

NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

HOMER'S VIEW OF THE EPIC NARRATIVE: SOME FORMULAIC EVIDENCE

During the feast being held in his honor in Phaeacia, Odysseus asks the Phaeacian singer Demodocus to sing the song of the Wooden Horse. He makes his request as follows (*Od.* 8. 496–98):

αἶ κεν δὴ μοι ταῦτα κατὰ μοῖραν καταλέξῃς,
αὐτίκ' ἐγὼ πᾶσιν μυθήσομαι ἀνθρώποισιν
ὥς ἄρα τοι πρόφρων θεὸς ὥπασε θέσπιν ἀοιδήν.

The poet's narrative is designated here by the verb καταλέγειν, "to recount." The verb is applied, though indirectly, once more to poetry in Alcinous' praise of Odysseus' narration of his adventures: μῦθον δ' ὥς ὅτ' ἀοιδὸς ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας (*Od.* 11. 368). Now καταλέγειν is not an ordinary verb of speaking. It is an enumerative verb that joined the *verba dicendi* as a result of semantic evolution, and it still possesses clear enumerative associations in all the contexts in which it occurs.¹ In his study of καταλέγειν, T. Krischer has shown that this verb in Homer designates concrete and exact accounts that relate the subject "point by point" and is applied only to the conveying of information; in view of this, he considers the application of the verb to poetry as a deviation unrepresentative of Homer's general idea of the epic song.² However, Krischer's own evidence shows that the characteristic sense of καταλέγειν has much in common with the early Greek understanding of "truth" conveyed by the words ἀληθής and ἀληθείη:³ this may well indicate that Homer applied the verb καταλέγειν to poetry because he conceived the epic narrative as just such a truthful and "point-by-point" account of facts. We can find evidence in favor of this suggestion in Homer's formulaic diction.

Only the future and aorist of καταλέγειν are used in the epic, obviously because in these forms the third syllable of the verb is lengthened, giving it the shape ~ ~ – – suited to the hexameter. One of the regular positions of καταλέξαι is at the end of the verse, where it usually occurs in some expression that fills the entire second half of the verse. The combinations thus produced are the following:

(after the trochaic caesura)	καὶ ἀτρεκέως καταλέξαι	18 times
	μάλ' ἀτρεκέως καταλέξαι	3 times
	ἀληθείην καταλέξαι	7 times

1. See H. Fournier, *Les verbes "dire" en grec ancien* (Paris, 1946), p. 58.

2. "ETYMOΣ und ΑΛΗΘΗΣ," *Philologus* 109 (1965): 168, 170.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 167–70.

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κατὰ μοῖραν καταλέξαι	4 times
ἐπισταμένως καταλέξαι	once
ἀριφραδέα καταλέξαι	once
ἐοικότα γὰρ καταλέξαι	once
ἀριθμήσας καταλέξαι	once ⁴

The καταλέξαι-expressions are employed by Homer in the following four situations. (1) A request for information is expressed in the wholly formulaic line ἀλλ' ἄγε μοι τόδε εἰπὲ καὶ ἀτρεκέως κατάλεξον (17 out of the 18 occurrences of καὶ ἀτρεκέως καταλέξαι in Homer) and once by ἄγε δὴ μοι πᾶσαν ἀληθεῖην κατάλεξον (*Il.* 24. 407). (2) A forthcoming narration is announced three times by μάλ' ἀτρεκέως καταλέξω, once by καὶ ἀτρεκέως καταλέξω (*Od.* 24. 123), and four times by ἀληθεῖην καταλέξω. (3) A listener characterizes some account with the words ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας (*Od.* 11. 368)⁵ or κατὰ μοῖραν κατέλεξας (*Od.* 3. 331; cf. also *Il.* 19. 186 and *Od.* 8. 496). Finally, (4) a narrator characterizes his own account with either κατὰ μοῖραν κατέλεξα or ἀληθεῖην κατέλεξα (2 times each). Consequently, the distribution of the καταλέξαι-expressions can be represented as follows:

BEFORE:	(1) request—καὶ ἀτρεκέως / ἀληθεῖην κατάλεξον
	(2) announcement—μαλ' (καὶ) ἀτρεκέως / ἀληθεῖην καταλέξω
AFTER:	(3) listener—κατὰ μοῖραν / ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας
	(4) narrator—κατὰ μοῖραν / ἀληθεῖην κατέλεξα

We can see now that the terms qualifying καταλέξαι at the end of the verse are abundant because they are specialized both semantically and metrically. Semantically, the expressions in question fall into two groups: ἀτρεκέως (“truly,” “exactly”) and ἀληθεῖη (“truth”) refer to the content of the account designated by the verb καταλέγειν; κατὰ μοῖραν (“in order,” “rightly”) and ἐπισταμένως (“with knowledge,” “expertly”) refer ostensibly to the way in which the account is delivered. Obviously, both the request for information (1) and the announcement of the forthcoming account (2) are appropriately expressed in terms referring to the content of what is to be narrated; terms referring to the manner or form of the narration are more suited to a listener who is characterizing an account the veracity of which he is not always able to attest (3). Note, however, that when such limitations are irrelevant, as they are when a narrator characterizes what he himself has narrated (4), ἀληθεῖη, referring to the content of the narration, and κατὰ μοῖραν, referring to its outward appearance, are used interchangeably.

4. With καὶ ἀτρεκέως: *Il.* 10. 384, 405; 24. 380, 656; *Od.* 1. 169, 206, 224; 4. 486; 8. 572; 11. 140, 170, 370, 457; 15. 383; 16. 137; 24. 123, 256, 287. With μάλ' ἀτρεκέως: *Il.* 10. 413, 427; *Od.* 24. 303. With ἀληθεῖην: *Il.* 24. 407; *Od.* 7. 297; 16. 226; 17. 108, 122 (v.l. κατὰ μοῖραν); 21. 212; 22. 420. With κατὰ μοῖραν: *Od.* 3. 331; 8. 496; 10. 16; 12. 35 (cf. also ἐν μοίρῃ γὰρ πάντα δίκαιο καὶ κατέλεξας at *Il.* 19. 186). With ἐπισταμένως: *Od.* 11. 368; ἀριφραδέα: *Od.* 23. 225; ἐοικότα γάρ: *Od.* 4. 239; ἀριθμήσας: *Od.* 16. 235.

5. Though a unique expression, ἐπισταμένως καταλέξαι fits in well with the metrical and semantic regularities according to which καταλέξαι is used. This is not true of the other unique expressions noted above: ἐοικότα γὰρ καταλέξω at *Od.* 4. 239 has a peculiar syntactic structure; ἀριθμήσας κατέλεξον at *Od.* 16. 235 takes the verb καταλέγειν in the strictly enumerative sense; and ἀριφραδέα κατέλεξας at *Od.* 23. 225, being part of a larger semantic unit (σήματ' ἀριφραδέα κατέλεξας), cannot be taken as an independent expression.

Metrically, it is convenient for the poet to reserve for each of the situations in question two expressions that differ in their initial sounds: those beginning with a vowel are suited to metrical conditions under which those beginning with a consonant cannot be employed, and vice versa. Clearly, this could only be possible if he thought that such terms were closely associated in their meanings. This is obviously the case with καὶ or μάλ' ἀτρεκέως and ἀληθείην (1 and 2), which denote "truth." The expressions κατὰ μοῖραν and ἐπισταμένως (3) also—at least as far as the listener's evaluation of a given account is concerned—might well be thought to converge on the same idea, so that "rightly" connotes "expertly," and vice versa. However, a similar alternation between κατὰ μοῖραν and ἀληθείην (4), suggesting as it does that each expression connotes the other, calls for a closer examination of the semantic content of κατὰ μοῖραν in Homer.

In fact, κατὰ μοῖραν is metrically isomorphic with καὶ or μάλ' ἀτρεκέως, ἐπισταμένως, and ἀληθείην only when it occurs in combination with the verb καταλέξαι: in this combination alone does the word μοῖρα appear in its ancient form *μμοῖρα (μμ- < συμ-) and give the expression κατὰ μοῖραν the metrical shape ~ ~ ~ ~;⁶ in all other contexts—for example, in the formula κατὰ μοῖραν ξειπες—κατὰ μοῖραν is shaped ~ ~ ~ ~. Examination of the two metrical shapes of κατὰ μοῖραν in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* shows that they differ from each other not only metrically but also semantically.

In its ancient form κατὰ *μμοῖραν, the expression κατὰ μοῖραν is applied to actions that have as their common semantic denominator the ordered succession in which they are performed.⁷ No ordered succession, however, is implied in the formula κατὰ μοῖραν ξειπες and related expressions, which as a rule refer to single utterances (or, sometimes, acts) not subject to further differentiation.⁸ None of these expressions, usually rendered as "you have said it rightly" (or, "not rightly"), preserves κατὰ μοῖραν in its ancient form; the only cases in which κατὰ *μμοῖραν is applied to human speech are those in which it is combined with the verb καταλέγειν.⁹ In view of this, it seems reasonable to suggest that the meaning of κατὰ μοῖραν, which originally connoted an ordered succession, evolved to connote "rightly," and that only the phrase κατὰ μοῖραν shaped ~ ~ ~ ~ preserves the original meaning of the expression together with the ancient metrical shape.¹⁰

Thus, the two meanings of κατὰ μοῖραν, "in order" and "rightly," correspond to the expression's two metrical shapes: the phrase κατὰ μοῖραν shaped

6. See P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris, 1968), p. 679, s.v. μείρομαι. Cf. D. B. Monro, *A Grammar of the Homeric Dialect* (Oxford, 1882), pp. 275–78; M. Parry, "Les formules et la métrique d'Homère," in *The Making of Homeric Verse*, ed. A. Parry (Oxford, 1971), p. 232.

7. Outfitting a ship (*Od.* 4. 783, 8. 54), milking sheep (*Od.* 9. 245, 309, 342), cutting up a sacrificial beast (*Od.* 3. 457), the advance of troops (*Il.* 16. 367).

8. Κατὰ μοῖραν ξειπες: *Il.* 1. 286; 8. 146; 9. 59; 10. 169; 15. 206; 23. 626; 24. 379; *Od.* 2. 251; 7. 227; 8. 141, 397; 13. 385; 18. 170; 20. 37; 21. 278; 22. 486. Μυθεῖται κατὰ μοῖραν: *Od.* 17. 580; κατὰ μοῖραν ὑποκρίναιτο: *Od.* 15. 170. Cf. also ἔρεξας, τελέσειεν (οὐ) κατὰ μοῖραν: *Od.* 9. 352; 15. 203.

9. Applied to Nestor's account of the events in the royal house of Argos (*Od.* 3. 331), to Odysseus' accounts of his adventures to Aeolus (*Od.* 10. 16) and to Circe (*Od.* 12. 35), and to Demodocus' song of the Wooden Horse (*Od.* 8. 496).

10. Note that the expression κατὰ κόσμον ("in order," "duly") also underwent a similar semantic development; see J. Kerschenshteiner, *Kosmos* (Munich, 1962), p. 6.

~ ~ ~ means "rightly" and the phrase κατὰ μοῖραν shaped ~ ~ ~ means "in order," "in turn"; for the kind of enumerative account implied by the verb καταλέγειν, "to recount point by point" seems to be the most appropriate rendering of κατὰ μοῖραν καταλέξει in Homer.¹¹ It follows that when varying the two expressions κατὰ μοῖραν and ἀληθείην before καταλέξει at verse-end, Homer had to choose whether he wished to say "to recount point by point" or "to recount the truth." We saw above that his choice was actually determined by metrical conditions. At the same time, metrical conditions cannot be thought to constrain his meaning, because he clearly varies speech-qualifications in an elaborate and subtle way. In view of this, and considering that the verb καταλέγειν itself connotes both an ordered succession and truth, we should conclude that these two meanings were conceived by him as interdependent. That is to say, the ordered succession was regarded as the form of a truthful narration, and the truth as the content of a "point-by-point" narrative succession.¹²

Since Homer meant poetry to deliver truth, and since Homer's truth consisted of properly ordered items, he would naturally have grasped the "point-by-point" progression as the only form appropriate for the epic narrative. The same conclusion seems to follow from his use of κατὰ κόσμον at *Odyssey* 8. 489. When Odysseus wants to praise Demodocus, he says that the Phaeacian singer sings of all that the Achaeans suffered at Troy "in perfectly good order" (λίην . . . κατὰ κόσμον); later on in the same speech the sense of the phrase κατὰ κόσμον is conveyed more specifically as follows: "as if you had yourself been present or heard the story from another" (*Od.* 8. 491). From this we can infer that the "order" of Demodocus' song is the order of the events as they took place.¹³ Moreover, Alcinoüs' evaluation of Odysseus' narrative at *Odyssey* 11. 368, "you have recounted your story expertly (ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας), like a singer," clearly implies that Homer not only thought of the epic song as a "point-by-point" narrative succession but even found in this feature of epic song the pattern for all veracious narrative.¹⁴

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11. In *Le vrai et le faux dans la pensée grecque archaïque* (Paris, 1976), J.-P. Levet comes to a similar conclusion: κατὰ μοῖραν in combination with καταλέγειν stands apart from other expressions employing κατὰ μοῖραν in the context of human speech (the only context in which he examines them), in that it does not bear the meaning "rightly." He proposes rendering κατὰ μοῖραν καταλέξει as "parler selon la portion de réalité qu'on a en soi" (p. 198).

12. This conclusion can be further corroborated by the fact that the "point-by-point" narrative succession may well function in Homer as a criterion of verification, as is the case with Alcinoüs' evaluation of Odysseus' narration of his adventures. Not being in a position to attest the veracity of Odysseus' story, Alcinoüs can only judge it on the basis of indirect evidence (*Od.* 11. 363-68): Odysseus does not look like a liar; shapeliness is on his words; his mind is noble; and, finally, he recounted his story expertly, "like a singer." "Point-by-point" relation of the facts (ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας) serves, therefore, as the final proof of the truthfulness of Odysseus' narration. Cf. Krischer, "ETYMOΣ," pp. 170-71; W. J. Verdenius, "The Principles of Greek Literary Criticism," *Mnem.* 36 (1983): 25; C. Macleod, *Collected Essays* (Oxford, 1983), p. 5; G. B. Walsh, *The Varieties of Enchantment* (Chapel Hill and London, 1984), p. 7.

13. See T. B. L. Webster, "Greek Theories of Art and Literature down to 400 B.C.," *CQ* 33 (1939): 175; G. Lanata, *Poetica pre-platonica* (Florence, 1963), pp. 12-13; H. Maehler, *Die Auffassung des Dichterberufs im frühen Griechentum* (Göttingen, 1963), p. 32; Krischer, "ETYMOΣ," p. 171; A. W. H. Adkins, "Truth, ΚΟΣΜΟΣ and APETH in the Homeric Poems," *CQ* 22 (1972): 16-17; Verdenius, "Principles," p. 53; Macleod, *Essays*, p. 5; Walsh, *Enchantment*, p. 8.

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