A Catalogue of Shapes
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A Catalogue of Shapes

A Composite Object Portrait of an Oral-Formulaic Homer

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Abstract

The thesis identifies an equivalence between two seemingly disparate art-forms – Homeric poetry (the Iliad and the Odyssey) and sculptural assemblage. The synthesis of form and content achieved by the re-organisation, manipulation, and transformation of pre-existing components in the theory of an oral-formulaic Homer is explored by means of a practical application of sculptural assemblage. The thesis proposes that Homeric poetics and sculptural assemblage are sufficiently similar in terms of structure, methodology, and interpretive processes, to enable a sculptural evocation of the participatory interpretive aspects of Homeric composition in performance that is comprehensible to a contemporary audience.

The development of an iconography of an oral-formulaic Homer is expressed in a series of twelve sculptural assemblages entitled A Catalogue of Shapes 2010-13. These sculptures are composite object portraits of twelve Homeric characters. The creation of this catalogue of characters was informed by core structural, compositional, and conceptual aspects of the Iliadic Catalogue of Ships as a reflexive site of artistic self-awareness. A Catalogue of Shapes therefore represents a composite object portrait of an oral-formulaic Homer.

The representational system underlying A Catalogue of Shapes incorporates complex connotative allusions achieved by the manipulation of symbolically-invested materials, objects, and forms to reflect the compositional strategy underlying Homeric poetics. As an 'aesthetic translation' this series of sculptural assemblages comprises the creative and contextual re-interpretation of attributes characteristic of the form and content of an existing text/artwork, by means of creating another. It is both an autonomous artwork and an extension of an existing creative tradition.
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Introduction

This project identifies an equivalence between two seemingly disparate art-forms – Homeric poetry (the Iliad and the Odyssey) and sculptural assemblage. The synthesis of form and content achieved by the re-organization, manipulation, and transformation of pre-existing components in the theory of an oral-formulaic Homer is explored by means of a practical application of sculptural assemblage. The thesis proposes that Homeric poetics and sculptural assemblage are sufficiently similar in terms of structure, methodology, and hermeneutics, to enable a sculptural evocation of the immersive and participatory hermeneutics of an oral-formulaic Homer for a contemporary audience.

Contemporary Homeric studies tend to describe the compositional strategies which produced the Homeric epics as a creative methodology premised upon the integration of the formal with the aesthetic, and the immediate with the inherited. The result has been an enhanced recognition of the poetic significance of procedural and formal elements of the Iliad and the Odyssey. Contemporary Homeric scholarship developed from radical methodological innovations, to stand “at the forefront of scholarly research in the field of Classics” (Tsagalis 2008, xi). Its interdisciplinary nature resulted from a rejection of conventional literary criticism as inadequate for the analysis of an archaic oral epic. Milman Parry and Albert Lord’s anthropological approach to studying oral performance produced a unique critical methodology where interpretation of the Homeric epic is contingent upon an understanding of its means of production. Given the interdisciplinary predilections of Homeric studies, a study based on points of convergence with the practical and theoretical concerns of sculptural assemblage may yield further insight into Homeric poetics. Analysis of the construction of the Homeric has revealed significant methodological similarities with sculptural assemblage:

1 Milman Parry (1930) and Albert B. Lord (1953).
premised upon the ‘anachronistic appropriation’ of objects, forms, and ideas, assemblage describes a process of visual and conceptual redefinition in the production of a new and coherent whole.

Parry’s procedure-focused approach to the Homeric Question echoes the basic principles of chaîne opératoire (operational sequence) in experimental archaeology, where theories on ancient technologies are tested by attempting to create accurate reconstructions. However, this study does not aim to examine theories of Homeric composition through a close replication of epic performance, but to produce a contemporary ‘aesthetic translation’ of Homeric poetics based on selected features of the Iliad and the Odyssey. Those include aspects such as structure, rhythm, composition, polysemy, and a dialectical hermeneutics, that many scholars now consider fundamental to Homeric artistry. This particular interpretive translation was created by means of a visual (sculptural) articulation of Homeric formalism. Entitled A Catalogue of Shapes, the translation takes the form of a series (or catalogue) of twelve composite object portraits of characters drawn from the Iliad and the Odyssey. These were produced by means of sculptural assemblage, and function as reciprocally interrelated components of a single symbolic system.

The aim of this thesis is to describe the theoretical context, creative methodology, and conceptual objectives underlying A Catalogue of Shapes. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the understanding of Homeric poetics as oral-formulaic that informed this interpretation. The focus of the discussion falls on characteristics such as composition in performance, the Homeric idiom (or Kunstsprache), linguistic flexibility, Homeric ‘doubles’ (sympathetic or juxtaposed antitheses), similes, parataxis, and the Homeric catalogue format. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how, in the theory of formulaic composition, the preservation and transmission of Homeric poetry is premised on a sustained re-interpretation of the epic, and that this process entails a significant and necessary fusion of form with content through the continuous re-organization, manipulation, and transformation of pre-existing components.

Chapter 2 introduces discussion on the transformative engagement between modern art and the antique in the ‘systemic Classicism’ of Cubism. The methodological and hermeneutic characteristics of a formally disparate, but visually cohesive, and predominantly metaphoric (non-literal) type of sculptural assemblage are related to Pablo Picasso’s innovations in collage and assemblage. Finally, the composite object portrait is discussed as an art-form premised on the creation of reciprocally allusive symbolic systems, which, in an example such as Joseph Cornell’s Juan Gris series, incorporates a dialectical engagement between a subject and its interpreter based on both recognizable and private allusions.

Chapter 3 opens with an overview of traditional iconographies of the figure of Homer and Homeric themes and characters. The second part of the chapter is focused on describing the construction and iconography of A Catalogue of Shapes as a reflection on the creative methodology and aesthetics of the Iliad and the Odyssey as understood in contemporary Homeric analyses.

Chapter 4 consists of the descriptive catalogue of artworks which details the dimensions, materials, subject, construction, composition, and iconography of each sculpture in the series.
CHAPTER 1

An Oral-Formulaic Homer

This exploration of a dialectical relationship between Homeric poetics and modern art practice is premised on an understanding of the Homeric as a poetic system preserved and transmitted through a process of continuous and adaptive re-interpretation. An essential feature of this approach is the integration of form and content. Long considered the ‘ultimate’ poet, doubts regarding Homer’s authenticity and creative genius at the beginning of the modern era signalled a shift in perceptions of the aesthetic and cultural merits of archaic Greek art and poetry. The notion of an oral basis underlying archaic Greek epic was initiated by Friedrich August Wolf1 in the late eighteenth century and more fully developed in Milman Parry and Albert Lord’s anthropologically informed theoretical innovations in Homeric studies.2 Parry’s theory of oral formulaic composition was premised on a predominantly functional understanding of the methodology of using prescribed phrases, and inherited themes and motifs to create complex compositions within oral epic performance traditions.3 Subsequent Homeric scholars (such as Gregory Nagy, Egbert J. Bakker, Ahuvia Kahane, and Leonard Muellner) developed the notion further to demonstrate how formal features of the Homeric epic (such as its polysemic vocabulary, metrical structure, repetition, and variation) relate to poetic themes and characterisation. The resulting view is that the

1. Wolf’s explication of his radical Homeric theory, the Prolegomena to Homer, was first published in 1795 and led to the establishment of the study of Classics as a science or Altegrenzenwissenschaft. With a preference for historical and philological arguments, Wolf viewed the epics as artefacts to be studied for the primary purpose of defining the means of their production.

2. The link between Homer and the ‘orality question’ was identified in the early modern period by thinkers and writers such as Robert Wood, Friedrich August Wolf, Jean Jacques Rosseau, and later Claude Levi-Strauss, but it was not until Parry (1930) presented his theory that the epics are neither text nor conventional literature, but recordings of oral poetry composed from formulae, that the question was fully addressed (Havelock 1986, 36-37; Holoka 1973, 261).

3. Parry’s research into the compositional techniques of Yugoslavian oral poets as applied to the Homeric epic was first published in 1930. After Parry’s death, Albert Lord extended his theories, producing a comprehensive reconsideration of the formalisms of archaic Greek poetic composition. Lord argued that oral performers’ decisions regarding how and when traditional motifs and formulae are used, allow for multiple original expressions of a shared tradition. In this context, defining the Homeric became contingent upon describing the poetic strategies of ancient composers. As a result, archaic authorship is understood as composition during performance through the application of conventional sets of formulae unique to a specific epic tradition. “The essential dimension that Parry adds is the perception that the dependence of language on verse is not merely an issue of aesthetics, the result of the hexameter functioning as a poetic generative principle, but a matter of functional motivation. Parry shows that the bewildering variety of epithets and morphologically heterogeneous dialectical ‘forms’ is not an arbitrary feature of ‘epic style’ but conforms to a system designed to facilitate oral composition in performance” (Bakker 1997, 13).
Homer's poems “constitute acts of interpretation as well as acts of creation” and that instead of being conceived of as a “simple matter of inflexible dependence on antecedents, [Homerian composition] is as emergent, on the contrary, as a process of selective adaptation at every stage” (Shatkin 1995, 1-2). The conflation of selection and interpretation with creation suggests an art-form based on the continuous appropriation and alteration of existing elements. It is arguable that the ambiguity of seemingly incompatible meanings accumulated through a process of adaptive reiteration constitutes a primary feature of Homerian artistry.

Composition in Performance

James Porter (2002, 81) argues that to Parry and his contemporaries, Homer represented a “modern idea of what is ancient about antiquity – a thought we can feel, or imagine we feel, but can never really know.” This separation between a knowable present and an unknowable past suggests the notion of the Homeric as having been fixed and perfected at a specific moment in the distant past, and no longer subject to further alteration through time. Such an approach is contrary to an understanding of the Homeric as inherently adaptive and performative. On the other hand, the notion of composition in performance suggests that each interpretation of the epic (by a rhapsode or a scholar) is an interpretative reiteration that perpetuates fundamental attributes of the poem, while simultaneously creating a unique version specific to its immediate audience and context. The resulting scenario is not of a text with a single occasion and person of origin that has since been distorted, but a uniquely specific version specific to its immediate audience and context. The resulting scenario is not of a text with a single occasion and person of origin that has since been distorted, but a unique version specific to its immediate audience and context. The resulting scenario is not of a text with a single occasion and person of origin that has since been distorted, but a unique version specific to its immediate audience and context.

The dialectical relationship between the Homeric canon and an interpreter may reflect the interdependence between past events and the song as sung in the present, where each exists not as a distant historical reality described by means of song, but in terms of a complete co-existence of the present in which the hero is dead, with the past, where he is alive. At the same time, the mythic world is invariably presented as superior to, and clearly distinct from, the banality of the present, emphasizing the incongruities of these combined realities.

The repetition of actions and verbalized statements characteristic of ritual practices is premised on a notion of the ritual as both ancient and unchanging. However, ritual practices can combine a desire for stasis with an adaptive flexibility. A process of constant reinvention that gives an illusion of unchanging permanence resembles our own deceptive perceptions of

6) draws a correlation between the multiformity of Homeric epic and myth, noting that “no aboriginal prototype of a myth exists that can claim priority over other versions” and that in the Homeric poet “the Homological range of that character’s role and its relation to the poem’s central ideas.” In his exploration of the Homeric epic in terms of heroes’ myths and cults, Nagy (1979) proposed that a “ritualistic antagonism” between a Homeric hero and a specific deity (such as Achilles and Apollo) informs the epic, particularly as it pertained to the hero’s death. The manner of death forms the basis of the hero’s cult, and is inferred, but does not occur, in the hero’s own epic. The reverence associated with a legendary hero and respected king’s much-mourned death in old age is, however, subject to his undertaking a further journey and conducting rituals (a sacrifice to Poseidon and the erection of a sailor’s tomb marker in Odyssey 22), but his death and funeral are described in the Odyssey. The reverence associated with a legendary hero and respected king’s much-mourned death in old age is, however, subject to his undertaking a further journey and conducting rituals (a sacrifice to Poseidon and the erection of a sailor’s tomb marker in Odyssey 22).

7. The thematic difference between the Iliad and the Odyssey is apparent in the symbolic function of the two heroes’ deaths: in the Iliad poetic immortalization (kleos) is won by death in battle at the instigation of an enraged Apollo (in Iliad 9.410–16 Achilles recounts his mother’s prediction of two possible fates for him – to die young and gain kleos, or live a long, uneventful life). In the Odyssey, the primary threat to the hero’s myth is an anonymous death without a corpse to bury or witnesses to recount the event. His poetic immortalization is dependent on his successful return to, and recovery of, his home, family, and human society at large (teiotis). The reverence associated with a legendary hero and respected king’s much-mourned death in old age is, however, subject to his undertaking a further journey and conducting rituals (a sacrifice to Poseidon and the erection of a sailor’s tomb marker in Odyssey 22).

8. In living epic performance traditions such as those of the Rajastani of India, “the central belief is that singing the hero’s story summons him and his power is then present to protect the community, what gives the hero his ultimate power is the actual fact of his death ... he (he) operates as the ‘generative point’ for stories in local traditions” (Nagy 1995, 168).

9. Nagy (1992, 10), for example, warns that “the insistence of ritual on a set order of things should not be misconstrued to mean that all rituals are static and that all aspects of rituals are rigid.”
CHAPTER 1 AN ORAL-FORMULAIC HOMER

of the dactylic hexameter.”

thorough investigation of the morphological, phonological, dialectical, and lexicographic features that
historical and descriptive linguistics [see Witte 1913 and Meister 1921] … and was based on a

11. The distinctiveness of the Homeric idiom is notable:
ordinary discourse at any time or place … The notion of
Homeric language as artificial: “Before Homeric style became traditional or oral, it was artificial.

11. Karl Meister’s (1921) definition of Homeric language as a

10. A description of a subject as it exists in a specific time and place is termed ‘synchronic’, while ‘diachronic’ refers to an analysis of its development over time. Nagy (1992, 20) argues that “Parry’s
corpus was strictly synchronous … [and that his] initial impressions of South Slavic oral poetry were influenced by the diachronic standpoint of his Homerist predecessors.”

11. Bakker (1997, 13) notes that Parry was a “direct heir” to the approach that characterized
Homeric language as artificial: “Before Homeric style became traditional or oral, it was artificial.

Even in cases where a given society deems a given ritual to be static and never changing, it may in fact be dynamic and ever changing, responding to the ever-changing structure of the society that it articulates.”

10. These include the Ionic, Doric, Thessalian, Lesbian, Boeotian, Arcado-Cypriot, and Mycenaean.

13. Kahane (2005, 66-7) points out that while the “basic components of Homeric discourse are highly receptive to formal patterning ... it is not possible to reduce basic Homeric diction to any single closed system or structure ... [and that the very same ‘rational substance’ can yield to several, indeed, mutually exclusive formalized characterizations.” Bakker (1997) argues that Homeric language represents a stylization of the distinctive attributes of normal speech, and as such is more accurately defined as a specialized type of speech, specific to the standardized performance of myth. This notion is founded on an understanding of Homeric poetry as “the verbalization of a heroic world that is literally visualized” by the Muse (Nagy in Bakker 1997, ix).

14. Muellner (2006, 2) notes that “an analysis of the formulas of the verb ἐυχόμομαι [euchomi] makes it clear that it has three very different meanings. The extent of this flexibility is such that “a word’s

language usages, and vocabularies from various time periods and geographic locations (see
Kahane 2005, 65). 12 Scholars such as Bakker and Kahane warn against interpreting the apparent artificiality of Homeric language as indications of Homer’s right-hand man with
’simple deterministic regulatory codes’ (Kahane 2005, 69). 13 Instead, the Homeric comprises a
dynamically adaptive poetic system. While the analogy of ‘strata’ of accumulated dialects
suggests a museum or an archive where inherited linguistic elements are conserved intact,
a more complicated situation is evident: dialectal features were “routinely ignored when they
threatened creativity just as readily as they were artificially extended when they proved
themselves useful” (Kahane 2005, 67), while archaisms stemming from instances where
a dialectical form was an integral part of a fixed expression. In such instances, “two or
more mutually incompatible elements or characteristics were forced together ... [to create] a
resilient amalgam of incompatible elements” (Kahane 2005, 69). In addition, what is termed
Homeric language is but a part of a larger compositional system that extends beyond purely
linguistic elements: this poetic system “is a higher-level system than a language, since its
compositional units and syntactical conventions are more complex and feature narratives
and characters as well as words and formulas and lines of poetry, but it is not a text with a
single synchrony or a single grammar” (Muellner 2006, 11). In this system, content and
form are intertwined.

The adaptation and transformation of linguistic elements reflects an important aspect
of Homeric poetry where the meaning of a word, phrase, motif, and even a character, is
flexible and can shift according to context. In Leonard Muellner’s (1976) study of the verb ἐυχόμομαι (euchomi) for example, he observed how, depending on its context, this word could have three very different meanings. 14 The extent of this flexibility is such that “a word’s

flexible and can shift according to context. In Leonard Muellner’s (1976) study of the verb ἐυχόμομαι (euchomi) for example, he observed how, depending on its context, this word could have three very different meanings. The extent of this flexibility is such that “a word’s

12. ‘assert/claim’ (in a legal context) observes a clear differentiation between secular and sacred ἐυχόμομαι based on various usages within set
formulas.

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14. “an analysis of the formulas of the verb ἐυχόμομαι [euchomi] makes it clear that it has three very different meanings. The extent of this flexibility is such that “a word’s
Skamandrios/Astyanax, Xanthos/Skamandros, Troy/Ilos, and Achaians/Danaans). This linguistic adaptability reflects a broader preference for ambiguity where words and characters are used primarily in terms of one another. Linguistic flexibility serves a structural purpose, allowing for the incorporation of archaisms and glosses that may be unintelligible in isolation, but are made comprehensible by their context. This approach incorporates a dialectical reciprocity based on the expressiveness of elements in combination with others.

On the level of characterization, plot, and theme, the associations most significant to this project are comparative relationships based on juxtaposition, similarity, and the seemingly paradoxical combination of contradiction with similarity. Examples of juxtaposition include what may be termed dissimilarity and opposition. E. Black (1982, 16) and Kahane (1994, 112) use the term ‘sympathetic antithesis’ to refer to Menelaus, Patroclus and Eumaeus as paired with Agamemnon, Achilles, and Odysseus, respectively. In this context, the juxtaposition of paired heroes emphasizes their dissimilarity, but does not denote enmity. Instead, the identification of an alter establishes a type against which major characters can be sketched (see Croiset 1969). Juxtapositions of complete opposites (such as Odysseus compared to Antinous, or Penelope compared to Clytemnestra) define characters as relative due to their dissimilarity. In such a scenario, attributes possessed by one are notably absent or oppositional in the other (such as respect for one’s host, or martial fidelity). Similar actions and shared epithets can thematically link characters, such as Circe and Calypso, who are both discovered weaving and singing (Od. 5.61-2 and 10.221-23), and are described as goddesses with beautiful hair (Ἀπλόκαμος in Od. 1.86; 5.58; 7.235; 11.8; 12.149; and Ἐυπλόκαμος in Od. 10.220) and human voices (Μῆλος in Od. 12.449; 10.136; 11.8; 12.149).

In some instances, such as Hector’s son Skamandrios and the river Xanthos, specific groups of speakers will use only one of the two names to refer to that individual (in Od. 6.402-03 Hector’s name for his son is Skamandrios while the Trojans call him Astyanax, in Il. 20.73-04 the river known to men as Skamandros is called Xanthos by the gods, and in Il. 2.811-14 the steep mound on the Trojan plain is known as Batieia by mortals and as the tomb of dancing/nimble Myrine by the gods). Clay (2011) contrasts this mound with the nameless tomb used for a turning post in the chariot race (Il. 2.697-98, noting that as the name of the Tomb of Myrine is known only to the gods, it is lost to men, but available to the poet through the agency of the Muses. As a result, the unknown and unnamed tombs “constitute contrasting emblems: of anonymity through mortal forgetfulness on the one hand, and poetic remembrance through the divine Muses on the other” (Clay 2011, 119). In other cases, such as Paris/Alexandros, no reason is given for the use of two different names and no group of speakers displays a preference for either.

16. Patroclus, Menelaus, and Eumaeus are three principle characters that are directly addressed (as opposed) by the Homeric narrator (Patroclus in Il. 16.787-88, Menelaus in Il. 17.702-03, and Eumaeus in Od. 14.55). Kahane (2005, 194) proposes that ‘ordinary’ counterparts of the larger-than-life hero with whom audiences can more easily identify, those characters represent a type of ‘peer group’ for the poet and ‘the men of today’.

17. In the case of Paris/Alexandros, this duality appears to have been combined in one person with two distinct natures (an idle coward and a brave and accomplished archer), reflected in his two different names. While many reviewers have been促使 for the two names of Paris/Alexandros, no discernible pattern has yet been convincingly identified. The Trojans and Achaians both refer to him by either of his names, as do the gods.

18. Porter (1972, 19-20) argues that “if the technique of violent juxtaposition which I find in these similes is a familiar Homeric characteristike, so, I think, is the outlook toward war which I perceive behind that technique .... ... Only a poet well aware of the tragedy of war could have told the story of the Iliad as Homer tells it, with a frequent emphasis not on the everlasting glory that can be won in war but on the horror and savagery it involves. This is not to say, let me repeat, that the Iliad is an anti-war document: clearly at many places the poet views war as inevitable, perhaps even necessary, and as the proving ground of valor. But I think it is also clear from the way he structures the poem as a whole, from the way he handles the motif of honor .... that Homer was acutely conscious of the degradation and the waste that war inevitably entails.”

19. Other examples of multiplied similes in Homer include Il. 13.491-95; 15.271-80; 17.520-24; and 22.188-93.

20. Kenneth Snipes (1988, 212) notes that critics as early as Zenodotus – who altered the lion similes – struggled to accept this juxtaposition. The Scholia (2 A 2 A 546, Erbse III 228) defended the inclusion by asserting that this expreses a different aspect of Ajax’s character, which modern scholars such as Moulton (1974, 387, 390), Scott (1974, 46, 61, 111), and Fränkel (1924, 61, 67, 84) have commented on the inappropriateness of comparing a hero to a donkey and the discrepancy between the animal’s satiated hunger and the hero’s half-empty hands (also see Ben-Porat 1992, 794).
a significant role in expanding an understanding of hermeneutic processes by demonstrating the “important roles that structural complexity and cognitive unclarity play in directing the interpretive process” (Ben-Porat 1992, 766).

While a nuclear simile consists of the comparison of two different things, the “multiplied simile is an elliptical combination of two, superimposed comparative structures [and represents] an actual realization of the simile’s potential inconsistency” (Ben-Porat 1992, 748). The difficulty for the interpreter lies in making sense of the incongruity of two comparative statements that ultimately appear to equate complete opposites. In a multiplied simile a dialectical interpretive process is created wherein two characters are initially defined in terms of oppositional attributes, and are then both associated with a seemingly incompatible shared characteristic (i.e. a thesis and antithesis are established, from which a synthesis is created). The ambiguity of related elements in a multiplied simile engenders higher levels of abstraction and figurativity, than in a standard simile, as whatever “fails to meet a similarity judgment is integrated into a new abstract frame. In this way the multiplied simile contributes to the actualization of the Iliad’s most basic - and most abstract - theme: the sameness of human nature and of human fate ... On the miniature scale of the human perspective, distinctions between opposites are real: lions are unlike fawns, and Greeks stand in opposition to Trojans. But from the omniscient perspective – of the gods or the author – Greeks are indeed utterly like Trojans” (Ben-Porat 1992, 766-7). The resulting text is multilayered and open to variable interpretations that may seem to conflict with one another, but can contribute to a deeper understanding of the epic’s primary theme and meaning.

The Structure of the Homeric

The syntactic ambiguity required to create such syntheses is facilitated by the paratactic nature of Homeric composition. As a compressed form of verbal narrative, parataxis comprises the additive placing of autonomous clauses in a sentence without using conjunctions. The result is a telegraphic shorthand that does not indicate syntactical interrelationships such as subordination. Parataxis is therefore premised on the juxtaposition of apparently unrelated and independent parts. While inherited formulae, archaic words, and new words and phrases in multiple dialects cannot be seamlessly assimilated into an unambiguous and unified

21. “First, there is the incompatible formal simile, which likens Hektor not to the fawn, but to the pursuing dog: “as a dog” (1.189) – “as Hektor” (1.194). Secondly, there is an incongruity between the last clause of the BP [base point] whose grammatical subject is the dog, and the grammatical subject of the formal TP [target point] – Hektor. Here, the reader cannot enjoy the luxury of a smooth transition, which occurs when the argument of the second nuclear simile is introduced as such in the TP ... Attentive readers cannot – or should not – ignore the clash between the three actualized nuclear similes:”

22. Bakker (1997, 56-7) draws a correlation between Homeric parataxis and the verbalization of an image (epipheneia) where “the consciousness of the speaker resembles that of the observer, who can only focus on one detail at a time, the area of focused vision...” The action or object seen is broken down into its component visual details, which are then presented in linear temporal order ... the contention is that Homeric narrative is on the whole epiphenetic, and that in Homeric discourse narration and description cannot be separated: all narration is description.”

23. While narration and description in this sense constitute a process of listing observed attributes which the interpreter mentally reconstructs as an image. In the Iliad this relationship between an eyewitness that describes and a listener who interprets is vividly represented in the invocation of the Muses at the outset of the Catalogue of Ships (Il. 2.484-93). In its first line, the poet directly addresses the Muses, by asking for a revelation λέισσαι νῦν μου (“tell me/reveal to me” Il. 2.484) and indicates that this is a reasonable request by interposing the following statement: Μόνος Ολύμπιος δ' ἔσχον τι βιονόμιον ὡς τάσσεσθαι νανότητας νάμοι μου, νανον τε νανών (“you Muses who have your homes on Olympus are gods, are present everywhere and know everything” Il. 2.484-85) and contrasts this with his own situation: ἵματις δ' ἁλυσιν οὔνομον σοφιας ἄνθρωπος (“we [poets] can only hear the names, we know nothing” Il. 2.486). This distinction between the Muse who sees and knows, and the poet who hears and does not know, constitutes the first part of a transmission of divine knowledge through the poet, concluded when the audience mentally visualizes the

24. Jenny Strauss Clay (2011) has emphasized the significance of visualization in Homeric epic, demonstrating the symbolic significance of the spatial coherence in Homeric descriptions of the Trojan battlefield. She distinguishes her notion of a visual Homer from Thaddeus Zielinski’s (1899-1901) schauender Dichter (showing poet) on the basis that Zielinski’s Homer is “an eyewitness to an action that always moves forward” (Clay 2011, 32). By contrast, her own analysis emphasizes the extent to which vividly expressed individual scenes do not present a temporal sequence, but contrastive relations that create a “play of meaningful juxtapositions” (Clay 2011, 34).
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An association between invocations and catalogues has been acknowledged at least since Euripides in the twelfth century. But, as William Minton (1960, 293 n.3) points out, "the perception that the association is an essential one" was only fully stated by Gilbert Murray in 1924. The Homeric catalogue format reflects the most fundamental characteristics of panatellus. Correlations between the structure of Homeric narrative and catalogues have been drawn by various scholars (such as Gisela Strasburger (1954), Charles Rowan Beye (1958), Julia Haig Gaisser (1969), Tilman Krischer (1971), Egbert Bukker (1997), and Magdelt Flindberg (1998)) with the result that catalogues are no longer conceived of as distinct from (or even alien to) the main text.26 Benjamin Sammons (2010)

26. ἀνάφημα ἀνάφημα γέλαι, ἀνάφημα δὲ σώματες ἑαυτοῖς, ἄφθονον δὲ καταφθάνειν, εἰ μὴ Ὑλομάδης Μοῖσις Διὸς ἁγίοις

Agnitae μεγαλοτέροι διὰ ὧν ἔπειν 'Νικές πάλιν ἀφίγμα πάντων ἐρώτων καὶ τὴν προσφοράν:

"Not even if I had ten tongues and ten mouths, a voice unbreakable, and a heart of Bronze, not unless the Olympian Mois, who holds the Aegis they are his daughters, reminded me of all who came to Ilion, but I will give the leaders of the ships and the ships in their number." (Il. 2.489-93).

27. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, catalogues were predominantly regarded as late insertions with little stylistic or narrative relevance to the epics (see Günther Jachmann’s (1958) critique of the Catalogue of Ships for example). Comparative research into oral literatures led C. M. Bowern (1933) to conclude that catalogues were more likely to be early components of epics. Edzard Visser (1970), John Crossley (1969), and Gregory Nagy (1970) proposed that the Catalogue of Ships serves a poetic (as opposed to geographical or historical) purpose, while J. K. Anderson (1995) taking a more literal view, cited the absence of kings and warriors mentioned in the Catalogue of Ships as evidence that it is alien to the Homeric epic (see Lang 1995, 160).

Of the patterns, pattern II "is by far the most common (18 times), pattern I second most common (7 times), and pattern III least common (4 times)” (Powell 1978, 264).

28. ...Dio, άνδρες, ἐντούς τοὺς Μοίσις ἀνέτοιομεν θυμοὺς τὸν ὕπεκάιον πάοιν δαίμονας Ὀμηρίσατο ἄνευ της πειράτης οἰκομένης σταύτως γὰρ κάθειμας υποκείμενος, εἰ παρ ἐν τούτω Μοῖσις ἀλλοιος κουμὸν Διὸς ἁγίοις αὐτῷ δὲ χολαρεμένη προῖκες θανάτων ἔπαιντον καὶ ἅλλωνθεν κυριαρχήν...”... Dorians, where the Muse

29. ...Thamyrus the Thracian stopping his singing, from Ochsia he who had come from Eurytos of Ochsia asserting and saying he would be victorious; if even themselves the Muse was to sing, the daughters of Zeus argo-bearer. Provoked they maimed him - they deprived him of his divine singing and made him forget his kithara-playing skill." (Il. 2.594-600).
invocation. As a choremélkos (one who fights the gods) Thamyris’ behaviour is more in keeping with heroes such as Diomedes and Achilles32 than the “blind, old, feeble, ‘non-self-destructive’ figure of poets and singers as they are portrayed elsewhere in Homeric poetry and in the biographical tradition” (Kalhan 2005, 199). This correlation is emphasized by the use of the verb euchomai (see n. 14), and the reference to Eurytus of Ochalia.

In Mueller’s (1976, 97) analysis, the Thamyris story conforms to a secular and military use of the word ἐκχωμαι (euchomai) in what he terms ‘death-euchomai passages’.31 On this reading the poet is portrayed as a warrior who wins kleos through destruction in battle. But while the meaning of euchomai is particularly suited to context, in the story of Thamyris the context is sufficiently complex for more than one of these meanings to apply. Zachary Biles (2011, 20-1) for example, notes that this example of euchomai does not clearly conform to any of the formulaic combinations identified by Mueller. Instead, in the Thamyris story, the term appears to be intentionally formulaically ambiguous. As divinities (the Muses) are present and addressed by Thamyris, an activation of auctoritas (in its sacred sense (i.e. to pray or respectfully address the gods) applies, as does an interpretation of euchomai in this context as a formal challenge. Biles argues that an invocation is a subspecies of prayer that marks the start of a poetic performance by establishing the communication with the Muses required for divinely inspired song. On this reading, the story creates an opposing scenario to the Muse-poet relationship of the invocation, while retaining the notion of invoking the Muses as a necessary component of both. Even a poet who aims to establish kleos for himself – as opposed to one who confines himself to transmitting the kleos of others – requires the agency of the Muses. A similar duality of meaning occurs in the reference to the court of Eurytus from which Thamyris had travelled. Odysseus claims his own superiority as an archer without human peer, but notes that he is not comparable to legendary archers such as Heracles and Eurytus (Od. 8.215-28). The context in which the story of Eurytus is told in the Odyssey33 in many respects mirrors the context in which the Thamyris episode is recounted in the Iliad.34 In both cases the narrator of the story (Homer in the Iliad, Odysseus in the Odyssey) establishes the extent of his mastery in the relevant fields (poetry and archery), but also emphasizes his constraints (Homer lacks the physical capacity to give a complete account of all participants in the war, while Odysseus’ strength has been sappped by the sea in Od. 8.231-33). They invoke a singer and an archer destroyed for challenging the patron gods of their respective fields. But apparent restraint masks irony: in both cases, Apollo and the Muses are described as geluoskerygon (denominative locution) ‘angered/provoked’ by Eurytus and Thamyris. In Od. 1.69, Zeus notes that the reason for Odysseus’ suffering is that he had angered/provoked (αἰγυφθὸν – ἀειγυφθόν) Poseidon when he blinded the god’s son. The hero’s caution is therefore grounded in experience.35 While presented as a negative paradigm, Eurytus is similar to Odysseus, who at this point in the epic risks his predecessor’s fate of not growing old in his own home. The Certamen recounts the tradition of Homer as a poet who loses the contest with Hesiod through his consummate skill.36 It provides a similar (albeit extra-textual) correlation between Thamyris and the poet of the invocation. It is also tempting to discern a subtle reference to Odysseus/Eurytus and Homer/Thamyris in the simile that compares Odysseus stringing the bow of Eurytus to a singer stringing his lyre (Od. 21.404-11).37

As catalogue format interacts with narrative by way of paradigmatic comparison and inter-textual allusion, it may also allow for allusion to other epic traditions. Sammons (2010, 209)


31. In this sense the singer ‘proudly and truly’ makes a claim in a legalistic sense or combative setting, as opposed to the translation of euchomai as ‘insulting’.32 In this instance, euchomai occurs in a context with the construction στρατεύον... νεκρόμαχον (the asserted/served that he would be victorious), which echoes the meaning of secular euchomai. This doubling may either strengthen a secular reading or make it superfluous, thereby encouraging a different (sacred) interpretation of the word.

33. τὸ ῥὰ καὶ τὸ ἠρώτητον μέγας Εὔρυτος, οὐδὲ ἔπει γῆρας ἀρέσκειν εἰς μικρότατον γιοίρον ἂν ἀπειλέει... Τὸ ῥὰ καὶ τὸ ἠρώτητον μέγας Εὔρυτος, οὐδὲ ἔπει γῆρας ἀρέσκειν εἰς μικρότατον γιοίρον ἂν ἀπειλέει... Τὸ ῥὰ καὶ τὸ ἠρώτητον μέγας Εὔρυτος, οὐδὲ ἔπει γῆρας ἀρέσκειν εἰς μικρότατον γιοίρον ἂν ἀπειλέει... Τὸ ῥὰ καὶ τὸ ἠρώτητον μέγας Εὔρυτος, οὐδὲ ἔπει γῆρας ἀρέσκειν εἰς μικρότατον γιοίρον ἂν ἀπειλέει...

34. This is in partial breach of ‘Mora’s law’ which holds that the Odyssey consciously avoids repeating anything contained in the Iliad, such as the actual death of Achilles which is predicted and symbolically enacted through the death of Patroclus in the Iliad, but his funeral is described in the Odyssey (Od. 24.86-97). It is notable, however, that the dead Achilles and the maimed Thamyris are both connected to the verb ἱπποκτάομαι (‘killed’ – ‘killed’) Thamyris forgets his kithara-playing skill (ἰχθύταιον ἱπποκτάομαι) while the dead Achilles’ horsemanship is forgotten (κακοχαρίαν ἱπποκτάομαι in Od. 24.40). The same phrase is also applied to Kehimios in II. 16.776.

35. While Odysseus never acknowledges that his troubles stem from having angered Poseidon, the seer Teiresias informs him of this fact in Od. 11.100-03.

36. This account occurs in the Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi (The Contest of Homer and Hesiod). The Certamen is generally regarded as a rather crude compilation of various texts produced during the Antonine period (138-193 CE) Although late, it is believed to be based on a longstanding Certamen tradition informed by Hesiod’s own account of winning a poetic contest in the Works and Days (650-62) and a broader Greek tradition of poetic riddling contests referred to as early as the Iliad. It is an example of a type of text conventionally referred to as the Lies of Homer, which ranged from freestanding compositions, to encyclopaedic entries and biographical information included as introductory sections in editions of the poet’s works or scholarly treatises on Homer. Of these, only the Certamen and Pseudo-Hesiodus’ On Homer’s Origins, Date and Liç (composed approx. 50-150 CE) appear to attempt a coherent narrative.

37. In which case, this simile would offer two equally valid interpretations: Odysseus (who at this point is still depicted as a ‘larger’) may be defined both in comparison to a competitive singer, and in terms of the ‘blind’ Demodocus Odysseus type of singer (such as the blind singer in Od. 8.64). Phemius who claimed that the suitors forced him to entertain them (Od. 22.351-53), and the unnamed singer instructed by Ajax (Od.) to keep an eye on Clytemnestra, but who was disposed of by Aegisthus so that he could seduce the queen (Od. 3.266-71).
squeezes such poems may be real or imaginary and provide the poet with an opportunity to "define the excellence of his own work" relative to other competing epics. Slatkin (1995, 4) attributes the "epic audience's knowledge of the alternative possibilities of how a myth is told" allows the poet to build his narrative by deriving meaning not only from what the poem includes, but from what it consciously excludes. A telling instance of this is the Iliad's treatment of the Judgement of Paris. Presupposed by the poem and implicit in its plot... the Judgement of Paris would, however, remain an obscure reference, occurring as it does in a single allusion at the end of the poem (24.25-30). In the Thamyris episode, the reference to Eurytus may also include an allusion to the most persistent heroic paradigm in Homeric epic -- the demigod Heracles. Martin (1989, 229) notes that the Thamyris episode reflects Homer's own predilection as a performer "when he attempts to compose an Achilles' epic against a widespread and predominant earlier tradition that privileges the role of Herakles." Homeric references to Heracles vary from the overt to the subtle. Mueller (2006, 9-11) suggests a link between the heroes of all three epics (the Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Siege of Oechalia) in the use of a single epithet -- thumoleon (lion-hearted), which occurs just five times in Homeric Epic. He proposes that "the use of this epithet of Herakles ... for the Homeric heroes comes at these moments in their respective stories first in internal reference of one epic to the other, but also as a receding reference to the greatest of all the Panhellenic heroes, Herakles, who stands behind them, and more especially in subtle allusion to the circumstances of hero cult, when figures of the past like these three are invoked as absent objects of grief, in connection with their death and loss but also as subjects of hope, for their benign, healing return." While the clearest reference to Herakles in the Catalogue of Ships occurs in the Rhodian entry, Rhodos itself is not associated with Herakles but with his son Tripolomeus. Instead, the catalogue alludes to Herakles on a more obscure, structural level. In Powell's analysis of the patterned structure of the Catalogue of Ships, one type (pattern III) consists of only four entries of which the Pylian (in which the Thamyris dithymia occurs) is one. All four of these similarly patterned entries refer to places conquered by Herakles: Orchomenos in Il. 2.511-16; Pylos and Oechalia in Il. 2.591-602; Kos in Il. 2.676-80; and Oechalia again in Il. 2.729-33. In addition, three of these entries include one character who plays an important role in the epic and an alter with no role beyond the catalogue,39 while the grandsons of Herakles named in the Koon entry are completely absent from the rest of the poem. In this use of "sympathetic antitheses", the complex relationship between the world of the catalogue and the world of the narrative is made explicit. And, in the context of the Catalogue of Ships listing the forces that came to conquer Troy, this silent reminder of the exploits of Herakles emphasizes an intricate appropriation and subversion of traditional poetic material in Homeric composition.

As these examples illustrate, Homeric compositional methods such as polysemy, comparative reciprocity, and the catalogue format, enable the poet to construct multilayered texts that are intended to provoke multiple readings and to stimulate constant re-interpretation. While the Homeric Kryptopoeia suggests a closed system with its own grammar, syntax, and rules of composition, the inherently allusive nature of the epics, and the extent to which characters, themes, and even the epics themselves are defined in terms of opposition and/or similarity suggests a powerful and sophisticated art-form uniquely adaptable to changing contexts. The exploitation of formal components to achieve the complexities, ambiguities, and allusions that prompt the sustained re-interpretation on which the preservation and transmission of the epics is founded, reveals the significant and necessary fusion of form with content in Homeric poetry. As a dynamic poetic system which evokes meaning by means of juxtaposition, inconsistency, and ambiguity, Homeric epic is unsuited to translation into media characterized by the predominance of syntactic uniformity, semantic singularity, and conceptual clarity. A contemporary reiteration (i.e. comprehensible to a modern audience) of Homeric poetics will therefore require a creative methodology sufficiently variable and semantically open-ended to reflect the integration of its form with its content and continuous reinterpretation as a type of creation. In the next chapter I will discuss the creative methodology underlying sculptural assemblage and introduce the notion of the composite object portrait, which, I will argue, are uniquely suited to a visual translation of a Homeric Homer.

38. In the Odyssey, Heracles represents a breach of the host-guest relationship by murdering Eurytus' son Iphitus whom he had entertained in his home at the time (Od. 21.14-30). This murder meant that Odysseus and Iphitos who had met and exchanged gifts (Odysseus received Eurytus' bow) on foreign soil could not establish a proper relationship by hosting each other in their own homes (Od. 21.31-37). In the Iliad, Herakles represents the ultimate thumoeides and in at least one instance "is alluded to as a negative exemplum (5.392-404)? (Martin 1989, 229). Herakles was also the hero of the lost epic Ofedokles Halkos which supposedly recounted how Herakles won Eurytus' daughter in an archery contest and sacked Oechalia when he was refused his prize. Homer was sometimes regarded as the author of this epic and that he gave it as a gift to Cresoepylus for hosting him on Samos (Strab. 14.1.18).

39. This word occurs once each in the Iliad and the Odyssey as an epithet of Herakles (ll. 5.639; Od. 11.267); once, in the Iliad, as an epithet of Achilles (ll. 7.228); and twice, in the Odyssey, in a closely repeated sequence of lines, as an epithet of Odysseus (Od. 4.724, 4.814).

40. These are: Acaelaphus, Nestor, and Machaon. Acaelaphus' death in ll. 13.918-20 is of dramatic significance as it pits his enraged father (Aias) against Achilles; Nestor plays an important role in both epics as an advisor; and it is his return to the Achaean camp with the injured Machaon that spurs Achilles to send Patroclus to determine the extent of Achaean losses, marking the beginning of Patroclus' end.

41. These are Acaelaphus' brother Ialmenos, the singer Thamyris who meets his doom in Nestor's kingdom, and Machaon's brother Polydamus.
CHAPTER 2

Sculptural Assemblage and the Composite Object Portrait

Given the emphasis on methodology in the construction of meaning in contemporary applications of the theory of Homeric formulaic composition by scholars such as Gregory Nagy, Leonard Muellner, Egbert Bakker, and Ahuvia Kahane, the integration of form and content in the sculptural technique of assemblage and the symbolic iconography underlying the composite object portrait, provides appropriate means to construct a visual interpretation of Homeric poetics. Contemporary sculptural assemblage derives from a combination of developments in visual art that occurred during the early twentieth century. These include the Cubists’ transformative engagement with the systemic aspects of Classical art, the appropriation and amalgamation of seemingly incompatible techniques, forms, and materials, and the development of a dialectical hermeneutics. The notion of the composite object portrait can be traced to Giuseppe Arcimboldo’s unusual re-interpretation of the art and ideas of antiquity in the sixteenth century and the symbolic use of objects in modern collage and assemblage.

Cubism, Picasso, and Sculptural Assemblage

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the emphasis placed on the art and literature of antiquity by academies of visual arts meant that early Modernism was to a large extent based on rejection of the antique. As a bastion of Academic Classicism, the Homeric epic therefore seems antithetical to assemblage as a product of the avant-garde. However, the basic principles of assemblage derive less from a rejection of Classicism, than a transformative re-evaluation of the art of antiquity. Such analyses of antiquity were undertaken by early modernists, such as Giorgio de Chirico, Fernand Léger, and Pablo Picasso. Their engagement with the Classical differed from nineteenth century Neoclassicism on a crucial point: for all of them “the art of antiquity had meaning only if it could be transformed, reinvented, revalued – and only if it could speak in the present tense” (Green 2011, 2). Each approach differed, reflecting the major advances and shifts in knowledge of antiquity during this period. Most significantly, these artists differentiated between long-held assumptions regarding ancient Greece and Rome, and antiquity as described in emerging scholarship. This scholarship extended across archaeology, art history, and Classics, and included a new recognition of the artistic and historical significance of the Cyclades, Minoans, Archaic Greece, and Etruscans, amongst other sources.

Picasso’s most evident exploration of Classicism occurs in what are termed his Neoclassical works (such as The Pipes of Pan 1923, Nessus and Dejanira 1920, and Head of a Woman 1931). In these works, as in those of Léger and De Chirico, stylistic references to ancient art-forms are clearly evident. Edward Fry (1985) however, argues that Cubism (which Picasso developed with Georges Braque) may be regarded as an engagement with
the Classical that went beyond the level of style, to a transformative reinvention based on systemic attributes. This reinvention was less immediately apparent than the suggestive reimagining of the look and subject-matter of the antique in works such as Drinking Méninour and Reclining Woman 1933 (see fig. 1). The notion of a ‘systemic Classicism’ is premised on the insight that the stylistic naturalism of ancient Greek art is only superficially mimetic, and is premised on an abstract assembly of features selected in accordance with symbolic associations and mathematical models. The combination of a considered set of formal elements with an illusionistic naturalism is produced by a representational system that Erwin Panofsky (in Spivey 1997, 42) describes as an ‘elastic, dynamic and aesthetically relevant system of relations.’ Spivey (1997, 40) cites intentional anatomical anomalies in works such as the Riace Bronzes (see fig. 2) as examples of artworks where an obsession with formal and relational compositional concerns has ‘overtaken the wish to “describe” its viewers with an illusion of reality.’ He warns that the ‘admission of such formalism in Classical sculpture adds a qualifying gloss to any idea that the Greek revolution was simply the triumph of naturalism’ (Spivey 1997, 40).

Fry’s argument is premised on a supposition of ‘densely mediated relationships between thought and experience’ as a core feature of Classicism (Fry 1988, 296). He proposes that the ‘special achievement of Cubism, and above all of Picasso, was to reinvent classical, mediated representation, and in that reinvention also to transform it so as to reveal its central conventions and mental processes’ (Fry 1988, 296). The gradual abbreviation from the Renaissance onwards of the Classical to a purely stylistic norm obscured the complex representational system from which it originated. Cubism rejected the idealised naturalism of Neoclassical iconography, obscured the complex representational system from which it originated. Cubism rejected the idealised naturalism of Neoclassical iconography, but emphasized the relational combination of conceptually determined formal elements underlying Classical art. Defining the Cubist project as ‘reflexive self-demonstration’, Fry locates memory at the core of the artistic temperament. In the Cubist project, formal description was not determined by the artist’s individual style, but by the problem of how to represent a specific subject. A systemic approach, and an unconventional methodology is not based on establishing an antithetical relationship between abstract and recognizable elements, or a transition from one to another, but on a synthesis of these.

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2. The Cubism of Picasso and Braque differs from the ‘Cubist style’ of their contemporaries who adopted Cubist binding as a recipe for stylistization equally applicable to any of painting and sculpture’s traditional themes (André Lhote’s sketch – see fig. 3 – detailing the procedure for describing a glass in Cubist terms demonstrates how easily analytic Cubism could be made into a unified set of purely formal conventions (see Chipp 1968)). Their approach, which casts Cubism as a ‘general pictorial language’ (Spies 2000, 65), conforms to traditional notions of style as the expression of artistic temperament. In the Demoiselles, Picasso had refuted the notion of style as a supposedly uniquely personal rendition of form can be appropriated and combined with other, dissimilar types, then an original image can be constituted of a limitless variety of forms derived from multiple sources. Picasso had first explored this notion in Les Demoiselles d’Avignon (see fig. 4) by inventing in paint various means of representing the human head as found in Iberian, African, and Archaic Greek sculpture. His first collage, Still Life with Chair Caning (1912) (see fig. 5), features a similar combination of stylistically disparate elements. Where the artist had appropriated these elements by imitating them in the Demoiselles, the collage incorporates industrially manufactured elements such as the cane-print oil cloth and rope into an oil painting. With its printed illusion of wickerwork, the oil cloth reflects Picasso’s imitation of sculptural form in the Demoiselles, and although an ‘alien’ intrusion into the unity of the image, the oil cloth still conforms to the notion of painting as the creation of an illusion. By contrast, the rope framing the image is an actual rope. Its representational function is highly complex as it can refer to a wooden frame, the rim of a tray, or the edge of a café table. As a frame, it reiterates the image’s status as a two-dimensional artwork, but as a rim on a tray it denotes a three-dimensional object, while the canvas’ oval shape bordered by the rope suggests a round table seen in perspective, resulting in an artwork that combines image with object.

3. André Lhote. Sketch demonstrating how to depict a glass by combining formal elements 1912


2. The arrival of an opalescent glow in the bone of the skull, the superficial dimples of the brow, a searing pain in the eye, and another is the dislocation of the spinal cord into a dimple, rather than a pad’ (Spivey 1997, 40).

1. These include “the continuation of the iliac crest around the back of the figure, to divide the rear aspect as emphatically as the front; another is the dislocation of the spinal cord into a dimple, rather than a pad” (Spivey 1997, 40).
CHAPTER 2  SCULPTURAL ASSEMBLAGE AND THE COMPOSITE OBJECT PORTRAIT

The cardboard, sheet-metal, and wire constructions (such as the Guitar and Violin) produced by Picasso in the same year, introduced a method of creating sculpture from pieced-together parts as well as developing the notion of reversible form (see fig. 6). As a result, the various materials (including prefabricated objects) from which the artwork is constructed serve both conceptual and formal functions. While the conceptual impetus for these innovations can be attributed to a systemic Classicism, the formal and material attributes of Cubist collage and Picasso’s assemblages represent the introduction of techniques and creative methodologies of artisans, and so-called ‘primitive’ and pre-Renaissance artists into Modern art practice. Such external and anachronistic appropriation is premised on a

dialectical engagement between previously unrelated parties. Roxana Marcoci (2000) defines the reassessment of the art of one period by artists from another as a type of historical riposte. In this view, anachronistic appropriation is premised upon a re-evaluating of art precedents as contemporaries (see Zizek 1998, 95-6). Marcoci (2000, 19) suggests that the aim of this essentially subjective procedure is to extract “new practices of far greater critical and historical significance than might have resulted from an objective, historicist approach.”

In this view, the engagement between old and new is premised on an understanding of the past as not fixed in history, but fluid and open to continuous re-interpretation. This reflects the manner in which human memory works (see Chapter 1), where the context in which recollection occurs significantly impacts on how it is interpreted, and the extent to which it changes. A similar situation is evident in the Cubist appropriation of techniques and materials that were alien to artistic practice of the period. Braque’s introduction of techniques used by decorators such as stencilling and wood-graining was not limited to borrowing alone, but reflected broader changes in how artists re-evaluated the work of artisans.

External and anachronistic acts of artistic appropriation may have conceptually ironic results, as is evident in an early pre-Modern example of sculptural assemblage, The Reliquary of St. Foy (unknown artists, 10th-11th centuries with later additions, see fig. 7). By the early twentieth century, the production of objects from prefabricated elements had become confined to folk artists and amateurs who lacked the artistic training required to achieve a

4. She cites as an example the interpretive transformation of the work of Constantin Brancusi by contemporary artists such as Richard Pettibone, Christian Alexa, and Tom Sachs. “Brancusi’s imprint on contemporary sculptural practice ranges from the dissemination of furniture-oriented sculpture and the emerging topos of architectural folly to new paradigms for public art ... [as a result, his work] plays a central role in the formation of this historical riposte [and that] many postwar artists engaging in a dialogue with his legacy have real and progressively mired Brancusi’s work” Marcoci 2000, 19). Richard Pettibone responded to Brancusi’s craftsmanship and use of prefabricated form to produce works straddling the traditional divide between art and functional design; Christian Alexa used performance and photography to explore the historical reception of Brancusi’s Endless Column and Table of Silence in Romania; Tom Sachs frequently appropriates the formal motif of the Endless Column. In Charles Needle’s Endless Column of Oklahoma City 1995 the truck used by Timothy McVigh was sculpted from Nabisco Shredded Wheat boxes and sits on a base resembling the Endless Column made from FedEx boxes.

5. The notion of innovation by means of a re-evaluative retrospection also echoes Karl Popper’s ideas on the relation between an institution, its doctrine, and its heretics, where institutions develop to preserve and transmit particular interpretations of the world and members attempting to change the doctrine are expelled as heretics. “But the heretic claims as a rule, that his is the true doctrine of the founder” (Magee 1975, 63).

6. James Hall (2000, 190) cites Picasso and Braque as the most subversive examples of artists whose repudiation of easel-painting and migration to collage and constructed sculpture took the cult of the ‘worker-artist’ to extremes. As such, they “challenged received ideas about craftsmanship as much as they exploited them” (Hall 2000, 19).

7. Pictures and objects produced by means of collage predominate within craft, folk art, and amateur art, with some of the earliest known examples dating from the pre-historic period. Eddie Wolfram (1975, 7) finds a “common ground between the magical potencies that primitive tribes bestowed upon
the naturalistic (observational and idealised) representations on which ‘high-art’ was based. A medieval object, such as the Reliquary of Saint Foy therefore represents a seemingly ‘primitivist’ anti-Classicism compared to the close correlation between formal mimesis, material associations between the single viewpoint and art as an attribute of scientific reason, discouraged equated with the “scientific perfection of art” (Hall 2000, 53; 57). Philosophical and art theoretical rationalism,” that allowed the artist full control of the viewer’s encounter with the image, and was a notion of the image as a cohesive organic whole. The “ability to pictorialize was an index of 8. Herta Wescher’s 1968 comprehensive survey of the modern history of collage. advertising and postcards suggest a general familiarity with collage (Wolfram 1975, 9; 14). Also see that the popularity of photomontage in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century photo-journalism, later Maria Montessori) encouraged creative play in their schools through the use of collage, and to create images of heraldic animals and magical castles in Germany in the seventeenth century.” He totems, seemingly mundane objects in association and the arrangement of scraps of silk on parchment to create images of heraldic animals and magical castles in Germany in the seventeenth century.” He also notes that during the mid-nineteenth-century the German educationalist Friedrich Froebel (and later Maria Montessori) encouraged creative play in their schools through the use of collage, and that the popularity of photomontage in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century photo-journalism, advertising and postcards suggest a general familiarity with collage (Wolfman 1975, 9; 14). Also see Herta Wescher’s 1968 comprehensive survey of the modern history of collage. 8. Since the Renaissance, conventions of art favoured a single viewpoint, a passive viewer, and a notion of the image as a cohesive organic whole. The “ability to pictorialize was an index of rationalism,” that allowed the artist full control of the viewer’s encounter with the image, and was equated with the “scientific perfection of art” (Hall 2000, 53; 57). Philosophical and art theoretical associations between the single viewpoint and art as an attribute of scientific reason, discouraged of the objects and materials used in the reliquary’s construction is antithetical to the same illusionist conventions of representation that the Cubists’ project criticized. The reliquary was constructed to contain a material remnant of the saint and provide the worshipper with a visual focus of veneration, and is characterized by significant disjunctions between its subject, form, and medium. Although it celebrates a saint who was martyred for refusing to worship images of pagan gods, it takes the form of an anthropomorphic icon that invites veneration (the figure is crowned and enthroned), and incorporates materials representative of pre-Christian worship.9 The incongruous use of Roman or ‘pagan’ objects in Christian iconography during this era10 reflects the notion of anachronistic appropriation as a hijacking gesture that effectively displaces the source of the appropriated element from its prior and proper hermeneutic context (see Marconi 2000, 19). In the context of the medieval reliquary, the intaglios represent the Catholic Church’s attainment of the political authority that had previously been held by the Roman Empire.11 It is difficult to assess the extent to which the artist(s) that produced the reliquary was/ Were aware of the conceptual complexity of these assemblages, and by extension, whether the intaglios evident to a modern viewer were intentional. It is arguable that the intaglios were part of a common symbolic currency, and widely understood as representative of power and authority. In the same manner various material remnants of saints were believed to represent the earthly presence of spiritual beings. What is significant is the incorporation of emblems of antiquity into a Christian iconography, at a time when the cultural values of ancient Greece and Rome, as expressed in these objects, were being condemned.

The ironic juxtaposition of seemingly incompatible elements is particularly characteristic of Picasso’s collages and assemblages. While Brancusi and Jean Arp preferred to use prefabricated modes of viewing conducive to active audience participation (which was disparaged as confusing to the viewer). The emphasis on the formal, material, and conceptual unity of the image served a hermeneutic function: the ideal was to enable the viewer to accurately comprehend the meaning intended by the artist, by exposing them to as little visual disjunction and conceptual ambiguity as possible. 9. For example, the head is believed to be a portrait of a late Roman Emperor sculpted in the 4th-5th century, while the robe and throne are decorated with ancient Roman intaglios engraved with images of rulers and motifs from Classical mythology (the body was carved from yew wood in the 9th century when the reliquary was first assembled). 10. Examples of religious objects that incorporate Roman intaglios include the Cross of Lothar, 10th century: the “A of Charlemagne” c. 11th-12th centuries; the Reliquary of Pepin c.9th century with multiple subsequent alterations; and the Pulpit of Henry II in the palace chapel at Aachen, 11th century. The “A of Charlemagne” features a cumelium intaglio of Victory on a shield, while a similar intaglio on the Reliquary of Pepin depicts Apollo. The Pulpit of Henry II incorporates six large ivory panels dating from the sixth century that feature pagan subjects (see Sekula 2003). 11. This symbolisms is particularly evident in the example of the Cross of Lothar (10th century, unknown artists’ gold, silver, gemstones) where representations of worldly and spiritual authority occur separately on the front and reverse of a sculpted cross. Kenneth Clark (1974, 19) observes a clear stylistic disjunction between the elaborate arrangement of gold and gemstones around a cameo of the Emperor Augustus on one side and a simple linear engraving in silver on the other.
objects literally (a mirror to represent a mirror, newspapers to suggest a newspaper). Picasso’s choices were more often driven by the conceptual potential of unexpected combinations and/or substitutions of material and objects. In his sculptural assemblages such as She-Goat in 1950 (see fig. 8) the constituent forms are largely derived from prefabricated objects that have been altered to varying degrees. While the sculpture is constructed from disparate parts, the artist’s primary concern is the creation of a comprehensive whole. The sculpture did not gradually emerge from an ‘accidental’ process of accumulating random objects. Instead, Picasso started with a mental (and possibly also a sketched) image of a goat before proceeding to identify correspondences between various parts of the goat and the attributes of objects and materials from which to construct the sculpture. These are not ‘found objects’ in the Surrealist sense where an object’s selection is randomly determined. Each component was chosen specifically for the role it would play within the whole, with all elements “perceived in their reciprocity” (Spies 2000, 272). Many of Picasso’s sculptural assemblages of the 1950’s (such as She-Goat, Small Owl, and Baboon and Young) combine an overall formal coherence and a strong illustrative character that contradict the accumulative and abstract method of its construction. Defined by Spies (2000, 270) as ‘veiled’ assemblages, the resulting interpretive process is premised on the recognition that two seemingly incompatible representational systems have been combined in syntheses of simplicity and complexity, and reality and abstraction. This is an inherently reflexive art-form that draws attention to its method of construction on the one hand, and the creation of a single cohesive whole, on the other. As such, these works come close to the “elastic, dynamic and aesthetically relevant system of relations” that Panofsky (in Spivey 1997, 42) identifies below the naturalistic surface of ancient Greek sculpture.

A similar concern with creating a cohesive whole is evident in the collages produced by Max Ernst (1891-1976). Unlike the intentional incongruity of Dada collages, Ernst’s work is distinguished by the formal consistency and logical cohesion of his imagery, and the transformation of his materials. 16 In a series of images produced through the alteration of images taken from a scientific catalogue
of anthropological, microscopic, mineralogical, and other objects. Ernst restricts his source material to a specific graphic type that, while still common in advertising, was increasingly being supplanted by photographs. His preference for such imagery is essential to his work was partly guided by technical considerations, as their strong graphic quality made them easier to incorporate seamlessly into collages, but also reveals a “fascination with the obsolete” that explores the “tension between the Now of art and an outmoded, trival Then” (Spies 1991, 78). While Ernst’s complete integration of his elements to produce an apparently seamless whole echoes the formal and stylistic unity of Picasso’s ‘veiled’ assemblages, his work lacks the spatial complexity and expanded potential for ‘visual punning’ that occurs when an object in an assemblage is read alternately as ‘itself’ and as part of a whole.

In the more recent example of Damian Ortega’s (1967–) Controller of the Universe, 2007 (see fig. 11) the constituent elements are neither altered, nor fused together. Yet, the work echoes Picasso’s and Ernst’s in significant aspects, by creating a coherent whole with a spatial interplay between two- and three-dimensions. The sculpture consists of a collection of suspended hand-tools, creating a single composition suggestive of an ‘explosion’ of tools. By using a limited category of elements, Ortega creates a sense of visual unity analogous to Ernst’s preference for a specific graphic type. The ironic juxtaposition of using hand-tools to create an artwork that is not ‘created’ in the conventional sense recalls Ernst’s evocation of the past in the present through his use of obsolescent materials. By constructing a disassembled assembly, Ortega emphasizes how the artwork as an apparently cohesive whole is constructed by establishing spatial, formal, and conceptual relations between its individual components. Authorship in this sense is predicated less on unique origination, than on the organization and manipulation of various elements. His use of physical proximity as opposed to physical attachment to create a cohesive whole, evokes both the

their pragmatic meaning and function by selecting and signing them, thus spiriting them into the aesthetic realm. The concept of reworking posits a distortion of original meanings.”

17. This series includes 1 Sheet of Copper 1 Sheet of Zinc 1 Sheet of Rubber ... Two Ambiguous Figures, c. 1920 (see fig. 10) where the selective emphasis of some elements and obliteration of others by means of added colour and line, creates two main groups of shapes – each of which is punctuated by a pair of goggles – to suggest two machinlike ‘figures’.

18. This process of assembly by disassembly resembles the mutated and amnesic singer Thamyris, whose poetic makeup becomes apparent when the Muses deprive him of his divine voice and ability to play the kithara.

19. Commenting on Ortega’s Cosmic Thing 2002, (which consists of suspended parts of a Volkswagen Beetle), Bruno Latour (2007, 139) notes that “For any piece of machinery, to be drawn to spaces by an engineer, on one hand, or to remain functional without rusting and rotting away, on the other, requires us to accept two very different types of existence. To exist as a part inter partes inside the isotopic space invented by the long history of geometry, still-life painting, and technical drawing is not at all the same as existing as an entity that has to resist decay and corruption.”


10. Max Ernst. 1 Sheet of Copper 1 Sheet of Zinc 1 Sheet of Rubber ... Two Ambiguous Figures, c. 1919/20. Collage, gouache, tinta china. Collection of Judith and Michael Steinhardt, New York

two-dimensional space where technical drawings such as ‘exploded views’ are constructed and the three-dimensional space in which the viewer encounters the work, and notions of expanding space associated with the theory of the ‘big bang’. Similar to the co-existence of abstraction and illustration in Picasso’s ‘veiled’ assemblages Ortega’s objects are presented as occupying two incompatible modes of existence. On the one hand, the work refers to the scientific theory of the ‘big bang’ and on the other to demiurgic creation myths. The suspended hand-tools suggest creative production, but suspended in their ‘impossible’ hybrid of two- and three-dimensional space, their creations remain figments of the viewer’s imagination. Ortega’s deliberate confusion of seemingly incompatible categories of ideas, methods of representation, and space, echoes core aspects of Cubism.

The fracturing of pictorial space that the Cubists had experimented with in their analytic phase, had, as its corollary, a subversive interpretative shift from clarity to uncertainty: instead of enhancing comprehension, form presents a visual and conceptual puzzle to be solved, for the content of the image to be revealed. In this sense, form and content are linked, hence Spies’ (2000, 65) description of Cubism as a “linguistic system for establishing a relationship between form and content” premised on a necessary iconographic reduction. In Picasso’s collages and assemblages, suggestion and association are reciprocal: material fragments allude to their previous identities, while concurrently acquiring new meanings through their incorporation into a new context. The resulting interpretive
process is premised on the revelation that seemingly incompatible visual elements and representational systems have been combined in syntheses of simplicity and complexity, reality and abstraction. Poggi (1988) renders this representational strategy as a game, and argues that in the collages and constructions the viewer (player) cannot “read” all of the pictorial forms at once. As the interpretive strategy is continuously shifting, disclosure takes place over time. “The question of pictorial unity itself is thus displaced from the collage to the experience of the viewer, where it is suspended and dispersed in the time of interpretive analysis, like a series of moves on a board game” (Poggi 1988, 320). Picasso’s “game” is premised on a realization that the identity and meaning of the constituent parts of an image are potentially fluid and variable. Fluidity is achieved by the combination of elements on the basis of formal and conceptual reciprocity, differentiation through intentional stylistic variation, and the creation of ambiguous images by means of reversible form.

Artists such as Man Ray (1890-1976) and Sam Smith (1908-1983) explore such conceptual play through sculptural assemblage. In Ray’s Gilf 1921 (see fig. 12) an inversion of the functionalities of its constituent elements (a flat-iron and upholstery tacks) produces a new, and essentially useless, object.20 The title emphasizes both its pathos as inoperative and the aggressive or absurd act of bestowing a gift of an iron that will tear fabric, or upholstery tacks incapable of securing fabric. Smith’s sculptures incorporate a similar combination of humour, pathos, and aggression. While Ray constructed Gift from prefabricated objects, Smith combines such elements with others he has carved from wood and painted. His largely figurative depictions of humans, animals, and mythological beasts (such as Harpy Candleholder 1972 (see fig. 13)) recall the embellished polychrome sculptures of the Greek Archaic period.21 Smith’s approach to sculpture reflects his experience as a handymen and toymaker, and recalls the Cubist appropriation of the techniques of decorative and folk art. While some components are painted in brightly coloured patterns, others feature naturalistic details (such as eyes, lips, skin tones, and hair). Smith’s use of decorative colour and pattern is in line with the period closely associated with the visual languages of utility, entertainment, folk art, and religious statuary, and on the other with Robert Rauschenberg’s (1925-2008) fusion of painting and sculpture in his combines.22 His visual paradoxes extend to his subject-matter.23

20. The sculpture conforms to the type of “non-functioning machine” that was also explored by Francis Picabia and Max Ernst.

21. While sculpture from this period has largely lost its colour and added elements in other materials (such as gold and silver jewellery on the举办 and bronze weapons in depictions of gods and warriors) reconstructions based on traces of pigmentation suggest that these works were not only brightly coloured, but also combined naturalistic elements (such as facial features) with elaborate patterning (see fig. 14 and also Chapter 3 fig. 19).

22. Rauschenberg’s combines such as Monogram, 1955-59 reveal the extent to which the artist fused the material object with the pictorial surface to create a synthesis of sculpture and painting in which both art-forms remain clearly identifiable. Branden Joseph (2006, 50) argues that while early works (such as an untitled work with a light box of 1954, Chess, 1954, and RED 1954) transform the metaphor of painting from an isolated window to a physical wall, with the development of the combines, “his “walls” did not evolve into environments, displays, or architectural design ... Instead, they folded back upon themselves in a status somewhat more akin to furniture - “cabinet forms” insisting on their hybrid existence between (or as both) painting and sculpture, 2- and 3-D.”

by, for example, presenting a harpy (a creature which endlessly torments its victim) as an apparent source of visual and fantastical amusement, but also as a caricature which describes a human subject in terms of the attributes associated with a mythological concept. In combining art with craft, and humorous play with social commentary, Smith reflects the toy as a source of imaginative play and the sculpture as an object for contemplation evoking a sense of conceptual play.

The methodological, conceptual, and hermeneutic attributes of sculptural assemblage as devised by Picasso and developed by artists such as Ortega, Ray, and Smith provide a general framework for a comparison between oral and visual constructive methods. For the more specific aim of creating a visual translation of formulaic Homeric poetics, in my body of practical works this understanding of sculptural assemblage was combined with the notion of the “composite object portrait” to create a series of sculptures based on twelve dramatic personae whose attributes and functions in the plot elucidate Homer’s principal heroes and their epics.
CHAPTER 2 SCULPTURAL ASSEMBLAGE AND THE COMPOSITE OBJECT PORTRAIT

The composite object portrait

The constructive method, reversible form, and dialectical (playful) hermeneutics, that are so important in Picasso's work, also invite significant comparison with aspects of the so-called ‘composite portraits’ of the sixteenth century Milanese painter, Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1526/7-93) (see fig 15). The composite portrait in turn, reflects the mythological exploitation of the poetic or visual personification of abstract ideas. In images such as his Seasons of 1563 and the Elements of 1566, complex sets of ideas are visually expressed through representations of portrait heads of various members of the Hapsburg imperial family (including the emperor) as the elements and seasons, composed of assembled symbolic elements. Arcimboldo established conceptual relationships based on obvious correspondences (such as birds and air), and more obscure symbolic

23. Each painting consists of an assemblage of natural objects such as fruit or animals arranged in such a manner that the illusion of a human portrait is created. As designer and producer of the elaborately costumed festivals of the Hapsburg court, Arcimboldo specialized in the ritualised transformation of the banal into the imaginative. His innovations were very popular, and many subsequent minor painters continued to produce ‘Arcimboldesques’. He became obscure during the 17th and 18th centuries, and most ‘Arcimboldesques’ produced after his death were simplifications of the original idea of the composite portrait, meant for amusement and decoration.

24. The still-prevalent representation of justice as a blindfolded woman holding scales is an example of such personification, as is the depiction of the Biad and the Odyssey as female figures in images of the Apotheosis of Homer (see Chapter 3).

Left and far left: 15.
Giuseppe Arcimboldo,
Summer 1563. Oil on board. 47 x
50.8cm; and Fire,
1566. Oil on board. 66.5 x 50.8cm. Both Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

25. Summer is paired with Fire as both are hot and dry; Spring and Air are hot and wet; Winter and Water are wet and cold; Autumn and Earth are cold and dry (see Kriegskorte 1988, 24-5).

26. The artist was ideally suited to the project, as almost all of his ‘creations, for that matter, formed part of large series of images; the stained glass windows for the Duomo of Milan, the Como tapestries, the processions’ (Alfons 1987, 73).

27. ‘Surely, in 1555, invested the walls of two apartments in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence with parallel depictions drawn from Greek mythology and the family history of the Medici. In these frescoes as well, the four elements and the four seasons act as guards to the duke of Tuscany’ (Alfons 1987, 72).

28. Scientific organization of the Emperor’s numismatic collections had been done by Wolfgang Lazus, whose search for ancient tools had turned up a manuscript generally referred to as De Imaginis Mundi (most probably authored by Honorius Lazarus around 1090 CE) which contained a theory on the transmutation of the elements into one another (see Alfons 1987, 74). A diagram from Isidore of Seville’s De Natura Rerum (approx. 600 CE) illustrates the relationships between the elements and the seasons (see fig. 16).
CHAPTER 2 SCULPTURAL ASSEMBLAGE AND THE COMPOSITE OBJECT PORTRAIT

each person with a season. Yet, despite their unique content and method of composition, Arcimboldo’s composite portraits still conform to the expectation that a portrait should refer to the human head. By contrast, Francis Picabia’s (1879-1953) “machine-drawings” provide a more abstract example of the composite portrait, while paying greater attention to the description of the core attributes of a subject’s character. In his 1915 “caricature” of the photographer Alfred Stieglitz (Here, This is Stieglitz/Rith and Love), Picabia represented his subject as a camera-like contraption composed of various mechanical elements (see fig. 17). While each element represents an aspect of Stieglitz’s personality, the relationships Picabia establishes between the machine’s deformed and inoperable components provide an underlying critique of his subject (hence Picabia’s labelling of the portrait as a caricature).29

The description of an individual therefore does not occur by means of creating an accurate physiological likeness, but instead, through a symbolic evocation of characteristic personality traits. The process is dependent on the viewer’s ability to recognize the original function of each element, and to decipher the significance of that function within the context of the image. As noted above in the discussion of Ray’s Gift (1921), the disconnection or defeat of an object’s functionality draws attention to its now confounded identity and purpose. This can elicit an emotional response to an object (such as sympathy) from a viewer that is usually reserved for animate subjects. This approach evokes the use of objects in the Classical tradition of Heroic portraiture as markers of identity and function.30 Such objects could also symbolize more complex ideas. For example, the singer Thamyris who was deprived of his poetic skills by the Muses in the Iliad (2.594-600), was frequently depicted in art and literature with a broken lyre (see fig. 18).31 Biles (2011, 12-15) argues that the association of Cubist collage is represented in terms of his own, but also in terms of Cornell’s, formal commentary, irrationalism, nihilism, and the ready-made.”

Picabia’s incorporation of Stieglitz’s profession as photographer into the symbolic depiction of his character is based on a fusion of Stieglitz’s personality with his activities. In Joseph Cornell’s (1903-1972) A Forest for Jean Gris, 1953-4 (see fig. 19), one of the inventors of Cubist collage is represented in terms of his own, but also in terms of Cornell’s, formal

29. “Picabia theorized all attempts to create the appearance of normal perspective: the anomalous lever and crossing frame-work are parallel to the drawing’s surface, but lens and the film box are twisted slightly toward the viewer, and the bellows is positioned impossibly within the film box itself. Given these distortions, the lens certainly will not slide easily into the box. Moreover, the bellows should connect the lens to the film compartment ... but it] has been severed from the lens, underscoring the incompatibility of the form to be photographed, the “ideal,” and the actual medium of artistic creation, the film. Cut from its mountings, the bellows sags simply to the left, suggesting a condition of mechanical and artistic impotence that is reinforced by the inability of the lens and the film to come together. Finally, the lever and handle that stand prominently in the background bear no apparent relationship to the operation of the camera ... Paul Schweizer, an art scholar, first recognized these objects as a brake lever and an automobile gearshift. The brake is engaged while the shift is stuck in neutral, further affirming the impotence of this machine, its lack of power, and its inability to move or accomplish anything. This is no state-of-the-art machine. Clearly, this camera will not work” (Rozaitis 1994, 47-48).

30. Spivey (1997, 46) for example, notes that recognition of the depicted deity was facilitated by means of personal traits (such as Apollo’s hairstyle), but neglects to mention the bow and bow held by the god in the image used to illustrate his point (Spivey 1997, 47, figure 20). (See also Chapter 3).

31. Pausanias reported that Polygnotus depicted Thamyris with a broken lyre in his mural at Delphi (10.30.8) and in sculpted form on Mount Helikon (9.30.2). Biles (2011, 13) notes that “Whereas Homer had the Muses punish Thamyris by causing him to forget his skill at playing the kithara, in the fifth century that element of the tale had developed further: Thamyris’ lyre was destroyed in the process of his undoing. The scene is preserved on an attic hydria and was vividly described in Sophocles’ Thamyris.”

32. νοικ ἐ ἀμα μέταν ἄνθρωπον παρεσπερετη σελήνη, ἐπεπυμνωμένον τῶν ἕλιβρων καὶ τῶν οὐκέτι οὐκέτι ἐνός τῶν θρόμων διακεχερεύνων.”

But now when you see him making a fool of himself, you feel no pity; Though his paws have popped out, and he’s all out of tune, And his joints are agape “(Biles 2011, 14).
concerns. Diane Waldman (2002, 100) for example, notes that Cornell appropriates details from Gris’s paintings to make his own statement about paper collage. While Gris’s work reflects a preoccupation with form, composition, and a literal use of prefabricated elements (such as newsprint), Cornell’s work is distinguished by its playfulness and symbolic imagery. The rectangular box, image of a bird (a white cockatoo), maps, stamp, wooden dowel, and toys (a cork ball, a folded handwritten note, and a metal ring to which a piece of string is attached, looped around a horizontal metal bar) recur in Cornell’s other works. Like his portraits of women (such as a collage for The Crystal Cage (Portrait of Berenice) c. 1942, and mixed media constructions Pennyl Arcade Portrait of Laurence Bacall 1945-6, Custodian II (Silent Dedication to MM [Marilyn Monroe]) 1963), and his Decoys series of the 1950’s based on Emily Dickinson’s writings, the Juan Gris series was premised on a completely personal interpretive response to his subject. While each box isolates and compresses its contents to create a private poetic world, the majority formed part of larger series of works. These were constructed over decades or more, included formal and thematic variation and repetition, and explored contemporary art, literature and media (such as the theatre and film) through the appropriation of seemingly sentimental scraps and fragments.

Cornell’s interpretation of Gris makes no attempt to provide an objective depiction of a subject, but is based on an exploration of the influence of the subject on its interpreter. The art-work is therefore as self-reflexive as it is an exploration of Gris’ methodology. As such, it conforms neither to Arcimboldo’s almost complete submersion of his subjects into his metaphorical constructs, nor to Picabia’s symbolic and satiric depiction of his photographer subject by means of references to malfunctioning photographic equipment. Instead, Cornell combines a careful analysis and representation of Gris’ work with idiosyncratic features of his own (such as the box and the parrot). Although widely separated by history, aspects of Arcimboldo, Picabia, and Cornell’s approaches are reflected in A Catalogue of Shapes, with the series of twelve composite object portraits constructed to create a visual translation of a formulaic Homeric poetics. These include references to Arcimboldo’s reciprocal system of individual, yet interrelated artworks; Picabia’s use of functional (and disfunctional) objects, such as machines, to express character traits; and Cornell’s exploration of another artist’s creative methodology in terms of his own.

In the representational systems discussed, concept and form are interrelated, and include combinatory, and organizational procedures. While each approach makes use of appropriated and/or naturalistic forms and objects, the resulting artworks are wholly fabricated in the sense that they comprise combinations of elements possible only within the context of the artwork. These methodologies involve the development of symbolic systems wherein each individual element retains a degree of autonomy while forming part of a larger whole. Elements within these systems are reciprocally related within the context of the work, as well as their previous identities, thereby creating complex series of internal and external allusions. The hermeneutics of these works are based on interactive and continuously shifting interpretive processes in which form and material are invested with meaning. As a symbolic representation of a subject, the composite portrait records a transaction between artist and subject. The viewer who interprets the artwork by ‘decoding’ its allusive iconography participates in, and extends, this dialectical engagement. The next chapter introduces a brief overview of traditional portraits of Homer and the representation of Homeric subjects, before describing the structure, construction, and iconography of A Catalogue of Shapes, as a visual translation of a formulaic Homer using the understanding of sculptural assemblage discussed above, and the notion of the composite object portrait.
CHAPTER 3

Homeric Iconographies

This project is a continuation of a long tradition in the visual arts of depicting Homeric subjects. It deviates from that tradition by attempting to materially represent a contemporary understanding of Homer and the Homeric epics that is still largely devoid of an appropriate iconography. While A Catalogue of Shapes lacks the figurative and/or illustrative attributes historically associated with representations of the Homeric, it draws on, refers to, and transforms aspects of artworks associated with the poems dating from the Greek Geometric period (c. 1050-700 BCE) to the twentieth century.

Historically, the visual representation of subjects related to the Iliad and the Odyssey belong to either of two categories: one is the representation of the figure of Homer, the other, the predominantly narrative/illustrative depiction of scenes and events from the poems. Scholars such as Katharine Esdaile (1912) and C. P. Jones (1982) describe the artistic representation of the figure of Homer in antiquity, and Richard Kannicht (1982) and Anthony Snodgrass (1998)1 the historic representation of scenes from the Homeric epics.

Representations of the figure of Homer have historically provided an accurate reflection of prevailing notions of Homeric poetry. Graziosi (2007, 2-3) for example, draws a correlation between “ancient (and, indeed, modern) discussions of the figure of Homer” and “the significance and meaning of the Homeric poems to specific audiences.” Ancient writers recorded multiple portraits of Homer in different visual formats,2 and Esdaile (1912, 303-5) provides a comprehensive list of such references in her study of coins featuring images of the poet. She identifies three stages in the development of the iconography of Homer on the coins (see fig. 1) which she argues, reflect that of other art-forms (such as sculpture and painting), and “correspond to all that we know from other sources of the development of

1. Snodgrass’ conclusion that images from the 8th and 7th centuries could not have been influenced by the Homeric poems is premised on the assumption that the Iliad and the Odyssey were composed by one poet sometime during the late eighth or early seventh centuries.
2. These include free-standing and relief sculptures, paintings, mosaics, coins, engraved cups, and intaglios.

41
Greek portrait art” (Esdaile 1912, 325). While the attributes of old age and blindness were well established characteristics of descriptions of Homer by the Hellenistic period, these are generally absent from portraits on coins of preceding periods.3 The persistence of these traits in the subsequent iconographic tradition reflects the influence of the increased interest in the figure of Homer stemming from Hellenistic scholarship and the Homeric biographical tradition. The Hellenistic cult of Homer claimed the poet to be the pre-eminent source of wisdom and knowledge (see Zanker 1995). Visually expressed, a relief by Archelaos of Priene (see fig. 3) depicts Homer as a cult statue, enthroned, bearded and bearing a strong resemblance to contemporaneous artistic and literary characterizations of Zeus. His reputation during the Hellenistic era had been expanded to such an extent that Homer was placed in a class entirely of his own.4 This transformation from epic poet to transcendental source of all poetry resulting in “the creed of Homeric classicism” according to which “what men were concerned to celebrate was the inspiration Homer had given, and was giving still, not only to epic poetry but to poetry and literature as a whole” (Brink 1972, 552). This Hellenic construct proved to be highly durable: in J. A. D. Ingres’ painting The Apotheosis of Homer of 1827 (see fig. 2) the artist appropriated the ideological authority of Homer to great theoretical effect.5 By installing Homer as the embodiment of nineteenth century Neoclassicism, Ingres cemented the

3. She notes that while the figure of Homer was closely associated with the attributes of age and blindness, the iconographic tradition does not always reflect this. The coins provide a wealth of information as to what the earlier (pre-Hellenistic) Homeric type was like, as his head or figure appears on the coins of no fewer than eight Greek cities, ranging in date from c. 307 BCE to the third century CE. It is noteworthy that, whereas most of the Hellenistic busts and reliefs represent the poet as bald with the pathos of age added to that of blindness, none of the coins represent him in this way (Esdaile 1912, 403).

4. “Homer had come to stand for poetry, not only one poetic genre. Thus Plato had contrasted the rational world-view with the poetic or ‘Homeric.’ Aristotle had found in Homer the origins of drama, tragic and comic. Homer is the archetype of the serious as well as the comic spirit in Greek poetry” (Brink 1972, 384).

5. In Ingres’ painting, two female figures representing his epics are seated at Homer’s feet. The inclusion of spherical female figures personifying the Iliad and the Odyssey in depictions of Homer are characteristic of the iconography of an apotheosized Homer, such as the relief from Priene, where they are two little girls, a silver goblet from Herculaneum, where an eagle carries Homer to heaven flanked by female personifications of the Iliad and the Odyssey, and the fragmented remains of sculptures and plinths engraved with epigrams suggesting sculptural groups representing the poet and his poems (see Jones 1985).
association of the image of Homer with the ideals and aesthetics of academic Classicism. Subsequent artistic retorts to Ingres’ *Apotheosis* rejected his canon, but not the notion of Homer as its archetype.

Depictions of events and characters from the Homeric epics historically exhibit greater iconographic variation than portraits of Homer. Art historians debate whether art from the Geometric and Archaic periods could have been informed by artists’ knowledge of the poems.6 Hanza Bouzeková and Jan Bouzek (1966) compiled a survey of various theories relating to correlations between early Homeric epic and art of the Mycenaean and Geometric periods. These range from perceived similarities between the stylized descriptions of human bodies in art, with the poet’s emphasis on specific body parts, parallels between structural and compositional patterning in decoration and the poems, to thematic resemblances. The absence of inscriptions and the abstract nature of art from these periods make such comparisons difficult to prove. The emergence of writing in the late Archaic period, enabled artists to clearly designate their subjects as depictions of topics from the Trojan Cycle by means of inscriptions alongside images.7 Such depictions are widespread, with the Homeric epics clearly attributable as major sources.8 Portrayals of scenes and characters from the epics and Homeric characters occur across art-forms, and range from illustrations of specific events (such as Priam visiting Achilles to ransom Hektor’s body) to general themes (such as battles between Greeks and Trojans) to artistic innovations (such as Achilles and Ajax playing a board game). Susan Woodford (2003, 116-119) notes that, while no literary counterpart of Achilles and Ajax playing a game has been found, this theme (which first appeared in the mid 6th century BCE) became a popular topic for vase painters. The pairing of this image with a depiction of Leda, Tyndareus, and the Dioscuri (Castor and Polydeuces) on an Attic black figure amphora of c. 540-30 by Exekias (?-c.525 BCE)9 has been interpreted as revealing the artist’s interest in the daily activities of heroes (see fig. 4 and Woodford 2003, 118). However, the image may arguably represent one of the primary underlying themes of the Iliad, which Nagy (1979) identified as the contest to be ‘the best of the Achaeans’ (in Achilles’ absence, Ajax is the strongest Greek hero).


7. Kannicht (1982, 76) notes how images on objects such as an Attic basin from Thebes dating from the third quarter of the eighth century (see fig. 5) and an Attic oinochoe in Munich which dates from the third quarter of the eighth century, both feature decoration depicting what could be interpreted as scenes from the epics (either the abduction of Helen by Paris, Jason and Medea, or the departing Odysseus greeting Penelope on the basin, and Odysseus’ shipwreck on the oinochoe). He argues that the hermeneutic problem of these images is their openness to multiple interpretation and communication, meaning that attempts to conclusively classify them as depictions of Homeric themes will fail. By comparison, images on objects from the seventh century onwards are clearly recognizable as Homeric due to inscriptions identifying their subjects. The majority of seventh century depictions appear to draw on key events from the larger Trojan cycle, such as the wooden horse and Neoptolemos’ murder of Hektor’s son Astyanax.

8. In the Chroanthropy of Pausias a handbook on literature compiled either in the second century CE or between 412-485 CE and reproduced as part of the introductory material in codex Venetus A of Homer’s Iliad the Trojan cycle starts with the Cyprian, the ‘big Iliad, the Little Iliad (which comprises three portions known as the Achilleis, Little Iliad, and Epylosis), the Neust

9. The majority of seventh century depictions appear to draw on easily recognizable events from the Cycle, such as the wooden horse, Neoptolemos’ murder of Hektor’s son, and the blinding of Polyphemus. Iliadic scenes were either less popular during this period, or are more difficult to identify, but the combination of inscriptions with the figurative illusionism of late Archaic and Classical art resulted in visual depictions of narratives (including the Iliadic) that can be more confidently categorized as such by art historians.

10. Woodford (2003, 116) suggests that Exekias’ example is the first known depiction of the theme of Achilles and Ajax playing a game. Later versions include Athena standing between the heroes and/or fighting warriors on either side. Exekias’ use of Achilles’ helmet to give him height over Ajax was rarely copied. Later versions tend to show both heroes either helmeted or bare-headed. The scene featuring the Dioscuri did not share the popularity of this theme and remained rare.


Il. poet asks the Muses to name the best of the Achaeans and their horses (12.11.2.768-70), but as Achilles is a demigod who wears armour forged by a god, he ultimately

2.768-70), but as Achilles is a demigod who wears armour forged by a god, he ultimately claims the title. As this rivalry does not take the form of Greek heroes physically fighting each other, it cannot be visually expressed in this manner. By contrast, two heroes playing a game symbolises amiable contestation. In formal terms, this reflects the Homeric strategy of establishing ‘sympathetic antitheses’ to describe one character in terms of another (see Chapter 1).

Roman artists appropriated Homeric themes together with Greek art and literature. Works such as a series of wall paintings from a house on the Esquiline Hill in Rome, dating from the second half of the first century BCE, reveal a detailed knowledge of the Homeric epic background (Beard and Henderson 2001, 53). From the Medieval to the early Renaissance period, depictions of Homeric themes were largely confined to illuminations in manuscript editions of the poems (such as the Laestrygonians of Od.10.82-199). By focusing on the exotic places the hero visits in the course of his journey home, the paintings transform the long corridor in which they appear into a mythical space through which the viewer travels. The identification of many characters in the painting with Greek script may suggest that the work is a direct Roman copy of a lost Greek original. However, as Mary Beard and John Henderson (2001, 54) argue, the writing intentionally identifies the image as the Greek Odyssey and may consequently reflect the cultural interplay between Greece and Rome. Moreover, the formal treatment of the landscapes echo the disruption of the conventional pictorial hierarchies of background and foreground, and the artist’s reorientation of the epic story itself, by encouraging the viewer to explore the significance of the minor events in the epic background (Beard and Henderson 2001, 53).

From the Medieval to the early Renaissance period, depictions of Homeric themes were largely confined to illuminations in manuscript editions of the poems (such as the translations by Leontius Pilatus (?-1366) done at the request of Petrarch (1304-74) in 1360-62). In Western Europe, the poems disappeared from popular culture, but the name ‘Homer’ did not. Philip Ford (2006, 1) notes that although Homer’s poetry was lost to Western Europe, the name Homer remained a byword for the inspired poet. Renewed interest in Homer is evident in the work of early humanists such as Angelo Poliziano (1454-94) and the Byzantine scholar James Lascaris (1445, 1534). Ford (2006, 2) points out that while readers of the altior principe of Homer, which appeared in Florence in 1488, admired the Iliad and the Odyssey as sources of all the arts, sciences, and philosophical schools, they were nonetheless put off by the formal aspects of the poems – the use of epithets, formulaic expressions, and repetitions. The association of Homer with scholarship, knowledge, and rationality persisted throughout the Renaissance and into the nineteenth century. During this period, academies of art (such as the Roman Accademia di San Luca, the Florentine Accademia del Disegno, the Carracci Accademia degli Incamminati, the French Académie Royale and its successor, the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts) were

11. The comparison of Ajax to Achilles occurs at the conclusion of the Catalogue of Ships where the poet asks the Muses to name the best of the Achaeans and their horses (ll. 2.761-62).

12. By pairing this image with a depiction of the demigod Polydeuces with his human twin Castor on the rear, Exekias emphasizes both the similarities and the differences between Achilles and Ajax on which their rivalry is premised.

13. These are ms lat. 7880(1) and 7880(2) in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

14. The altior principe contains the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Homeric Hymns, the Battle of the Frogs and Mice, the Herodotean and Plutarchian Lives of Homer, and an essay by Dio Chrysostom. An epitite by the editor, Bernardo Necchi to Piero de’ Medici represents the only significant Latin explanation of the manuscript’s contents (see Ford 2006). While not direct translations, narratives based on the Trojan War, such as John Lydgate’s 15th century The Siege of Troy (see fig. 10) were also produced.
closely associated with the imitation of the antique. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the core doctrine of the academy had been narrowed down to a canon of “select antique sculptures and in subjects culled primarily from the Bible and the classics on the assumption that this ideal, like these subjects, constituted the excellence and pre-eminence of Western civilization” (Goldstein 1996, 251). The manner in how approved topics, such as Ajax defying the gods as described in Od. 4.499-511 (see fig. 11), should be interpreted, were cemented in the academy through competitions, such as the grand prix de l’Académie Royale, in which contestants were required to interpret a Classical theme in accordance with fixed criteria such as “action, setting, and psychological keynote” (Mullarkey 2005).

The institutional interpretation of the Homeric, like the academic understanding of antique sculpture, was based on perceptions of the ancient Greeks as serious, dignified, and rational. Any evidence to the contrary was ignored. When Alexander Pope (1688-1744) created his 1715 translation of the Iliad for example, he was careful to conform to his audience’s expectation of a refined, dignified, and moralistic heroism. Pamela Poynter Schwandt (1979, 387-8) notes how in the half-century before Pope began translating the Iliad, the Ancients-Moderns controversy had produced many complaints against Homer, with the Greek poet often unfavourably compared with Virgil. Pope approached the problem of producing an acceptable translation by “using many of the same techniques by which Virgil had adapted Homer’s epics for the Aeneid and often working his way down to eighteenth-century England by way of Paradise Lost and Dryden’s Aeneid. The narrative style, the heroes, and the gods all became more Virgilian than Homeric” (Schwandt 1979, 388).

Pope’s most significant changes involved Homer’s less ‘dignified’ extended similes where insects, dogs, donkeys, and other ‘base’ references occur. Honoré Daumier’s (1808-1879) irreverent representations of Homeric characters such as Helen and Menelaus in his Ancient History series of 1842 (see fig. 12) appear to reflect this aspect of Homeric poetics. However, Daumier’s burlesques are less an interpretation of Homeric poetics than a satirical denunciation of academic Classicism.

As discussed in Chapter 2, early Modernists such as Giorgio de Chirico, Fernand Léger, and Pablo Picasso rejected academic Classicism while re-evaluating, transforming, and reinventing the art of the antique. The systemic Classicism of the Cubists explored the underlying systemic and methodological – as opposed to the stylistic – attributes of ancient art. Although Milman Parry devised the theory of formulaic composition during the early part of the twentieth century, this understanding of Homer had little influence on popular culture, where ‘Homer’ remained a by-word for academic Classicism and notions of Greek rationalism. 

Cy Twombly’s (1928-2011) interpretation of Homeric poetry in Fifty Days at Ilios 1977-8 (see fig. 13) is primarily based on Pope’s translation of the Iliad, and extends the Modernists’ transformative reinvention of ancient art to ancient literature. Fifty Days at Ilios is composed of ten individual paintings, installed in a single room, to form an

16. In the mid-twentieth century, E. R. Dodds (1951, 1) noted that both their critics and their apologists regarded the ancient Greeks as blind to the non-rational factors in human experience and behaviour. He cites the ideas of Paul Meran, Gilbert Murray, and C. M. Bowra as examples of scholars who define the Homeric epics as a “complete anthropomorphic system” with no relation to religious beliefs or cultic practices (Dodds 1951, 2).

17. These are: Shield of Achilles; Heroes of the Achaean; Vengeance of Achilles; Achaean in Battle; The fire that consumes all before it; Shades of Achilles, Patroclus and Hector; House of Priam; Ilians in Battle; House of Eternal Night; and Heroes of the Ilium.
immerse the viewer in an immersive environment. Rebecca Resinski (2006, 315) suggests that the spatial arrangement of the canvases comprising Fifty Days at Ilium may also function as a spatial equivalent to the effects of Homeric repetition by creating “ricochets of visual echoes” in which the viewer “is both pulled through a narrative and prompted to jump out of narrative sequence to trace a shape, name, color or theme through other paintings.”

Twombly’s engagement with the Iliad is neither figurative, nor illustrative. Characters and events are represented by means of words, shapes, colour, and rhythmically made (and frequently erased) marks and scrawls. Pope’s influence is particularly apparent in Twombly’s choice of inscriptions and imagery such as clouds to represent the ‘shades’ of the deceased (see fig. 14) and his interpretation of Homeric similes. But, whereas Pope’s translation is premised on expressing an eighteenth century view of a heroic masculinity, Twombly responds to this ideal, animating its underlying savagery. In many respects, the contrast between the heavily emotive impact of Twombly’s expressive mark-making and Pope’s elegant verse echoes Daumier’s rejection of the grandeur of academic Classicism by invoking its antithesis. While text, in the form of letters, words, names, and phrases form part of Twombly’s work from the mid-1950’s, this aspect of Twombly’s engagement with the Iliad signals the extent to which the artist approaches the Iliad as a founding text of the Western literary canon. The cruelly scribbled names and words in Fifty Days at Ilium function both as text and motif (see fig. 15), particularly when Twombly combines stylized chariots in the form of disks and triangles with letters to write names such as ‘Achilles’. Richard Leerman (2005, 22) points out that Twombly’s analysis of the origins of writing, graphic art, and the glyph replicates his interest in ancient surfaces and textures, and that writing represents a manifestation of “the ‘directness’ that Twombly sees in ‘the primitive, the ritual, and fetish elements’” (Leerman 2005, 22-3). This interest in early writing recalls the complex relationship between the development of the textual format of the Homeric epics and historic changes in the reception of the poems. The prevalence of scriptio continius and boustrophedon22 lettering in early inscriptions of Homeric verses reveal a lack of concern for consistency in the graphic orientation of letters that seems “to testify to a creative, original, and governing idea behind this writing: to translate directly into visible symbols what is heard” (Powell 1991, 121). Lawrence Campbell (in Leeman 2005, 23) identifies a similar relationship in Twombly’s work when he suggests that the artist uses text because he likes the sound of the words and not because they are descriptive. The ‘evocation’ occurs between the sound image of the word and the visual image of the painting. Fifty Days at Ilium reinterprets the notion of the Homeric epic as monument of civilized art and thought by returning to its first rudimentary inscriptions. As an antithetical inversion of the idea of a ‘transcendent’ Homer and its associated iconographies, Twombly’s Homer therefore retains its core attributes: his Iliad remains a text, albeit a raw and primordial Urtext. By contrast, an iconography of an oral-formulaic Homer cannot be premised on expressing a phase in a process of textual origination, enhancement, and corruption. The aim instead, is to visually describe the Homeric epics as the products of a creative methodology that incorporates the transformative manipulation and organization of disparate elements.

18. The fire that consumes all before it translates the phrase ‘Like a fire that consumes all before it’ and refers to Iliad 2.780 (στ’ ὑπ’ ἔναν θανάτον ἔχει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τοὺς πύρην πολλοὺς ἂν ἔρισον ἂν χρονίς). “And then they went as if all the earth were consumed by fire.” Pope translates this phrase as ‘They pour along like a Fire that sweeps the whole Earth before it’ and cites it in the introduction to his translation as epitomizing Homeric artistry and inventiveness: “For Pope, the simile describes not only the Achaeans moving in battle formation but also the force of Homeric epic, carrying its audience along in its sweep” (Resinski 2006, 314).

19. Jon Bird (2007, 489) notes that the graphic dimension of this text is a constant, with the gestural aspect of writing as an identifiable linguistic sign emerging from the chaos of the scribble.
Developing an Iconography for an Oral-Formulaic Homer

A Catalogue of Shapes 2010-13 consists of a collection of twelve sculptural assemblages. Attributes, such as spatial composition, visual and conceptual patterning, rhythm and cross-references detail the characterization, narrative, and thematic content, as well as the formal, structural, and experiential aspects of Homeric poetics (for individual discussion see Chapter 4). The construction and iconography of the artworks reflect on the creative methodology and aesthetics of the Iliad and the Odyssey, as understood in contemporary Homeric analyses, to function as an exploration of the integration of form and content in constructive art-forms, such as sculptural assemblage and formulaic composition. The theory of formulaic composition is underpinned by the notion of an ‘immanent’ or implicit Homer as the personification of the entire epic tradition (as opposed to a single historical, and creatively unsurpassable, originator (see Bakker 2006 and Chapter 5 note 21)). The iconographic separation of the relatively stable figure of Homer from the more varied depictions of Homeric subjects is therefore not compatible with an understanding of ‘Homer’ as a poetic system underlying the entire epic tradition (as opposed to a single historical, and creatively unsurpassable, originator (see Bakker 2006 and Chapter 5 note 21)). The iconographic separation of the relatively stable figure of Homer from the more varied depictions of Homeric subjects is therefore not compatible with an understanding of ‘Homer’ as a poetic system underlying the entire epic tradition (as opposed to a single historical, and creatively unsurpassable, originator (see Bakker 2006 and Chapter 5 note 21)).

Although neither the individual performer, nor the eponymous poet of the Homeric poems explicitly identifies themselves in the Iliad or the Odyssey, the combination of an elaborate invocation of the Muses with the story of Thamyris in the Iliadic Catalogue of Ships appears to represent an example of artistic self-awareness in the poems. Many of the strategies employed in the construction of this ‘Homer-Thamyris complex’, such as the catalogue format, the establishment of comparative pairs, parataxis, allusion, the distillation of information, and the individual contextual determination of interpretation of traditional material, informed the composition of my collection of original sculptural images in A Catalogue of Shapes. Designed to function as a coherent unit, the twelve sculptures that make up A Catalogue of Shapes are arranged into two main categories (characters from the Odyssey, and from the Iliad) and four sub-categories: The Warrior; The Writer; The Demos; The Kings. This structure echoes Giuseppe Arcimboldo’s combination of the Seasons (1573) with the Elements (1566-84) as well as Cy Twombly’s ten part painting Fifty Days at Ilium (1977-8), and is acknowledged in the spatial presentation of the collection (with paired sets located either alongside or opposite each other) and by means of iconographic correlation and visual cross-referencing (see figs. 16 and 17). The strategy of pairing heroes for thematic comparison is characteristic of Homeric style and echoes Exekias’ representation of the rivalry between Achilles and Ajax by depicting them seated opposite one another, engaged in a game. The selection of the dramatic ‘persona’ referred to in the artworks comprising A Catalogue of Shapes was thematically determined. The Iliad and the Odyssey constitute two distinct types of epic:

(1) The Iliad, with Achilles as its main hero, is defined as a klesis epic in which the dramatic theme is established by the poetic immortalization of the hero by death in battle.

(2) The Odyssey, which recounts the adventures of Odysseus following the Trojan War, is a nostos epic, in which the hero’s poetic immortalization is achieved by a successful homecoming.

Odysseus and Achilles form the twin nuclei of my series. The twelve composite object portraits of A Catalogue of Shapes are intended to provide a catalogic translation, or glossary, of the characters whose attributes and functions in the plot represent Homer’s principal heroes and their epics within this series of sculptural assemblages. The Homeric catalogue format served as an important model as it is characterized by structural parallels, and subsets within larger sequences. The Catalogue of Ships for example, is composed of three basic patterns (see Powell 1978), with one pattern in particular, characterized by paired heroes. Thematic relationships between categories of sculptures in the series are signalled by formal means, using symmetrical geometry in the physical layout of the group. The plinths supporting the twelve sculptures are identical in colour and design with the exception of small plaques inscribed with the name of the appropriate Homeric character and an epithet on each plinth. The plinths are arranged about a central square in a grid-like format in accordance with a series of overlapping linear, rectangular, triangular and hexagonal patterns. Each pattern denotes a specific set of thematic relationships: the masculine characters


24. In Aristotle a gloss (from gloss- ‘tongue’) is a foreign – as opposed to recognizable – word (this includes words from related communities, such as other Greek dialects (Poucet 1457a1); while in Parry (1928, 235) it is a word with ‘either no correspondence, or at best a remote one, with any element of vocabulary in the current language of an author’s public.’ A glossary provides a descriptive translation of obscure words, originally in the margins of ancient texts. Parry proposed that Homeric audiences deduced the specific meaning or intent of a ‘gloss’ from its context during performance. This is reflected in the descriptive, allusive, and contextual facets of this collection of sculptures.

25. Stephen Scully for example, notes that in “recounting to the Phaeacians the series of his adventures from Troy to Scheria, Odysseus makes no effort that he perceives within his travels a pattern of parallel, but diverging episodes, and he suggests that this pattern of observed correspondences is organically related to his understanding, or interpretation, of those experiences. Although the thirteen episodes of giants and monsters, intoxication and forgetfulness, demigods, and storms narrated by Odysseus to the Phaeacians (Books 9-12) may appear randomly collocated, his telling of these adventures indicates, to the contrary, that they are structured according to a cohesive, over-arching design. In commencing his tale, he does not simply proceed in chronological order, but prefaces the many adventures by doubling the two enchantresses Kalypso and Kirke … Odysseus’ comparison establishes at the outset a precedent for interpreting at least some of the adventures in relation to each other. It furthermore suggests that the hero is not simply recalling his experiences mechanically but that he is also recording them in his mind according to common principles, refining and retelling them synoptically” (Scully 1987, 401). See also Bloch (1982) and Karaman (1994) on the ‘sympathetic antithesis’ to the hero; and the hero’s alter in Crotos (1969).

26. This pattern (II A, II B (1), II C (2) according to Powell’s system) consists of the following four entries: the Minyan leaders, Aeschylus and Ialmenus (twins) in II, 2.511-16; the Pylian leader Nostos and the singer Thamyris (storyteller) in II, 2.591-602; the Koon leader Polydorus and Antiphilos (brothers) in II, 2.676-80; the Thrikon leader Polyclus and Makhon (brothers) in II, 2.729-83.
CHAPTER 3: HOMERIC ICONOGRAPHIES

16. Schematic representation of the spatial arrangement of *A Catalogue of Shapes*

The Wives: 5. Penelope ΑΡΕΘ; 6. Helen ΑΕΩΛΩΝ
The Kings: 11. Nestor ΝΟΟΣ; 12. Menelaos ΒΟΛΩ

17. Schematic representation of the primary interrelations between the sculptures comprising *A Catalogue of Shapes*
provide the North-South axis, the feminine\textsuperscript{28} the East-West, and are symmetrical inversions of one another (see fig. 17). Axial, rectangular, and linear arrangements are gender-specific, while triangular and hexagonal patterns are not. The structure does not describe the catalogue as a purely sequential listing of information, but as the manifestation of various patterns and relationships within a collection of autonomous elements. In this sense, the catalogue is not simply a repository of names, origins and troop numbers, but a considered arrangement of sets of allusions, events and characters, that compose a predominantly spatial and visual context within which epic narrative occurs. Sammons (2010, 54; 20) for example, argues that the poet displays an “all-encompassing view” in the “geographical substrate of the Catalogue of Ships,” and that this catalogue “which may seem at first glance a mere introduction to the Iliad’s cast of characters, actually opens up our field of vision to a heroic world that goes well beyond that of the poet’s narrative ... constructing a plausible epic world in which to situate his own story.” The visual construction of a navigable mythic space echoes the second century BCE ‘Odyssey-Landscapes’ in the Esquiline house, where the viewer’s passage down the corridor evokes Odysseus’ journey home.

The individual artworks in \textit{A Catalogue of Shapes} employ assemblage as the primary method of construction and composition. Each sculpture is composed of carefully selected forms and objects. By using the formal and associative aspects of things to suggest certain ideas and/or experiences, the constituent objects, forms and fragments of objects contribute to the visual representation of attributes and functions. Depictions of gods, heroes, and allegorical personifications (such as cities, rivers, and seasons) in Classical art generally reflect objects as symbolic aspects of identity and function. In representations of the apotheosis of Homer, such as the example by Archelaos of Priene and the painting by Ingres, the \textit{Iliad} and \textit{Odyssey} are represented as female figures holding a sword and/or spear for the \textit{Iliad}, and an oar and/or rudder to symbolize the \textit{Odyssey}. As the figures lack any distinguishing physical features other than age and gender, it is the objects associated with the human figure which serve to differentiate the significance of the features. The catalogue of \textit{A Catalogue of Shapes} is therefore based on the elimination of the figure and the development of a metaphorical ‘code’ of objects. Visual identification by means of objects echoes the symbolic function of material goods in the Homeric epic, where objects have the quality of an economic value (for characters in the narrative),\textsuperscript{29} as well as a poetical value understood by both characters and audience.\textsuperscript{30} This thematic play allows heroic characters to make selected and interpreted by the artist, are represented by means of symbolic entities.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.6\textwidth]{fig17.jpg}
\caption{Attic funerary vase with detail of \textit{Odyssey-Landscapes} in the Esquiline house, where the viewer’s passage down the corridor evokes Odysseus’ journey home.}
\end{figure}

Applying a strategy similar to Homeric pairing, objects may also be defined in terms of adjacent forms and objects. In \textit{A Catalogue of Shapes}, the structurally expressive and contrived combinations of previously unassociated objects occurs in the selection of objects that conform to a specific set of formal qualities, such as the materiality, symmetry, and simple geometry of designed and manufactured utilitarian goods.\textsuperscript{31} This predominance of symmetry and geometry is informed by the reductive abstraction and considered proportionality of the art of the Geometric period. Defined by Brunschweiger (1971, 16) as a feeling for accuracy (\textit{akribia}), balance (\textit{symmetria}), and rhythm (\textit{rhythmos}), the Geometric art offers a representational system that Susan Langdon (2008, 8) argues, rejects “the world of direct sensuous experience in favor of the constructed, the imagined, the interpreted,” and is distinguished by the establishment of a “unified field of figure, object and ornament” (see fig. 18). This understanding of Geometric art describes an approach where the artwork is not intended to create an illusion of reality, but a non-mimetic and apparently self-reflexive reality. The expressive and selective approach of Geometric art is characterized by a narrow repertoire of basic forms and motifs (Langdon 2008, 8).

The Homeric world is evoked by a selective and expressive language of form and themes, conventionally described as a manufactured language of the \textit{Iliad} and \textit{Odyssey} of gods and heroes (see Bakker 1997) exhibits two primary attributes: parataxis and meter.

As discussed in Chapter 1, parataxis is a compressed form of verbal narrative based on the additive placing of autonomous clauses without conjunctives. The absence of syntactical interrelationships such as subordination allows for the juxtaposition of apparently unrelated and independent parts in paratactic sentence construction and facilitates the co-existence in Homeric language of inherited formulaire, archaic words, and newer phrases in dialects from diverse regions and historical periods.\textsuperscript{32} This resembles the structurally expressive and contrived combination of previously unassociated objects in sculptural assemblage.

30. The bow of Eurytus and the shield of Achilles, for example, allude to people, places and events (past and future), that are central to the \textit{Odyssey}’s and the \textit{Iliad}’s respective themes and narratives.

31. While parataxis is not unique to Homer, the combination of an agglomerative syntax with the restraint of Homeric hexameter allows for both elaboration and sharp focus. Aristotle detected a satisfying organic unity in the \textit{Iliad} and the \textit{Odyssey} (\textit{Poet.} 1450b21-1451a6), despite his critique of the paratactic style as “explodingly boundless” (\textit{èkèsis dòrphèn, ke dòrphèn éxèphis 1409a31}) (Rh. 3.9, 1409a27-37). See also \textit{Rh.} 1451a16-30 for a specific discussion of the \textit{Iliad} and the \textit{Odyssey}.

32. These include objects such as fishing buoys, funnels, wheels, Bundt moulds, and a columnar, for example (see lists of materials in individual entries in Chapter 4).
In assembling the complex sculptural images comprising *A Catalogue of Shapes*, signifying details were achieved by the manipulation of component parts. Such manipulation ranges from reduction to embellishment, with the application of colour and pattern amongst the most frequently used means of adjusting meaning. As in examples of Greek sculpture from the Archaic period where pigmentation has been restored (see fig. 19),\(^3\) combinations of bright colours flatten, emphasise, and distort, three-dimensional form. Colour also allows for symbolic coding\(^4\) and the establishment of reciprocal interrelations between individual sculptures. By using colour coding to establish connections between classes of things that might otherwise not share characteristics, the Iliadic and Odyssean categories have been assigned colour values specific to their allusions (see figs. 16 and 17). Orange predominates in the Odyssean group and yellow in the Iliadic. Female characters are distinguished by a central white disk,\(^5\) while two intermediate characters respectively feature a reduced palette (Nester NOΣ, 2013) and an all-inclusive palette (Mentzos IOA, 2013) (see entries 11 and 12 in Chapter 4).

For this series of sculptures, a modified compositional template was devised to achieve a metrical format. The intention being to allow for an overall coherence, in which the smallest variation becomes significant. By creating two compositional registers (upper and lower see fig. 20) for each sculpture, identity is indicated by the register in which significant details and variations may be accommodated. This approach requires careful design as the simplicity of the metrical format, with an emphasis on symmetry and strong geometry, demands carefully considered proportionality and balance. Each sculptural image was originated on paper. Scale drawings (see individual entries in Chapter 4) allowed for a preliminary assessment of how combinations of objects and forms would relate. As colour and pattern became increasingly important, these preliminary drawings allowed for the exploratory testing of potential combinations.

An important consideration during the planning of the artworks was the establishment of visual and conceptual rhythms within the series. The consistent repetition of compositional features, form, and colour within a clearly defined scope, demarcates a visual environment in which every element is affected by adjacent detail, where previously utilitarian objects are poetically activated. John Bispham (2006) argues that the hypnotic effects of rhythm heighten experience and generate the feelings of ecstatic pleasure and social cohesiveness associated with ritual events.\(^6\) In epic performance, rhythm is instrumental in distinguishing the performance event from normal social and verbal interaction, delineating a distinctive space in which the epic poet invokes the mythic world. Bakker (1997, 138) describes epic performance in terms of "a moment in the process of verbalization, the transformation of the stream of private consciousness into a stream of public and rhythmical speech" and notes that the "usual account of speech as deriving from consciousness is insufficient here, for the singer's consciousness not only produces the speech but is also propelled forward by the rhythmical movement of the language."

The iconography of an oral-formulaic Homer developed for this project constitutes a catalogic system (*A Catalogue of Shapes*) incorporating twelve reciprocally interrelated elements (the twelve individual sculptures). The spatial arrangement and structure of the series, the appropriation and manipulation of objects, and the symbolic use of colour, pattern, form, and material, allow the viewer to trace and identify interrelationships to construct a different catalogic sequence with each viewing. This multiform system reflects the dialectical hermeneutics of Homeric composition during performance. In the next chapter, I describe the subject, construction, composition, and iconography of each of the individual sculptural assemblages comprising *A Catalogue of Shapes*.

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33. Modern polychrome reconstructions by archaeologists such as Vinzenz Brinkmann and Ulrike Koch-Brinkmann are based on the scientific analysis of pigmentation found on ancient statues and textual evidence (see Gurvenicht 2008).

34. For example, Humbold's paint colour *Mediterran Eau* first appears on every sculpture in *A Catalogue of Shapes* where it symbolises the agency of the gods.

35. In Kirke ΦΑΙΝΩ 2012 the central white disk is a void (see entry 9 in Chapter 4).

36. Bispham (2006, 131) hypothesises that MRR (musical rhythmic behaviour) is primarily rooted in providing a temporal framework, collective emotionality, a feeling of shared experience, and cohesiveness to group activities and ritualistic ceremonies. He cites evidence that effects of tempo on arousal levels, the consistent use of music in altering states, and the clear relationship between rhythmic behaviours and physical action suggest that musical pulse is functional in regulating emotions and motivational states by means of affecting states of action-readiness.
CHAPTER 4

A Catalogue of Shapes 2010-13

Descriptive Catalogue of Artworks
THE WARRIORS

This category includes Odysseus ΜΗΤΙΣ (1) and Achilles ΜΗΝΙΣ (2) as the main heroes of the Odyssey and the Iliad; while Telemachus ΤΕΛΕΜΑΧΟΣ (3) and Hector ΗΕΚΤΟΡ (4) reflect the Homeric strategy of defining a character in terms of a thematically similar or diametrically opposed ‘other’.
1. ODYSSEUS ΜΗΤΙΣ

Fishing buoy, funnel, rotary breast-drill breast-plate, outdoor umbrella slider, vase cap, bell-shaped lamp holder component, ribbed rod, wood (Camphor, Jelutong, Obeche), enamel paint

51 x 30 x 20 cm

2010

Subject

This assemblage is based on the character Odysseus, the hero whose quest to achieve a successful homecoming (nostos) forms the basis of the Odyssean narrative. Homer describes Odysseus as a successful and mentally dexterous warrior, adept at extreme endurance. In the Odyssey, Odysseus is the central character as well as a second (although unreliable) narrator.¹

Construction

The component parts were either wholly retained or selectively manipulated to derive signifying details. The buoy and umbrella slider were chosen for their weathered state and left unaltered, except for the slider’s ‘foot’, which was painted a deep red. The circular concertina was carved from wood and painted a similar orange to the buoy, establishing it as an extension. The colour of the funnel was changed from grey to a weathered bronze. The C-clamp (including the arc, threaded rod, and breast-plate) was carved from wood and painted blue. The wooden propeller was carved from wood and varnished. The rudder was carved from the same wood and in the same shape as the propeller’s blades. It received a semi-transparent coating of moss-green paint, as did the brass ribbed rod connecting the buoy to the slider.

¹ Odysseus himself recounts his adventures following the fall of Troy to his arrival on Scheria to the Phaeacians (Od. 9-12). The ease with which he makes up stories when in disguise (e.g. Od. 14.191-359) raises the possibility that the fantastical tale he tells his hosts may be untrue.
CHAPTER 4

Composition

As the first in the series, and alluding to the primary Odyssean character, Odysseus MHTIE provides the basic template of a compositional division into two main registers (upper and lower (see Chapter 3 fig 19)). The upper section comprises a sphere with five attributes. The buoy ‘floats’ in space on a thin neck, indicating exposure, isolation and vulnerability. The umbrella slider provides physical and visual counterweight. Its narrow base and material qualities echo the sense of precariousness, wear and durability established in the upper section. The extended neck and concertina are offset by the rudder at the back of the neck.

Iconography

The sculpture reflects on Odysseus as an experienced and weather worn seafarer, under extreme duress. The clamp alludes to the ocean and sky, and by extension the gods, as the source of this pressure. The concertina, propeller, rudder and umbrella slider suggest aspects of his voyage, while the arrow emerging from the funnel alludes to the bow of Eurytos2 and Penelope’s contest, but also suggests a tongue within a mouth. The traces of former rib connectors on the slider represent Odysseus’ lost crew.

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2. Odysseus acquired the bow (with which he wins Penelope’s archery contest and kills the suitors) from Iphitos, son of Eurytos (Od. 21.14-27). The bow’s association with appropriate and aberrant interactions between hosts and guests makes it a fitting instrument of Odysseus’ revenge.
Left: 3. Back view of Odysseus MHTIE, 2010
Right: 4. Preliminary drawing of Odysseus MHTIE, 2010. Pen and coloured pencil on paper. 58.5 x 42cm
2. **ACHILLEUS ΜΗΝΙΣ**

Fishing buoy, spoked wheels, rotary breast-drill gear, Jamboli food press lid and handle, lid and threaded shaft, flame-shaped finial, Jaffle toaster mould plate, various bell and cup shaped lamp holder components, jingle bell, coffee press plunger shaft, cutting tool handle, anniversary clock base, linoleum tile, wood (Obeche), enamel paint

59.5 x 22 x 32cm

2011

**Subject**

This assemblage is based on the character Achilles, the hero whose quest for *kleos* forms the basis of the *Iliad*. Homer describes Achilles as a swift, temperamental warrior, and the best of the Achaeans. In the *Iliad*, Achilles’ anger is the catalyst for the events that make up the poem. Unlike Odysseus, Achilles trades his return home (*nostos*) for a death in battle that will win him poetic immortality. Achilles’ *kleos* is diminished by Agamemnon’s disrespect and his subsequent refusal to fight, but reestablished when he avenges the death of Patroclus.

**Construction**

The component parts were either wholly retained or selectively manipulated to derive signifying details. Indications of function on the buoy were retained and its surface polished to enhance texture and colour. Some metallic components including the jingle bell, a section of the axe and girders between the gears and wheels were

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1. *menis*: ‘anger; wrath; ire’ also the first word and topic of the *Iliad*.

2. Forced to return the daughter of the priest Chryses to appease Apollo (Il. 1.440-48), Agamemnon (on the basis of his superior rank) took Briseis from Achilles in compensation (Il. 1.317-25).

3. Patroclus was killed by Hector while wearing Achilles’ armour (with the exception of the ash spear which only Achilles could carry) and fighting in the absent Achilles’ place (Il. 16.130-824).
left unpainted. All other parts were painted to emphasize particular attributes. The lid of the food press was painted the same yellow as the busby, while its handle was painted blue. To make the ‘shield’, the maker’s mark on the toaster mould plate was filed off to produce a smooth central plane onto which a solar swastika was applied. The ribbed interior was painted in alternating bands of grey and yellow with a red dot at the center to simulate a target. While the brass rims of the wheels were left unaltered, the outsides were painted a soft green and the insides a deep purple. The ‘spear’ and parts of the ‘axe’ were carved from wood and painted.

**Composition**

As the second image in the sub-category *The Warriors*, but the first of the Iliadic characters, *Achilleus* retains aspects of the template established in *Odysseus*, (1) but also diverges enough to establish the second major ‘type’. As *Odysseus* and *Achilleus* represent the *nostos* and *kleos* epics as two distinct aspects of Homeric poetry, they form a contrasting pair. While the basic design of the upper register refers to *Odysseus*, in the lower, the single voluminous form of the umbrella slider is replaced with three light components comprising an outer symmetry (two wheels) and an inner axis. The structural anchoring weight needed is provided by mounting the lower section on a clock base. The width of this base exceeds that of the wheels and is an inversion of the narrow foot in *Odysseus*.

**Iconography**

The image of *Achilleus* refers to the hero as one of the ‘Sea-Peoples’ who decimated the great Mediterranean cities of the Bronze Age. The wheels represent speed, the spear the weapon he alone could carry, the flame his temper, and the axe his status as king of the Myrmidons. The plume on his helmet as a blue rotating handle is indicative of interaction with the gods and enmity towards his allies and enemies. The swastika on the ‘shield’ in *Achilleus* reduces Hephaestus’ complex embellishment to a single image.4 The target on its rear confirms the death which Achilles knows will occur in battle.

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Right: 8. Preliminary drawing of Achilleus MNIE, 2011. Pen and coloured pencil on paper: 51 x 62.5cm
3. TELEMACHOS ΨΦΕΛΛΩ\textsuperscript{1}

Outside spring calliper, bobbin spools, cabinet door handle, anniversary clock weights, outdoor umbrella slider with rib connectors intact, coffee pot, ribbed lamp holder component, metal washer, wood (Pine), enamel paint

57.5 x 34.5 x 24.5cm

2011

Subject

This sculpture is based on the character Telemachus, the son of Odysseus and Penelope in the Odyssey. Homer describes Telemachus as initially ‘uncertain and pensive’, but during the course of the poem his physical and mental resemblance to Odysseus become apparent. In the Odyssey, Telemachus journeys in search of information on his father’s whereabouts, as Odysseus alone is absent from the nostoi (epic songs recounting the fates of the men who went to Troy). On his return, Telemachus is the first person on the island of Ithaca to whom Odysseus reveals his hidden identity, and assists his father in killing the suitors.

Construction

The component parts were either wholly retained or selectively manipulated to achieve signifying details. The two circular frames were constructed from wood and assembled to suggest a sphere. A line runs horizontally around the faces and edges of the frames, demarcated with light-blue paint, while the inside edge of the square cut-outs at the centre of each frame were painted the same orange as used in Odysseus
\textsuperscript{1}.

Unpainted wooden surfaces were waxed to emphasize the grain. The calliper was painted Mediterranean and Oxford blue. The spotting scope was constructed by removing the handle from a coffee pot and attaching the body to a lamp-holder component. Cross-hairs were engraved onto the base of the pot to form the front of the scope.

\textsuperscript{1} of what one ought to do or be doing; 2. to become greater; grow; increase.
The projector consists of a cabinet door handle with a small circle engraved on its front and two bobbin spools on either end of a curved metal band. The neck was produced by vertically stacking three clock weights, and left unpainted. The umbrella slider was broken when found, and was re-glued, sanded, waxed, and the foot painted red. The rib connectors were cleaned, re-attached and painted black inside.

Composition

As a part of the Odyssean category, the image of Telemachos is a visual and conceptual response to that of Odysseus in the narrative increases with maturation, they function as a 'complimentary pair' in the sub-category The Warriors. Devising Telemachus as an individual and as a reflection of Odysseus proved difficult. The buoy component is replaced with a structural representation of a sphere made from Pine, with a deep orange coloured grain, and painted orange interior. In place of a C-clamp, Telemachos includes an outside spring calliper. The cylindrical concertina in this work forms the neck, while the circular motion of the propeller is represented by film reels. The cone of the funnel on Odysseus is transformed into the cone of the spotting scope, while the arrow-head and cross-hairs represent archery and the name 'Telemachus.' The worn umbrella slider in Odysseus is replaced with a smaller, reconstructed version in Telemachos, emphasizing the rib connectors, which are absent in Odysseus.

Iconography

This sculpture invokes Telemachus as a potential Odysseus. The frames suggest a sphere under construction, the callipers and concertina allude to growth; the rib connectors to his ship's crew (assembled by Athena). The spotting scope and projector describe Telemachus' function in the epic as the audience searching for Odysseus' as-yet-untold story, and as the primary verifier of his father’s existence.

2. The children of Homeric heroes are often named for their father’s characteristics. Nagy (1979, 146 n.2) proposes that the name Telemachus (from tele ‘far’ and machos ‘fighting’) “may mean either ‘he who fights far away [at Troy]’ or perhaps ‘he who fights from far away [with arrows]; both characterizations are appropriate to the father.”

Right: 10. Side view of Telemachos, 2011
Right: 12. Preliminary drawing of Telemanios OREIAO, 2011. Pen on paper. 71 x 51 cm
4. HEKTOR EXΩ

Fishing buoy, funnel, fire sprinkler valve, gate valve hand-wheel, Electro Voice 630 microphone grille, threaded rod, metal helical ribbon, two coffee press lids, metal washer, wood (Oak), enamel paint

59 x 27.5 x 25cm

Subject

This sculpture is based on the character Hector, the chief defender of Troy and primary opponent of Achilles in the Iliad. Homer describes Hector as an unwavering and intimidating warrior, but also as an inspiring leader, a kind husband and a skilled horseman. In the Iliad, Hector is the antithesis of Achilles. He lacks the latter’s divine parentage, and Achilles’ supra-human and sub-human excesses, is reliably loyal to his people and allies, and is of little significance to the gods (despite being a frequent provider of burnt offerings). In the poem it is Hector who explains that a hero’s kleos is marked by his victim’s tomb. His own death therefore forms part of the kleos of his killer (Achilles), while his funeral and the lamentations for him prefigure those of Achilles, as described in the Odyssey.

Construction

The component parts were either wholly retained or selectively manipulated to derive signifying details. The original bright yellow of the buoy was adjusted to match the golden yellow of Achilleus MHNIS (2). The helmet was constructed from a tin funnel painted

1. ekho: “to ‘protect; hold; preserve’.

2. Achilles’ behaviour ranges from ‘godlike’ to ‘bestial’. Apollo expresses disgust at Achilles’ mutilation of Hector’s corpse, and compares his savagery to that of a lion. Hera by contrast, argues that as Achilles is the son of a goddess he is superior to Hector despite the latter man’s good character and piety (cf. 24.31-63). Joan O’Brien (1990, 107) argues that Achilles’ vengeful fury “resembles the doxa [lust for vengeance] and megalē [wealth] of Herakles,” an association expressed in the stated desire of both for ‘raw-eating’ their enemies (an act symbolic of extreme depravity) in Il. 4.34 ff. (Hera) and Il. 22.346 ff. (Achilles).
bronze, with a fire sprinkler valve for its crest. The hand-wheel and microphone grille were left unpainted, whereas the two shields are coffee press lids painted yellow and grey to resemble the profile of an axe and Dipylon shield. The walls were constructed from wood, waxed outside and painted purple inside. A horizontal relief of a black, yellow and red key pattern was applied to the lower outside part of the walls, while circles containing dots and crosses were painted onto the vertical sections between the struts.

Composition

As representative of the Iliadic category, the image of Hektor EXΩ is a visual and conceptual response to Achilleus MHNIΣ. And since Hector’s tomb will symbolize Achilles’ kleos, Achilleus MHNIΣ and Hektor EXΩ form a contrasting pair. As the complementary characters that define Odysseus and Achilles in the sub-category The Warrior, Telemachos OFELLW and Hektor EXΩ form a complimentary pair. Attributes on the upper and lower registers of the image of Hektor EXΩ are thematic and visual opposites of the image of Achilles MHNIΣ. The latter suggests motion, aggression and visual expansion; by contrast, the image of Hektor EXΩ is constructed from objects used for containment, and from ‘anchoring’ forms such as the cone and the square. The cross-hairs on the scope, the unpainted wooden frames, and the triangle of the calliper above the sphere in Telemachos OFELLW (3) are echoed by the cross pattern on the microphone grille, the wooden walls and the helmet in Hektor EXΩ. To reflect the Iliadic pattern of outer symmetry and inner axis, the weight of the buoy needed to rest on a long and fragile neck situated between the two wooden walls. Initially imagined either as a threaded shaft or a helical ribbon, the final sculpture combines both.

Iconography

This sculpture alludes to Hector as protector (and personification) of the ancient cities which fell to the roaming pirates of the Bronze Age. The crest of the most visible component, his ‘shining helmet’, is a fire sprinkler valve (in reference to the archaeological identification of catastrophic fire with cities destroyed by invasion). The green and purple helix suggests plants and the Homeric comparison of the human life-cycle to that of leaves. The microphone might suggest Hector’s function as the transmitter of Achilles’ kleos.

3. In Il. 21.461-67 Apollo compares human lives to the growth and death of leaves; while in Il. 6.144-51 Glaukos tells Diomedes that the generations of men are like leaves, with one coming into being as another dies. In both, the transience and vulnerability of human existence is emphasized.
Left: 15. Back view of Hektor EXO, 2011

THE WIVES

This category consists of two sculptures. Penelope ΑΡΕΘ (5) and Helena ΑΕΩΛΩΝ (6) represent a pair of opposites personifying nostos and kleos, in the Odyssey and the Iliad respectively.
5. PENELOPE APETH

Embroidery hoop, embroidery needle, bobbin spool, ribbed rod, funnel, vase cap, angle-grinder inner flange, drill chuck, hinge leaves, hollow soldered brass ball, lamp holder fastener, wood (Plywood), enamel paint

48.5 x 18 x 18cm

2011

Subject

This sculpture is based on the character Penelope, the wife of Odysseus in the Odyssey. Homer describes Penelope as intelligent and loyal to her husband, whom she equals in cunning. In the Odyssey, Penelope determines the success of Odysseus’ homecoming. If she were to choose a new husband, then Odysseus’ fate would echo Agamemnon’s who returned from Troy to be murdered by his wife and her lover. Conferring nostos, Penelope preserves the uniqueness of the Odyssey by clearly differentiating it from the Oresteia.1

Construction

The component parts were either wholly retained or selectively manipulated to derive signifying details. The area usually occupied by fabric in the embroidery hoop was filled with a round Plywood disc painted white. The wood of the hoop, the needle, and the ribbed rod of the neck were left unpainted. The amphora was constructed from a variety of objects: a drill chuck for its collar; hinge leaves for its arms; a vase cap for its shoulder; its ‘belly’ is a hollow brass ball sitting 1. arete: ‘merit; good character;’ also the name of the Phaeacian queen.

2. If Penelope relents as Clytemnestra did, and marries a suitor, then Odysseus, like Agamemnon, will be murdered upon arrival. The hero of the ensuing epic will be Telemachus, as Orestes is hero of the Oresteia (see Od. 11.422-53). Homer is therefore careful not to let Telemachus equal his father: for example, in Od. 21.125-30 the younger man is prevented from stringing the bow of Eurytus, even though he was at the point of doing so.
in a funnel; while its ‘foot’ is an angle-grinder’s inner flange. It is painted in horizontal bands of pattern and colour, while vertical light-blue bands on either side feature a hexametrical sequence of 1s and 0s.

Composition

As limited to the Odyssean category, the image of Penelope ARETH is a visual and conceptual response to Odysseus ΜΗΤΙΣ (1) and Telemachos ΟΦΕΛΑΩ (3). As the first of a new type, Penelope ARETH provides a basic template which allows for adherence to established properties, but diverges sufficiently to establish a new format (The Wives). The most significant change occurs in the upper part where the sphere is replaced with a disc, a transition informed by the image of Telemachos ΟΦΕΛΑΩ where the sphere is constructed from intersecting frames. This reduction necessitated an adjustment in the suggestion of attributes in the upper section of the composition. The front and back attributes for Odysseus ΜΗΤΙΣ and Telemachos ΟΦΕΛΑΩ were consolidated into two parts of a single object (the needle). By using an embroidery hoop, the contraction mechanism (the C-Clamp and the calliper which formerly enveloped the core spherical objects), becomes the object itself. The lower part conforms to the Odyssean pattern of a single solid form on a narrow foot. The pierced arms of the amphora echo the rib connectors on Telemachos ΟΦΕΛΑΩ, and the painted patterns reflect the traces left by the ‘lost’ connectors in Odysseus ΜΗΤΙΣ.

Iconography

This sculpture depicts Penelope as a repository. The embroidery hoop and needle refer to Penelope’s deception of weaving and unravelling Laertes’ shroud to keep her household intact. The amphora as storage for provisions, and as a funerary marker, reflects her role as either the custodian of Odysseus’ homecoming or as the potential instrument of his death. The needle in the embroidery hoop and the axes on the belly of the amphora evoke the archery contest.3

3. At Athena’s instigation, Penelope proposed an archery contest to determine who would marry her. She set the archers the near-impossible task of shooting an arrow through the handles of twelve axes. This test was accomplished by Odysseus disguised as a beggar (Od. 21.1-434).

Right: 20. Preliminary drawing of Penelope ARETH, 2011. Pen, Indian ink, and marker on paper. 71 x 51 cm
6. HELENA ΑΕΘΛΟΝ

Circular tambourine, Propert Swift Whip rotary egg beater, pot lid, corkscrew, metal cap of a bath plug, wood (Plywood, Oak), enamel paint

49.5 x 8 x 17cm

2011-2

Subject

This sculpture is based on the character Helen, the daughter of Zeus, and the contested wife of Menelaus and Paris/Alexandros in the Iliad. Homer describes Helen as desirable and regarded as blameless by others, but she speaks of herself as responsible for the war. In the Iliad, possession of Helen (and all her property) provides the motive for the war. Participation in the fight for her translates into poetic immortality, while Menelaus (having regained his status as son-in-law of Zeus) learns in the Odyssey that he will achieve immortality through transportation to the Elysian Fields at the end of his life.

Construction

The component parts were either wholly retained or selectively manipulated to derive signifying detail. The translucent membrane of the tambourine was removed and replaced with a Plywood disc. The disc was painted white and the frame a light yellow. The pairs of jingles were glued together to form single shapes and painted silver and blue. An additional pair of jingles was taken from another tambourine and inserted into the frame to produce an overall set of five (each jingle represents a year in the war's ten year duration). The neck consists of a thin rod inserted into a corkscrew. The egg beater was stripped of its handle, painted and mounted in the shallow bowl made from a painted pot lid with its handle removed.


1. αεθλον: ‘prize for a victor in a contest’.
Composition

As part of the Iliadic category, Helena AEΘLON is a visual and conceptual response to Achilles MHNIS (2) and Hektor EXD (4); and since the image of Penelope ARETH (5) represents fidelity and that of Helena AEΘLON instability, they form a contrasting pair in the sub-category The Wives. The upper register is reduced to a disc in a circular frame; the expansiveness of Achilles MHNIS and the containment of Hektor EXD are combined in locating the jingles equally inside and outside of their frame. In the lower part of the composition, the Iliadic pattern of an outer symmetry and an inner axis is reflected by the two beaters and the vertical gear. The inclusion of a small “mantle” above the top of the gear interrupts the strong diagonal line of the conical narrowing of the section below the neck with a horizontal extension.

Iconography

This sculpture alludes to Helen as a catalyst for the erotic impetus that generated the Trojan War, and the fatal attraction of kleos. The tambourine recalls Maenadic frenzy, while the egg-beater suggests dancing, the ocean’s waves that brought the Achaean ships to Troy, and the mingling of fluids. The choice of this particular beater was informed by its ball drive mechanism, with each sphere on the gear disc representing the buoys in The Iliad.

2. The word πυγμα μιγνυμεν means ‘to mix’ or ‘mingle’ (properly of fluids), and describes contact between people and sexual intercourse in Homer.
Left: 23. Back view of Helena AE7AON, 2011-12

Right: 24. Preliminary drawing of Helena AE7AON, 2010. Pen, Indian ink, and marker on paper. 71 x 51cm
THE DEITIES

This category consists of four sculptures. Kalypso ΚΡΥΠΤΟ (7), Eris ΦΑΓΟΝ (8), Kirke ΦΑΙΝΟ (9), and Δίαι ΠΑΓΙΣ (10), depict two opposing sets of (seemingly) matching pairs. These pairs represent thematic aspects central to the plot of each poem: obstruction and transition as thematically essential to nostos in the Odyssey, and the role of conflict and narrow self-interest in the construction of kleos in the Iliad.
7. KALYPSO ΚΡΥΠΤΩ

Colander, Primus camping stove, brass washers, pulley, fish hooks, bobbin spool, lamp holder components, warming plate lid, wood (Cypress, Plywood), brass rod, enamel paint

51.5 x 31 x 20cm

2012

Subject

This sculpture is based on the character Calypso, the goddess who rescues Odysseus when he is thrown by a tempest onto her island of Ogygia, and attempts to separate him from the world in the Odyssey. Homer describes Calypso as solitary and isolated from gods and men alike, with beautiful hair and a woman’s (as opposed to a goddess’s) voice. In the Odyssey, Calypso offers Odysseus immortality as her spouse, but at the cost of permanent separation from the world. As an obstacle and diversion she is a threat to the hero’s nostos, yet spurs a supra-human transformation: Odysseus’s rejection of her offer of divine (but dark) immortality returns him to the mortal world of Ithaca, which secures his poetic immortality.

Construction

The component parts were either wholly retained or selectively manipulated to devise signifying detail. White Plywood discs were applied to the interior and exterior of the colander’s base. The interior and exterior of the colander were painted with spirals and interlaced bands, surrounding the patterned perforations. With the exception of the feet, the tank of the camping stove was stripped of external features, the resulting holes were filled and the entire body painted. The frieze was carved into the podium in low relief, and painted black. The wood was painted with a translucent layer of moss green and waxed to emphasize the grain.

Composition

As part of the Odyssean category, Kalypso ΚΡΥΠΤΩ is a visual and conceptual response to the images of Odysseus ΜΗΤΙΣ (1), Telemachos 1.

1. Krēpto: ‘to hide; conceal; keep from view or knowledge; shelter or shelter’.
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CHAPTER 4

OFELLO ω (3), and Penelope AΡΕΤΗ (5). As the first of The Deities, 
Kalypso ΚΡΥΠΤΗ introduces a basic template which allows for 
adherence to established properties, but diverges sufficiently to 
establish a new type. Changes occur across all sections. In the upper 
part, the sphere and disc are replaced with a hollow hemisphere. 
The connection between sections is no longer a thin central neck but 
two symmetrical arms running from either side of the core object in 
the upper register, to a central point in the lower register. A large 
colander was selected. Its perforated surface is reminiscent of the disc 
pierced by a needle in Penelope AΡΕΤΗ, and the projector spools and 
rh connectors in Tèlemaχos OFELLO. The patterning was informed 
by the image of Penelope AΡΕΤΗ and the colours by those of Odysseus 
ΜΗΤΟΣ and Tèlemaχos OFELLO. The lower register comprises two 
main components, one of which is a square wooden podium. The 
podium intentionally creates a disproportion in scale between the 
colander and stove without a loss of overall height, as a symbolic 
differentiation between humans and gods, without losing cohesive 

scale within the series. Despite this shift, the single solid form of the 
stove tank on its three fragile legs (as opposed to a narrow foot) still 
refers to the Odyssean type. While the body is painted a flat grey, 
the patterning of the image of Penelope AΡΕΤΗ is reflected in the 
perforated and raised geometric pattern on the plate lid that occupies 
the area between the colander and the stove. The podium was made of 
unpainted wood to echo the wooden frames in Tèlemaχos OFELLO, 
and the umbrella sliders in Odysseus ΜΗΤΟΣ and Tèlemaχos OFELLO. 

Iconography

This sculpture presents Calypso as a fishing-net made of long swirling 
hair, inspired by images of the Gorgon. The orange ovoid at the 
centre of the blue patterned disc is intended to suggest her remote 

island’s insularity, and the slender legged camping stove, perched on 
its podium, is based on images of the crouching Sphinx.

2. In Η. 5.440-42 Apollo warns Diomedes who has attacked Aphrodite, to 
retract ‘as there is no likeness between gods and mortals’. 

3. This image is based on depictions such as the West pediment of the 
temple of Artemis at Corfu, circa 580 BCE (see Boardman 1996 B, 172 and 
Pelley 1998, 152); a polychrome clay relief from Syracuse, circa 600 BCE 
(see Boardman 1996 A, 66); and on the body of the “Nessos” late proto-Attic 
amphora, circa 625-600 BCE (Pelley 1998, 130).

4. This image is based on depictions such as the Archaic sculpture of the 
Naxian Sphinx at Delphi, circa 560 BCE (see Boardman 1996 A, 81 and 
Pelley 1998, 181); and an Attic painting of Oedipus and the Sphinx on a 
bowl circa 470 BCE (see Cooper 1993, 157).
Left: 27. Back view of Kalypso KRPITΩ, 2012

Right: 28. Preliminary drawing of Kalypso KRPITΩ, 2012. Pen, Indian ink, and marker on paper. 71 x 51cm
This sculpture is based on the character Eris, the goddess of conflict in the Iliad. Homer describes Eris as a small insatiable creature who grows in size as her influence spreads; roaming the battlefield even when the others gods have left. In the Iliad, Eris functions as the personification of the self-generative, mesmerizing and consumptive aspects of conflict. According to tradition, she caused the Trojan War in response to having been excluded from the wedding feast of Achilles’ parents. The dramatic function of Eris is to create and maintain the conditions for achieving kleos.

Construction

The component parts were either wholly retained or selectively manipulated to derive signifying details. The shield consists of a heat deflector dish. The heating device entry hole was filled using a wrist watch case back, and the dish was painted in radiating bands of black and gold with a red rim. The blade of a fan was flattened, painted in black and gold with a red rim. The blade of a fan was flattened, painted in black and gold with a red rim. The blade of a fan was flattened, painted in black and gold with a red rim. The blade of a fan was flattened, painted in black and gold with a red rim. The blade of a fan was flattened, painted in black and gold with a red rim. The blade of a fan was flattened, painted in black and gold with a red rim. The blade of a fan was flattened, painted in black and gold with a red rim. The blade of a fan was flattened, painted in black and gold with a red rim. The blade of a fan was flattened, painted in black and gold with a red rim. The blade of a fan was flattened, painted in black and gold with a red rim.

1. phagon: ‘to devour’ (of the cannibal Cyclops; of the monster Scylla; of fish eating corpses).

2. Eris reputedly threw a golden apple inscribed ‘for the fairest’ amongst the guests. When Hera, Athena and Aphrodite all claimed it, Zeus decreed that Paris/Alexandros should award the prize. Aphrodite promised him Helen, wife of Menelaus; Athena promised him immortality and Hera promised him the golden apple itself. Paris/Alexandros chose Helen, thereby instigating the Trojan War.
patterns resembling flames and/or eyes, with a small Plywood disc at its centre, painted white. The drumsticks are two halves of a table-tennis ball. The frame of the wheeled base is an inside spring calliper and a wax-working tool painted blue, and the wheels are filter parts from a coffee press, painted gold. The frieze was carved into the podium and painted yellow. The wood received a translucent layer of grey, and was waxed to emphasize the grain.

Composition
As a member of the Iliadic category, Eris FAGON is a visual and conceptual response to the images of Achilleus MHNIS (2), Hektor EXΩ (4), and Helena AEQLON (6). And as the image of Kalypso KRUPTW (7) represents cool isolation, and that of Eris FAGON, combustible integration, they form a contrasting pair in the sub-category The Deities. The upper register is accordingly a hollow hemisphere, with its interior partly enclosed by the fan blade. The shield reflects the use of armour as primary signifiers in Achilleus MHNIS and Hektor EXΩ, while the number and arrangement of blades echo the five jingles in Helen. The references to sound in the two-pronged (tuning) fork and drumsticks are reminiscent of the jingle bell in Achilleus MHNIS, the microphone grille in Hektor EXΩ, and the tambourine in Helena AEQLON. In the lower section, the Iliadic pattern of an outer symmetry and inner axis is achieved with the two wheels and a rear support. The wheels reflect Achilleus MHNIS, while the triangular frame recalls the helmet and walls in Hektor EXΩ. As in Kalypso KRUPTW this section includes a wooden podium, creating disproportionate scale between the shield above, and the wheeled frame below, setting the divine apart from the human.

Iconography
This sculpture depicts Eris as a self-fuelling inferno, invoking a war chariot, armour, marching, and a call to war.

Right: 32. Preliminary drawing of Eris ΦΑΓΟΝ, 2012. Pen, Indian ink, and marker on paper. 71 x 51cm
9. KIRKE ΦΑΙΝΩ

Bundt mould, outside spring collar; Burmos camping stove, lamp burner border, ribbed and cup-shaped lamp holder components, brass washers, brass latches, wood (Obeche), enamel paint

50.5 x 24.4 x 18cm

2012

Subject

This sculpture is based on the character Circe, the goddess who transforms Odysseus’ men into swine on the island of Aeaea, and instructs him to travel to the underworld in the Odyssey. Homer describes Circe as a dangerous and generous hostess, with beautiful hair and a woman’s (as opposed to a goddess’s) voice. In the Odyssey, Circe has a transformative power which Odysseus neutralizes with Hermes’ help. She sends Odysseus to the underworld to consult Teiresias, who reveals that the hero’s nostos is (and will be) hindered by angered gods, but that he will eventually be reconciled with Poseidon. She represents the Homeric concept of the conflicting capacity of the gods as equally helpful or harmful.

1. phaino: ‘to bring to light; make known; bring to action’.

2. Hermes provides Odysseus with an antidote— a plant (moly) that only gods can harvest (Od. 10.277-307).

3. Odysseus could not resist boasting about outwitting Polyphemus, thereby enabling the Cyclops to reveal his identity to Poseidon (Od. 9.500-05). Teiresias predicts Odysseus’ reconciliation with Poseidon: after his return home, Odysseus will take an oar inland, until it is mistaken for a winnowing fan. He will then plant the oar upright by its handle and sacrifice to Poseidon, return home, and sacrifice to the other gods (Od. 11.119-34).

4. Nanno Marinatos (2001) argues that the journey of Odysseus parallels the cosmic journey of the Egyptian sun god, and that Circe’s island which is described as ‘the House of the Rising Sun’ is a ‘cosmic juncture’ located in the East, and is divided into two halves: one part is in the upper hemisphere, while the other part “belongs to the path of night.” Circe sends the hero to the underworld, but also receives him back from it. “When Odysseus and his men return to life and light, she is naturally equated with dawn” (Marinatos 2001, 399). Marinatos locates Calypso’s island of Ogygia in the West. Given
Construction

The component parts were either wholly retained or selectively manipulated to derive signifying details. The Bundt mould was painted to emphasize its moulded patterning. The screw and spring of the calliper were removed and the arms painted green. Unlike the image of Kalypso KRUPTΩ (7), the external features on the tank of the camping stove were retained and, with the exception of a horizontal painted band, the metal surface was left unpainted. The wood on the podium was waxed, and the frieze painted black.

Composition

As part of the Odyssean category, Kirke FAINΩ is a visual and conceptual response to the images of Odysseus ΜΗΤΙΣ (1), Telemaque ODEΛΟ (3), Penelope ΑΡΕΤΗ (5), and Kalypso KRUPTΩ; and as Calypso and Circe are described in similar terms in the Odyssey, they constitute a complementary pair in the sub-category The Deities. The hollow hemisphere of the Bundt mould contains an inner shaft open at both ends, and the swirling spirals in Kalypso KRUPTΩ are replaced by more rigid geometric shapes. The open space refers to the arrow in Odysseus ΜΗΤΙΣ, and the needle in Penelope ΑΡΕΤΗ. The calliper that forms the "arms" is of the type used in the image of Telemachos ODEΛΟ. The small rings at its tips are the same as those at the tips of the arms in Kalypso KRUPTΩ. The lower register is a reference to the image of Kalypso KRUPTΩ, with variations: the horizontal line created by the warming plate lid in Kalypso KRUPTΩ (suggesting an island in the ocean) is described by a lamp burner border (suggesting solar radiation) in Kirke FAINΩ. Retaining the external parts of the stove in Kirke FAINΩ is intended to counteract the sense of withdrawal in Kalypso KRUPTΩ (where these have been removed). The podium is of a similar wood, but without the translucent coat of moss green.

Iconography

This sculpture refers to Circe as initially endangering, before enabling, Odysseus’ passage, and the transformation of his interaction with the gods. The geometric markings in the mould are reductively transformative, while the central open space suggests the possibility of transition. The red radiating disc with a yellow core represents Circe’s origins as daughter of the sun, and the stove marks her as Calypso’s Sphinx-like “twin.”

the fact, however, that she is the daughter of Atlas, who, according to Hesiod, stands in the far West (Od. 1.52-54; Hes. Theog. 517-20; 746-48; 779), she must be also located at the western juncture” (Marinatos 2001, 397).
Left: 35. Back view of *Kirke* ©AINQ, 2012

Right: 36. Preliminary drawing of *Kirke* ©AINQ, 2012. Pen, Indian ink, and marker on paper. 71 x 51 cm
Spring divider, Bundt mould, brass ball, knitting needles, Primus burner bell, filter parts from a coffee press, brass ring from a chandelier, 20g weights, wax-working tool, wood (African Zebra), enamel paint

47.5 x 21 x 18cm

2012-3

Subject

This sculpture is based on the character Ate, the goddess who induces lapses in judgment in the *Iliad*. Homer describes Ate as an exceptionally fast runner (thus avoiding detection and retribution). She is banned from Olympus, making her victims exclusively human. In the *Iliad*, Ate personifies the fateful decisions that resulted in Achilles’ rage and the Trojan War itself. By diminishing the status of Memelus and Achilles by their loss of Helen and Briseis, Ate disrupts the prevailing order and endangers *kleos*, but creates conditions for the attainment of *kleos* through retribution.

Construction

The component parts were either wholly retained or selectively manipulated to derive signifying detail. The central shaft of the Bundt mould was enclosed at its narrowest point and painted to emphasize its moulded patterns. The exterior was painted in yellow, blue, red, green, and purple common to the Iliadic type, while the interior was painted black and grey with a small yellow, grey and red target at the centre. The outer ring had its connector holes filled, and was painted 1.

1. *pagis*: ‘a snare’ (of women, and of the Trojan Horse).

red. The wheeled base consists of a spring divider and a wax-working tool painted blue. The wheels are coffee filter parts and 20g weights painted grey and dark blue. The wood of the podium was waxed and the frieze painted yellow.

Composition

As part of the Iliadic category, the image of Ατη ΠΑΓΙΣ is a visual and conceptual counterpoint to the images of Αχιλλευς ΜΗΝΙΣ (2), Ηλέκτρα ΕΧΩ (4), Ηλένα ΑΕΘΩΝ (6), and Ερις ΦΑΓΩΝ (8); and as Circe encourages comprehensive understanding and Ατη narrow self-interest, they constitute a contrasting pair in the sub-category The Deities. As Ερις and Ατη traditionally create and maintain the conditions for war, they form a complementary pair. In the upper register, as in Κιρκή ΚΡΙΠΤΩ (9), the hollow hemisphere is a Bundt mould, but it is reversed (with the exterior at the front), while the small disc inserted at the far end of the shaft creates a dead-end (as opposed to the open space in the image of Κιρκή ΚΡΙΠΤΩ). The red circular ring suspending the mould resembles the rim on Ερις ΦΑΓΩΝ and the tambourine frame in Ηλένα ΑΕΘΩΝ, while the small target evokes the shield in Αχιλλευς ΜΗΝΙΣ. The lower section is formally similar to Ερις ΦΑΓΩΝ, with significant variations: the inside spring caliper in Ερις ΦΑΓΩΝ suggesting expansion is replaced by a spring divider; and the sharp edge of the wax-working tool on which Ερις ΦΑΓΩΝ rests, holds a small brass ball in the image of Ατη ΠΑΓΙΣ. The podium is of the same wood, but was not treated with a translucent grey.

Iconography

This sculpture compares Ατη to a carnivorous plant, with a petal pattern on the front exterior, and the central space as trapping mechanism. The target at the rear suggests the actual, initially unseen danger; and the black and grey interior, the mental delusion she causes. By fixing her victim’s focus on an object of desire, she conceals the context.

Right: 40. Preliminary drawing of a sculpture in metal, 2012-13. Pen, Indian ink, and marker on paper, 71 x 51 cm
THE KINGS

This category consists of two sculptures. Nestor NOOΣ (11) and Menelaos BOAL (12) form an opposing pair, representing constancy and change as fundamental aspects of form and content in the Iliad and the Odyssey.
11. NESTOR ΝΟΟΣ

Fishing buoy, brass lid of an urn, acanthus leaf-shaped finial, decorative lamp-holder component, primus tank lid, hanging cheek snaffle bit, anniversary clock weight, brass ashtray, plastic lamp-holder component, wood (Oak), enamel paint

44.2 x 32.1 x 21cm

2013

Subject

This sculpture is based on the character Nestor, the patrician advisor to the Achaean army in the Iliad, and host to Telemachus in the Odyssey. Homer describes Nestor as the oldest and wisest of the Achaeans, generally referred to as the “Gerenian horseman.” In the Iliad and the Odyssey, Nestor formulates his advice to heroes on comparisons of current situations to historical precedent on the basis that all things of the present are inferior to those of the past.1

Construction

The component parts were either wholly retained or selectively manipulated to derive signifying details. An originally orange buoy was painted a greyish white with solid white, grey, and turquoise details. An acanthus leaf-shaped finial was painted and secured to the rear of the buoy, while the tip of the brass lid of an urn was removed, and a painted lamp holder component was inserted to create the mouth. The joints of the snaffle bit were secured in place with epoxy glue and screws and painted Oxford blue. The ‘Cycladic vase’ consists of an upturned ash tray for its neck, its body was carved from oak.

1. noos: ‘the mind; sense; perception; counsel’.

2. Nestor represents a Hesiodic view, where each generation of heroes is inferior to the preceding one (see Nagy 1979, 213-221).
CHAPTER 4

and placed on a conical plastic foot. The neck is brass, the foot was painted and the body was treated with the same translucent white wood stain used on the plinths.

Composition

As a visual and conceptual response to all the sculptures in this series, the image of Nestor NOOS is part of both major categories (the Odyssean and the Iliadic); and as the first of The Kings, Nestor NOOS provides a basic template which allows for the retention of established properties, but varies sufficiently to establish a new type. While such changes have to this point involved the introduction of new attributes, in Nestor NOOS, variation is achieved by combining components of established types. The intention was to develop a work which conformed to existing patterns while asserting a novel, autonomous, visual and conceptual identity. The upper section conforms to the upper sections of The Warriors (in shape) and The Wives (in colour). Two attributes are indicated front and rear, and painted circles containing dots and crosses similar to those in Hektor EXD (4) and Helena AEQLON (6) mark the top, base and sides. The tongue recalls the reference to sound in the images of Achilleus MHNIS (2), Hektor EXD, Helena AEQLON, and Erin ΦΑΓΟΝ (8), while the trident-like quality of the tongue and the acanthus leaf echo the helix as life-cycles in Hektor EXD. The link between upper and lower registers consists of two arms emerging from a central point on the lower part, reminiscent of The Deities. As equestrian equipment, the bit evokes the horsemanship of Iliadic characters such as Achilles and Hector. The lower section consists of a single solid form on a narrow foot, specific to the Odyssean type. The pierced lugs on the vase recall the rib connectors in Telemachos ΦΕΛΛΩΣ (3) and the arms of the amphora in Penelope APETH (5), while its function as a container, combined with the acanthus leaf as funerary symbol, reflects the amphora as signifier of life and death.

Iconography

This sculpture depicts Nestor as an archaic prototype. Of his original warrior’s attributes, only two remain: his arresting voice (the tongue) and memories of the dead (the acanthus leaf). The bit represents the epithet of “Gerenian horseman,” and the Cycladic vase refers to the cup only he could lift as a member of the former generation of heroes.

3. Achilles owns two immortal horses. One of them (Xanthos) reveals that Apollo was responsible for Patroclus’ death and will enable a man (Paris) to kill Achilles as well (II. 19.404-17). The description of Hector’s funeral (and the Iliad) ends with his epithet hippodamoio ‘tamer of horses’ (II. 24.804).
Left: 43. Back view of Nestor NOOS, 2013

Right: 44. Preliminary drawing of Nestor NOOS, 2013. Pen, Indian ink, and marker on paper. 71 x 51 cm
12. MENELAOS BOAΩ

Fishing buoy, lamp-holder components, whistle, violin bridge, winding key, headphones, outside spring calliper, wreath-shaped finial, conical finial, bobbin spool, Rockler Power Bore bit, wooden handle of a brace drill, threading die, wood (Plywood, Camphor, Obeche), enamel paint

53.5 x 26 x 36.2cm

2013

Subject

This sculpture is based on the character Menelaus, the wronged husband of Helen in the Iliad, and the first to provide Telemachus with news of Odysseus in the Odyssey. Homer describes Menelaus as possessing a “loud war cry,” and the lesser of the two sons of Atreus, but as extremely wealthy and content by the time he returns home from Troy. Menelaus’ marriage and status are endangered in the Iliad, but exemplary in the Odyssey.

Construction

The component parts were either wholly retained or selectively manipulated to derive signifying details. An originally light yellow buoy was painted and stained auburn. The cylindrical concertina was carved and painted red. The whistle was fixed to a spout constructed from lamp holder components and painted. The violin bridge was attached to a small conical finial and painted. The wreath was painted and attached to the buoy above, and the arms of an outside spring calliper below. At the tip of each arm is a headphone painted white, grey and blue. Although the headphones are located on either side of the buoy, they are not attached to it. The agitator consists of an axial drill bit and four vertically arranged wooden blades, mounted on a dome-shaped base in a shallow square pool constructed from wood and painted.

1. *boa*: ‘to give a loud cry; shout;’ of things ‘to roar, resound’.
CHAPTER 4

Composition

As a visual and conceptual response to all the sculptures in this series, the image of Menelaus BOAD is part of both major categories (the Odyssean and the Iliadic); and as Nestor NOOS (11) represents stability and Menelaus BOAD flux, they form a contrasting pair in the sub-category The Kings. As the opposite of the formal restraint of Nestor NOOS, Menelaus BOAD demanded a greater degree of visual complexity. In the upper register, the buoy with attached (and seemingly attached) attributes conforms to The Warriors. The dark auburn is contrasted with the white in Nestor NOOS, and echoes the dark wooden umbrella sliders in the images of Odysseus MHTIS (1) and Télemachus ΦΘΕΛΑΩ (3). The calliper arms which appear to connect the upper part to the lower, recall The Deities, Télemachus ΦΘΕΛΑΩ and Kirke ΦΑΙΝΩ (9). The use of the circular wreath to achieve the actual connection echoes the rings on the snaffle bit in Nestor NOOS. The round headphones suggest the drumsticks in Eris ΦΑΓΟΝ (8), the white faces of the headphones refer to Penelope ΑΡΕΤΗ (5) and Helena ΑΕΘΛΩΝ (6), while their apertures reflect the colander in Kalypso ΚΡΥΠΠΟ (7). The lower section consists of four symmetrical objects and a central axis, reminiscent of the Iliadic type. The agitator mirrors the egg-beater in Helena ΑΕΘΛΩΝ, and the disruptive power of Eris and Ate. Its square base however, equates Menelaus BOAD with the steadfastness of Hektor ΕΧΩ (4).

Iconography

This sculpture depicts Menelaus as an ‘emitter’ and a ‘receiver’. The whistle refers to his epithet as “master of the war-cry”, the agitator provides the imaginary waves to carry ships to Troy, and the headphones, the privileged information Menelaus obtained from Proteus.

2. Stranded on Pharos near the mouth of the Nile, Menelaus was advised to extract knowledge from Proteus (The Old Man of the Sea) by his daughter Eidothea. Proteus told Menelaus that his delayed homecoming stemmed from his failure to sacrifice to Zeus prior to leaving Egypt. Menelaus learnt of the failed nostoi of Ajax and Agamemnon, and that the Old Man had seen Odysseus trapped on Calypso’s island. Finally, Proteus foretold Menelaus’ own end in the idyllic Elysian Fields (Od. 4.351-569).
Left: 47. Back view of Menelaos BOAW, 2013

Right: 48. Preliminary drawing of Menelaos BOAW, 2013. Pen, India ink, and marker on paper. 71 x 51 cm
CHAPTER 5

A Composite Object Portrait of an Oral-Formulaic Homer

The theory of formulaic composition, as developed by Homeric scholars since first proposed by Milman Parry, is essentially a theory of creative practice. However, the constructive methodology it describes differs significantly from the notion of ‘originating authorship’ that informs modern editions and translations of Homeric poetry. The result is a separation between the reception of the poems by a modern audience and contemporary developments in modern Homeric scholarship. A key obstacle to assessing the viability of the theory of formulaic composition and the creation of a translation of a systemically constructed poem may be seen to lie in the theorized integration of form and content in Homeric poetry. One of the aims of this project was to argue that Homeric reification by means of a sculptural manifestation of Homeric formalism can elucidate interconnections between materiality and abstraction that underpins constructive art-forms. This approach includes the development of an autonomous sculptural extension of an existing tradition to provide a visual counterpart to the Homeric integration of the formal with the aesthetic (and the material with the abstract) as exhibited in the means of its production. The assembled sculptures may therefore be understood to function as a translation of specific conceptual and formal aspects of Homeric poetics.

Translations play a significant role in shaping general perceptions of ancient works such as the Iliad and the Odyssey. But, changes in language, culture, and modes of reception, have made the possibility of constructing a comprehensive translation that faithfully expresses every facet of the Homeric epic impossible. A problem exacerbated by increased emphases on complex extra-linguistic facets, such as the musicality of the epics, the participatory role of the audience, epic performance as ritual, and composition as occurring during performance. Whitaker (2012, 62) notes that translators of Homer face the paradox of rendering “an oral derived performance text into a very different, written/printed form which has its own stylistic pressures and demands.” Historically, translators such as Alexander Pope, E. V. Rice,  

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1. Philip Ford (2006, 14-15) notes that various factors were responsible for the assimilation of Homer into humanist culture in Renaissance France. For example, teaching on the Homeric texts by the lecteurs royaux reached multiple audiences, by offering both a linguistic commentary as well as a fuller literary and cultural explanation of the Iliad. Another factor in the more general awareness of the Homeric epics was the French translation of the Iliad begun by Hugues Sallé (1504–53) which was well received by the public. Produced at the request of François I, the translation proved influential and in the early 1540s, paintings which draw on Homeric themes make their appearance at Fontainebleau with the benefit of royal patronage.

Aesthetic Translation

Given the significant formal and hermeneutic differences between literary texts and visual artworks, the approach adopted in this project does not conform to the expectation of direct translation as the conveyance of meaning in which the words of one language are replaced by words that express the same ideas from another language. This definition of translation privileges the content (as most closely allied to meaning) of a text over its form (as most allied to translation of the particular to a contemporary Southern African context. 

1. Pope’s translation of the Iliad was first published in subscription form from 1715-20. His Odyssey (in collaboration with W. Brome and E. Fenton) was published in 1726. Pope adopted a Neoclassical approach that aimed at recreating the poetry of Homer primarily by means of formal devices, and is considered more a poetic interpretation than an accurate translation; E. V. Rieu’s translation of the Odyssey was first published in 1946 and his Iliad in 1950. His prose versions follow the principle of “dynamische Äquivalenz” where the translator aims to communicate the content of the original, as opposed to its form; Richmond Lattimore’s Iliad, published in 1951 is a literal free verse line-for-line rendering that intentionally avoids a poetic dialect; Christopher Logue undertook a long-term project to translate the Iliad into a modernist idiom from 1959-2005. His interpretations included sound recordings and printed volumes of verse such as War Music: An Account of Books 16 to 19 of Homer’s Odyssey (1861) which was later retitled The Early Italian Poets (1863) and the Iliad and the Odyssey in 1990 and 1995 that attempted a balance between modern English and the original verse; Richard Whitaker published a translation of the Iliad in 2012 that aimed to give an impression of orality in a hybrid vernacular, particular to a contemporary Southern African context.

2. A. G. Geddes (1988, 11) ascribes the literal approach to a reluctance to “introduce anything which is not in the original,” but warns that this approach does not guarantee clarity of expression or meaning. 

3. Pope’s translation of the Iliad and the Odyssey as works of art. For example, Frederick Combrell’s (1959, 1959; 2016; 2016) assessment of the implications of Parry’s theory for Homeric scholarship reveals that the idea of composition based on the use of pre-existing formulas appears incompatible with the predominant understanding of creative originality and authorial intent on which literary criticism was based. “The difficulty is not that Pope’s work has proven that there is no translation and the work to which it refers should not be conceived of in hierarchical, but in dialectically reciprocal terms. He cites as an example Hans-Georg Gadamer’s view of the relationship of a translation of a work to the original, apart from its own independent being ... As a result, it is an interpretation. This echoes the method of ‘anachronistic appropriation’ (discussed in Chapter 2), where artists engage in a non-objective historical riposte with their predecessors as though they were contemporaries. In the work of early Modernists (such as Picasso, Léger, and de Chirico) their engagement with the antique was premised on the transformation, re-invention, and re-evaluation of ancient works to create art within a contemporary context. While stylistic attributes provide fertile grounds for such engagement, the Cubists’ interests in the more systemic aspects of Classicism focused not on superficial attributes but on core underlying conventions and mental processes.

Martindale (2008, 92) suggests that the relationship established between an aesthetic translation and the work to which it refers should not be conceived of in hierarchical, but in dialectically reciprocal terms. He cites as an example Hans-Georg Gadamer’s view of the relationship of a translation of a work to the original, apart from its own independent being ... As a result, it is an interpretation. This echoes the method of ‘anachronistic appropriation’ (discussed in Chapter 2), where artists engage in a non-objective historical riposte with their predecessors as though they were contemporaries. In the work of early Modernists (such as Picasso, Léger, and de Chirico) their engagement with the antique was premised on the transformation, re-invention, and re-evaluation of ancient works to create art within a contemporary context. While stylistic attributes provide fertile grounds for such engagement, the Cubists’ interests in the more systemic aspects of Classicism focused not on superficial attributes but on core underlying conventions and mental processes.
fully comprehensible in terms of its relation to its subject. However, the composite object portrait expands the dialectical reciprocity that the conventional portrait establishes between artist and subject by introducing a predominantly metaphorical approach and the hermeneutics of collage and assemblage. On the surface, the absence of a physiological resemblance to the subject obscures the status of the art-work as portraiture. The abstract representation of non-material attributes such as character (or in the case of Cornell’s *A Parrot for Juan Gris* – their creative methodology) increases both the subjectivity and the complexity of the interpretation. A composite object portrait, as a collage or sculptural assemblage, provokes a certain kind of interpretive process. It tends to draw the viewer into the transactional encounter between artist and sitter. A conventional portrait records and evokes this encounter as having occurred at a set point in time, but the constantly shifting, reciprocally associative, and allusive functions of the disparate elements in a composite object portrait indefinitely extend the transactional event from an initial encounter between artist and sitter to each subsequent encounter between subject and interpreter.

Martindale’s comparison of the ontological relationship between a text and its translation is premised on the conventional notion of a portrait as an “increase in being” (see note 7 above). The composite object portrait entails both an increase in, and perpetuation of being. As such, it replaces the largely passive process of viewing a seamlessly mimetic image of a person with an active process of decoding, connecting, and reconstructing clues. The result is an interpretive engagement with the subject that echoes the artist’s own encounter with the sitter as a fluid accumulation of potentially informative and/or contradictory attributes. This echoes the conflation of performance with composition in the theory of formalic composition (see Chapter 1), suggesting that the hermeneutics of the composite object portrait provide an appropriate conceptual model for an aesthetic translation of Homeric poetry. The examples of aesthetic translations cited by Martindale constitute responses to literary texts in a literary format, which is appropriate given that these were all produced by literary authors for largely literate audiences. By contrast, the persistent influence of the oral-formulaic foundations of Homeric poetry on its creative methodology, the multi-textuality of its formative textual tradition, and core formal attributes such as the Kunstprache (or ‘Special Speech’), parataxis, repetition, and hexametrical format, deviate significantly from the grammar, syntax, and articulation of modern literature. These differences suggest that while a literary translation is appropriate to the epics in their status as texts, many fundamental characteristics of the poems that reflect the oral-formulaic basis of the Homeric creative methodology are less suited to this format. These aspects play a significant role in a contemporary understanding of Homeric poetry which is premised on the integration of form and content as argued by scholars such as Nagy, Bakker, Mueller, and Kahaner. Therefore a methodology offered by contemporary sculpture for the formulation of an approach to creating an aesthetic translation of these aspects of Homeric poetics may potentially be conducive to the expression of this understanding of Homeric poetry.

**Comparative Visualisation**

The introduction of an untested extra-lingual method of translating the epics is premised on two processes: the first is the translation of the verbal into the visual, and the second, the comparison of the creative methodologies underlying Homeric formalic composition and sculptural assemblage. Both of these processes are characteristic of the poetic simile. Metaphor and simile allow for the transformation of words into mental and visual imagery, and create meaning through the interrelation of disparate elements.8 While the sculptural assemblages produced for this study function as visual metaphors, the simile provides a more appropriate model for the comparative analysis of two unrelated forms of art-making that informed the production of these artworks.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the simile (in particular complex forms such as expanded and multiplied similes) significantly contributes to the frequently noted ‘visuality’ of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. It is arguable that due to its structure and hermeneutics, the simile encapsulates the fundamental structural and compositional aspects of the poetic simulacrum – the use of formulae, parataxis, polysyndatous, catalogues, and juxtaposed pairs. It also echoes sculptural assemblage. As a comparative poetic device, the simile establishes equivalence between clearly disparate objects as based on particular shared characteristics. In its basic form, two autonomous elements with pre-existing meanings and associations are joined or juxtaposed to create a reciprocal relationship between them. The audience’s ability to mentally visualize these juxtaposed components both separately, and in relation to each other, recalls the use of the formulaic phrase, plot, or character in oral-formulaic poetry; and the use of appropriated elements and pre-fabrikated objects in collage and assemblage. Representation does not occur by means of mimetic description, but through symbolic association. In complex examples, such as the multiform similes identified by Ben-Fair (1992) (see Chapter 1), the absence of syntactic subordination characteristic of paratactic sentence construction, and a catalogic, as opposed to a sequential, narrative presentation of information allows for multifaceted interpretations that can even appear to contradict one another. The Homeric simile therefore elicits a continuously shifting interpretative strategy in which disclosure takes place over time, that echoes the game-like hermeneutics of Picasso’s collages (see Chapter 2).

Albert Cook (1984, 40) suggests that the perceptual process underlying an assemblage such as Picasso’s *Bull’s Head* (see fig. 1) is comparable to the literary evocation of mental imagery through the equation of attributes in a simile such as the comparison of arrows deflected by a shield with peas and chickpeas bouncing on a threshing floor.9 Cook describes

8. He notes that Rossetti translated ancient Italian verse and John Dryden (1631-1700) translated the Latin poetry of Ovid (43 BCE – 17/8 CE) into English verse.

9. The reader receives a metaphor with its constitutive parts collapsed into a single literary image, while the simile comprises two autonomous statements linked by a simile marker (such as the phrase “is like”); the reader therefore ‘unpacks’ a metaphorical image to determine its constitutive parts, while the two statements comprising a simile are mentally conflated to arrive at a composite idea. Both enable comprehension by means of associative image-making, but since the visualization procedure is more immediately apparent in the structure of the simile than the metaphor, the former will be used in the remainder of this discussion.

10. Cook (1984, 40) draws a correlation between a Homeric simile (J.I. 13.588-92) and Bull’s Head: “A particular kind of motion is discerned, in a way that a modern painter might admire, a “fused”
The arrow is deflected, but Menelaus’ spear penetrates the hand with which Helenos holds the bow. An interchange of arrow and spear between Menelaus and Helenos, both hit their mark at the same time.

The visual impulse is not so different, I mean, from that of modern "found" sculpture, when the formal association between the ‘found object’ and the referent as a revelation proceeding for provoking a process in which various elements are continuously mentally disassembled, compared, and reassembled. The parallel between tree and man spirals into a sequential narrative that brings out the parallel of building oars, spears, chariot wheels, or ships which goes beyond a simple relationship of likeness.

motion underlying the bounce of peas on a winnowing fan and the rebound of an arrow from a breast plate. The visual impulse is not so different, I mean, from that of modern ‘found’ sculpture, when Picasso calls a bicycle seat and handlebars a bull’s head.” Cook does not pursue this insight further compared, and reassembled.

11. “The winnowing-basket or fan is the emblem of the distribution of rewards and punishments, as well as that of initiation and of predestination” (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1996, 1118). In the interchange of arrow and spear between Menelaus and Helenos, both hit their mark at the same time. The arrow is deflected, but Menelaus’ spear penetrates the hand with which Helenos holds the bow.

The extent to which the constituent elements of a simile or an assemblage are ‘logically’ comparable has a significant impact on the interpretive process it provokes, and by extension, on its formal and conceptual complexity. Demonstrating the role of the poetic comparative device in Homeric reception, scholars such as Lorna Hardwick (1997) and D. F. Rauber (1969) have studied the similes of Derek Walcott (1930-) and John Donne (1572-1631) in relation to the Homeric extended simile. In Hardwick’s analysis, the relationship between Walcott and Homer is logical and clear, but while poets such as Walcott, Virgil, John Milton, and Dante Alighieri are commonly associated with either Homeric style or subject-matter, Donne is not, and Rauber’s comparison appears curious. In Rauber’s analysis, Donne’s primary point of convergence with Homer is their frequent comparison of wholly dissimilar things (a kind of discordia concors) of which his own comparison of Donne to Homer is an example. While the nexus in discordant similes appears ‘trivial’, a complex conceptual abstraction emerges upon analysis to illuminate themes of particular significance to the epic as a whole (Rauber 1969, 101). In this analysis, Donne’s development of the discordant

12. Hardwick analyses Derek Walcott’s use of Homeric poetry in his poem Omeros (1990) and his play A Far Voice of the Odyssey (1992). She proposes the development of a model of reception as simile on the basis that the structural role of the simile can contribute to the generation and transmission of the interpersonal relationships between ancient and modern texts. "There is a wide spectrum of models which can be used to map the relationship between ancient texts and their reception in modern poetry and drama. Translations, adaptations, transplantations, versions – each term not only indicates a genre with its own conventions but also, more importantly, suggests a variety of aspects of the relationship between ancient and modern, including imaginative restructuring" (Hardwick 1997, 326-7).

13. Rauber (1969, 97) quotes Samuel Johnson’s famous dictum on the essence of metaphysical wit as a “kind of discrdia concors; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike.” An example of such a simile is the comparison of the stones thrown by Achaians and Trojans at each other with a snowstorm sent by Zeus in Ili. 12.278-89. Rauber (1969, 90-100) notes that “The separation of elements is here at a maximum. On the one side of the division of violent activity, a terrible battle to the death fought amid a mighty roar; on the other, an extremity of quiet, a scene with no human actor or even observer – with, indeed, no human element except the very oblique diphthong stolos (lines 283) [Andre piece eur the cultivated fields of man]. Likewise, the nexus of ‘falling thick’ is strange and extreme: it is almost deliberately paradoxical. The lay snow falls slowly, silently, inexorably, and the whole movement is dominated by a largely tactile sensation of a frightening downward pressure. The tone is deeply melancholic, almost Virgilian in its pathos. The stones, by contrast, are solid and hard; they are hurled, and they smash and crash through bronze and bone.”
simile represents an inadvertent extension of the fundamental structure of Homeric poetics.\textsuperscript{15} This leads Rauher to suggest that a comparison of deep structural correspondences between two different contexts to create the Homeric catalogue format allows the poet to juxtapose a variety of items/entries with dimensional forms and objects. Reflecting the fundamental characteristics of parataxis, parts analogous to the construction of a sculptural assemblage from separate three-dimensional forms combine ‘old’ and ‘new’: while their component parts are selected for, and characterized by, their predetermined origins, usage, and associations, their transformative amalgamation into an unprecedented whole gives each of these elements a new context and meaning.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the creation of connections and establishment of complex relationships between previously unconnected and seemingly incompatible things are characteristics of Cubism, Cubist collage, and sculptural assemblage. External and anachronistic appropriation are based on the transformative re-evaluation of both contemporary and historical techniques, methodologies, artworks, and artefacts for the purpose of creating new methods of representation. This process does not include the juxtaposed elements’ broader cultural, philosophical, and/or artistic frameworks.\textsuperscript{16} Instead, like Rauher’s ‘discordant similis’, appropriation is based on the identification of ‘trivial’ points of correspondence which are isolated and extracted from their normal context. Anachronistic appropriation is therefore a highly subjective and anti-historicist procedure in which the works of artistic predecessors are treated as though they were contemporary, while external appropriation is premised on the reconsideration of aspects of one discipline in relation to aspects of another. Both instances incorporate a process of decontextualization where the appropriated element functions as an allusive, yet autonomous, representative of its original context, while acquiring a new set of meanings within its current one. The comparison of seemingly highly dissimilar entities in this project therefore echoes the ‘discordant simile’. As such, the comparison is not comprehensive, but limited to deep structural correspondences with the aim being to create complex conceptual abstractions.

The structural characteristics of Homeric composition that most closely approach sculptural assemblage include the paratactic syntax of the Iliad and the Odyssey, the catalogue format and Homeric polysemic vocabulary. The absence of syntactical subordination in Homeric parataxis allows for the inclusion and juxtaposition of unrelated and independent parts analogous to the construction of a sculptural assemblage from separate three-dimensional forms and objects. Reflecting the fundamental characteristics of parataxis, the Homeric catalogue format allows the poet to juxtapose a variety of items/entries with no explicit relation other than a unifying rubric\textsuperscript{17} (such as the leaders of the Achaeans contingents and their ships). The rubric establishes a context that determines which of the multiple possible meanings of the assembled elements will apply. In this view, elements within a paratactic structure are predominantly polysemic and comprehensible mainly in combination with proximate elements. Such structures allow for the establishment of associations that may be unexpected or even appear illogical, but are more expressive and/or complex than conventional sets of semantic relations. Likewise, in the non-literary application of sculptural assemblage that evolved from Picasso’s approach to collage, the choice of component elements is driven by the conceptual potential of surprising combinations and/or substitutions of material and objects. In Homeric poetry, the composition undertaken by a performer, playwright, or a scholar compiling an edition of the Iliad or the Odyssey, is a reiterative transmission of an existing form, making composition and interpretation concurrent in Homeric poetics. In sculptural assemblage, composition consists of the selection and combination of previously unaffiliated parts to prompt a continuously shifting interpretive strategy. Structurally, the production of a sculptural assemblage resembles the accumulative development of the Homeric Kunstsprache.\textsuperscript{18} As already explained, the Homeric compositional system comprises an assemblage of often incompatible dialects, language usages, and vocabularies from various time periods and geographic locations, as well as narratives, characters, formularies, and lines of poetry. These elements are selected, altered, and adapted according to context, resulting in a dialectically reciprocal semantic system. In the same vein, a sculptural assemblage is composed of appropriated forms and prefabricated objects that are selected and altered specifically for the role they can play within the artwork as a whole. In both cases, the combination is ‘artificial’: although individual elements are drawn from everyday life, they are derived from different settings. The result is the coexistence of seemingly incompatible and previously unaligned things within a single context. Both art-forms combine ‘old’ and ‘new’: while their component parts are selected for, and characterized by, their predetermined origins, usage, and associations, their transformative amalgamation into an unprecedented whole gives each of these elements a new context and meaning.

Structural resemblances between sculptural assemblage and Homeric poetry extend to their respective hermeneutics, as both provoke ‘constructive’ interpretive processes. In an assemblage such as Odysseus MH12 for example (see fig. 2 and entry 1; Chapter 4), the notion of ‘Odysseus’ provides the primary context within which each of the sculpturae’s constitutive objects function to evoke formal and symbolic associations redolent of thematic, character, physical, and narrative attributes. Unlike naturalistic sculptural representations of the hero, such as Pierre-Saint-Denis Durand’s (1789-1878) Ulysses Recognized by his Dog 1810...

\textsuperscript{15} A rubric is the “stated category or class which legitimates the inclusion or exclusion of potential items” (Sommers 2010, 9).

\textsuperscript{16} In this sense, the correlation is between the Homeric poetic system (as opposed to the individual performer that results from it) and a sculptural assemblage. While numerous twentieth and twenty-first century visual artists drew on, and allude to, classical mythologies on a thematic level, Cy Twombly’s Fifty Days at Iliam 1977-8 represents an example of a direct and sustained engagement with a specific classical text. Twombly’s “re-invisioned” Iliad is itself based on a prior poetic interpretation of the epic by Alexander Pope.
and Jean Baptiste Carpeaux’s (1827-1875) Ulysses Throwing the Discus 1871. The assemblage disjointed form (Sammons 2010, 17; 16). The notion of interpretation as re-construction of a whole (an ontological vision of history or an argument) behind the assemblage or fragments a whole into its constituent elements, and the interpreter is left to assume an immanent understanding of Odysseus in terms of his overall conduct, character, and thematic significance. The sequence in which these elements are interpreted, the extent to which allusions are grasped and pursued, and the significance attached to elements in relation to others will vary from one viewer (and viewing) to another. The artwork is therefore conceptually heterodox and open to multiple readings. Schwandt (1979, 415) detects a similar parataxis in the image-making process underlying Homeric similes: “The details which compose Homer’s similes often appear in random order, piled one on top of the other without the subordinate conjunctions that might make clear their relationships.” Homer’s basic unit of composition is the formulaic phrase, two or three to a hexameter line, and each of his lines usually ends with some natural break in thought. He builds his similes out of an accumulation of formulaic phrases and of relatively self-contained lines, connected mostly by simple coordinate conjunctions. In the cauldron simile Homer begins with an image of a cauldron boiling, then moves to the flame which has heated it, then to the melting of the fat within, then to its bubbling, and last of all to the building of the fire.” In the Homeric catalogue format it is similarly unclear whether a cataloguer constructs a collection of facts, or fragments a whole into its constituent elements, and the interpreter is left to assume an underlying whole (an ontological vision of history or an argument) behind the assemblage of fragments of information, and work at reassembling something that was presented in a disjointed form (Sammons 2010, 17; 16). The notion of interpretation as re-construction places a significant creative demand on the interpreter. The artwork is not conceived of as a clear and coherent message to be transmitted whole, but as a dialectical process where the interpreter actively participates in the work’s unravelling or rearticulation.

According to the theory of formulaic composition, in early Homeric poetry, re-interpretation and interpretation are shared between a “transmitter” (rhapsode) and an audience, so that a rhapsodic performance entails an active collaboration. For composition and performance to be aspects of the same process, it is necessary to relate authority in performance to the concept of authorship in composition. Therefore, as Nagy (1996, 19) argues, “the poet’s song does not become authoritative until it is performed in an authorized setting. Only then does the song become real, authentic … the authorization of the composer is implicitly not enough because the transmitter as performer may also be authorized by his audience, who are presumed to be authoritative members of the song culture (Nagy’s italics).” It is assumed that this audience is sufficiently familiar with epic themes, plots, and conventions to recognize its traditional allusions alongside deviations and innovations. The performer’s task is not to clarify the epic for the audience, but to select, distill, and activate whichever part of it is contextually most appropriate to the immediate setting as determined by the audience and occasion.20 This creative and interpretive model poses significant problems to conventional methods of literary criticism. As already noted, Frederick Cornbleac (1959, 208) for example, argues that Parry’s ideas removed both the artistry from features of Homer’s style and “all possibility of any certainty in the criticism of features of Homeric style” (see note 6 above).

Homer as Creative Methodology

Depending on one’s point of view, Parry’s theories might be seen as either negating Homeric artistry, or providing the means for an entirely new conception of it. An oral-formulaic Homer presents the modern reader and translator, unaccustomed to a notion of words as primarily signifiers, with a significant conceptual challenge. The contemporary nexus of Homeric studies is not an individual historical originator (such as the blind wanderer of the Homeric biographic tradition), but a language of objects, in which meaning is constructed by means of a grammar of formal elements. Bakker (2006) contrasts the traditional notion of an individual ‘transcendental’ Homer that exists outside of (transcends) poetry, with an ‘immanent’ Homer that is identified with the mechanisms underlying the development, transmission, and survival of the Iliad and the Odyssey.21 As discussed in Chapter 3, the iconography of the figure of Homer from the Hellenistic period onwards conforms to a
‘transcendent’ understanding in which Homer is the pre-eminent source of wisdom and knowledge, while the epics, alongside other canonical works of antique literature such as the Bible, served as sources-material for the biprojective. While still a specific model to represent a specific and Classical rationality. As an ‘immanent’ Homer is essentially the poetic system underlying Homerica poetry as described by Mueller (2006, 11) the visual representation of the oral-formulaic epic is an identical process to the visual representation of an ‘immanent’ Homer. While there is no known visual precedent for describing both the epics and their portraiture as one and the same, an ancient textual attempt at achieving this task may arguably exist in the form of The Contest of Homer and Hesiod (commonly referred to as the Certamen).

While the extent to which a literal reading of the Homeric biographical tradition can provide factual information regarding the origins of the Homeric epics is questionable, the structure of the Certamen echoes important aspects of Homeric compositional and hermeneutic principles, and in a non-literal reading may function as a conceptual portrait of Homer designed to elicit a playful dialectical hermeneutics similar to Picabia and Cornell’s composite object portraits. Unlike the Iliad and the Odyssey, whose allusions to non-homeric epics cannot be conclusively proven, the manner in which the Certamen draws on the literary traditions of its period can be determined. Composed during the Antonine period (138-193 CE) the Certamen is generally regarded as a rather crude compilation of fragmentary information drawn from pre-existing texts. To a modern reader accustomed to a uniform authorial style and clarity of narrative, the extent to which the Certamen constitutes a catalogue of miscellaneous texts, fragments, and anecdotes suggests an absence of the conceptual and formal cohesion that characterizes creative writing. However, James Uden (2010, 133) suggests that although “the Contest of Homer and Hesiod preserves passages of greater antiquity than the Imperial era and of great interest to scholars, we ought not to lose sight of the compilation as a whole, the ideological context in which it was produced and the internal dynamics of the work itself.” This emphasis on considering the aesthetic merits of the Certamen entails reappraising its method of construction, wherein the compilation format is not necessarily indicative of literary poverty, but may represent a creative strategy instead. The notion of a single identifiable authorial “voice” which provides the conceptual criteria by which the Certamen has been edited and translated is premised on an understanding of individual creative expression as complement, or contradict each other. “Ultimately, the meaning of the work as a whole will be determined not by a reading of one constituent source or anecdote, but rather by an understanding of the complex interplay between them” (Uden 2010, 123).

22. Tests defined as Lives of Homer, range from freestanding compositions, to encyclopedia entries and biographical information included as introductory sections in editions of the poet’s works or scholarly treatises on Homer. Of these, only the Certamen (c. 138-193 CE) and Pseudo-Herodotus’ On Homer’s Origins, Date and Life (c. 50-150 CE) appear to attempt a coherent narrative.

23. Modern interest in the Certamen from Nietzsche onwards (such as N. J. Richardson (1981) and Ralph M. Rosen (2004) in particular), has centred on the text’s own merits and curiosities, but more on whether similarities between it, the Michigan Papyrus and the fragment published by B. Mandilana (1992) (see Rosen 2004) can prove a thematic link with the narrative section describing the contest between Homer and Hesiod, and Alcidamas’ Morceaux and Aristophanes’ The Frogs.

24. Uden (2010, 123) notes that while there may be an expected hesitation to assess the effect of a compiled text on a whole, the compilation as a form should provide interpretative leverage. This is because the juxtaposition of narratives and authorities from different periods and cultural contexts allows the compiler to reframe material already-known in new ways, thereby encouraging readers to make connections between sources and across time periods. These elements can be used to challenge, stylistically, formally, and conceptually coherent. However, as Picasso demonstrated, formal description is not necessarily limited to an artist’s individual signature style, but by the problem situations of idealized hermeneutical and Classical rationality. As an ‘immanent’ Homer is essentially the poetic system underlying Homerica poetry as described by Mueller (2006, 11) the visual representation of the oral-formulaic epic is an identical process to the visual representation of an ‘immanent’ Homer. While there is no known visual precedent for describing both the epics and their portraiture as one and the same, an ancient textual attempt at achieving this task may arguably exist in the form of The Contest of Homer and Hesiod (commonly referred to as the Certamen).

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25. Scholars cited in the catalogue of fathers include a Clasitas (source of clans) and a Democritus (chosen of the people) of Troezan. M. L. West (2003, 321) argues that the author actually meant Ninomachus of Cyn Psdides and Demotus of Troezan, but, I propose that these may be invented ‘speaking names’ instead. Insertions of ‘speaking names’ into catalogues is not unknown in Homer, which is why in Cook (1967) suggesting that in the Catalogue of Ships, Epistrophos and Schedios are inventions of the poet, with their inclusion motivated by the etymology of their names. Sammons (2010, 161) emphasizes that the ironic play associated with the addition of ‘speaking names’ to catalogues, inventories is possible if “one admits that the catalogue may in part be a field for poetic invention.”

26. In the so-called ‘Hadrianic oracle’ the Delphic Pythia responds to the emperor’s inquiry regarding Homer’s origins with a genealogy that includes Telemachus and a mother named as Nestor’s daughter, Epicaste. West (2003, 322-323) is of course that Epicaste is a mistake that he changes the text to read ‘Polydatis’ in his translation, commentary, and edition of the Greek. His only reference to an alternative version of line 36 occurs in a footnote to Nietzsche’s edition of the Certamen. Keld Zemzophil (2007) also substitutes the name for the other when paraphrasing the oracle.

27. The most intriguing of which is the potentially oblique reference to Oedipus in the seemingly mistaken use of his mother’s name Epicaste to refer to Nestor’s daughter in the Hadrianic oracle. The assumption that “Nestor’s daughter Epicaste” in line 36 is a mistake or corruption of the text is understandable, given that the narrator has already stated in the catalogue of mothers in line 25 that some claim Homer’s mother to be “Nestor’s daughter Polydatis.” While Telemachus was already included in the preceding catalogue of fathers, T. W. Allen (1912) notes that only the Certamen and the tenth-century Suda lists Telemachus and Polydaste as parents of Homer. However, Polydaste and Epicaste appear in two different contexts, with the ‘incorrect’ version enjoying the narrator’s own
the amorphous and subversive attributes of the riddle and the pun, where the questioner’s failure to imagine a meaning beyond the apparent message sets off a course of action which ultimately reveals the nature of its initially undetected meaning. This aspect of the enigmatic oracle is prevalent in the foundation myths of the Greek colonies of the archaic period where linguistic ambiguity serves as a basis for oracular puns and word-play. Such punning relies on the flexibility of words and imagery to appear contradictory on one level, but make sense on another, and reflects Aristotle’s comparison of riddles with metaphors as the combination of things that are impossibly true. Ian Hamilton (1967, 381-2) argues that the social and cognitive function of riddles is to categorize ambivalent words, concepts or items of behaviour within more than one frame of reference to allow “a point of transition between these different frames of reference or classificatory sets. It can, indeed, mediate between sets that are not only different, but in many aspects opposed, and in this way it can form the basis for a differing system of classification, or allow contrasting classifications and conceptual frameworks to co-exist at the same time.” Despite its encyclopaedic format, the Catalogue of Ships incorporates a seemingly dry accumulation of trivia as a complex literary game of allusions, riddles, and puns. Ultimately, it fails to provide any historical or biographical information about the poet, emphasizing the complex polysemic nature of the Homeric text and the manner in which it resists attempts at definitive interpretations instead.

In the Catalogue, Homer emerges as an elusive and protean fusion of characters that populate his epics – an abstract personification of the distinctive attributes of Homeric composition. In a similar vein, Scott Richardson (2006, 353-4) argues that in the Odyssey, the narrator shares Odysseus’ defining characteristics, but ascribes Odyssean characteristics to the narrator of the Odyssey as opposed to its author. Richardson therefore distinguishes the attributes of the epic from Homer as its author – which the Catalogue conflates – to retain the notion of a narrative, objective author, Homer as an author, observer, or authoriser, as an author as the reader. The Catalogue promises an authorisation of a devious narrator. By contrast, John Miles Foley (2007) recounts how each of the Slavic singers (guslar) interviewed by Parry and Lord described a great Guslar whose existence is widely attested, but inherently inconsistent, and he concludes that this figure represents an anthropomorphization of the poetic tradition itself, “a story-based way to talk about the inheritance of oral epic.” If the reader accepts its inconsistent and ambiguous aspects as intentional juxtapositions, then the portrait of Homer that emerges from the Catalogue is of a poetic system incorporating a similar allusive, reciprocally dialectical, and game-like interpretive process that is evident in Picasso’s collages and assemblages.

Homer in a Catalogue of Characters

As is expected of a biographical text, the question of Homer’s origins predominates throughout the Catalogue, and is shared by the poet himself who – like Oedipus – consults an oracle on the topic. On the one hand, the Catalogue fails as a biography by emphasizing the ultimate unknowability of an historical person named Homer, but on the other, it combines a number of characteristically Homeric features, such as catalogues, narratives, juxtaposition, and polysem, to create an abstract representation of Homeric poetics. A Catalogue of Ships is promised on a similar contradiction. On the one hand, none of the twelve composite object portraits in the series describes ‘Homer’. On the other, the work draws on the expressions of artistic self-awareness in the combination of the invocation preceding the Iliadic Catalogue of Ships with the story of Thamyris (see Chapters 1 and 3), and the conflation of character and performer in moments of ‘primary action’ (see below). The invocation preceding the Catalogue of Ships incorporates the narrator’s self-description as having access to a direct eyewitness account, but lacking the means to relay every detail. While the performer can determine which part of the known information will be communicated, the audience expects core events to be described accurately, and for major characters to speak and developed a derisive relationship with his audience that mimics that between Odysseus and the people he encounters ... as our expectations are frustrated and our sense of understanding and clarity frequently undermined, we enter the instability and unreliability that characterize the world of the Odyssey” (Richardson 2006, 353-4).

Indeed, none of the Parry-Lord guslari had ever encountered him face-to-face. If we aggregate all of his often unverifiable, “tall-tale” bio-data, we gain a composite portrait of the master-singer or guslar who sang his praises ever actually met him. Again depending on the informant, the explanation given was that he lived in another village, or was always traveling, or plied his trade a generation or two earlier (“he was not even my father’s father,” said Stolar). Not everyone might agree. Indeed, none of the Parry-Lord guslari had ever encountered him face-to-face. If we aggregate all of his often unverifiable, “tall-tale” bio-data, we gain a composite portrait of the master-singer or Guslar met as a historical person but as a legend. Moreover, it is a portrait that, like all legends, morphs to fit the local circumstances: real-life singers used the Guslar to establish their own bardic lineage and prominence, as well as to stamp certain of their songs as the best. The fact that they describe – and even name – the Guslar in mutually inconsistent ways is simply a function of the role such a figure plays for them.”
behave in accordance with their primary characteristics.32 However, given the link between the fundamental facts of the poems and their characters, variations may be indicative of how performers used seemingly extraneous variations in conjunction with fixed elements to create narrative tension, amplify important themes, or even critique the epic tradition itself. Graeme Bird (2010, 100) for example, notes that individual performers “could and did choose to heighten the emotional level by means of things such as variation in word choice, and intertextual links to other Homeric episodes; since a line of verse does not operate in isolation (or a vacuum), “importing” it into what may appear to be a “new” location has the effect of bringing with that line all of its thematic connections and connotations.” On a few occasions in the Odyssey for example, it is suggested by both gods and heroes that Agamemnon’s disastrous homecoming may serve as a potential precedent for Odysseus’ own return,33 while in Il. 9.142, Agamemnon’s offer of his daughter in marriage to Achilles (which is included in a catalogue of prospective gifts (Il. 9.120-57) constitutes a ‘para-narrative’ that may offer a telling contrast or competing motif to the narrative in which it appears (see Summons 2010, 125). The story of Thamyris as it relates to the self-description of the narrator in Il. 22 constitutes such a para-narrative, the function of which may extend beyond comparing a constructive muse-poet relationship with an antagonistic one. Scholars such as Martin (1989) and Slatkin (1995) have argued that para-narratives locate the Homeric epics within a much broader poetic tradition (incorporating such epics as the Oretés, the Odhukális Ilidós (the Siege of Ochelai), the Cypris, and possibly other poems known to ancient audiences that have since been lost).34 In this view, seemingly minor deviations from the main plot and narrative allow the poet to create complex networks of allusions against which the Ilid or the Odyssey may contextually be defined. Innovation is not vested in creating new characters and narratives, but in finding ways to give audiences new insights into what a well known character or narrative can be made to mean through comparative allusion to other poems.

Scupltural assemblage is premised on a similar approach: the sculptor does not devise new means of expressing form or describing action, but establishes a network of reciprocal allusions where each element individually retains its original/most familiar meaning (to varying degrees), while concurrently taking on new meanings through incorporation into a new context. By exploiting viewers’ awareness of the provenance of objects and their normative use, the sculptor can draw from a well-established reservoir of social, cultural, and personal associations to create artworks that might initially appear obscure, but are in fact sufficiently open to interpretation to allow several multilayered readings. In Kalypso 2012 for example (see fig. 5 and entry 7, Chapter 4), the colander (unlike the less familiar camping stove below it) is an easily recognizable kitchen implement that most viewers will have either seen in use, or used themselves (see figs. 6 and 7). In the sculpture, alterations and additions to the colander emphasize those aspects of its usual context and function most relevant to the formal and conceptual requirements of the sculpture in particular, and the series of sculptures as a whole, to allow for the expression of Calypso’s more abstract attributes, including her personal characteristics and her role in the plot and theme of the Odyssey.35
The manner in which Homeric heroes are described, the actions they engage in, and the speeches they make can also be reflective. While the poet’s “presence” is evident in passages such as his epic. While the moments of “primary action” which Bakker describes are set points in the narrative, the portraits do not aim to illustrate the character as they appear or behave at a specific moment. Instead, the selection and representation of characters were determined by their overall contribution to the expression of the fundamental plot and theme of each epic. As the Odyssey is a noetic (homecoming) poem, the main character Odysseus, is defined in terms of his familial relationships, with the core themes of isolation, obstruction, transformation, and passage, all of which inform the inclusion of Calypso and Circe. In terms of the Iliad’s emphasis on conflict as a means to obtain kleos, Achilles is defined in terms of his main opponent and Helen as both source of the conflict and prize for the victorious side. The core themes of self-fuelling rage and catastrophic self-interest are represented by Eris and Ate.

As in moments of “primary action” in the epic, where character and narrator are conflated to create an immersive and participatory hermeneutics, the sculptures are intended to evoke Homer’s poetic world by means of a continuous and dialectical interpretive process. In an example of a composite object portrait, such as Joseph Cornell’s A Parrot for Juan Gris, 1933-4, the artwork is predominantly an expression of the reciprocal dialectic between a subject (Gris as inventor of a type of collage) and its interpreter (Cornell as an artist using a methodology that developed from Cubist collage). As a


11. Detail of Klytê, 2012 showing spirals, interlaced hatching pattern, and fishing hooks.
viewer encounters Gris via a set of Cornell’s private associations. The extent to which each individual interpreter will be able to decode and unravel each of the multiple allusions and associations that make up the work will differ. The process is dependent on the viewer’s ability to recognize the original function of each element, and to decipher the significance of that function within the context of the image. This interpretive experience differs significantly from a conventional understanding of translation as making a foreign and/or ancient text easily comprehensible to a contemporary audience. Therefore, as the aim of this project is to convey an understanding of how the complexities of Homeric composition inform its content, the twelve sculptural assemblages that make up *A Catalogue of Shapes* do not present the viewer with an unambiguous ‘solved’ interpretation of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. The result is a visual symbolic system in which the Homeric poetic system is expressed as a catalogue of composite object portraits. As in the Homeric epic, the interpreter is responsible for mentally reconstructing the relational, narrative, and thematic significance of each catalogic entry as relative both to each other and to the series as a whole.

While the traditional iconography of Homer and Homeric poetry is closely associated with an historicist approach to the Classical in the visual arts and the notion of a ‘transcendent’ Homer in scholarship, the iconography developed for this project for the representation of an ‘immanent’ oral-formulaic Homer is premised on a dialectical visual engagement with antiquity. In artistic terms, Hegel had defined Classical sculpture as an ideal actualized in history that is not susceptible to further revision and provides a standard type which can never be attained again (Krukowski 1986, 283). From this standpoint, engagement with antiquity involves a nostalgic re-creation of Classical forms to invoke the mythologized achievements and values of ancient Greece and Rome. The rejection of the Classical as a static paradigm antithetical to modernity by much of the *avant garde* in the early twentieth century, was consequently premised on theories described by Krukowski (1986, 270) as self-consciously historical. Such definition of the Classic – and by extension the Homeric – as historically perfected, fixed, and resistant to revision, is intrinsically oppositional. It resists the dialectical engagement between the contemporary and the Classical required for a synthesis of the immediate and the inherited on which the notion of an oral-formulaic Homer is premised. The ‘systemic Classicism’ underlying Cubist innovations in visual representation, exemplifies a transformative engagement with antiquity that echoes the Homeric composing performer’s reiterative interpretation of the epic, and provides a model for the creation of a contemporary interpretation of the Homeric as a poetic system. The sculptural technique of assemblage that developed from Picasso’s Cubist collages, shares sufficient methodological, conceptual, and hermeneutic traits with core aspects of Homeric poetics to allow for a process of comparative visualisation, while the notion of the composite object portrait provides a model for an immersive and participatory ‘aesthetic’ translation of an oral-formulaic Homer.

41. The transformation of one of Cornell’s favourite images – the parrot – in the Gris series, illustrates the extent to which these allusions derived from Cornell’s own understanding of the artist. D’Harnoncourt (1978, 12) points out how in his notes, Cornell often associated Gris with the nineteenth century opera singer Maria Malibran, who was described by many admirers as a “bird of song”, and suggests that the crisp white frontal image of the cockatoo seems appropriate to Gris’s passion for precision and clarity. The white parrot incorporates aspects of Cornell, Gris, and Malibran in one image.

42. As seen in the commentary on Picabia’s *Ici, c’est ici Stieglitz*, 1915, Paul Schweizer’s recognition of the objects that make up the portrait as an engaged brake lever and a gashift stuck in neutral, further affirmed the suggested impotence of Stieglitz as the machine (see Rozaitis 1994, 47-48).

43. Sara Cochran (2011, 32) notes, for example, that to nineteenth century Europe and America, the Classical was the antithesis of the ‘traditional’ and ‘primitive’, and that they “championed their idea of progress by aligning themselves with the great thinkers of the ancient world, a world which they saw as equal in ambition and innovation.”
Conclusion

The understanding of Homeric poetry that emerged from the theory of formulaic composition is of a constructive creative methodology underlying a dynamically adaptive poetic system. The textual multiformity, transformative re-iteration, and integration of form with content in the epics, differs so significantly from a modern literary idiom as to render a conventional literate translation formally, conceptually, and hermeneutically incompatible with composition in performance. The representational system underlying a formally disparate, yet visually cohesive, and predominantly metaphoric (non-literal) type of sculptural assemblage offers a useful contemporary parallel. The interrelatioin of concept and form by means of combinatory and organizational procedures in assemblage invests both form and material with meaning, provoking an interactive and continuously shifting interpretive process.

This project draws on core structural, compositional, and conceptual aspects of the Iliadic Catalogue of Ships as a reflexive site of artistic self-awareness, expressed in the formulation of a ‘Homer-Thamyris complex’. The visual expression of Homeric formalism was addressed through the development of an iconography for the Homeric integration of form and content, the immediate with the inherited, and the fabricated with the prefabricated. The dialectical hermeneutics of Homeric composition during performance were explored through the application of sculptural assemblage as a multiform system of representation. The resulting catalogue of composite object portraits reflects a complex representational system, based on internal and external connotative allusions that are achieved by manipulation of symbolically-invested materials, objects, and forms.

While differences between visual and verbal expression may preclude the direct transmission of a text into an image, these are less prohibitive in an ‘aesthetic translation’. This approach constitutes the creative and contextual re-interpretation of attributes characteristic of the form and content of an existing text/artwork by means of creating another. The series of twelve sculptures that make up A Catalogue of Shapes, 2010-13 is therefore both autonomous as an artwork, and an extension of an existing creative tradition. The reciprocal dialectic that is established in a composite object portrait between its subject and interpreter provides a model for the ontological relationship, created through this project, between Homeric poetry and A Catalogue of Shapes.

Allusive and reciprocally dialectical image-making mechanisms underlying literary devices such as metaphors and similes allow for a process of comparative visualization that is premised on an individual interpretation of Homeric poetics. An example of anachronistic appropriation, A Catalogue of Shapes reflects a subjective and non-historicist engagement with antiquity that draws on core attributes of Homeric composition in performance to evoke its immersive and participatory hermeneutics for a modern audience.
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