

XXII. Oral Bards at Delphi

WALLACE E. McLEOD

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

A cult center was established in the temenos of Apollo at Delphi only after 750; the earliest dedications are associated with Late Geometric and Early Protocorinthian pottery.¹ From the mid-eighth century, according to the archaeologists, Delphi had close connections with Crete, Corinth, and perhaps Aegina.² This wide renown may indicate that the sanctuary housed an oracle from the beginning. At any rate, by the time of the Homeric poems, perhaps about 700, the shrine was already rich (*Il.* 9.404-5), and the oracle undoubtedly had been established (*Od.* 8.79-81).

Some 581 responses attributed to the Delphic oracle are extant; they are conveniently assembled by Parke and Wormell. The traditional medium for oracular utterance was the dactylic hexameter; of this Herodotus and Aristophanes provide eloquent testimony.³ So, of the surviving oracles, 175 are hexametric, and many others may be prose paraphrases of hexameters.

The first oracle in Parke and Wormell's corpus was addressed to the men of Aegium, probably in the first half of the seventh century. It consists of eight hexameters:

¹ Pierre Amandry, *La Mantique apollinienne à Delphes* (Paris 1950) 209, 231-32. The oldest known religious buildings in the temenos are the old temple ("of Agamedes and Trophonius") and the Cypselid Treasury, a century after the earliest dedications.

² On relations with Crete, which endured through the seventh century, see George Forrest, *BCH* 80 (1956) 34-35; and cf. Pierre Demargne, *La Crète dédalique* (Paris 1947) 233, 243, 280. On Corinthian Late (or "Middle") Geometric (800/750) in Delphi, see Saul S. Weinberg, *AJA* 45 (1941) 32, and *Corinth* 7.1 (Cambridge [Mass.] 1943) 32; *BCH* 74 (1950) 322, 328. On Protocorinthian (or "Corinthian Late") Geometric (750/725), see Weinberg, *AJA* 45 (1941) 32-34, and *Corinth* 7.1, 33; *BCH* 76 (1952) 249; 81 (1957) 708; and now Lucien Lerat, *BCH* 85 (1961) 342-50; cf. also Thomas J. Dunbabin, *The Western Greeks* (Oxford 1948) 38. On Aeginetan (?) Geometric, see Weinberg, *AJA* 45 (1941) 42-43; *BCH* 74 (1950) 328; 76 (1952) 249; and now Lerat, *BCH* 85 (1961) 348-50. A little Attic Late Geometric has also been found; see *BCH* 74 (1950) 322.

³ See also Theopompus in Plut. *Mor.* 403ε. Indeed the whole essay *De Pyth. or.* is an attempt to explain the lapse of the former custom.

γαίης μὲν πάσης τὸ Πελασγικὸν Ἄργος ἄμεινον,
ἵπποι Θεσσαλικάι, Λακεδαιμόνιαι τε γυναῖκες,
ἄνδρες δ' οἳ πίνουσιν ὕδωρ καλῆς Ἀρεθούσης·
ἀλλ' ἔτι καὶ τῶν εἰσὶν ἀμείνους, οἳ τε μεσηγῷ

5 Τίρυνθος ναῖουσι καὶ Ἀρκαδῆς πολυμήλου
Ἀργεῖοι λινοθώρηκες, κέντρα πτολέμοιο·
ὕμεις δ' Αἰγίεες, οὔτε τρίτοι οὔτε τέταρτοι
οὔτε δυωδέκατοι, οὔτ' ἐν λόγῳ, οὔτ' ἐν ἀριθμῷ.

These lines contain seven phrases (marked by continuous underlining) which recur practically verbatim in Homer or Hesiod. The remainder of the response is similar in expression to Homeric lines; phrases for which parallels have been found are indicated by dotted underlining. There are only three half-lines which do not have epic analogues.⁴

Other hexametric responses exhibit the same peculiarity.⁵ If the Homeric poems first became current on the Greek main-

⁴ Herbert W. Parke and Donald E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* (Oxford 1956, hereinafter abbreviated PW) No. 1. Useful for locating parallel passages are Guy L. Prendergast, *A Complete Concordance to the Iliad of Homer* (London 1875); Henry Dunbar, *A Complete Concordance to the Odyssey and Hymns of Homer* (Oxford 1880); Augustus Gehring, *Index Homericus* (Leipzig 1891); and Johannes Paulson, *Index Hesiodicus* (Lund 1890). In the lists which follow, the fragments of Hesiod, the epic cycle, etc., are cited by their page numbers in Denys Page's revision of Hugh G. Evelyn-White, *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns and Homeric* (London 1936). Parallels for PW No. 1: **line 1**, cf. ἀνδρὸς δ' εὐόρκου γενεῇ μετόπισθεν ἀμείνων, Hes. *Op.* 285; γαίης ἐν ῥίζησι, καὶ ἀνδράσι πολλὸν ἀμείνω, Hes. *Op.* 19; τὸ Πελασγικὸν Ἄργος, *Il.* 2.681; **line 2**, cf. Λακεδαιμόνος, -ι, -α, *Il.* 2.581; 3.239, 387, 443; *Od.* 4.1; 13.414; 15.1; 21.13; καλλίζωνοι τε γυναῖκες, *Il.* 7.139; the first part of **line 3** belongs to the same system as *Τρώων οἳ ναῖουσι*, *Il.* 2.130; *Λοκρῶν οἳ ναῖουσι*, *Il.* 2.535; *Νυμφέων αἱ ναῖουσιν*, Hes. *Theog.* 130; *Γοργούς θ' αἱ ναῖουσι*, Hes. *Theog.* 274; ἐν δ' ἄνδρες ναῖουσι, Hes. fr. 214.97.3; ἄνδρας μὲν κτείνουσι, *Il.* 9.593; for the remainder of **line 3**, cf. πίνοντες ὕδωρ, *Il.* 2.825; *Epigram* 1.4; κρήνη Ἀρεθούση, *Od.* 13.408; **line 4**, cf. ἀλλ' ἔτι καὶ, Hes. *Theog.* 428; **line 5**, cf. Τιτῆνες ναῖουσι, Hes. *Theog.* 814; and the parallels to line 3 cited above; καὶ Ἀρκαδῆς πολυμήλου, *Hymn* 4.2; 18.2; **line 6**, identical with *Il.* 2.568b; **line 7**, cf. ὕμεις δ' Ἀργεῖοι, *Il.* 3.458; ὕμεις δ' ἄστεμφέως, *Od.* 4.419; **line 8**, cf. ἦδε δυωδεκάτη, *Il.* 21.81; τῇ δὲ δυωδεκάτῃ, *Il.* 24.667; ἡ δὲ δυωδεκάτη, Hes. *Op.* 776; οὔτε γάρ ἐστ' ἄφρων οὔτ' ἄσκοπος οὔτ' ἀλιτῆμων, *Il.* 24.157, 186; οὔτε Πύλου ἱερῆς οὔτ' Ἀργεὺς οὔτε Μυκῆνης, *Od.* 21.108.

⁵ This kinship between Delphic responses and epic dialect has been noted by Charles Autran, *Homère et les origines sacerdotales de l'épopée grecque* (Paris 1938-43) 1. 120-22; Roland Crahay, *La Littérature oraculaire chez Hérodote* (Paris 1956) 34, 98, 150, 172, 186, 193, 237, 296-97, 310; Marie Delcourt, *L'Oracle de Delphes* (Paris 1955) 57; PW 1.390, 396; 2.xxx, xxxiii; Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Der Glaube der Hellenen*² (Berlin 1955) 2.39.

land in the late seventh and early sixth centuries, one is entitled to enquire the source of Homeric phrases in early oracles.⁶

The recurrent formula is in fact the touchstone by which oral verse composition may be recognized. It has been observed not only in the Homeric poems but also in Hesiod, the epic cycle, the *Hymns*, the first elegists, and even in the earliest inscriptions.⁷ Now it appears as well in some of the responses ascribed to Delphi; one concludes that they too were composed orally.

It is difficult to assess the historicity of the Delphic oracles. We cannot discriminate between genuine and spurious oracles by counting formulas, for early forgeries too would have been composed by an oral poet.⁸ On grounds of historical probability some of the oracles are generally accepted as authentic. Thus, of 175 hexameter responses, there are 72 which the editors do not brand as mythical, forged after the event, alternative versions, or the like.⁹ This residue is sufficient to establish the existence of a bard in the service of Delphic Apollo. Apparently in ancient Greece the bardic art was related to the mantic art.¹⁰

The obscurity which cloaks every detail of the mantic mechanism at Delphi makes the identification of the bard

⁶ On the diffusion of the Homeric poems see (for Sparta) John A. Davison, *Eranos* 53 (1955) 139-40; (for Sicyon) Hdt. 5.67; (for Corinth and Athens) James A. Notopoulos, *Hesperia* 29 (1960) 184, with references to previous discussions.

⁷ On the literary remains, see Milman Parry, *HSCP* 41 (1930) 90-92; A. Hoekstra, *Mnemosyne* 4th series 10 (1957) 193-225; Notopoulos, *Hesperia* 29 (1960) 177-97. On the inscriptions, see Paul Friedländer and Herbert B. Hoffleit, *Epigrammata* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1948) 18, 38, 55; Hoekstra, *op. cit.* 222; Notopoulos, *op. cit.* 195-96. All cite epic parallels.

⁸ The inscriptions forged in an epichoric Boeotian alphabet ("Cadmean letters") which Herodotus saw at Thebes (5.59-61) are formulaic; they were called to my attention by C. W. J. Eliot. Epic parallels are noted by Friedländer-Hoffleit (above, note 7) 21, 23, 24.

⁹ On the difficulty of distinguishing genuine oracles, see Amandry (above, note 1) 160; *PW* 2.xxi. The present study ignores this problem; the reader may seek solace for the omission in Nora Kershaw Chadwick's dictum concerning Celtic prophecies (*Poetry and Prophecy* [Cambridge 1942] 5):

How far these poems were actually composed by the seers and on the occasions to which they are attributed matters little. The consistency of the literary forms and formulae, and the early date of much of the evidence, speaks strongly in favour of the substantial veracity of the literary tradition.

¹⁰ This relationship has existed in many regions at different periods; see Hector Munro Chadwick and Nora Kershaw Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature* (Cambridge 1932-40), especially the chapters headed "Mantic Poetry"; Chadwick (above, note 9) 27, 39, 45. Autran (above, note 5) 1.124 cites a number of Greek poets who were credited with both oracular and epic hexameters. A close connection between Delphi and the epic poets was posited by Wilamowitz (above, note 5) 2.39.

difficult. The ancients believed that the situation required the improvisation of verses in the presence of the inquirer.¹¹ The technique of oral verse composition makes this improvisation intelligible.

The person who uttered the hexametric oracles at Delphi has sometimes been identified with the Pythia.¹² The difficulty with this interpretation is that the bardic art bespeaks long apprenticeship, whereas the Pythia was a poor peasant woman who "was advanced to the oracular seat rude and unpolished, void of all the advantages of art or experience" (Plut. *Mor.* 405c, trans. John Philips). No doubt most people thought of the Pythia as the source of verse oracles. Naturally it would never do to advertise that there were men who could tamper with the words of the god's mouthpiece.

Nevertheless there was a tradition that the temple had in its service versifiers who could impose a hexametric form on the Pythia's utterance.¹³ Modern scholars have identified them with various other functionaries. Obviously the bards played an important rôle in enunciating Apollo's will and must have been rather responsible officials.¹⁴ Perhaps most likely is their equation with the *prophêtai*; the best evidence is the very name, which seems to mean "interpreters" rather than "prophets." They in turn are identified with the priests, *hiereis*, two officials chosen for life from the aristocrats of Delphi. They were picked by lot (Eur. *Ion* 413–16); the god's choice was probably not left to blind chance, but was restricted to *klêrôsis ek prokritôn*. We may readily surmise that one requisite was a predisposition to oral poetry. But here we theorize beyond the evidence.¹⁵

¹¹ So *PW* 2.xxix–xxx; inelegancies are thus explained by Otis J. Todd, *CQ* 33 (1939) 163–65. It is not clear whether the Pythia was in the same room as the inquirers; see the discussion by Parke, *CQ* 34 (1940) 85 and note 6.

¹² So Chadwick-Chadwick (above, note 10) 1.624; ancient references cited by Todd *CQ* 33 (1939) 164, note 3. The sources which refer to the Pythia as *prophêtis* are collected by Amandry (above, note 1) 120, note 2.

¹³ Strab. 9.3.5, p. 419; Plut. *Mor.* 407b. A parallel has been recognized in the *thespiôidos* at Claros; Autran (above, note 5) 1.115; Parke, *CQ* 34 (1940) 86; *PW* 1.34.

¹⁴ For this reason there is less likelihood in their identification with the *hosioi* (Parke, *dubitanter*, *CQ* 34 [1940] 89), or with non-clerical assistants (*ibid.*; *PW* 1.34; Amandry [above, note 1] 125; Delcourt [above, note 5] 57–58; cf. Ph.-E. Legrand, *REG* 64 [1951] 296).

¹⁵ The poets are equated with the *prophêtai* by Thomas Dempsey, *The Delphic Oracle* (Oxford 1918) 189, note 3; Legrand, *REG* 64 (1951) 296; Parke, *CQ* 34 (1940)

The oracles may also show how long bardic composition persisted at Delphi. The oldest oracles with claims to authenticity are four from the last third of the eighth century—the foundation oracles of Syracuse, Rhegium, Croton, and Tarentum. At least three of these appear to be oral; the fourth, that of Croton, exhibits some epic influence.¹⁶ For the next three centuries, the period of widest Delphic influence, orally composed responses continue to occur.¹⁷ The latest reply which is certainly oral was

89, with some reservations; *PW* 1.33; the equation thought “wahrscheinlich” by Marie C. van der Kolf, *RE* 23 (1957) 808, s.v. “Prophetes.” The *prophētês* is identified with the *hierês* because Nicander bore both titles (Plut. *Mor.* 386b, 438b).

¹⁶ *PW* No. 2, to the oecists of Syracuse, ca. 733; 3 hexameters; with **line 1**, cf. *Od.* 7.244; 3.294, 8.568, 12.285, 13.150, 176, Hes. *Theog.* 252, *Hymn* 3.493; **line 2**, cf. *Od.* 15.404; **line 3**, cf. Hes. *Theog.* 343; *PW* No. 1.3.

PW No. 371, to the oecists of Rhegium, ca. 730/720; 3 hexameters; **line 1**, cf. Hes. *Theog.* 791; *Il.* 11.495, *Od.* 14.88, *PW* No. 377, No. 608.1; **line 3**, cf. *Od.* 24.536; *Il.* 8.129, *Hymn* 5.210; *Il.* 5.648, 18.270, 21.515.

PW No. 44, to the oecists of Croton, ca. 708; 6 hexameters; **line 1**, cf. *Il.* 1.370, 5.444, 15.231, 16.711, 17.333, *Od.* 20.278, Hes. *Sc.* 58, fr. 618.4, *Hymn* 3.134; **line 2**, cf. *Il.* 3.294, 7.223, 10.153, 17.518, 23.549, *Od.* 3.432, 22.113, 24.524; **line 3**, cf. *Il.* 4.182, 8.150, 11.741, 21.387, Hes. *Theog.* 458, *Sc.* 373, *Hymn* 2.428, 472, 4.570; **line 4**, cf. *Il.* 17.116, 682, *Hymn* 4.418, 499.

PW No. 47, to the oecists of Tarentum, ca. 706; 2 hexameters; **line 1**, cf. *Il.* 4.43, 7.288, 9.38, 39, 18.436, *Od.* 1.264, 4.647, 649, 736; *Il.* 2.739; 2.496, 497, 498, 502, 559, 570, 647, 656; 16.437, 514, 673, 683, 20.385, 22.501, Hes. *Theog.* 477; **line 2**, cf. *Od.* 23.9; 8.520; *Il.* 7.400.

¹⁷ *PW* No. 3, to the oecists of Gela, ca. 688; 4 verses; **line 1**, cf. *Il.* 2.855a; 4.93; **line 2**, cf. *Il.* 2.9, 5.645, 9.166, 10.337, 11.115, 14.162, 16.668, 18.279, *Od.* 10.522, 11.30, 19.411, 538; *Od.* 6.153, Hes. *Theog.* 564, 621, *Hymn* 3.335; *Il.* 23.731; 1.363, 7.299, 16.825, 23.486, *Od.* 15.366, 17.302; **line 3**, cf. *Il.* 17.407, *Hymn* 2.318; *Od.* 12.178, 424; **line 4**, cf. *Od.* 11.242.

PW No. 4, to Calondas, after ca. 640; 1 verse; cf. *Hymn* 32.20, *Margites* fr. 536.2.2; *Il.* 15.431; 5.608, 6.414, *Od.* 14.271, 17.440; *Hymn* 2.355, *PW* No. 575.2.

PW No. 33, to the Spartans before the conquest of Tegea (ca. 550); 5 verses; **line 1**, cf. Hes. fr. 214.97.1, *PW* No. 381.1; *Od.* 7.123; **line 2**, cf. *PW* No. 470.5; *Od.* 11.592; Hes. *Theog.* 517, *Cyria* fr. 498.8.3; **line 3**, cf. *Il.* 2.607, 829, 10.431, 20.9, *Od.* 6.124, 10.396; *Il.* 21.197; *Od.* 1.49, 7.152, 8.411, *PW* No. 74.8; *Il.* 9.382, *Od.* 4.127; **line 4**, cf. *Od.* 1.30; *Il.* 3.243, *Od.* 11.301; **line 5**, cf. *Od.* 6.24, 96, 9.446, 10.179, 17.453, 19.15, 21.380, etc.; *Il.* 5.808, 828, 11.366, 12.180, 17.339, 20.453, 21.289, *Od.* 24.182.

PW No. 94, to the Athenians, 480; 12 verses; **line 1**, cf. *Il.* 12.409; Hes. *Theog.* 731; *Sc.* 12; **line 2**, cf. *Hymn* 3.33, 39; **line 3**, cf. *Il.* 5.527, 15.406, 622; **line 4**, cf. *Il.* 13.308; **line 6**, cf. *Il.* 7.330; *Hymn* 9.4; **line 8**, cf. Hes. *Op.* 668; *Il.* 10.463, Hes. *Theog.* 21, 43, 939; **line 10**, cf. *Hymn* 2.293; **line 11**, cf. *Il.* 16.529, Hes. *Sc.* 252; *Il.* 23.740; **line 12**, cf. *PW* No. 408.7; *Il.* 2.850, 5.155, 848, 7.451, 458, 15.240, 460, 17.564, 678, 20.425, 459, 21.417, 22.312, *Od.* 11.201, 22.388, Hes. fr. 618.2, *PW* No. 206.3.

PW No. 121, to the Athenians, probably 457-449; 3 verses; **line 1**, cf. *PW* No. 16; *Il.* 5.765, 6.269, 279, 15.213, *Od.* 16.207, Hes. *Theog.* 318; **line 2**, cf. *Il.* 21.82; 9.492, *Od.* 5.223, 8.155; *PW* No. 428.3; **line 3**, cf. *PW* No. 7.1; *Il.* 14.269, 276, 19.226, *Od.* 5.210, 219, *Cercopes* fr. 538. 3.

PW No. 163, to the Arcadians, perhaps ca. 422; 6 verses; **line 1**, cf. Hes. fr. 214.97.1;

delivered to the Achaeans, perhaps between 404 and 367:

γῆς Πέλοπος ναέται καὶ Ἀχαιῖδος, οἳ ποτὶ Πυθῶ
 ἦλθετε πευσόμενοι ὥς κε πολίεθρον ἔλητε,
 ἀλλ' ἄγε δὴ φράζεσθε λάχος πόσον ἡμῶν ἕκαστον
 λαῶν πινόντων ρύεται πόλιν, ἣ δὲ πέπωκεν
 5 οὕτω γάρ κεν ἔλοιτε Φάναν πυργήρεα κόμην.

Here, of five hexameters only one half-line and part of a second are not formulaic.¹⁸

No responses given after that date are patently oral. This may reflect the decline of oral verse composition; or it may be due solely to the scarcity of material available for analysis. For while Parke and Wormell accept thirty-nine hexametric oracles as genuine for the period before the destruction of the Alcmaeonid temple in 373, they accept only seven from that time until the advent of Sulla; and of these all but three are either single lines or couplets. There is considerable epic influence in some oracles, such as that delivered to the Thebans before their revolt against Alexander, or the one given to the Sicyonians after the death of Aratus.¹⁹ But whether this is due to oral composition or to

Il. 2.750; 23.210, *Od.* 21.398; **line 2**, cf. *Od.* 17.174; 8.131, 23.49; 8.37; *Il.* 18.487, 22.29, 506, *Od.* 5.273, *Hes. Theog.* 207; **line 4**, cf. *Il.* 15.138, *PW* No. 339.2; *Hymn* 30.14; **line 5**, cf. *Il.* 6.293, 23.856, *Od.* 15.106, *PW* No. 33.5; *Il.* 5.26, 21.32; **line 6**, cf. *Il.* 18.550.

Further work with the concordances could add to the list of formulaic oracles.

¹⁸ *PW* No. 181; **line 1**, cf. Ἀχαιῖδες αἱ μὲν ἐν αὐτῇ, *Od.* 21.251; δὲ περὶ πάντων, *Il.* 2.831; οἳ τε καθ' ὕλην, *Il.* 3.151, *Od.* 9.120; αἱ δ' ἐπὶ νυκτὶ, *Hes. Op.* 102; αἷτ' ἐπὶ γαίαν, *Op.* 505; αἱ κατὰ γαίαν, *Theog.* 346; οἳ μετὰ κείνην, *Theog.* 450; οἳ περὶ καλὴν, *PW* No. 7.3; **line 2**, cf. ἦλθετε πευσόμενοι, *PW* No. 338.3; οἴχετο πευσόμενος, *Od.* 13.415; ἦκετε πευσόμενοι, *PW* No. 493.3; ἦλθετ' ἐρησόμενοι, *PW* No. 229.2; εἶτ' ἂν πολίεθρον ἔλωμεν, *Il.* 2.228; ἐπὶν πολίεθρον ἔλωμεν, *Il.* 4.239; ἱερὸν πολίεθρον ἐλόντες, *Od.* 9.165; **line 3**, cf. ἀλλ' ἄγε δὴ φραζώμεθ', *Od.* 17.274; ἀλλ' ἄγετε φράζεσθε, *Il.* 22.174; ἀλλ' ἄγε δὴ φράζεσθ', *PW* No. 229.3; ἡματα πάντα, *Il.* 8.539, *Od.* 2.55, etc.; ἄνδρα ἕκαστον, *Il.* 7.424, *Od.* 10.173, etc.; **line 4**, cf. ἀνδρῶν δυσμενέων κατέδυν πόλιν, *Od.* 4.246; the first two words of line 4 belong to the same system as λαῶν ἱζόντων, *Il.* 2.96; λαῶν ἡμετέρων, *Od.* 7.323; ἀνδρῶν λικμώντων, *Il.* 5.500; ἀνδρῶν τρεσσάντων, *Il.* 14.522; ἀνδρῶν γηράντων, *Hes. fr.* 74.3.2; κούρων ἐλκόντων, *Il.* 20.405; for the end of line 4, cf. ἣ δ' ἐγέλασε, *Il.* 15.101; ἣ δὲ παρέιθη, *Il.* 23.868; ἣ δὲ παρέστη, *Il.* 24.303; **line 5**, cf. οὕτω γάρ πού μ' ἤλπετ', *Od.* 9.419; οὕτω σ' οὐκ ἂν φημι, *PW* No. 44.5; and the system represented by θεῶν ἔδος, αἰπὴν Ὀλυμπον, *Il.* 5.863; Πύλου αἰπὴν πολίεθρον, *Od.* 3.485, 15.193; θεοὶ δωτήρες ἑάων, *Od.* 8.325, *Hes. Theog.* 46, etc.; Ἀρης ἄτος πολέμοιο, *Il.* 5.863; θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη, *Od.* 1.44, etc.

¹⁹ *PW* No. 273; **line 2**, cf. *Od.* 21.277; 8.551. *PW* No. 358; **line 2**, cf. *Od.* 14.8, 376, 450, 17.296, 18.313, 20.216, 21.395; **line 4**, cf. *Il.* 18.483, *Od.* 12.404, 14.302, *Hes. Theog.* 427, 847.

conscious imitation cannot be determined. Perhaps as the oral art withered away, would-be imitators mistook its reliance on traditional formulas for plagiaristic borrowing. The culmination of this tendency is seen in the response to the Athenians at the time of Sulla's siege: merely a quotation from a well-known legendary oracle.²⁰

It remains to investigate whether poets capable of improvisation still survived in the Greek world as late as 400. Chief custodians of the oral art were the Homeridae of Chios, who appear at the end of the sixth century.²¹ Originally they were probably *aoidoi*, court bards in the tradition of Phemius and Demodocus. From *aoidoi* they developed into *rhapsôidoi*, who were at first quite similar (Hes. fr. 280.3; Pind. *Nem.* 2.1). The Homeridae survived into the fourth century (Plato, *Resp.* 599E, *Ion* 530D; Isoc. *Helena* 65); even then they could still produce "Homeric" anecdota (Plato, *Phdr.* 252B). In the same generation non-Homerids as well were becoming rhapsodes; the most notorious is Ion of Ephesus. By this time the rhapsodes were noted not so much for their original composition as for their dramatic recitation of fixed texts (Xen. *Symp.* 3.6; Plato, *Ion* 535B-C). Even so they seem to have retained vestiges of their ancestral craft, embroidering their memorized passages with interpolations. Their activity is reflected in the "plus-lines" of the Homeric text. Ludwich's study of ancient citations of Homer revealed that extra lines first became frequent in the fourth century; these eccentric texts endured in the papyri until 150 B.C.²² There were then oral poets of a sort still performing after 400, when the latest formulaic oracles occur.

²⁰ *PW* Nos. 154, 434; see Parke, *Hermathena* 52 (1938) 59-61; cf. the remarks in *PW* 1.281.

²¹ Schol. Pind. *Nem.* 2.1. In the next generation the Homeridae were noted by Acusilaus, *FGrHist* 2, F 2, Pind. *Nem.* 2.1, and perhaps Pherecydes; cf. *FGrHist* 3, F 167.

²² On the essential continuity from Phemius to Ion, see Raphael Sealey, *REG* 70 (1957) 312-55. The evidence of the Homeric citations, collected originally by Arthur Ludwich, *Die Homervulgata als voralexandrinisch erwiesen* (Leipzig 1898), is reconsidered by Thomas W. Allen, *Homer, the Origins and the Transmission* (Oxford 1924) 249-70; his conclusions, *ibid.* 267-70. On the disappearance of the eccentric papyri, see, in the first place, Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, *Hibeh Papyri* 1 (London 1906) 70-75. It is generally conceded that rhapsodic activity accounted for the eccentric texts; see Allen, *op. cit.* 267; Parry, *HSCP* 41 (1930) 76; Paul Collart in Paul Mazon, *Introduction à l'Iliade* (Paris 1942) 66. It has recently been suggested that post-Homeric rhapsodic accretions may be recognized by their "anti-traditional phraseology"; see Geoffrey S. Kirk, *Mus. Helv.* 17 (1960) 203-5.

Inasmuch as the personnel of the Delphic sanctuary (Pythia, *prophētai, hosioi*) was of local origin, one must postulate a Phocian school of oral poetry. Its relation to the other schools is but nebulously defined. Some formulas it uses in common with the Homeric and Hesiodic schools; for instance (to cite only examples which close the line after the caesura at the third trochee): ἐν ἡεροειδέϊ πόντῳ (*PW* No. 2.1; *Od.* 3.294, etc.; *Theog.* 252); 'Ολύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσι (*PW* No. 29.2; *Il.* 1.18, etc.; *Theog.* 75, etc.); καὶ οὐρανοῦ ἡδὲ θαλάσσης (*PW* No. 358.4; *Od.* 14.302, etc.; *Theog.* 427, etc.).

There are also formulas which it shares in isolation with one or the other school. Thus the oracles and Homer make use of formulas which are not found in Hesiod: καὶ Ἑλλάδα καλλιγύναικα (*PW* No. 225.2; *Il.* 2.683, etc.); ἄκρον πολιοῖο γενείου (*PW* No. 46.5; cf. *κάρη πολίων τε γένειον*, *Il.* 22.74, 24.516). Yet others are employed by the oracles and Hesiod, to the exclusion of Homer: καὶ ὄφρυόεντα Κόρινθον (*PW* No. 7.4; *Hes. Fr.* 196.59); ἔχειν βασιλῆϊδα τιμὴν (*PW* No. 71.3; No. 431.1; *Theog.* 462).

In addition a few formulas seem confined to the Delphic oracles: ὄλβιος ὁδτος ἀνὴρ ὅς at the beginning of a line (*PW* No. 8.1; No. 206.1; No. 607.1); εὐδαιμον πτολίεθρον at the beginning of a line (*PW* No. 16; No. 121.1); πεπρωμένον ἐστίν at the end of a line (*PW* No. 148.2; No. 206.5; No. 381.3; No. 595.2).²³

Presumably a Phocian school of verse composition would be more closely related to the Boeotian than to the Ionian school. Analysis of the formulas does not furnish documentary proof, simply because the volume of the Homeric text dwarfs the Hesiodic and Delphic remains.

The discovery of a Delphic oral poet cannot help to distinguish which oracles are genuine, nor even which ones are old. It does however shed a new light on some aspects of the Delphic problem. No longer need a verse which is ascribed both to Hesiod and to the oracle be assigned exclusively to one or the other.²⁴ No longer can Crahay's "utilisations multiples" be used to undermine faith

²³ The existence of Delphic formulas was suggested by Henry T. Wade-Gery, *Essays in Greek History* (Oxford 1958; this essay first published in 1936) 33, note 4.

²⁴ *PW* 1.390, 396, observe that No. 598, a one-line gnomic fragment ascribed to the oracle, is also found in *Hes. Fr.* 74.1.2; on this account they list it among their "Dubious and Pseudonymous oracles."

in the oracles.²⁵ No longer can one look for reminiscences of specific epic passages in the oracles.²⁶

The presence of epic formulas in Delphic oracles indicates the existence of an oral bard in the service of the sanctuary. The Phocian school which produced these bards was related to the Boeotian and Ionic schools, and yet distinct from them. The Delphic poet (probably the *prophêtês*) had at his fingertips an immense store of specialized knowledge. Employing this knowledge, he extemporized oracular verse to suit all occasions; he specified far-off places to be colonized; he designated obscure local heroes to be rehabilitated. This combination of encyclopaedic erudition with competent versification, perhaps difficult for us to comprehend, was sustained through some ten generations, from after 750 until after 400 B.C.²⁷

²⁵ Crahay (above, note 5) 31-34 observed that certain identical or similar responses are assigned to different occasions by various ancient sources; he noted No. 1 (to the men of Aegium and the Megarians); No. 1.1=122 (to these and the Athenians); No. 8=431 (to Cypselus and Attalus I); No. 97=256=329 (to the Delphians at the times of Mardonius, Jason, and Brennus); No. 98 (to the Illyrians and the Persians); No. 112 (to the Spartans ca. 475 and ca. 400); No. 154=434 (to Theseus and the Athenians; see above, note 20). Further examples may be added: No. 8=206 (to Cypselus and Hesiod); No. 4=74 (to Calondas and the Sybarites); No. 25 (to the Pellenians and the Aeginetans); No. 46 (to the oecists of Tarentum and to Aesop); No. 99=257 (to Mardonius and Jason).

²⁶ Parke-Wormell, *CQ* 43 (1949) 138, see in No. 6.2 an allusion to *Il.* 13.137, a punning reference to Cypselus' birth-place, Petra; similarly they propose that No. 55.1, with its echo of *Hes. Op.* 286, conveys "a veiled warning against the Persian."

²⁷ Compare the general descriptions of the methods employed by seers everywhere, in Chadwick-Chadwick (above, note 10) 3.890.