implies that he is aiming at a panhellenic audience. As in the case of Theognis, an authorial seal is to be applied to a text which is set to travel. This is

[155] To Homer (*Il*. 7.76), Corcella 1996, 300, and Bertelli 2001, 80. For Hesiod (*Theog*. 27-28), Jacoby 1912, 2738; Pearson 1939, 97-98; Calame 1995, 92-93; Moles 1999, 47-49, somewhat more broadly; Bertelli 2001, 80-82. We can be confident of the fragment's authenticity (e.g. Moles 1999, 44 n. 31).
[156] Corcella 1996, and more broadly Porciani 1997. In contrast with Corcella's insistence on the importance of Persian parallels (also in Moles 1999, 68), Porciani's argument that the Persian resonance of Hecataeus' proem should not be overestimated is persuasive.
[157] See Boterf 2017 on authors identifying themselves geographically.

then the first prose text which we know to be explicitly composed by its author for circulation, as opposed to publication, which need not necessarily involve circulation.[158] Epistolography, which we have seen to already be in practice in the sixth century, provided an appropriate model for Hecataeus' purposes.

The second introduction implies that the epistolographic model Hecataeus is following is written.[159] The explicit mention of writing, far more emphatic than in Thucydides' proem, for instance, implies that it cannot be taken for granted.[160] The awkwardness of the double introduction appears to be a reflection of the text's novelty: Hecataeus must explain how it is possible for him to communicate with his audience though he is absent. Hecataeus' proem thus signals the moment in which writing is no longer incidental, but something that authors do: they do not just compose texts, they write them. Writing may not be incidental from the point of view of the text, either, in the sense that its model is possibly, for the first time, not oral but written.

The question is, is it only the author's absence which is novel, or is Hecataeus writing to a new a kind of audience as well, an audience of readers? Robert Fowler thinks that mythographic texts in general, Hecataeus' *Genealogies* included, were "occasion-free", that they were not transcripts but books meant for readers. Few as they may have been in 500, they were, he surmises, "highly literate".[161] By denying these works an occasion, he is in effect claiming for the invention

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[158] Aristotle (*Rhet*. 3.5 1407b14) identifies DK 22 B1 as the beginning of Heraclitus' treatise, but it may have begun with δὲ, suggesting that its original opening is missing (perhaps identifying Heraclitus as its author). Given the importance of the oracle as a model for his work, and its reported deposit at Delphi, it is not clear that he would have framed his text as a letter nor intended for it to circulate (though oracles – e.g. Theognis, 805-10, again – could circulate). Hecataeus may well not be the first to write with circulation in mind, but the practice of doing so was probably relatively new, for reasons which are further discussed below. In identifying as prose-writing author Hecataeus may have also been preceded by Solon (θεσμοὺς… ἔγραψα, 36.18-20 *IEG*), but again we are dealing with texts which were published, but did not exactly circulate. For scenarios for the circulation of texts see, Cole 1991, 80, specifically in Ionia, motivated by geographic constraints; and Hubbard 2004, 82-85, on gift-exchange, esp. through *proxenoi*.

[159] See also Moles 1999, who argues that the epistolographic model is specifically monumental, following Svenbro 1993, 149-50.

[160] Cf. Fowler 2001, 110.

[161] Fowler 2001, 113; Fowler 2006, 41; Fowler 2013, xii, specifically for Hecataeus on pp. 678, and 707. If I focus on Fowler here, it is because little attention has been paid to these crucial texts by other scholars, particularly to the

of a culture, a reading culture. These texts were, he thinks, "reference works".[162] Some of them may have been but we need, I think, to be more careful when considering the beginnings of the mythographic tradition.

Fowler's argument is in part based on the mythographic style which, he claims, remains constant from Hecataeus down to Apollodorus.[163] But Hecataeus didn't know he was doing mythography, and if he knew of Acusilaus he certainly didn't know of others who would one day come to be known as mythographers. Acusilaus himself is exceptional among mythographers for incorporating theogony into his *Genealogies*. It is especially dangerous to conflate early and late mythographers, when we consider that few *ipsissima verba* survive from either of the two earliest *Genealogies*.[164] They are not incompatible with performance, and they certainly do not make an effort to mark this text as distinct from sixth-century aural texts.

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context of their performance (or lack thereof). The weakness of Fowler's approach is the jump from the recognition that a text is not anchored to a specific occasion to the conclusion that it had *no* occasion; this putative freedom from *an* occasion is better understood as freedom from one *specific* occasion to which it would have been restricted. This weakness stems from the dichotomous association of prose with writing, and poetry with performance. With regard to Hecataeus' *Genealogies*, Corcella 1996, 300, is more careful, leaving open the possibility that it could also be a transcript. Fowler himself (2013, 628) imagines Acusilaus and Hecataeus' texts being performed, their texts serving as aide-mémoires rather than transcripts.

[162] Fowler 2006, 43-44. Indeed, Fowler 2013, xvii, deems mythography "a revolution in information technology". Wherever a revolution is posited, we should probably be suspicious.

[163] Fowler 2006. It is also rooted in the strong association of prose with writing (e.g. Fowler 2001, 103; Fowler 2006, 48-49), already discussed in the introduction.

[164] Substantial verbatim fragments which are clearly from Hecataeus' *Genealogies*: F1, 6, 7, 15, 16, 19, 22, 27b, 30; from Acusilaus': F1, 3, 22 (and 44?). To wit, Fowler sees the mythographic narrative texts as "summaries", characterized by economy and a lack of concern for mimesis, hence the dearth of direct speech (Fowler 2006, 40-42). But while direct speech may be rare in the mythographic tradition overall, this is not true for Hecataeus: one fragment of direct speech (F30) out of approximately nine, given the unpredictable interests of his excerptors, is not bad. In fact, its lack of markedness could well be taken to imply that it was not unusual. If the beginning of direct speech was explicitly signaled in the language of epic, in that of Greek drama it wasn't. It is equally risky to deduce from his spare style that the work was intended as a reference work; the style of biblical Hebrew has famously been described, in contrast with the same Homeric poetry looming large in Fowler's mind, in similar terms. Compare: "the strong tendency of mythography is to tell its story as economically as possible, reducing it to its bare essentials… mythography has little besides the story… its stripped-down style, just the facts (Fowler 2006, 40-43)", with "the decisive points of the narrative alone are emphasized, what lies between is nonexistent… thoughts and feeling remain unexpressed, are only suggested by the silence and the fragmentary speeches… (the stories') aim is not to bewitch the senses" (Auerbach 2003 (1953), 11-14). It was because of their charm (χάρις), Dionysius of Halicarnassus wrote, that Hecataeus' work and those of his contemporaries survived for half a millennium (*Thuc.* 5.5). Finally, it is instructive to remember that moving from text to performance is fraught: as with Greek dramatic texts, we do not know what gestures, what movement, what intonation, what visual trappings might have accompanied the text if performed.

The *Genealogies*, we saw, are introduced with a verb, *mutheisthai*, which is distinctly associated with speaking in public. The present tense of the verb moreover indicates that this act of communication is still conceived – in contrast with the aorist in the late fifth-century proems of Antiochus (συνέγραψε, FGrH 555 F2) and Thucydides' (ξυνέγραψε, 1.1) – as occurring live, as in performance, with no gap between composition and reception.[165] If the text was composed with spatial distance in mind, the impression of temporal distance is studiously avoided. It is, in other words, conceived as an *agonisma* rather than a *ktēma es aei*. Significantly, the second introduction is also in the present, and though it emphasizes the written nature of the text, it does not necessarily work against this performative conception: later, in Herodotus, who sees himself composing in much the same tradition as Hecataeus, *graphō* and *legō* from a pragmatic point of view seem to be essentially interchangeable.[166]

One may counter by claiming these to be conventions which are only "pseudo-oral". We earlier noted the problem inherent in supposing that an author seeking to make an authoritative claim, such as Anaximander, would compose in a medium lacking in authority. Here we should be similarly skeptical of the idea of an author who in making a distinct bid for authority addresses an audience which, Fowler admits, would be restricted. Hecataeus, we have already seen, is driven by an ambition to reach as broad an audience as he possibly could: all Hellenes.

Again, as with Pherecydes, we must ask what kind of interest an audience would have in these texts, and how it might engage with them. We earlier saw some evidence for the use of texts for the purpose of research already in the sixth century, but while this would involve what we call

[165] Cf. Bakker 2006b, 114-16, on Thucydides' aorist.
[166] Nagy 1996b, 67-68; also Hartog 1988, 283-85, from a slightly different point of view. Note also the argument made in Moles 1999, that Thucydides is presenting himself as superior to his predecessors, Herodotus and Hecataeus, by depicting them as oral performers in contrast with his own much more decisively literate work. Consider especially Thuc. 1.21: … οὔτε ὡς λογογράφοι ξυνέθεσαν ἐπὶ τὸ προσαγωγότερον τῇ ἀκροάσει…

"reading", this does not entail the existence of a culture of reading. The memorization of transcripts for performance in the sixth century would similarly require some "reading", but does not constitute evidence for reading as a culture, as an autonomous means of engaging with a text.[167] It is notable that the preserved prose of his *Gēs periodos* features formulae, some of which incorporated dactylic rhythms.[168] One feature which stands out in the language of the fragments of the *Genealogies* is the author's constant intervention (ὡς ἐγὼ δέ, F19; δοκέω, F27b).[169] As opposed to the common *logoi,* these are presented as the product of Hecataeus' own *historiē*, his own controversial convictions, almost as idiosyncratic. This is not the style of what we consider a reference work, nor is the story of the bronze tablets that Acusilaus' father dug up, probably the proem to his *Genealogies*.[170] The partisan nature of Acusilaus' *Genealogies* and of Pherecydes of Athens' *Historiae* suggests that they were indeed composed in and perhaps for an agonistic context; their later use as encyclopedias may be of little value for reconstructing the culture in which they originated.

Paradoxically, then, Hecataeus' insistence that he is unique should be taken as an indication that in fact he is not. Scholars typically construe his prosaic form as a deliberate rupture with the poetic tradition;[171] but we have seen that Hecataeus' text had a formal model, and thus was

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[167] For the beginning of a culture of reading, in the late fifth century, see Ford 2003, and more broadly Johnson 2000. Written resources for research, such as Hecataeus may have used in composing his prodigious works, need not necessarily be identical with the text that he himself produced.

[168] E.g. ἐν δὲ [place name] (F141, 159, 229, etc.); μετὰ δὲ [place] (F43, 48, 275, etc.); [ethnic in genitive] πρὸς [direction] οἰκέουσι [ethnic in nominative] (F100, 108). For their meter, Dover 1997, 162-63 (who thinks that the meter is "accidental"; in the case of a formula, though, dactylic rhythm cannot simply be dismissed as meaningless).

[169] Cf. Thomas 2000, 239-47, for the use of the first person in early prose, with a list of some parallels on p. 239 n. 74.

[170] See Calame 2004b, 233, and again Pàmias 2015 for ties between Hesiod and Acusilaus, who appears to be styling his knowledge as inspired, rather than the product of meticulous study. We should thus be careful when assessing the similarity of their theogonies. Fowler 2013, 627, characterizes Acusilaus' work as "reducing a specific poetic oeuvre to prose". But what if Acusilaus were aligning himself with Hesiod against rival theogonies? (In F10 Acusilaus significantly disagrees with Hesiod, and according to Josephus (T6) that disagreement was typical). Andolfi 2019, 31-32, makes the intriguing suggestion that Acusilaus is a kind of rhapsode, though I find its framing unhelpful. Appealing, too, is the suggestion that these tablets were inscribed with oracles, and that Acusilaus was a *chrēsmologos* (Toye 2016). What is important here is the variety of performance occasions which can be reconstructed for this text, which in themselves and certainly cumulatively are more compelling than the occasion-less scenario.

[171] Bertelli 2001, 80; Fowler 2001, 102. Calame 2003, 24, while urging caution in seeing these works as "mythography", regards them as signaling a transition from poetry to prose. It is noteworthy that Acusilaus' attempt

associated with a tradition. By proudly claiming that the knowledge is his own, and not invoking the Muses, he was setting himself in opposition not specifically to bards – even when he was contradicting them – but to the sages, in whose manner he was said to advise political leaders,[172] and of course other practitioners of *historiē* in Miletus.[173] Instead of looking forward to a future which from his point of view was unforeseeable, we should look back to the traditions with which he was engaging.

Innovative as Hecataeus may have been in other regards, his *Genealogies* hardly constituted a new genre. There was a long tradition of Greek genealogizing, briefly mentioned in chapter 1, which sometimes assumed poetic form, and sometimes – as in the case of Acusilaus or, later, Hippias – did not. The form of Hecataeus', which apparently included narratives concerning the figures whose genealogy he was tracing, fit well with the form of traditional genealogies.[174] If Hippias performed genealogies (*Hipp. Maj.* 285d.), we should not be surprised that, significantly earlier, Hecataeus' *Genealogies* were performed too.

His other work, the *Gēs periodos*, also belonged to a tradition, that of the *periēgēsis*. One such text was attributed to Skylax of Karyanda, probably a bit earlier than Hecataeus' *periodos*.[175] The latter was not simply a verbalized map, as the many fragments from Stephanus Byzantinus' *Ethnica* might have us believe. Fragments which impart ethnographic rather than geographic information are numerous enough to suggest that his work was structured by geographic

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to establish authority was also, in a different way, traditional (Fowler 2013, 624: "the trick is as old as the Epic of Gilgamesh").

[172] On Hecataeus as adviser, West 1991, 155-57. On Hecataeus as traditional see also the insightful but uneven Martin 2013.

[173] Fragments from his *Gēs periodos*, to be discussed below, evince an interest in the natural world, and see F302d, for an attested interest in natural philosophy, aligning him with Heraclitus.

[174] Thomas 1989, 174.

[175] Fowler 2013, 659-60. Others credited with *periēgēseis* around the turn of the century possibly include Euthymenes of Massilia, Dionysius of Miletus (*FGrH* 687), and Hanno of Carthage (in Phoenician, *GGM* 1.1). Herodotus 4.36 attests to the popularity of the genre.

descriptions, in highly formulaic language, which organized ethnographic accounts quite similar to those later composed by Herodotus.[176] Their resemblance to the few fragments left of Skylax imply that the latter are authentic,[177] and that we have here evidence for a stable tradition. It further seems that Hecataeus' two works shared the same structure: a person/place heading, followed by commentary. As in the case of the other Milesians, these texts were constructed on similar principles, joining together relatively contained units of text according to some form of thematic continuity.[178]

This stability, in turn, suggests that Hecataeus' literary innovation lies not in the language of his work or its occasion, but rather in its presentation of the absent author, the author as writer. With *graphō*, then, he's not declaring that he wrote a work for readers, but rather for readings; the important distinction is not between *graphein* and *legein*, between writing and speaking, but between the writer and the speaker – the author, he emphasizes, is the former and not, in spite of appearances, the latter. In contrast with other authors, whose relation to written texts is somewhat loose, his seal seeks to definitively identify him as its author. As a new kind of author, the text he is associated with is a different kind of text: unlike those of Pherecydes and Anaximander, like the "speaking" inscriptions or the epistolography we saw in chapter 2, this text could stand on its own. It was a script for future performances, rather than a transcript of a past performance.

The language it spoke is significant. While it is not surprising that Hecataeus of Miletus wrote in Ionic, in light of its panhellenic audience the language of his text is important, and it is impressive

[176] That ethnography and geography go together should not surprise us in light of theories of environmental determinism (e.g. Thomas 2000, 102-14). One may be skeptical of Porphyry's claim that Herodotus plagiarized Hecataean ethnography (FGrH 1 T22), but what this in any case indicates is that their ethnographic style was similar; this is an important corrective to the view that Herodotus created an entirely new style (e.g. Denniston 1952, 5; Bravo 2001, 87). For non-geographic fragments from the *periodos*, see e.g. F154, 284, 287, 291-92, 322, 358.

[177] FGrH 709 F3-4 (see also Fowler 2013, 659-60). On Skylax see esp. Schepens 1998, with the intriguing argument for composition of something resembling a biography of Herakleides of Mylasa.

[178] The anthologies attributed to presocratics may well have also exhibited such continuity; this would fit well with the suggestion in Kahn 2003, 145-46 (also Laks 2007, 256), that the persistent structure of the *peri physeōs* treatise went all the way back to Anaximander. According to Diogenes (9.1.5) Heraclitus' text was organized, the question is how late it was organized (*KRS* 184, argues for Alexandria; Finkelberg 2017, 34, considers the organization original).

that already Acusilaus of Doric Argos, if he is indeed Hecataeus' contemporary,[179] would compose his *Genealogies* in Ionic as well. Pherecydes of Athens, Hellanicus of Lesbos and Antiochus of Syracuse, as well as the Hippocratic writers from Doric Cos and Cnidos would follow, possibly attesting to the deep roots of Ionic as a language of oral prose. Thus, Hecataeus points the way forward, to the fifth-century prose author as writer of scripts for performance, in Ionic, for distant audiences. On the threshold of the classical period, we may now conclude.

Conclusion

We have seen three kinds of prose authors operating in the late archaic period. There were (1) legendary prose authors, whose relationship to the texts attributed to them was reconstructed, and somewhat loose. They originally had reputations as oral prose authors; those with a reputation as seers, for instance, were easily matched with cosmogonies, those known for a less specialized form of wisdom – with aphoristic sayings. Pherecydes was not, then, an outlier. Moreover, we earlier noted the relation between Pythagoras' *akousmata* and Anaximander's *kephalaia*, but the *akousmata* were ritual texts, and thus related to Pherecydes' text as well. Pythagoras and Pherecydes were also related biographically, and Pherecydes himself was said to have engaged in collecting texts(!).[180] Not entirely dissociated from the legendary authors, then, were the (2) historical authors, authors of oral prose, who were incidentally writers. Their relationship to their texts is more concrete, though

[179] See again Fowler 2013, 623-24. See Fowler 2013, too, for Hecataeus and Acusilaus' dialect. On the use of Ionic by Doric doctors, van der Eijk 1997, 99-100; Craik 1998, 11-12, who notes the mixture of Dorisms. Herodotus' Halicarnassus, though originally Doric, spoke Ionian – e.g. Dover 1997, 84, and Willi 2010, 103; see ibid. for an insightful account of the rise of (authored) Attic prose in the late fifth-century (cf. Cole 1991, 102). It is difficult to know whether there was authored Doric prose earlier. Scholars tend to think Alcmaeon of Croton (who is in any event difficult to date) wrote in Ionic (Cassio 1989, 142, and also Burkert 1972a, 222 n. 21 with other references). See Cassio 1989 for the rise of authored Doric prose, which he argues should be dated to the late fifth-century at the latest (and even earlier, if we are to believe in the historicity of Corax and his *technē*, which Cassio does, and is confident would have been in Doric).

[180] Burkert 1972a, 177-85. The biographical relation is evident already in Ion of Chios (DK 36 B4). And see West 1983, 20 and 250. West 1971, 217, posits a relationship between Pherecydes' cosmology and that found in the *akousmata*.

it is entirely possible that they did not write down the works attributed to them, nor perhaps even envision them in the form they would ultimately assume. These authors were practitioners of *historiē*, and characteristically had followers; it is thus difficult to know who is responsible for the written texts attributed to them. Because they had followers, there was little incentive – for them, at least – to fix their teachings in written form, or to establish their ownership of them. Finally, there were (3) authors of written prose, intentional writers, whose relationship to their texts is strongest. Their texts, unlike those of the others, did not incidentally circulate, but were rather designed for circulation. They too practiced *historiē*; but Hecataeus and Scylax, at least, had audiences, not followers. Further demonstrating the coherence of the category of the archaic prose author, it is interesting that Herodotus' biographical account of Hecataeus is more traditional than historical.[181] The distinction between these groups, it should again be noted, is fluid.

These authors were all authors of oral prose. They produced three kinds of texts: the legendary authors (category 1) and the incidental writers (category 2) produced full transcripts of oral performances and partial transcripts of them (*kephalaia*), while the intentional writers (category 3) produced scripts for performance. The latter differed from the full transcripts by virtue of their independence. But they were all related, not only in their dependence on oral performance, but also in the contemporary writing habits of Greek culture which underlie them: Greeks wrote down texts, not random verbal aggregates, but rather textual units – poems, laws, aphorisms, etc.; they also collected such units. Thus, *syngraphai* were not incidentally gnomic, and they took this form not because the Greeks had not yet developed the capacity for continuous prose, nor because their aesthetic was limited to the "microscopic" as opposed to the "macroscopic".[182] When they wanted

[181] West 1991.
[182] As in Most 1999, 345-46. Since these texts did not stand on their own, they should not be taken to reflect the absence of a concept of literary unity.

to transcribe continuous prose, as in the case of Pherecydes, they did. When they didn't transcribe continuous prose, it was either because they had no need of it but rather a different kind of aid to performance or, in other cases, because they had a different macroscopic form in mind, that of the anthology. This form was not arbitrary, it was structured around meaningful textual units, gnomic utterances, the hallmark of *sophia*. We have seen that the principles of its composition were not necessarily different than those governing Hecataeus' work.

These texts came to be committed to writing in much the same way that verse texts were. Just as the earliest texts of poetry, be their date as it may, do not signal the beginnings of poetry, the earliest texts of authored prose – the ritual prose of Pherecydes, the gnomic and oratorical prose of Ionian *physiologoi*, narrative prose in Hecataeus and the mythographers – bear witness to the longstanding traditions of oral prose surveyed in chapter 1. Nor should these texts be severed from genres of unauthored written prose studied in chapter 2: epistolography served as a model for Hecataeus, and Heraclitus allegedly offered his book as a votive (ἀνέθηκε, DL 9.1.6) to Artemis, following the inscription of the sages' aphorisms at Delphi (Pl. *Prot*. 343a), amidst inscribed laws.[183]

Similarly, diction that to readers may appear primitive was rather tailored for oral performance; gnomic structures were not a result of lack of development, but a reflection of different needs and a different aesthetic, that of the anthology. Early "literary" prose did not "stutter". It had no reason to. While Anaximander's summary may not have had authority in itself, Heraclitus' apparently did, and in any event the oral prose which these authors performed was hardly lacking for authority. How else could Hecataeus challenge tradition? (And if his prose were novel, how could he – so eager to buck tradition – have failed to highlight that?). Because prose

[183] For other literary dedications, Rouse 1975 (1902), 64-66. See also Sassi 2018, 108, with references.

was invested with authority, its use did not signify rupture, rejection or rebellion, certainly not rationalization, nor any fundamental shift in Greek culture. *Sophoi* who composed in verse, Xenophanes and Parmenides and later Empedocles, were not "reacting" to Milesian prose, which may well not have traveled far in written form initially, but were rather composing in different traditions.[184]

Prose, then, was not a choice. It was a tradition, or the vehicle of traditions which governed its use. Seen against the traditions of prose we have traced here, classical prose literature – its use and form and authority – no longer appears to have emerged *ex nihilo*, as a development which was either random or trivial. Prose was neither: it played a vital role in archaic Greek culture, and it is in relation to the particularities of that role which the emergence of Greek prose "literature" should be appreciated.

[184] *Pace* Mansfeld 1983, 27; Burkert 1985, 307-10; Wöhrle 1992, 46-47; Most 1999, 335, 350, and *passim*; Granger 2007a; Laks 2007, 266. Cf., e.g., Floyd 1992, demonstrating the importance of the epic tradition to Parmenides' poem.

Epilogue

To Herodotus, as to Molière's M. Jourdain, it would have come as quite a surprise that for as many years as it took him to compose the *Histories* he was writing "prose". I will briefly recapitulate how we got to Herodotus, blithely composing prose without thinking much of it, and then point the way forward to a consideration of the question how Herodotus became a "prose" author, or in other words: how the concept of prose, absent from archaic Greece, came into existence.

We began with the incoherent narrative of the origins of Greek prose which, significantly, corresponds to the contradicting intuitions concerning the meaning of the term "prose", as both "ordinary" and "literary" language. Understood as "literary", sixth-century prose literature was taken to be new. As this non-ordinary language could not emerge *ex nihilo*, it was taken to be primitively derived from the established language of Greek verse. But if prose in the archaic period had neither style nor status, why would Greeks begin to write prose in the first place? Its use could only be explained by taking prose as "ordinary", and natural. In the introduction we saw, however, that "prose" does not denote a natural linguistic category: it is not something in the world, but rather a mental abstraction contingently developed in the western tradition to capture some things in the world.[1] It therefore cannot be taken for granted that a concept of "prose", as the inferior member of a hierarchical dichotomy dominated by verse, goes back to archaic Greece, or that prose would naturally be considered by contemporary Greeks more lucid than verse and better-suited to scientific discourse. It thus appeared that shedding light on the early history of prose first required disentangling the meaning of "prose". Generally taken as denoting either language with

[1] Cf Rotstein 2010, ch. 1.

rhetorical figures ("non-ordinary") or without ("ordinary"), the introduction argued that it was better to approach the term pragmatically, distinguishing its use in situations of immediacy and distance, concrete as well as abstract.[2]

Rather than anachronistically resorting to the supposed nature of prose, the pragmatic understanding of prose, which was indifferent to the mode of its production – whether written or oral – allowed us to turn to its neglected prehistory. Chapter 1 gathered and examined evidence for four broad genres of oral prose: gnomic, ritual, oratorical and narrative prose. Each was shown to employ formally distinct language, and also to have been emically recognized as marked. The four genres combined to show that in archaic Greece there was a vibrant culture of oral prose, affiliated with oral verse but not dependent on it. The important roles that oral prose performed in archaic Greek society do not, however, account for its eventual use in writing.[3]

The earliest evidence of alphabetic writing in Greece, studied in chapter 2, demonstrates that it is hardly given that oral language which is socially valuable should be committed to writing. Three genres of early written prose were surveyed: ownership and craftsmanship inscriptions, epistolography, and law. The reason there is little evidence of gnomic, ritual, oratorical and narrative prose, whose importance cannot be doubted, among the earliest remains of Greek writing is that committing them to writing would not have filled any immediate need. They were all performed *in praesentia*, and in order to acquire authority sought to establish abstract distance. The earliest genres of written prose, on the other hand, primarily aimed to overcome concrete distance, and in order to do so made use of the already-existent language of oral prose, further illustrating its vitality in archaic Greece.

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[2] Cf. Slings 1999, 61, on the value of a pragmatic approach to archaic Greek verse.
[3] Assmann 2011, 242 n. 18: "it was anything but normal for a society to write down its oral tradition". See also Lord 2000 (1960), 135; Goody 1977, 79-80; Ong 1982, 7.

With this history of oral and written prose in mind, we returned in chapter 3 to the specimens of sixth-century "literary" prose with which we began, a subset of written prose better characterized as authored – or authorized – prose. There was no need for written "literature" in archaic Greece, in which there was no culture of reading. Written literature which survived, or was attributed, to this period was in fact oral prose transcribed: ritual prose in Pherecydes, gnomic and oratorical prose in the works of the Ionian *physiologoi*, narrative prose in Hecataeus and the mythographers. These texts, transcribed either in full or partially, as tran/scripts or anthologies could have served in various capacities before they were later enshrined as "literature", which required attribution to an author, in case one was missing. It was not prose, but authored prose, along with authored verse, which began in earnest in the late archaic age.

Prose was not new, then, it was deeply traditional and highly authoritative. But in archaic Greece it was not considered "prose". Contemporary Greeks recognized the language(s) of these discourses as special, but they did not group these genres together in the comprehensive category of prose, just as they did not similarly group verse genres, and naturally could not consider the former inferior to the latter. The only criteria which can consistently distinguish poetry and prose, we have seen, are formal criteria, but in the archaic age the role such criteria played in the evaluation and discussion of texts which would come to be considered "literary" was at best limited, and in any event subservient to social and ritual considerations.

It was in the classical period that formal criteria properly came to the fore, as the act of composing these texts was conceptualized on the model of the plastic arts as an act of *poiēsis*, its practitioners as *poiētai*.[4] Thus Gorgias in his *Helen* characterizes *poiēsis* as "metrical language" (λόγον ἔχοντα μέτρον, DK B11.9). There was some disagreement over what exactly was the

[4] See Ford 2002, in detail.

constitutive property of *poiēsis*, and it should not be taken for granted that this new category fully corresponded to the modern category of "verse", but what is important here is that Gorgias presents *poiēsis* as a special kind of *logos*. *Logos* itself is a "great master" (δυνάστης μέγας, §8), and seems to mean something like "effective language", or more precisely effective oral language, but in any event not simply language, or ordinary language. Because it is subsumes verse it is also not equivalent to prose, and so when Herodotus refers to Aesop and Hecataeus as *logopoioi* we cannot as a matter of course take him to be referring to them as composers of "prose"; it rather appears that the term *logopoioi* identified them as composers of unmarked *logoi*, in contrast with the marked *epopoiia* of Homer (Hdt. 2.116) or *mousopoiia* of Sappho (Hdt. 2.135). While verse was special *logos* and was worthy of critical attention, prose was just regular old *logos*. This conception is reflected in the remarkable absence of attention by classical prose authors – with exceptions to be noted below – to their prose *qua* prose, in a time of intense interest in language. In previous chapters we saw that prose texts were not new; we now can see that the Greeks did not consider them novel either: they did not see their language as a novelty of which they could boast, nor one which required any kind of apology. As regards their linguistic medium, they were simply following in the steps of their predecessors and doing what had long been done: they were composing *logoi*.

The emergence of the category of verse, which we have seen is presupposed by "prose", was a necessary condition for the latter's emergence, but was not in itself sufficient. It is anachronistic to assume that a category of "prose" instantaneously formed in parallel with the newly emergent category of verse. It was a process that took time, and in the interim alongside "verse" there were only amorphous catchall categories for everything else. Some texts were referred to as "non-metrical" (ἄνευ μέτρων), but such a term cannot be taken as evidence for a

category with any definite identity; the language of others was characterized as "bare" (*psilos*), but this was hardly a technical term denoting "prose", for it could also refer to arguments lacking proof.[5] It is significant that *psilos* was also used to modify other elements of *poiēsis*, such as music:[6] non-verse texts were part of the literary conversation, but the conversation was never actually about them, it was always about *poiēsis*.

Terms which are commonly translated as "prose" did not necessarily all have the same referent, and even individually did not always consistently denote the same object. Aside from *katalogadēn*, they were all negative and were metaphoric extensions of terms active in other semantic fields as well. It is symptomatic that for prose no neologism was invented in the manner, for instance, of *rhetorikē*: prose was not an object of critical attention in the classical period. Within the broad field of Greek texts and fourth-century attempts to classify them, the antecedents of the category of prose can be glimpsed, as in Aristotle's use of *psilos logos* as a cross-generic category in the *Poetics*, or occasionally the use of *katalogadēn*. But they did not yet constitute the norm, and we should not take for granted the binary distinction grouping genres in two broad formal categories. The Greeks didn't, and indeed devised other ways for dividing up contemporary speech genres: a different kind of binary could be constructed, as when prose is grouped with *epos* against *melos* in *Laws* (810b) and the *Poetics* (1447b24-28); or a completely different scheme could be adopted, as in the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates speaks of three kinds of authors and composition: of *logoi* (here speeches), of *poiēsis* (*epos* and *melos*), and – surprisingly – of laws (278c-e).

[5] E.g. Demosthenes *Against Androtion* 22, *Against Aphobus* 54. In Plat. *Theaet*. 165a it refers to arguments without diagrams.

[6] *Psilos* for unaccompanied instruments: Plat. *Laws* 669e; Arist. *Pol*. 1339b21. For unaccompanied metrical language: Plat. *Phaedr*. 278c, and ψιλομετρία at Arist. *Poet.* 1448a11 (but cf. Janko 2011, 507-508). For unaccompanied singing: Plat. *Stat*. 268b.

There was, in fact, only one kind of discourse besides verse which was seriously theorized in the classical period, *rhetorikē*. When Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* characterizes *logos* as "having rhythm, not meter" (ῥυθμὸν δεῖ ἔχειν τὸν λόγον, μέτρον δὲ μή, 1408b30), it might appear that he is responding to Gorgias' characterization of *poiēsis* as "*logos* having meter" (λόγον ἔχοντα μέτρον), and that Greek literary criticism has in the course of approximately a century progressed from a preliminary definition of poetry to a theorization of prose in equivalent terms. But Aristotle here, like Plato in the *Phaedrus* and Isocrates in his speeches, is discussing oratory, not prose *in toto*. Nevertheless, the theorization of oratory may have been of great importance for the later conceptualization of prose. Brief mention was made in the introduction of the misleading Aristotelian history of rhetoric;[7] it is significant that its origins lie in Gorgias' appropriation of a style which is properly "poetic" (*Rhet*. 3.1.8-9). In Isocrates' *Antidosis* the language of oratory is similarly presented as derivative, while in his *Evagoras* and elsewhere it is nude, primitive, a medium lacking in style and instead communicating content transparently.

To the reader this will sound quite familiar. The affinity between the fourth-century theorization of oratory and the western concept of prose is highly suggestive. Elsewhere I will explore in detail the role of the former in the conceptualization of the latter, specifically whether the classical conception of oratorical language was generalized and extended to cover other non-verse genres and unite them under the umbrella of a broad formal category opposed to verse and inferior to it. If today we live in a "prosaic" world, as Hegel famously lamented, it may well be because of fourth-century BCE debates concerning the language of Greek oratory.

[7] On the Aristotelian narrative see the subtle Cole 1991.

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