

the epigram was inscribed suggests that the fame referred to is posthumous in nature. These developments need not, however, surprise us, given the famous Homeric precedent in *Il.* 9.413. If anything, we should perhaps rather be surprised that the inherited connotations had proven so persistent, in the face of the Homeric usage, which seems such a forceful and obvious application to give to the inherited phrase.

Men's Epithets in Homer

An Essay in Poetic Syntax

By PAOLO VIVANTE, Montreal

1.

My question is: what difference does it make to our perception of a sentence whether there is an epithet or not? How does an epithet contribute to the mental image of what is mentioned? And how, on the other hand, does the lack of epithets contribute to the further development of a sentence by simply letting us notice that something is mentioned for the sake of some ulterior purpose¹)?

In any sentence or sequence of sentences there are zones of focus or exposure which are naturally brought out by the very idea of what we wish to express. To take a trivial example of every-day speech, I may say quite naturally "I walked over the soft grass", but just as naturally "I decided to walk over the grass" or "I ran over the grass to meet him". Why is it so? The reason is that only in the first instance do I linger upon the act of walking, on the spot,

¹) The question has hardly been touched in any comprehensive way. As it is, no general answer is available but Milman Parry's. On the epithets of men in particular, see *The Making of Homeric Verse*, Oxford 1971, p. 114–115. As usual, no consideration is given to the fact that in Homer (as anywhere else) the same noun may or may not have the epithet, or may be replaced by a pronoun, or may be simply understood without being mentioned. Disregard for the absence of the epithet prevents us from appreciating the epithet's presence. Hence the view of the Homeric epithet as a purely metrical or ornamental element.

on the moment; and the epithet, which is intrinsic to grass, arrests the occasion to my mind's eye. The epithet, on the other hand, would be far less natural in the other instances: what here prevails is a sense of decision and purpose.

I am touching here upon something quite elementary; but it is a principle which, on the very strength of its being elementary, is rich with implications. What is true of ordinary every-day speech is also true, on a more complex scale, of a literary or poetic statement. The noun-epithet phrase conveys the sense of a concrete presence, whereas a noun without epithet (or a mere pronoun) rather reflects some superimposed meaning, connection, subordination, cause and effect.

2.

Bearing this in mind, let us turn quite generally to Homer's epithets, considering passages of different kinds.

Take the first line of the Iliad. We might easily imagine that the poem could have begun in quite a different way: the Muse, or the Muses, might have been invoked with an epithet and the theme might have followed in a discursive way (cp. Il. 2.484–487, Hes. *Op. et dies.* 1, *Theog.* 25). Not so in this passage, however. It is the “wrath-of-Pelides-Achilles” which occupies, as one unit of expression, the field of vision²), and the hero's epithet is essential in giving it its rightful weight and thus letting it space out in the ensuing lines.

Or take Il. 13.1–6:

*Ζεὺς δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν Τρωῶας τε καὶ Ἑκτορα νηυσὶ πέλασσε,
τοὺς μὲν ἕα παρὰ τῆσι πόνον τ' ἐχέμεν καὶ οὐζὺν
νωλεμέως, αὐτὸς δὲ πάλιν τρέπεν ὅσσε φαεινὸν
νόσφιν ἐφ' ἵπποπόλων Θρηκῶν καθορώμενος αἶαν
Μυσῶν τ' ἀγχεμάχων καὶ ἀγανῶν Ἰππημολγῶν
γλακτοφάγων Ἀβίων τε δικαιοτάτων ἀνθρώπων.*

We find no epithet of Zeus himself who is caught up in the realization of his plans, no epithet for the ships which are nothing but a term of reference in these plans, but there is an epithet for Zeus' eyes and for the people or places which are scanned by his far-reaching look. The epithets are here poetically essential in

²) For similar occurrences of such a noun-epithet phrase in the genitive, cp. Il. 1.75, 203, 5.444, 13.624, Od. 17.581.

giving us a sense of extension, as if their very length were suggestive of actual space. We appreciate them quite apart from any narrative connection or topical interest. These distant people stand out in their several habitats as points of focus to the divine gaze which spaces out acquiring substance and volume.

3.

We hardly question, in these cases, the presence or absence of epithets. Any reader is dimly aware of a poetic appropriateness in their distribution. If, however, we seek critical reasons to support our appreciation, theories of style will give us little help. The old-fashioned rhetorician will say that we find here forms of amplification. The punctilious commentator might suggest that in Il. 1.1 the identity of Achilles needs to be established or that in 13.1–6 the poet finds occasion to give us curious details about the people mentioned. On the other hand, the current theories of oral composition quite evade the issue of aesthetic value by their very insistence on traditional diction.

I believe we should seek a poetic principle in the language itself, in the way sentences gather around certain points of focus, in the art whereby the poet elicits these basic potentialities of perception and expression. This is, in other words, a question of syntax.

The rules of accident and construction, however, help us little at this point. What comes to mind is a broader sense of syntax, There is some support for it in modern linguistic theory³). I appeal especially to the 'localist' or 'spatial' theory of case⁴). I shall try to expound it in relation to my argument.

³) I am here referring very generally to the principle that regular sentences (usually taken for granted) are to be accounted for on the basis of underlying syntactic relations which are universally meaningful: see, for instance, N. Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1965, p. 5–7. Hence also the semantic approach to syntax: see, for instance, U. Weinreich, *Explorations in semantic theory*, The Hague, 1972, p. 112–115.

⁴) See L. Hjelmslev, *La catégorie des cas, étude de grammaire générale*, Aarhus 1935, especially p. 11–13, 25–28, 36–45, 65–70, 102–103; *Sur l'indépendance de l'épithète*, Copenhagen 1956 (= *Essais linguistiques*, Paris 1971, p. 208–219); R. Jakobson, Beitrag zur allgemeinen Kasuslehre, *Travaux du cercle linguistique de Prague*, 6, 1936, p. 240–288; J. M. Anderson, *The Grammar of Case, towards a localistic theory*, Cambridge 1971.

Ideas particularly relevant to my argument may be found in W. Wundt, *Die Sprache*, II, Leipzig 1904, p. 93; F. Misteli, *Charakteristik der haupt-*

The epithet, we may say, highlights any object which the sentence brings to the forefront in the line of vision. This has nothing to do with any deliberate stress or emphasis. On the contrary, we have, very simply, the full statement of what is presented before us. Thus “divine Achilles went” (Il. 24.596) simply lets us dwell on the hero’s presence, while “they rejoiced because Achilles had appeared” (Il. 20.42–43) rather underlines a superimposed motive. “Divine Achilles”, the name with its epithet, represents here what I call a point of focus.

Another condition favouring the epithet is that the action or state so brought out by the sentence should be a simple one, naturally pertinent to the nature of what is in focus. In such a way the noun-epithet image is immediately apprehended along with the verb which governs it or is governed by it. We thus have, as above, “divine Achilles went” but (Il. 23.224–225) “Achilles wept for his friend burying his bones, walking to and fro by the pyre . . .” In the first instance the simple act of going (and the same might be said for ‘speaking’, ‘shouting’, ‘seeing’ etc.) is all one with the hero’s image, the simple act blends with its subject in one single impression, it is intrinsic to its nature. This is not so, on the other hand, in the second instance: we are distracted by the complications of Achilles’ action; and, though he is in focus, his image loses its edge in the ensuing description. I call ‘concrete’, ‘existential’ this aspect of the epithet’s function in “divine Achilles went”. This is because the act so expressed is not thinned out by description, because it is immediately and fundamentally relevant to Achilles as a body in motion.

Another related principle is what I might call ‘intimacy of relation’⁵). This intimacy consists in the unity whereby the noun-epithet is inextricably bound up with the act or state expressed in the sentence (thus in such cases as those quoted above “divine Achilles”, “swift-footed Achilles” is all one with the idea of going,

sächlichsten Typen des Sprachbaues, Berlin 1893, p. 86, 91–92: it is here pointed out that certain languages reserve a distinctive case-form for the names of things which stand out most distinctly in the field of vision. Most instructively R. Jakobson (*op.cit.* p. 278–281) points to two Russian forms of genitive and locative, one of which has a more ‘individualizing’ function and is the only one to admit an attribute or epithet. Such rules of course do not apply to Greek; but their implications are rooted in perception and may be felt otherwise than through case-forms.

⁵) For ‘intimacy’ (and ‘concreteness’) in this sense, cp. Hjelmslev’s *Catégorie des cas*, p. 64–65, 96–98, 127–136.

speaking, etc.). These units of expression are as much as possible self-contained. Here is a syntactic principle whose poetic function is to highlight the moment or the occasion quite apart from any narrative or discursive purpose. This is why the Homeric epithets are so relevant to the immediate sentence, so indifferent to the narrative contents of the passage in which they occur.

Focus, concreteness, intimacy of relation thus favour the use of epithets. Now can we, on these premises, formulate any general rules? The answer must be a negative one. We are faced with matters of nuance and degree, complexities arise which cannot be brought under any one-sided view. Thus our notion of focus or lack of focus cannot be translated into terms of principal and subordinate clauses. Similarly our concreteness is relative to the way a thing is mentioned, not to be defined in contrast to anything ideal or intangible.

Are then our categorizations useless? No, what we can do is to establish a criterion. We have tendencies, predispositions, preferences, spontaneous choices which are, nonetheless, rooted in a syntactic perception of the expressive material — not a matter of chance nor prompted by the mere need of versification or ornamentation.

How then shall we apply these syntactic principles? Their verification depends on the way we read Homer—on how far we realize the contents in terms of actual representation and not of mere narrative. What comes to the fore is the level of apprehension. What matters is the collocation of things and the concreteness of their presentation. Our view, in other words, must be horizontal rather than vertical. The degree of evidence is here more important than the logical scheme whereby clause governs clause or word governs word in completing a sentence. The contents is spread out before us according to focal points of position and weight, not presented as a statement in which adventitious embellishments cover up the bare distinction between the various parts of a sentence. On the contrary, a thing will have its epithet according to its degree of focus and concreteness—according to how central it is and how integrated to an act (or state) which is immediately pertinent to its nature.

Not all things, of course, have the same way of being concrete and of being in focus—not all things, let us say, have the same kind of concrete focus. A complete survey should thus take into account the nature of each thing, looking into what are the kinds

of occasion in which such a thing may be given concrete focus and thus be mentioned with the epithet. A character's name, for instance, will be highly concrete as subject of a simple human act; a tool or weapon in so far someone actually uses it; a place as a term of arrival which is actually reached. We have, for instance, "here lies the spear on the ground" (Il. 20.345), but "to throw the long-shadowed spear" (Il. 3.346, etc.). There are certain existential conditions which bring out to the full, in some way or other, the intrinsic function of anything we may name.

In the light of these principles I shall now survey the designation of men in Homer—a meaning which is both important in itself and a frequent occasion of epithets.

4.

We may thus put our question in these terms: what are those occasions in which the idea of 'men', 'humanity' is most concretely apprehended? Where is it that men as a whole are presented in such a way that we can actually visualize them—not mentioned as a matter of course nor abstracted as an idea?

It is immediately striking in this connection that men are most frequently mentioned with an epithet in the partitive genitive. It is understandably so. For in such a case the meaning 'man' or 'humanity' is most concrete: we see an individual emerging from the mass of mankind, and what stands out is this mass, this multitudinous whole. Here is a syntactic relation which is existentially important on its own strength. It has its own intimacy, its own inner cohesion. It is thus unaffected by the narrative contents; and we find the epithet wherever the syntax of the phrase is allowed full scope—*viz.* whenever other syntactic relations do not intervene and obstruct it.

Such is the case in Il. 6.123:

τίς δὲ σὺ ἔσσι, φέριστε, καταδνητῶν ἀνθρώπων;

Cp. 142, Od. 6.153. The thought "who are you of men", gives to the word 'men' an extraordinary resonance. This is so, at least, if we give the word its full value. For, in this full partitive sense, mankind is mentioned in its pure objectivity, away from the strain of any narrative or discursive sequence. Homer does justice to such existential undertones by using the epithet⁶).

⁶) We should thus not attribute to the epithet 'mortal' the point of contrasting men to gods. Such a contrast (and much else) is naturally implicit in the phrase itself.

By the same token, on the other hand, there is no epithet where the syntax exerts external pressure. Such is the case in the compressed coordination of the line *τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν; πότι τοι πόλις ἤδὲ τοκῆες*; in Od. 1.170, 10.325, etc., cp. Il. 24.387; such, again, is the case where the pronoun is qualified: Il. 21.150; or where there is an indirect question: Od. 4.61–62, 138–139. Such cases are tantamount to merely asking a person's identity.

Similarly we find the same rich partitive phrase in Od. 3.114 *τίς κεν ἐκεῖνα / πάντα γε μνθήσαιο καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων*; The self-contained phrase gives us, again, a sense of extension. Compare this and other epithets in Od. 1.167, 9.502, 521, 17.587, Il. 3.402, 9.340, 18.404. In all such instances the idea "someone (none, alone) among men" is in sufficient focus and joined to some simple, basic human activity (to say, to ask, to know . . .). Hence we have conditions which require the epithet. The very thought of a single individual summons up, in such cases, the sense of humanity as a whole.

Again the lack of epithet is here due, mostly, to syntactic constraints or complications which have the effect of blurring this unhampered sense of 'man', 'humanity'. We thus have in Od. 1.281–282 "go and seek news of your father, see if perchance any of men might tell you . . .", but ib. 167 "he is dead and no comfort is there, if any of the-men-upon-earth tells us that he will come". Cp. 23.216, Il. 20.173. A complete analysis and survey would show the many ways in which the lack of epithet reflects a curtailment of perspective because of some superimposed idea⁷).

⁷) See the following instances without epithet:

a) An infinitive clause as object of strong affirmation or hearsay: Il. 6.488, Od. 17.115.

b) A weak conditional clause ("if anyone should see them") following a dogmatic statement about dreams: Od. 19.567.

c) Compressed coordination of acts in narrating an escape: Od. 13.269–270 "it was night, none of men saw me, I killed him unseen". Contrast Il. 18.401–404 "I worked in an ocean cave . . . none of gods knew it nor of mortal men".

d) There is explanatory intent: in Od. 6.205 Nausicaa's "none other of men with us mingles" after describing the situation of Scheria (note that *ἀνδρῶν* could easily have replaced *ἄλλος*). Contrast the simpler rendering of Calypso in Od. 7.247.

e) The pronoun has a qualifying predicate distracting us from the down-right objective presentation of men: Od. 5.448, 23.187, 13.143, 8.552, Il. 23.554.

The sense of the whole and part lends itself preeminently to a sense of extension. Hence the epithet also in the dative or accusative where the mentioning of men simply gives extension to what touches any individual among them—and this quite apart from the need of completing the sentence or of defining an abstract thought. Such is Od. 1.349:

*ἀλλὰ ποθι Ζεὺς αἴτιος, ὅς τε δίδωσιν
ἀνδράσιν ἀλφηστῆσιν, ὄπως ἐθέλησιν, ἐκάστω.*

Cp. 11.365, 20.195, Il. 14.199. Note how, in these instances, the individual members (*ἐκάστω*, *πολλούς*, *βασιλεῦσι*, *πάντας*) are juxtaposed to the full presentation of mankind, with a similar intimacy of relation as in the partitive genitive. Thus in the instance quoted above the act of Zeus is seen stretching out to one and all. A similar idea is similarly expressed in Od. 1.593 where this sense of extension is conveyed in the phrase “over the corn-giving earth” which replaces the epithet of men.

The same significance may be found in other genitive phrases which constitute with the governing noun one voluminous idea. Take Od. 18.136:

*τοῖος γὰρ νόος ἐστὶν ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων
οἷον ἐπ’ ἡμαρ ἄγῃσι πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε.*

Just as *τις ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων* is any human being across the world, so *νόος ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων* is the human mind or the nature of man similarly considered in its concrete wordly setting. Again there is a self-enclosed relation between the words, one objective whole which stands juxtaposed to the context. While the epithet

f) The genitive men is modified: Od. 7.25–26, 6.176–177, Il. 24.220.

g) Various forms of emphasis upset the existential balance—irony: Od. 9.405; command: Od. 7.31; exclamation (where “over the boundless earth replaces the epithet”): Il. 7.446, Od. 19.107, 17.386; pathos: Od. 19.365; pointedness: Il. 16.850, cp. Od. 4.80, Il. 11.761.

Compare genitives after a superlative. We find the epithet in e.g. Il. 1.266 “those were the strongest of men-upon-earth”, cp. Il. 20.220, 233, Od. 1.219, 19.285 (and by analogy 13.261, cp. Il. 2.553)—all outright statements of some acknowledged superiority. On the other hand, no epithet in an infinite clause: Od. 4.190, cp. 7.212, 23.125; or where one superlative is distinguished from another: Od. 1.66, 13.297, 7.108; or where ‘men’ is modified: Il. 24.67; or where the superiority is determined by a god: Od. 15.253, cp. 1.236; or where there is some overbalancing emphasis: Il. 13.374, Od. 19.364, 23.210. In Od. 4.231 the superiority is question is too specialized to admit an epithet.

of course adds nothing to the literal denotation (as if to say 'earthly', 'poor mortal clay'), yet it is essential to the poetic (and existential) sense: we are made to see man in his habitat as a being whose locality in the universe is all one with his state of mind. Without the epithet, we might take the genitive in a merely possessive sense, as "a man's way of thinking".

Od. 20.75–76 (of Zeus):

*ὁ γὰρ τ' εὔ οἶδεν ἅπαντα,
μοῖραν τ' ἀμμορίην τε καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων.*

The phrase again centralizes the human condition—presented here as an extensive sphere opened up to the knowledge of Zeus. Without the epithet, we should have the thin statement of a fact; and we might translate: "Zeus knows all—what a man may have and what he is denied".

Il. 20.204:

πρόκλυτ' ἀκούοντες ἔπεα θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων.

Again a compact expression. It conveys the human oral traditions in their vast extension. The epithet cements the synthesis; and, without it, we might translate merely "what men proclaim".

Il. 2.804:

ἄλλη δ' ἄλλων γλῶσσα πολυσπερέων ἀνθρώπων.

We have, through the epithet, the idea of human languages as a whole. Contrast the lack of epithet in Il. 20.248 *στρεπτή δὲ γλῶσσ' ἐστὶ βροτῶν* which presents us with a particular kind of behaviour: glibness, volubility of speech.

Il. 4.45:

*αἱ γὰρ ὑπ' ἡελίῳ τε καὶ οὐρανῷ ἀστερόεντι
ναιετάουσι πόλεις ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων.*

Again the poetic synthesis: "human city", "community of man". It conveys the dwelling of people the world over. The epithet conveys a sweeping sense of extension juxtaposed to sun and sky.

We may note here the phrase *πόλις μερόπων ἀνθρώπων* (Il. 18.342, 20.217, cp. 18.490) presenting a city in full exposure as forthright object of founding, conquering—*viz.* object of acts which are intrinsically pertinent to it. Lack of epithet is, again, due to complications of description or construction impairing the centralized image: in Il. 9.328, for instance, Achilles says: "I conquered twelve

cities of men with my ships”, where both the number of cities and the naval expedition detract from the simplicity of the picture⁸).

Il. 1.250:

τῷ δ' ἤδη δύο μὲν γενεαὶ μερόπων ἀνθρώπων
ἐφθίαθ' . . .

“Generations” is existentially bound up with “men”. The passing human generations are presented before us in their own right, as Nestor recedes into the background. Without epithet, we should merely have information of Nestor’s age⁹).

We may treat in the same way the meaning “close to, or far away from, man” in Od. 6.125 ἧ νό που ἀνθρώπων εἰμὶ σχεδὸν ἀδθεντων and ib. 8 εἶσεν δὲ Σχερίη, ἐκάς ἀνδρῶν ἀλφηστῶν. We find here juxtaposition between an individual spot and the rest of humanity, much in the same way as τις and the genitive partitive phrase. The human habitat, in other words, is given full focus as an integrating term of this relation, quite apart from the narrative context. We might convey this forcefulness by giving to the mention of men an independent spatial connotation: “Where am I—is it close to man?”, “Settled them in Sheria—far away from man”. The epithet is here essential in conveying a human space. This is especially so in Od. 6.125. Without the epithet, we might merely understand “are there any men close by?”. As it is, the epithet

⁸) Other instances in which lack of epithet is due to overlaid thought or complication:

a) The genitive ‘men’ is, again, modified: Od. 5.101: “There is nearby no city of men who might sacrifice . . .”.

b) The transitive act governing ‘city’ is treated in detail concentrating the attention: Il. 17.737 “a fire that suddenly risen leaps up and burns a city of men”.

c) The governing verb has a topical significance and thus, again, draws the attention to a narrative fact away from the city’s image: “I shall take you to cities of men” (Od. 15.82), “wandering through cities of men”, ib. 492, cp. 1.3, 9.128, 16.63, 23.267, 19.170). See p. 163 above. Note that in these instances we find ἄστυ not πόλις; we do not find, e.g. ἄστυ καταδνητῶν ἀνθρώπων. The word πόλις has a more existential sense.

⁹) But no epithet in Il. 6.146 “such is the generation of leaves as is that of men”: men are a term of comparison, we have a concept rather than a concrete sense of extension. There is, on the other hand, Il. 5.442 “beware . . . quite unequal is the tribe of immortal gods and of earth-walking men”: χαμαι ἐρχομένων ἀνθρώπων is not a regular noun-epithet phrase, but a unique expression produced by strong pointed emphasis. We could easily have had instead καὶ ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων.

removes us from the mere practical question of whether there are people within reach, giving us a sense of inhabited lands and of distant solitudes¹⁰)

5.

Consider now, in contrast, the absence of epithet. It will be seen that men have generally no epithet when they are mentioned without being given independent exposure, apart from the drift of the sentence—when, in other words, their designation serves to specify and explain.

Here are a few typical instances.

We naturally find no epithet where the meaning 'man' is but part of a superimposed attribute or predicate: e.g. Il. 19.94 "Ate that-damages-men", Od. 13.60 "Old age and death that-visit-men". Compare the way in which the meaning 'man' loses all focus or concreteness in such attributes as *φιλόανθρωπος*, *μισάνθρωπος*.

Hence, generally, no epithet where the mention of men serves to bear out an act or an idea which has its own emphasis or unusual pointedness:

"It is a shame among men" Od. 18.225, cp. 14.403, 1.391, 6.29, 4.710, 8.160.

"To suffer from men" Il. 5.384, cp. Od. 2.136.

"To refresh men" Od. 4.568, cp. 1.137, 12.40.

"To rejoice in men": Il. 7.61; "to be without men": Od. 9.124; "to lie with men": Od. 5.119, cp. 6.288.

"To be a wanderer among men": Od. 15.276, 20.206; "to be brave among men": Il. 13.461, cp. Od. 17.354, 14.176, etc.

Nor generally is there any epithet where the meaning 'men' is modified and the sentence is thus given a particular bias: Od. 11.123 "men who know not the sea", cp. Il. 16.386, 9.592, 134, etc.

Nor in a mere genitive of possession: Il. 5.557 "lions that ravage the farmsteads of men", Il. 10.13 "wondering at the clamour of men" (distinguished from other sounds), cp. Od. 6.259, Il. 16.392, 19.131. Note here how the adnominal noun-epithet phrase in the genitive (e.g. *πόλις μερόπων ἀνθρώπων*) is usually connected with its governing noun by a relation which is inevitably intrinsic to it—i.e. not a casual or loose relation as in the instances just cited.

¹⁰) But naturally no epithet in e.g. Od. 21.364 "soon shall your swift dogs eat you up alone away from men".

In these as in many other examples the lack of epithet may be more or less self-explaining. Take now other instances in which an epithet might have been expected. Such is Od. 14.83–84:

*οὐ μὲν σχέτλια ἔργα θεοὶ μάκαρες φιλέουσι,
ἀλλὰ δίκην τίουσι καὶ αἴσιμα ἔργ' ἀνθρώπων.*

How does the meaning 'men' differ here from Od. 20.75–76:

*ὁ γὰρ τ' εἶ οἶδεν ἅπαντα,
μοῖραν τ' ἀμμορίην τε καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων.*

It is a question of weight and position, not of literal meaning. Whereas Od. 20.75–76 objectively presents a voluminous self-contained whole, we have instead in Od. 14.83–84 an overbalancing moral judgement. The focus shifts here to the discrimination of the gods, thinning out the pure sense of existence. Anything like *αἴσιμα δ' ἔργα τίουσι καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων* would have sounded unnatural. The predominant restrictive tone strongly works against the epithet. Cp. Od. 17.487, 13.214, Il. 6.351.

Or take Il. 20.242:

*Ζεὺς δ' ἀρετὴν ἀνδρεσσιν ὀφέλλει τε μινύθει τε,
ὅπως κεν ἐθέλησιν· ὁ γὰρ κάρτιστος ἀπάντων.*

There is no epithet here, but there is in Od. 1.349:

*ἀλλὰ ποθι Ζεὺς αἴτιος, ὅς τε δίδωσιν
ἀνδράσιν ἀλφηστῆσιν, ὅπως ἐθέλησιν, ἐκάστω*

Why is it so? An important reason is that Il. 20.242 dwells on the nature of *ἀρετή*—on how it increases and how it fades. There is again a point that alters the existential balance: the power of Zeus and the weakness of man presented as a comparison rather than as a state of existence.

More generally, the epithet is lacking where the idea expressed in the sentence is emphatic or takes a strong moral connotation:

Il. 19.270:

Ζεῦ πατερ, ἧ μεγάλας ἄτας ἀνδρεσσι διδοῖσθα.

Il. 24.49:

τλητὸν γὰρ Μοῖραι θυμὸν θέσαν ἀνθρώποισι.

Od. 20.202 (addressed to Zeus):

οὐκ ἐλεαίρεις ἀνδρας ἐπὴν δὴ γείνεται αὐτός.

Il. 24.45:

*οὐδέ οἱ αἰδῶς
γίγνεται, ἧ τ' ἀνδρας μέγα σίνεται ἠδ' ὀνίνησι.*

Or the sentence is like an aphorism:

Il. 6.339: *νίκη δ' ἐπαμείβεται ἄνδρας.*

4.320: *ἀλλ' οὐ πως ἅμα πάντα θεοὶ δόσαν ἀνθρώποισι.*

We have here dispensations of a moral order. What stands out is an effect rather than an act. The mention of men thus serves to complete the sentence by bringing out this effect. Thus, for instance, in the verse "O Zeus, great delusions you give to men", men are but the term of a dispensation, absorbed in the religious or moral emphasis. As a result, we are hardly presented with a concrete field of vision. The sentence is such as to contract the spatial perspective and extenuate the collocation of things.

This explains why we do not normally find the epithet in the dative of interest, e.g. Il. 18.328 *ἀλλ' οὐ Ζεὺς ἀνδρεσσι νοήματα πάντα τελευτᾷ*. Cp. Od. 13.397, 16.148, 11.274, 15.343, 4.565, Il. 9.592, 6.14, 9.159, Od. 9.20, 14.289, 17.287 (474), 15.255, 17.519, Il. 17.547, 13.244, 14.325, Od. 11.287, 12.125¹¹).

Or we may put the argument in terms of grammar rather than contents. The governing verb along with the agent takes to itself the greater stress, with the result that the object noun becomes a mere complement. There is, on the one hand, a characterizing role and, on the other, the object ('men') which serves to define that role.

The epithet thus tends to be missing where 'men' literally serve to complete the construction of a sentence. This brings us to men in the nominative—to the remarkable fact that the epithet is most scarce in this case, exactly where we might be most inclined to use it.

Why is this? The reason is that men as a collective entity can hardly be visualized as subject in any single concrete act (this in contrast with individual characters who so often have the epithet

¹¹) But there is a concrete face to face relation in Od. 4.479 "to all men-upon-earth are minstrels possessed with honour . . .". Compare Il. 1.339 "let them be witnesses on the part of the blessed gods and of mortal men".

Quite different is the use of *οἰζυρός*, *δειλός* as in Il. 22.76 "this is the thing most pitiable to wretched mortals". ib. 31, 24.525, Od. 12.341, Il. 13.569, Od. 4.197. These are not proper Homeric epithets in that they normally occur also as predicates and emphatic attributes. Hence they are always pointedly connected with the meaning of the sentence (except possibly Od. 15.408).

Contrast Hesiod's loose moralizing use of Homeric epithets in the dative of interest: *Op. et dies*, 82, 201, 472, 384.

in this case). When mentioned generally as subject of a sentence, men inevitably tend to become a theme of reflection, and most often in a moral sense. We thus have Od. 19.328 *ἄνθρωποι δὲ μιννθάδιοι τελέθουσι*. Cp. ib. 330, 360, 1.32, 351, 3.48, 9.129, 13.112, 158, 15.345, Il. 9.500, 13.733, 21.569, Od. 19.592. There are few exceptions: Il. 18.288, Od. 24.62¹²).

The analogy with the instances without epithet in the dative and accusative is clear. Especially in the nominative man is spirited away from his habitat into a thought which has its own logic. He cannot have epithets here but predicates from Homer's point of view. The field of vision is contracted, abstracted; and for a vital Homeric use of epithets on this level, we should have to fancy some idealized region acquiring plastic concreteness in the poet's imagination.

A facile or affected language, on the other hand, could apply epithets anywhere. It would thus be trite or punctilious to say "wretched men live but a day" or "Zeus, you give great delusions to ignorant men". But such expressions would be alien to Homer. The Homeric epithets do not judge, and thus bring out an existential connection which is fundamental though unobtrusive.

A good instance in this respect is Od. 17.588:

*οὐ γὰρ πού τινες ὧδε καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων
ἀνέρες ὑβρίζοντες ἀτάσθαλα μηχανόωνται.*

Homer would not say "men-upon-earth never behaved in such a way", he would not have anything like:

*οὐ γὰρ δῆποτε πάμπαν ἐπιχθόνιοί γ' ἄνθρωποι
τοιαῦθ' ὑβρίζοντες ἀτάσθαλα μηχανόωνται.*

No, we find the noun-epithet phrase at its right place in the partitive, while 'men' as subject have no epithet and are otherwise qualified. The repetition of the word 'men', which would be irksome in ordinary speech, is poetically right. Man is first mentioned with

¹²) In Il. 18.288–289 *πρὶν μὲν γὰρ Πριάμοιο πόλιν μέροπες ἄνθρωποι / πάντες μινθίσκοντο . . .* the phrase *μέροπες ἄνθρωποι* with enjambement of *πάντες* appears redundant. To express a similar idea ("people say", "people call") Homer uses no epithet at all, cp. Il. 2.813, 14.291. In Il. 24.546 (a passage similar in contents to 18.288ff.) there is not even any mention of men, but simply "they say".

In Od. 24.64 there is an uncharacteristic compression and contents. We may add Od. 5.197 "such food as mortal men eat (not nectar and ambrosia)" — a rare point.

the epithet in his existential setting, and then without epithet as a theme of judgement.

6.

Let us summarize and draw some conclusions. The main syntactic functions of the noun-epithet phrase (partitive, adnominal) have the common property of presenting us with a point of exposure joined to the outer context by a connection which is as much as possible purely existential (i.e. not descriptive, not detailed, not discursive, not pointed or emphatic for any ulterior purpose). What stands out is the value of the syntactic relation in itself and by itself. The noun-epithet phrase thus occurs at points which are relatively free from overlaid complications. There must be an opening, an interval in which this syntactic significance surfaces on its own account, unimpeded by deliberate thought. Here spontaneously arise such intimate connections as those between 'city' and 'men', between part and whole, between a certain property and its range of relevance.

Why, we may ask, are men mentioned at all? Why not simply say *τις, πόλις* rather than *τις μερόπων ἀνθρώπων, πόλις μερόπων ἀνθρώπων*? The reason is that poetry locates things in their existential setting and avoids mentioning them either casually or tendentiously. We are made to dwell for a moment upon men as a whole in any of those typical connections which most naturally bring out this wholeness.

Hence the semantic importance of these noun-epithet phrases. They naturally occur as an extension to meanings which have in themselves a high human interest (the individual *τις*, 'mind', 'city', 'generation' or a god's affecting dispensation); and, since they are not used at random or for external reasons, their significance is continually sustained. As a result, the lack of point does not lead to looseness or mere ornamentation; the epithet is hardly ever stale¹³).

¹³) By 'stale' I mean here not vital, forced, arbitrary or otiose. Among such stale instances (besides those in the nominative, n. 11) I would consider Il. 11.28 *τίνας μερόπων ἀνθρώπων* (cp. Leaf *ad l.*); for the same idea we find a dative without epithet in Il. 17.547–548. Il. 2.285 *ἐλέγχιστον . . . μερόπεσσι βροτοῖσι* also seems inflated—much weaker at least than Od. 8.479.

And there are, of course, ambiguities. Thus the idea 'to be superior (*καίννμαι*) to all men' is found both with an epithet (Od. 13.261) and without (19.395, Il. 24.535) in the same syntactic conditions; likewise the idea 'to honour, or dishonour, someone among men': compare Od. 20.132 and 4.692.

This is not to say that the poetic effect is automatic. That it is so pervasive is something ultimately due to the fact that Homer's juxtapositions are so often pregnant. Even in such an unobscure instance as Od. 1.168 "if any of the men-men-that-live-upon-earth should say . . .", the epithet has this suggestion of existence, giving us the sense of a world in which men come, go, bring tidings. Or consider Il. 3.400–402:

ἢ πῆ με προτέρω πολλίων εὔ ναιομενάων
 ἄξεις ἢ Φρυγίης ἢ Μηονίης ἐρατεινῆς,
 εἴ τις τοι καὶ κείθι φίλος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων;

Note the partitive noun-epithet phrase not only of men, but of land and cities. The world is a foil to Aphrodite's power, and yet an essential ground to which the epithets give its strong identity: the individual plight is seen against the bounteous range of existence. So strong is the poetic logic of this presentation that the puzzling *μέροψ* hardly disturbs us, we appreciate the phrase on the same level as "the well-built cities of men" and "lovely Meonia". The very obscurity leads us to supply some vital inherent meaning¹⁴). What else can we deduce from the epithet's characteristic connection with cities, generations, troops of men? The very syntax appears productive of meaning. And this is true of the epithets as a whole. What stands out is a broad inevitable appropriateness. Any biased characterization (e.g. 'foolish', 'proud', 'weak', 'strong') would disrupt the existential sense of the syntactic relation.

Πυγαστόλος: una donna-uccello?

Da O. Vox, Bari

I ritratti esiodei della donna sono quanto mai personali; e più che l'ampia e ripetuta descrizione del suo prototipo, Pandora (*Th.* 570–613 e *Op.* 60–105), memorabili sono quei sintetici cenni allusivi ad un determinato tipo femminile. Così un unicismo, *δειπνολόγη*, in un contesto vivacemente caratterizzato (*Op.* 695–705), definisce la moglie infedele del tipo di Elena o Clitennestra¹); ma un altro singolare epiteto, ancora un unicismo, *πυγαστόλος*,

¹⁴) On *μέροψ* cp. M. Leumann, *Homerische Wörter*, Basel 1950, p. 214.

¹) H. Neitzel, *Homer-Rezeption bei Hesiod*, Bonn 1975, pp. 35–45.