

THE *HOMERIC HYMNS*
AND GEORGE CHAPMAN'S TRANSLATION

Stephen Scully

George Chapman's Renaissance translation of the *Homeric Hymns* is its first rendering into English. Chapman's efforts stride with robust Shakespearean vigor and are a source of delight even for modern readers, both as poems in our tongue and as lovely stories of the Greek gods. The *Hymns* are a collection of thirty-three poems celebrating the gods and goddesses of the Greek Pantheon from Mother Earth, the Sun, and Moon to Zeus, his children, and his children's children. Though gathered under Homer's name, they are anonymous compositions, varying in length and excellence, the best having the concentration and splendor of Homer's own achievements. Like all Greek narrative poems, they are composed to entertain and enthrall even as they also reveal and honor a deity's deeds and powers. The many modern translations of these hymns testify to the pleasure they continue to bring both to students of Greek literature and to the general reader.

The *Hymns*, like the poems of Homer and Hesiod, are *epica*: epic songs in dactylic hexameter in an artificial poetic dialect. The hybrid collection, consisting of five long poems followed by twenty-nine short ones, vary in length from six hundred lines to just three. Yet, even within such variation, most of the poems exhibit a common form: (1) a formulaic opening identifies the god invoked and draws attention to the poem itself as a "beginning"; (2) the middle describes the god's birth or a telling attribute—in brief or at length; (3) a formulaic close bids farewell to the deity and again draws attention to the

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activity of singing as the composer indicates that he is about to move on to a new song. Often in this context the singer will ask the god to favor him over other poets in a competitive performance. To the best of our knowledge, the form is very old, invoking both a god and the performative nature of the song.

The date of the collection is uncertain. It appears to be late, compiled by scholars at the Library of Alexandria in the second century BCE. In all likelihood, the compilers were also the first to attribute the multiple hymns to Homer, although variations in diction, style, and geographical perspective indicate that most of the poems were composed at different times and places on the Asia Minor coast and the Greek mainland roughly between 675 and 450 BCE in the Archaic and Classical periods. The earliest extant references to the collection come from two very different authors in the first century BCE, the Epicurean teacher of philosophy Philodemus and the historian Diodorus Siculus, both of whom refer to “Homer in the hymns.” Even though shared dialect, meter, and certain elements of style, especially in the splendor of the long narratives, might serve to remind later audiences of Homer, there were certainly many in this period who questioned the Homeric authorship of these poems. Such may be inferred from the scant reference to the collection in antiquity, including the surprising absence of any allusion to the *Hymns* in the ancient commentaries to the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*. But if not to Homer, the source of the poems could reasonably have been attributed to the Homeridae (Sons of Homer), a clan or school of rhapsodes in the Archaic and Classical periods who claimed descent from Homer; or, even more appropriately, attributed to Hesiod, Homer’s contemporary, who in his *Theogony* and *Catalogue of Women* wrote about the gods, their births, attributes, and love affairs.

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While the collection itself is late, the genre of these hymns almost certainly dates back to Homer's—and Hesiod's—time. When quoting from what he calls the *Hymn to Apollo* (with no reference to Homer), Thucydides refers to the song as a *prooimion*, or prelude (3.104). Plato uses the same term to describe a song that Socrates composes to Apollo while waiting in prison to drink the hemlock (*Phaedo* 60d). Pindar refers to something of the sort as a “prelude”: “Just as the Homeridae, / singers of woven stories, very often / began with a *prooimion* from Zeus, so this man . . .” (*Nemean* 2.1–3). It was the custom in ancient recitations of long narrative epic about heroes, sometimes called an *oimê* (literally, a “path” or “poem”), to begin with a short poem to a god, a *pro-oimê*.¹ One Alexandrian librarian, Crates of Mallos by name, apparently knew of an edition of the *Iliad* which began with such a hymn: “Of the Muses I sing, and of Apollo, famous for his bow.”² Evidence from Homer suggests such practices already existed in his time: when in the *Odyssey* the Phaeacian bard Demodocus “begins from the god” when about to sing the story of the Wooden Horse at Troy (*Od.* 8.499). If the *Homeric Hymns* are a residue of that tradition, it is easier to imagine that the shorter hymns in the collection offer a closer approximation of the Archaic “prelude” than do the long poems, even though Thucydides identifies the long *Hymn to Apollo* as a *prooimion*. Indeed, it is tempting to see

¹ For the use of *oimê* (path, course, road), a term found in Homer metaphorically to refer to an episode in epic poetry or even to the poem itself, in the *Odyssey*, see 8.74, 481, and 22.347. The term is not found in the *Iliad* or in Hesiod but appears in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* (#4) 451.

² For the reference to Crates of Mallos, a contemporary of the Homeric scholar and head of the Alexandrian Library, Aristarchus, see Martin West, ed. and tr., *Homeric Hymns, Homeric Apocrypha, Lives of Homer*. Loeb Classical Library 496 (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), p. 455. Compare *Homeric Hymn to the Muses and Apollo* #25.

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in the five long poems at the beginning of the collection the evolution of an introductory poem into a new literary form.³

Even if the *Homeric Hymns* seem to have seen themselves as fulfilling that introductory function, they do *not* refer to themselves as *prooimiai*. Rather, they call themselves “songs” (*aidai*), and their composers “singers” (*aidoi*) who “sing” (*aeidein*), also commonplace terms in Homer and Hesiod for epic singing. On rare occasions, the *Homeric Hymns* also identify themselves as “hymns” (*humnai*), a term used rather vaguely once in Homer to refer to an after-dinner song and also found once in Hesiod. More pointed perhaps is the verb “to hymn” (*humnain*) [a song in praise of] a god, which is found in Hesiod and often in the *Homeric Hymns* but never in Homer.⁴ It is from the verb that the noun came to specify a song in celebration of a god or goddess.

Even the shortest of the *Hymns*, a three-liner to Demeter, manages to convey much of the genre’s formulaic structure:⁵

Of Demeter, golden-haired, revered goddess, I begin to sing,

³Hesiod’s poetry also suggests a development of this form, although in a different direction. His *Theogony* and *Works and Days* are much longer than the longest of the *Homeric Hymns* but both open with a proem to a god and proceed to integrate those themes into the poem proper. The *Theogony* in its entirety could well be regarded as a hymn to Zeus, making it the longest and most elaborate of all such hymns from antiquity.

⁴For *hymnos*, see *Od.* 8.429, Hesiod’s *Works and Days* 657 and 662 and fragment 357.2, and the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 5.293. In variant readings, two other hymns mention a “hymn” to follow (9.9 and 18.11). For singers (or the Muses) “hymning,” see Hesiod’s *Theogony* 11, 33, 37, 48, 51, 70, 101 and *Works and Days* 2; *h. Apoll.* 3.158 and 177–78, 190, 207; *h. Her.* 4.1; 9.1; *h. Helios* 31.1. Dionysus is called a god of “many hymns” (*polyhumnos*, 26.7).

⁵All translations from the Greek are my own and follow Martin West’s Loeb text, *Homeric Hymns, Homeric Apocrypha, Lives of Homer*. To help the Greekless reader have a sense of the Greek line, I try to follow the Greek word order in the line and across the enjambment, if it occurs, but in no instance do I strive for a metrical arrangement.

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both her and her daughter, the exceedingly beautiful
Persephone.

Hail and farewell, goddess, and save this city here, and begin
my song. (*Homeric Hymn to Demeter* #13)

The lovely six-line *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* #10 conveys almost all of the basic features:

The Cypriote-born Cytherea I shall sing, you who to mortals
give honeyed gifts. On her alluring face,
there is always a smile; an alluring bloom shines over it.
Hail and farewell, goddess, ruler of well-founded Salamis
And of all Cyprus: grant an alluring song.
And I shall remember both you and another song.
(*Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* #10)

While the short poems can do little more than list a god's spheres of influence or principal activity, the long songs magnificently narrate the story of a god's birth or some other defining episode in the deity's life, in a manner and style which rivals Homer and Hesiod at their best.

Like Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, some of the hymns, and especially the long ones, identify the honored deity with a particular place. It is possible that these hymns were performed in the context of religious festivals at those places, even perhaps as part of ritual or cult. Those less tied to place could have been performed in a variety of settings, ranging from large formal affairs such as the poetic competitions at public festivals or funeral games to more intimate gatherings at private banquets. In all settings, these songs may well have been accompanied by dance.

When George Chapman in 1624 and near the end of his literary life turned to translate these hymns, he had little or no understanding of the peculiar properties of the *Homeric Hymns*.

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Understanding them as Homeric poems, though devoid of the heroic pathos that so drew him to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, he took it upon himself to translate the hymns, along with the *Battaile of Frogs and Mice* and *Epigrams*, also by Homer he thought, as his final and crowning tribute to the one he considered the greatest of all poets. As he says about himself, with these poems translated, the work he was “borne to doe is done.”⁶ He published little else thereafter before he died in 1634. Chapman’s renderings of the *Hymns* do not reach the majesty of his translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* but even in these works we can witness his elegant command of *poesie*’s form and sound rarely matched in later renderings of Greek epic poetry. Consider his translation of the 3-line poem to Demeter (*To Ceres*) (#13):

The Rich-hayr’d Ceres I assaie to sing;
A Goddesse in whose Grace the naturall spring
Of serious Majestie it selfe is seene;
And of the wedded, yet in grace stil green,
Proserpina, her Daughter, that displaies
A Beautie casting every way her Raies.
All Honor to thee, Goddesse! Keepe this Towne,
And take thou chiefe charge of my song’s Renoune!

Chapman was never one to resist embellishment or to strive for word-for-word translation, as his critics were wont to point out. His fondness for expansion and liberty of form can be only partly explained by his use of rhymed couplets. As he wrote in “The Preface to the Reader” to his 1611 translation of the *Iliads*: “if in some few places . . . , I be something paraphrasticall and faulty—is it justice . . . to drowne all the rest of my labour?” A truly faithful translator, for Chapman, was inspired by the “elegancie, height, intention and invention”

⁶ Chapman’s epigram at the end of *The Crowne of all Homers Workes*, line 1.

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of the original poems and strove to “clothe and adorne them with words and such a stile and forme of Oration as are most apt for the language into which they are converted.”⁷

In one instance, the composer of the long *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (#3) deviates from the standard practice of anonymity and draws attention to himself as well as to the occasion for his singing. The Greek lines are worth translating because, since antiquity, many have taken them to be a description of Homer himself. As we shall, Chapman does as well. From the Greek:

May now Apollo and his sister Atremis be gracious,
and all you girls of Delos, welcome; about me—even in
future times—
be mindful, if ever someone of men upon this earth,
a long-suffering stranger coming here, inquires,
“O Maidens, who is for you the best of all the singers
having traveled here; which of them causes you the most
delight?”
Then all of you need answer well in unison,
“A blind man, who lives on rocky Chios,”
of all the songs his are by far the best.

(*h. Apoll.* 3.165–73)

Chapman translates:

And you, O Delian Virgins, doe me grace, }
When any stranger of our earthie Race }
Whose restlesse life Affliction hath in chace }
Shall hither come and question you: “Who is,
To your chaste eares, of choicest faculties
In sacred Poesie, and with most right
Is Author of your absolut'st delight?”

⁷ From “The Preface to the Reader,” drawn from lines 147–57.

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Ye shall your selves doe all the right ye can
To answer for our Name: "The sightlesse man
Of Stonie Chios. All whose Poems shall
In all last Ages stand for Capitall."

(An Hymne to Apollo 259–69)

Even with its convoluted syntax, Chapman's lines can still—four hundred years after their time—cause strangers much delight. But it is his identification with Homer that I wish here to stress. When he published his translation of the *Iliads* in 1611, he imagined Homer (filled with poetic fire but "outward, blind") praising the Englishman's efforts: "thou didst english me"; and of himself he said that the ancient master "brought stay to all my state; / That hee was Angell to me; Starre, and Fate."⁸ Now when Chapman finds himself describing that "sightlesse man" after more than a quarter of a century of translating his works, we can almost see him looking in the glass and beholding himself as Homer: indeed on the engraved title page of this last volume the facial features of Homer and Chapman have an uncanny resemblance.

Both heights—and stumblings—of Chapman's translations can be seen in his version of the *Hymn to Venus* (#10), a rendering particularly gracious for its fluency, alliteration, enjambment, and end rhymes.

To Cyprian Venus, still my verses vow,
Who gifts as sweete as honey doth bestow
On all Mortality; that ever smiles,
And rules a face that all foes reconciles;
Ever sustaining in her hand a Flowre

⁸From "Euthymia raptus" (1609), in Phyllis Brooks Bartlett, ed., *The Poems of George Chapman* (New York, 1962), p. 175, lines 36, 85 and 92–93, respectively. For Chapman inspired by Homer's soul, see George deF. Lord, *Homeric Renaissance: The Odyssey of George Chapman* (New Haven, 1956), pp. 16–17.

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That all desire keepes ever in her Powre.

Haile then, O Queene of well-built Salamine
And all the state that Cyprus doth confine!
Informe my song with that celestiall fire
That in thy beauties kindles all desire.
So shall my Muse for ever honour Thee,
And any other thou commend'st to Me.

In Chapman's expansion of three Greek words, "grant an alluring song," into a full rhyming couplet: "Informe my song with that celestiall fire / That in thy beauties kindles all desire," one can sense that he is addressing Venus in his own voice, and masterfully. But earlier in the same passage, he had stumbled into an awkward misunderstanding, rendering the Greek "a lovely bloom runs over" Aphrodite's face as "Ever sustaining in her hand a Flowre" that keeps alive her eternal "Powre." Chapman loses his footing here because, turning his back to the Greek text, he has his eye on the usually reliable word-for-word Latin gloss accompanying it. Trying to make sense of the Latin *et amabilem fert florem*, "and she bears a lovely flower," rather than the difficult Greek phrase, *eph' himerton theei anthos*, Chapman gives us the banal image of Venus forever holding a flower in her hand.

Chapman also has little understanding of the form and occasion of the ancient hymns. This is particularly evident from his renderings of the formulaic opening and close of the *Homeric Hymns*, lines which offer internal evidence that the hymns may well have prefaced epic narration. Nine of the hymns explicitly open with, "I begin by singing of" (with a deity named), drawing the audience's attention to the activity of performance and to the fact that these hymns are "beginnings."⁹ Chapman

⁹Cf. *Homeric Hymns* 2, 11, 13, 16, 22, 25, 26, 28, 31. Compare Hesiod's *Theogony* 1.

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takes great liberties especially with the formulaic close. In the Greek, ten of the hymns end with the formula “And I shall be mindful both of you and another song (*aidê*),”¹⁰ a repetition that one would never guess from Chapman’s diverse endings:

Both thee and others of th’ Immortall state,
My song shall memorize to endless date.

(To Apollo, 3.836–37)

So all salutes to Hermes that are due,
Of whom, and all Gods, shall my Muse sing true.

(To Hermes, 4.1010–11)

So shall my Muse for ever honour thee,
And (for thy sake) thy faire Posteritie.

(To Venus, 6.31–32)

And thus, all honor to the shepherd’s King!
For Sacrifice to Thee my Muse shall sing!

(To Pan, 19.83–84)

Haile then, Latona’s faire-hayrd seede, and Jove’s!
My song shall ever call to Minde your Loves.

(To Diana, 27.35–36)

These many variations show the enormous liberties Chapman took, especially in his later years, and his difficulty in understanding the genre he was translating.¹¹

¹⁰Cf. *Homeric Hymns* 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 19, 27, 28, 29, 30. Georgius Dartona’s facing Latin translation in Spondanus’s Greek text, *Homeri Quae Extant Omnia*, does not render the Greek in exactly the same way in every case but the variations are very slight.

¹¹For other examples, see: “So shall my Muse for ever honour Thee, / And any other thou commend’st to Me” (To Venus, 10.11–12); “So I salute thee still; and still in Praise / Thy Fame, and others’, shall my Memorie raise” (To Pallas, 28.25–26); “Yet not to you alone my vowes belong: / Others as well claime t’Homage of my song” (To Vesta and Mercurie, 29.29–30);

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Two of the very late hymns explicitly say that the poet will next celebrate the famous deeds of heroes, characteristic of epic poetry. The way Chapman expands these references is in itself striking and suggestive of what he found meaningful in these hymns. In one instance, the Greek reads:

- A) having begun with you (Helios), I shall celebrate the
race of mortal men,
heroes whose deeds the gods revealed to mankind.
(31.18–19)

And the other reads:

- B) . . . having begun with you (Selene), I shall sing
of the famous tales of mortal heroes, whose deeds
singers,
servants of the Muses, make famous from their
enchanted mouths.
(32.17–20)

Finding in these lines Homeric themes that forever stirred him—his fascination with half-God heroes, the model they provided for lesser mortals, the grip of sad death upon all mortals, including these half-god men, and poesie's sacred charge to celebrate them—Chapman embellishes these lines to read:

- A) . . . and then from Thee
And all the race of compleate Deitie

“ . . . Sustaine a Minde / Propitious to me for my Praise, and give / (Answering my minds) my vows fit Meanes to live” (To Earth, 30.31–33). In a slight variant, another formula reads, “having begun with you (Aphrodite), I shall pass on to another *hymn*” (5.293) which Chapman translates: “My Muse, affecting first thy Fame to raise, / Shall make Transcension now to others’ Praise” (To Venus, 5.486–87). The Spondanus text also prints this close for the *Hymn to Artemis* (Diana) (#9), line 8.

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My song shall celebrate those halfe-God states
That yet sad death's condicion circulates,
And whose brave Acts the Gods shew men, that they
As brave may ayme at, since they can but die.
(To the Sun, 31.31–36)

B) . . . With thy grace begun,
My Muse shall forth and celebrate the praise
Of Men whose states the Deities did raise
To Semideities; whose deedes t'endlesse Date
Muse-lov'd and sweete-sung Poets celebrate.
(To the Moon, 32.24–28)

GEORGE CHAPMAN, TRANSLATOR OF THE *ILLADS*
AND *ODYSSES*

Homer's poesie, "in which Humanitie to her height is raisde, / Which all the world (yet none enough) hath praise," shaped Chapman's literary life. Born in 1559, Chapman was the first to translate the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in their entirety into English and the first to introduce the *Batrachomyomachia* and the *Homeric Hymns* to an English-speaking audience. Without the *Iliad* in England's mother tongue, he felt his "kingdome's maine soule [was] maim'd."¹² In 1598 when he was almost thirty, Chapman published seven books (Bk. I, half of II, VII–XI) in thunderous fourteen-syllable rhymed couplets, and *Achilles' Shield* in a quieter iambic pentameter rhymed couplet. In 1600 he brought out the first twelve books in fourteeners, and on April 8, 1611,

¹²Both quotations from Chapman's dedicatory poem to his patron, "To the High Borne Prince of Men, Henrie Thrice," lines 39–40 and 34, respectively, published in his 1611 edition of the *Iliads*.

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after translating the last twelve books in a frenzied eighteen months, he published the complete poem in that meter. The title page read:

THE ILIADS OF
HOMER
Prince of Poets.
*Neuer before in any lan-
guag truely translated.*
With
a Comment uppon some of his chiefe
places;
Donne according to the Greeke
By Geo: Chapman.
At London printed for Nathaniell Butter.
William Hole sculp:

Three years later, he brought out his *Odyssees* (1614–15) in rapidly flowing, enjambed iambic pentameter rhymed couplets, admired by some for its more refined sensibility and seasoned hand than his robust *Iliads*, but it has its own excesses. Whereas Chapman's passionate *Iliads* was only 14,416 lines compared to Homer's text of roughly 15,700 lines, Chapman's *Odyssees* was a whopping 16,663 lines compared to Homer's roughly 12,150 lines. About ten years later, Chapman published *The Crowne of all Homers Workes* (1624) including *Batrachomyomachia, or the Battaile of Frogs and Mice. His Hymn's—and—Epigrams Translated according to ye originall*, in decasyllabic rhymed couplets. One feels that Chapman, without heroic figures to animate his imagination, struggled to find his way with these latter poems. Rather than a climax, the last works represent something of a descent from his Olympus. Even so, his *Hymnes* are even more embellished than the *Odyssees*, a total of 3,027 lines compared to 1,814 lines in the Greek.

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Chapman's expansions are not due solely to his use of rhymed couplets and the shorter decasyllabic verse. As he aged, he felt ever more free to let Homer's poesie move through him and carry him to his own "true sence and height." "Word-for-word traductions," he complained, "lose / The free grace of their naturall Dialect / And shame their Authors with a forced Glose."¹³ For literal renderings, Chapman advised his reader to pick up the Latin prose translations of Lorenzo Valla or Eobanus Hessus and convert them to verse. He also took delight in making fun of French and Italian verse translations with their polysyllabic end-rhymes concluding "in harsh Collision." In phrase of English, Chapman coos: "Our Monosyllables so kindly fall / And meete, opposde in rime, as they did kisse."¹⁴

In addition to his free paraphrase, critics with reason have chastised Chapman for his quirky English (often rich in invented words) and forced expressions midst the plain, natural, and most just—his entangled syntax leading one occasionally into difficult-to-escape-from thickets—and of course for his epithets. Coleridge was by no means alone when objecting to Chapman's "quaint epithets which he affects to render literally from the Greek, a language above all others 'blest in the marry marriage of sweet word,' and which in our language are mere printer's compound epithets—such as quaffed divine *joy-in-the-heart-of-man-infusing* wine to be one-word, because

¹³ "To the Reader" (to be distinguished from "The Preface to the Reader," both in the 1611 *Iliad* edition), lines 120–22. The only English translation of the *Iliad* at this time was by Arthur Hall, *The Ten Books of Homers Iliades, translated out of the French* (1581), by Hugues Salel (1545), itself translated from Andreas Divus's Latin translation of 1537. Cf. Millar MacLure, *George Chapman: A Critical Study* (Toronto, 1966), p. 234.

¹⁴ "To the Reader," lines 168–69.

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one sweet mellifluous word expresses it in Homer.”¹⁵ As vulnerable as Chapman is to such criticism, his rendering of the Homeric epithet *also* deserves praise.

Even the first Renaissance translators of Homer into Latin stumbled over Homer's epithets, in no small measure because the Latin they imitated from Vergil's (and Ovid's) interwoven line was far from Homer's formulaic half-line cadences. Shaped by Vergilian and Ovidian poetics, these translations were doomed to appear clunky, graceless, and all too obviously “translationese” in their rendering of Homer's formulaic phrasing. Two early translations of the *Iliad* into Latin prose—the speeches of Book IX by Leonardo Bruni in the early 1400s and the whole poem by Valla in 1444—simply cut out the epithets. As Bruni explains: “I translated in the oratorical manner . . . leaving out epithets because they are the property of poets.”¹⁶ In English Chapman does much better. Even his quaint hyphenated compounds are almost invariably of his own design. So, for example, at *Hymne to Apollo* 3.21–22:

All haile (O blest Latona!) to bring forth
An issue of such All-out-shining worth,

Chapman creates a compound and an end-rhyme of his own choosing—again under the influence of the Latin gloss accompanying the Greek text. His “an issue of such All-out-shining worth” is closer in sense and structure to *praecclaros liberos* than to *aglaa tekna*, “the radiant children,” of the original. Such

¹⁵George Whalley, ed., *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 12: II (= Marginalia II) (Princeton, 1984), p. 1119.

¹⁶Peter Thiermann ed., *Die Orationes Homeri des Leonardo Bruni Aretino: Kritische Edition*, Mnemosyne. Bibliotheca classica Batava. Supplementum 126 (Leiden, 1993), p. 66. Cf. Scully, “Homeric Epithets and Translation,” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 11 (2004–2005), pp. 404–15.

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examples abound. Even more to the point, *pace* Coleridge's claim, Chapman frequently ignores the epithets in the original and adds others where Homer has none. More often than not, these invented *nonhyphenated* epithets capture the flavor of the Greek more successfully than almost all other efforts in English: they are simple and straightforward, evoking an essential and generic quality of a noun, bringing it temporarily into focus, even energizing the line. Such verse is not Homer's but it is Homeric.

Three translations from the *Hymn to Aphrodite* (#5) illustrate the point: The first, by Diane Rayor, *The Homeric Hymns: A Translation, with Introduction and Notes* (Berkeley, 2004), is most literal:

Seeing her, Anchises wondered, amazed
at her beauty, her stature, her shining clothes!
Her robe blazed past the radiance of fire,
spiral bracelets and earrings shining like flower buds,
with brilliant necklaces gracing her soft throat,
like the moon shining on her soft breast,
beautifully inlaid in gold, a marvel.
Passion seized Anchises, face to face, he spoke to her . . .

Faithful to the Greek, there is a certain flow in Rayor's lines of three, four, or five beats but they lack rhythmical vitality and, as well, the connective tissue of vowel and consonant patterns. Compare Daryl Hine's translation (1971), republished by the University of Chicago Press and 2005 winner of the Landon Translation Prize from the Academy of American Poets:

When he beheld her Anchises was filled with amazement
and wondered
At her appearance and stature and also her shimmering
raiment,

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Since she was wearing a mantle outshining in brightness the
firelight,
Torques that were twisted in spirals and glittering
flower-shaped earrings;
Necklaces lay on her delicate neck, of surpassing refinement,
Beautiful, golden and cunningly fashioned; a luster of
moonlight
Shone round her delicate body; which was a great wonder to
witness.
Longing laid hold on Anchises, who spoke to her something
as follows: . . .

A master metricist, Hine manages what few can get away with in English, Homer in dactylic hexameter. Meter drives the narrative and is linked to a whole nervous system of caesura, enjambment, vowel play, and alliteration. Though not particularly illustrated in this example, Hine is often quite cavalier with recurring epithets, sacrificing them for the contingencies of meter and sound pattern. With the heroic couplet, Chapman is even freer, extreme in adding ornaments but splendid in flow, meter, texture, sound:

Anchises seeing her, all his senses were
With wonder stricken, and high-taken heeds
Both of her forme, brave stature, and rich weedes.
For, for a vaile, she shin'd in an Attire
That cast a radiance past the Ray of fire.
Beneath which wore she, guirt to her, a Gowne
Wrought all with growing-rose-budds, reaching downe
T'her slender smalls, which buskins did divine,
Such as taught Thetis' silver Feete to shine.
Her soft white neck rich Carquenets embrac't,
Bright, and with gold in all variety grac't,
That, to her breasts let downe, lay there and shone

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As, at her joyfull full, the rising Moone.
Her sight show'd miracles, Anchises' Heart
Love tooke into his hand, and made him part
With these high Salutations . . .

These three versions of the *Hymn to Aphrodite* 5.84–91 (Chapman, 136–51) illustrate the choices readers must inevitably make when selecting a translation. All of them take us only so far toward the original but at their best—“With Poesie to open Poesie”—they find their “naturall Dialect” and help enrich a “kingdome’s maine soule.”

Not all speak approvingly of Chapman’s efforts. In 1875, for example, in an essay accompanying an edition of Chapman’s writings, the poet A. C. Swinburne admired Chapman’s “subtle and sleepless ingenuity” but criticized his inability to “resist the lure of any quaint or perverse illustration, . . . [of] the rough and barren byways of incongruous allusion, of unseasonable reflection or preposterous and grotesque symbolism. . . . For all his labours in the field of Greek translation, no poet was ever less of a Greek in style or spirit. He enters the serene temples and handles the holy vessels of Hellenic art with the stride and grasp of a high-handed and high-minded barbarian.”¹⁷ Today, we are less inclined to think of Greek temples, or thought, as serene, and better able to embrace the spirit and fluency of Elizabethan grandeur in Chapman’s vocabulary, syntax, and cadences. His *Hymnes* are of interest to us today both for historical reasons as they are the first in our tongue and an admirable testament to a Renaissance effort to make Homer out of them. But they also are fascinating in and of themselves; Chapman’s translations cannot rival many of the modern editions for their closeness to the Greek but we can still learn from him how to make Homer sound vital and vivid in English.

¹⁷Swinburne, *George Chapman: A Critical Essay* (London, 1875), pp. 3 and 6.

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TEXTS AND RECEPTION

By a curious twist of fate, the *Homeric Hymns* were more popular and widely known in Chapman's time than they were in antiquity. There are relatively few references to the collection in antiquity. In spite of their many geographical references and allusions to obscure events that would have aroused ancient pedants, there are no scholia for the *Homeric Hymns* themselves and few scholia to other authors refer to the *Hymns*.

From the Byzantine manuscripts, the *Hymns* entered the Renaissance either preserved as part of the Homeric corpus, along with the *Batrachomyomachia* and sixteen epigrams, or in company with other hymns from Callimachus, the Orphic tradition, or Proclus (mostly in the odd order of Orpheus, Proclus, Homer, Callimachus). With the Renaissance fascination for all things Homeric and mythological, the *Homeric Hymns* enjoyed a greater audience circa AD. 1500 CE than they had in their first seventeen hundred years. While the *Battle of Frogs and Mice* is scarcely read today, the *Hymns* have never been more popular than they are now. Close to ten translations in English alone are currently on the market, many of these published for the first time or reprinted within the past five years. The eloquent and unrivalled stories recounted in the long *Hymns* about many of Zeus's most prominent children account for their wide audience.¹⁸ They are often read in courses alongside Homer or in conjunction with the *Theogony* as their stories of the gods charmingly complicate Hesiod's brilliant interpretation of Zeus's ascendancy to power and the stabilization of order on Olympus.

¹⁸These are Dionysus; Persephone, like her mother Demeter, in agony at Zeus's "marrying" her off to Hades; Apollo; Hermes; and Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus and Dione in *Hymn #5* and in Homer but sea-born from Ouranus's severed genitals in Hesiod's *Theogony* and in *Hymns #6* and 10.

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By another quirk of fate, in Chapman's day the twenty-five extant manuscripts which included the *Homeric Hymns* began with the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. It would not be for another one hundred and fifty years, when Christian Friedrich Matthæi, a professor of Greek in Moscow, discovered in a barn outside Moscow in 1777 a manuscript from a different tradition, that scholars became aware that in the ancient collection a long *Hymn to Dionysus* (now in fragmentary form) began the volume, followed by the splendid *Hymn to Demeter*. Modern editions begin with these poems, numbering the *Hymn to Apollo* at the beginning of Chapman's translation as number three.

For his translations, George Chapman used the *Homeri Quae Extant Omnia. Ilias, Odyssea, Batrachomyomachia, Hymni, Poemata aliquot*, edited by Johannes Spondanus (Jean de Sponde), Basel, 1583, reprinted in 1606. This volume also contained Spondanus's Latin commentary and book-by-book argument for the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* which Chapman consulted actively; there were no such aids for the *Batrachomyomachia* or the *Hymni*. The volume included a facing Latin translation, which Chapman also consulted line by line, but he was by no means Greekless and blindly dependent upon the Latin, in spite of the claim of "a certaine envious Windfucker. That hovers up and downe, laboriously engrossing al the aire with his luxurious ambition and buzzing into every eare my detraction—affirming I turne Homer out of the Latin onely, etc.—that sets all his associates and the whole rabble of my maligners on their wings with him to beare about my empaire and poyson my reputation" ("The Preface to the Reader," 157–63 [1611]). As there was no indication to the contrary in Spondanus's text, Chapman thought these translations were by the editor but in fact they were reprints: the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by Andreas Divus, the *Batrachomyomachia* by Aldus Manutius, and the *Hymni* by Georgius Dartona of Crete, published collectively in

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Homeri opera Latine ad verbum translata (Venice, 1537). Franck Schoell's condemnation of Divus's translations for being "absurdly literal" and "greatly inferior Latin" misses the point.¹⁹ These translations did not strive to be elegant or even good Latin but word-for-word glosses of the Greek, a feat possible in Latin but not in the less-inflected later European languages. Inevitably, they misconstrued a Greek phrase on occasion or in their severe constraints distorted coherence, but in general these renderings were remarkably successful for what they set out to be.

Chapman's translations remained popular until the end of the century but by the time of Alexander Pope's *Iliad* (1715–20) and *Odyssey* (1725–26), in refined end-stopped iambic pentameter couplets, they had become "totally neglected" according to Samuel Johnson. The tide turned with the English Romantics, due largely to the pull of Charles Lamb's enthusiastic endorsement. In 1808, his friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge sent a copy of Chapman's Homer to a young lady with a note saying that the translations with their "mighty faults counterpoised by mighty Beauties" were now "very scarce & valuable."²⁰ The availability of Chapman's translations appears to have changed within a decade. In 1616, Keats published "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," and two years later Shelley, encouraged by his friend Thomas Hogg to read the *Homeric Hymns* ("miraculous effusions of genius" of "magical verses," in Hogg's words), began translating the *Hymns*. He began this project in

¹⁹Schoell, *Études sur l'humanisme continental en Angleterre à la fin de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1926), p. 152. Pace George deF. Lord, *Homeric Renaissance*, p. 24, Divus's lines are not "in hexameters" but in the nature of a gloss break at the end of the line in imitation of the Greek.

²⁰For Johnson, see his *Lives of English Poets* (published in 1781), ed., G. B. Hill, (Oxford, 1905), vol. 3, p. 114; for Coleridge, see *The Collected Works*, vol. 12.II, p. 1119.

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January of 1818 and by the end of the month had ordered a copy of Chapman's translation of them to arrive "if possible by tomorrows Coach."²¹ By the end of the nineteenth century Chapman's Homer, including the *Hymns*, were reprinted or edited several times. The text printed here is from Allardyce Nicoll's excellent edition with introductions, textual notes, commentaries, and glossaries, *Chapman's Homer: the Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Lesser Homerica* (New York, 1956).

Coleridge praised "it" (presumably Chapman's *Odysseys*, his favorite of the two poems), "as truly an original poem as the Faery Queen—it will give you small Idea of Homer; tho' yet a far truer one than from Pope's *Epigrams* or Cowper's cumbersome most anti-homeric *Miltoniad*—for Chapman writes & feels a Poet—as Homer might have written had he lived in England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth."²² Matthew Arnold echoed these sentiments midcentury: "Chapman's style is not artificial and literary like Pope's nor his movement elaborate and self retarding like the Miltonic movement of Cowper.

²¹ Shortly after this request, Shelley gave up on the project due to an eye illness. In that year, Shelley translated five *Hymns*: #28 and 30–33 (To Minerva, Earth, Sun, Moon, and Castor and Pollux) and the first fifty-eight lines in draft of #5 (To Venus), primarily in end-stopped heroic couplets; cf. Kelvin Everest and Geoffrey Matthews eds., *The Poems of Shelley*, vol. 2 (Harlow, 2000), pp. 338–39. In 1820 Shelley translated and freely expanded into playful *ottava rima* the *Hymn to Mercury* (#4). As this poem is about the invention of poetry and as one of Shelley's nicknames was Mercury, Shelley's rendering of Hermes' gift to Apollo: "I / Present thee with this music-flowing shell, / Knowing thou canst interrogate it well" (659–60) seems delightfully to evoke comparison between Shelley's name and his occupation; cf. Byron's characterization of his fellow poets as "brethren of the Shell," and Gary Farnell, "Rereading Shelley," *English Language Notes* 60 (1993): 634–36.

²² By *Miltoniad* Coleridge means Cowper's translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, published in 1791.

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He is plain-spoken, fresh, vigorous, and, to a certain degree, rapid; and all these are Homeric qualities." For Ezra Pound in 1920, Chapman remained "the best English 'Homer.'"²³

From his first days working on the *Iliads*, Chapman felt a yearning of the gods to come down from above and to engage with men ("downe from heaven Athena stoopt and shind / . . . and tooke / Achilles by the yellow curles," *Il.* 1.196–200) and a hero's capacity to rise up to meet the divine ("they were nimble wings, and made so light his spirit / That from the earth the princely captaine they tooke up to aire," *Il.* 19.372–73). Chapman is most at home in this vast cosmological exchange. In the rarer atmosphere of the *Hymnes*, he makes his way less easily but even here readers can find delight in the combination of Greek epic narrative and Chapman's English.

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE COLLECTION AND INDIVIDUAL *HYMNS*

The arrangement of the thirty-three hymns (thirty-one in Chapman) is not as arbitrary as it may at first appear. The collection begins with the long narrative poems, each several hundred lines in length, though these 5 hymns themselves do not conform to any discernible order and are not arranged in the chronological order in which they were composed. Judging from internal evidence, these songs were created for particular festivals or locales where the respective god was especially honored. The 28 short hymns have a certain internal logic, beginning with two longish hymns, one to Aphrodite (Venus),

²³ For Coleridge, see *The Collected Works*, vol. 12.II, pp. 1119–20; for Arnold's essay, see Arnold, *Essays, Literary and Critical* (London, 1907), p. 223; for Pound, see "Translators of Greek: Early Translations of Homer" (1920), in T. S. Eliot, ed., *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (Norfolk, Conn., 1954), p. 249.

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the other to Dionysus (Bacchus) (in the Greek 21 and 59 lines, respectively; in Chapman, 32 and 103 lines, respectively). An anomalous poem to Ares (Mars), which Chapman admired, comes next, followed by 6 very short poems to goddesses, arranged from younger to older deities and culminating in a *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods* (#14, 6 lines long). After these come 9 very short poems to gods, again arranged from younger to older and culminating in a *Hymn to Zeus* (Jove) (#23, 4 lines long). Then appear 6 poems of varying length, framed by songs to Zeus's virgin sister, Hestia (Vesta) (#24 and #29), with songs to various of his children sandwiched in between. Three songs to very old gods follow: to the Earth, Mother of all (#30), Helios (Sun), and Selene (Moon) (#31 and #32). The hymns conclude with a song to the Dioscuri (Castor and Pollux), twins of a mortal woman, one of the sons fathered by Zeus, the other by Tyndareus, the king of Sparta. In this way, the collection begins and ends with songs to half-gods, made immortal—Dionysus and the Dioscuri, half-men not gripped by sad death. Seven hymns in this collection are to such figures: 3 to Dionysus (#1, #7, # 26); 2 to the Dioscuri (#17 and #33); 1 each to Heracles (Hercules) (#15) and to Asclepius (Aesculapius), fathered by Apollo from a mortal woman (#16). The collection ends with a song to Guests/Strangers (Xenoi), (Men of Hospitality in Chapman's translation [#34]), though often not numbered; found in only some of the manuscripts).

Ignoring the arrangement of the collection, we may group the gods in the hymns into three sets:

I) Pre-Olympians:

Mother of the Gods (#14)

Earth, Mother of All (#30)

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Helios (Sun) (#31)

Selene (Moon) (#32)

Aphrodite (Venus) (Hesiodic version, as in #6, #10)

II) The 12 canonical Olympians:

a) Zeus and siblings:

Zeus (Jove) (#23)

Hestia (Vesta) (#24, #29)

Demeter (Ceres) (#2, #13)

Hera (Juno) (#12)

Poseidon (Neptune) (#22)

Not surprisingly, there is no hymn to Hades, Lord of the Underworld, Zeus's much-feared other brother, and rarely present on Olympus.

b) Zeus's children (if one follows Homer and not Hesiod in thinking that Aphrodite is his daughter and Hephaestus his son):

Athena (Pallas) (#11, #28)

[Persephone (Proserpina) with Demeter (#2, #13)]

Apollo (Phoebus) (#3, #21, #25 with the Muses)

Artemis (Diana) (#9, #27)

Aphrodite (Venus) (Homeric version, as in #5)

Ares (Mars) (#8)

Hephaestus (Vulcan) (#20), where his parentage is not specified, but in the *Hymn to Apollo*, Hera, enraged at Zeus for giving birth to Athena, gives birth to Hephaestus without male consort (3.317, in Chapman, *An Hymne to Apollo* 501–2)

Hermes (Mercury) (#4, #18)

Pan, Hermes' child (#19)

III) Children from a god and a mortal woman:

a) immortal, Zeus's children:

Dionysus (Bacchus) (#1, #7, #26)

the Dioscuri (Castor and Pollux) (#17, #33)

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Heracles (Hercules) (#15)

b) mortal(?), Apollo's child:

Asclepius (Aesculapius) (#16)

As a collection, the hymns often complicate Hesiod's picture of the gods in the *Theogony*, even as they complement and confirm his understanding of an harmonious Olympus.

THE HYMNS

The *Hymn to Apollo* (#3) (546 lines in Greek; 837 in Chapman). This is a remarkable tale of literary and textual interest. It was many years after Chapman's translation that scholars began to make sense of its tangle of narrative twists and turns. In two separate instances, it recounts the fear of the gods, and in particular the goddesses, at the arrival of this new god, first in the story of his birth on the island of Delos and then in the founding of his sanctuary at Delphi in mainland Greece. In both cases, instead of the young, powerful bow-god being a threat to Zeus and the new order of Olympus, Apollo proves to be the loyal son, eager to carry out the will of his father. As soon as he is born on Delos, he frees himself from his swaddling bonds and proclaims straightway: "The lyre and curved bow are dear to me, / and I shall prophesy to mortals Zeus's unerring plan" (3.131–32; Chapman, 195–97). The second tale records Apollo's struggles to clear the site of Delphi for his oracular home, a feat which in this telling entails the violent defeat of two female figures and Hera's monstrous son Typhaon. The three stories are so telescoped that the outer one about Apollo's hostile run-in with and eventual burying in a shower of stones the spring nymph Telphousa (244–76 and 375–87) frames the story of

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his violent slaying of the vicious female serpent, Pytho, who guards the spring near Delphi (277–304 and 356–74). Embedded within the Pytho story is a digression (305–55) about the birth of a male monster, Typhaon, whom Hera, in a rage at Zeus for giving birth to Athena, creates without consort and gives to Pytho to raise. In defeating Pytho, Apollo in effect slays Typhaon, though that is never said outright, and saves Zeus and the world at large from the destruction that Hera had desired.

Even in the Greek, the transitions in this intricately woven sequence of tales are abrupt and awkward, and especially so with the Typhaon digression, which drops into the narrative as if from outer space and similarly disappears without warning. It is remarkable that Chapman got through the sequence as well as he did, considering that he had no commentaries or other guides beside George Dartona's Latin translation facing his Greek text. Spondanus's Greek text does not make matters easy for Chapman when it prints Delphusa for Telphousa as if she were somehow Delphi. Chapman is aware that Pytho (Pythus in Chapman) is an alternate name for Delphi but for some reason he renders her as Dragonesse at 431–83a but as Pytho at 558b–92a. In Chapman the transitions between episodes are often blurred, occurring as they frequently do across a semi-colon in mid-line. In outline, a comparison of the three stories looks like this:

| <i>Greek Text</i> | <i>Chapman's Text</i> |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Telphousa 244–76 | Delphusa 389–430 |
| Pytho 277–304 | Dragonesse 431–83a |
| Typhaon 305–55 | Typhon 483b–558a |
| Pytho 356–74 | Pytho 558b–92a |
| Telphousa 375–87 | Delphusa 592b–610 |

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Chapman's translation of this hymn often seems labored but on occasion he approximates the "daring fiery Spirit" that Pope said animates the best of Chapman's *Iliads*.²⁴ Consider:

The King Apollo, with an arrow, freed
From his strong string, destroyed the Dragonesse
That Wonder nourisht, being of such excesse
In size and horridnesse of monstrous shape,
That on the forc'd earth she wrought many a rape,
Many a spoile made on it, many an ill
On crooke-hancht Herds brought, being impurpl'd still
With blood of all sorts; (476–83a)

Long after Chapman's death, it was argued that the two episodes in the *Hymn* were originally separate poems. One poem concerned with Apollo's birth at Delos ended at line 178 (in Chapman, line 278);²⁵ it was performed at the Delian festival, while the other, of earlier date, concerned with the establishment of Delphi, was composed by a poet from central Greece. Variations in diction, formulaic usage, and geographical orientation in the two sections of the existing poem strongly support this view, but the shared themes and structure of the two parts also suggest that both poems were reworked, rather successfully, to interweave the separate pieces into a single, coherent poem. Even the digression on Typhaon, awkwardly inserted as it is, fits well into the themes of the poem and may well be part of the reshaped poem rather than a later interpolation. A scholiast at Pindar's *Nemean* 2.1 claimed that one of

²⁴ *The Iliad of Homer, Translated by Mr. Pope* (1715), I, sig. F2.

²⁵ Chapman frequently follows his own sense of the structure of a scene, choosing to indent a line which Spondanus's Greek text does not, but at 178 (Chapman 278) neither Spondanus nor Chapman saw reason to indicate a shift in the narrative.

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the Homeridai, a poet named Cynaethus of Chios, composed verses in Homer's name, including the *Hymn to Apollo*, and was the first to recite Homer's poems at Syracuse, in the 69th Olympiad (=504/501 BCE). The date seems too late for the original compositions of either part of the *Hymn to Apollo* but, if there is truth to the observation, it may be the case that Cynaethus was the one to reshape two older poems into the poem found in this collection. If so, this would be the only poem in this grouping with an identifiable author.

The *Hymn to Hermes* (Mercury) (#4) (580 lines in Greek; 1011 in Chapman). This is the longest of the *Hymns*, and certainly the last of the long hymns to be composed. It is also among the wittiest and most playful in keeping with the trickster nature of the god it celebrates. Born of Zeus and Maia, a goddess from the line of crafty Prometheus and Iapetus, the "faire tongu'd, but false hearted" (Chapman, *A Hymne to Hermes* 20), Hermes might easily have grown up to threaten the new order of Olympus so celebrated in Hesiod's *Theogony*. As much as he exasperates his older brother Apollo when, not even a day old, he steals the far-shooter's prized cattle, the irrepressible newcomer is eager to be accepted by his father and welcomed into the company of the Olympians. He gains this end by his characteristic craft and whimsy: less than six hours old, he invents the lyre by slaying a tortoise and fitting a bridge and seven strings to the back of the hollowed-out shell. Trying his hand at this "lovely plaything," he improvised a song—about his parent's love affair and his own distinguished lineage, naturally enough. In the early hours of his second day, by the river Alpheios he invents a device for making fire, wrestles two of Apollo's mighty cattle to the ground and slays them, roasting their meat (careful not to eat any of it himself). Without explanation, Hermes has divided

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the meat into twelve portions with a “perfect honor for each” (4.129). It is generally presumed that Hermes is preparing a sacrifice for the twelve Olympian gods, *implicitly* including himself in that number and reversing Prometheus’s unequal division of sacrificial meats at Mecone that greatly angered Zeus, as described in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (536–49). In Zeus’s presence, the two brothers eventually reconcile, when Hermes returns the surviving cattle and gives to his older brother the plaything that he had invented the day before. Created on a whim, the lyre will become an integral part of Apollo’s identity and acquire the greatest significance for gods (and men), the instrument associated with the highest art, festivity, song and dance, and Olympian harmony. Needless to say, by hymn’s end Hermes has gained acceptance on Mt. Olympus. Like Apollo in the *Hymn to Apollo*, the potentially dangerous Hermes in this hymn proves from the start to be a loyal, if irreverent, member of his father’s new order.

The tone and clever arrangement of episodes in the hymn elegantly imitates Hermes’ character. As do the other long hymns, this one appears to allude to the establishment of the cult, in this case that of the Twelve Gods at Olympia (along the Alpheios), and it could well be that the hymn was composed for festivities there. Though the origin of this cult is much older, diction and untraditional use of formulae suggest a fifth-century date for the hymn. Narrative inconsistencies and repetitions make translation difficult but Chapman often captures the humor and light touch of the poem.

The *Hymn to Aphrodite* (Venus) (#5) (293 lines in Greek; 487 in Chapman). This is the shortest of the long hymns and most likely the oldest. It is closely associated with Troy and has close parallels with the *Iliad*, causing some scholars to argue that it might have been by Homer. It probably dates to the

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end of the seventh century. As in Homer, but contrary to the story of her birth in Hesiod's *Theogony*, in this hymn Aphrodite is identified as Zeus's daughter. She is also called the Cyprian goddess, and Kytherea, after the two islands associated with her sea-birth in the *Theogony* (188–200). These names for the goddess need not evoke Hesiod's tale, however, as Aphrodite's association with Cyprus and her cult center at Paphos appears to date back to the twelfth century, long before either poet.

Again, the hymn treats playfully a theme important to Hesiod's *Theogony*. Rather than transforming the generative but destabilizing force of eros as he does in Hesiod's poem, in the hymn Zeus turns the tables on Aphrodite, subjecting her to the bewitching powers of love that have bedevilled him and most other gods. Driven by Zeus to fall in love with a mortal, Aphrodite seduces the Trojan prince Anchises on Mt. Ida. Shamed by her pregnancy, she insists that the child be named Aeneas (Aineias) "because a dreadful / distress (*ainos* / *akhos*) took hold of me, that I fell into the bed of a mortal man" (198–99). Chapman movingly embellishes these verses, with the end rhyme of "life" and "griefe," and the added line in the second couplet (327–30), but he misses the pun on Aineias and *ainos* in the Greek (as does Dartona's Latin translation: *Huic autem et Aeneas nomen erit. Quoniam me gravis / Habuit dolor, quod mortalis viri incidi ad lectum*):

His Name Aeneas—therein keeping life
For ever in my much-concepted griefe,
That I (immortall) fell into the bed
Of one whose blood Mortality must shed.

A comparison of three love unions at the end allows meditation on sexual energy and renewal. Eos (Dawn) at the edge of the world offers her mortal lover immortality but not eternal

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youth in what proves to be a sterile union. Zeus whisks his beloved, Ganymedes, the adolescent son of Laomedon, up to Olympus to join the gods in what is also—this time of necessity—a union without procreation. Aphrodite, by contrast, beds down in love with the mortal Anchises on the wild slopes of Mt. Ida. The union in the realm of men is fertile, leading to a kind of urban immortality—Aeneas will die but give birth to an unending line of rulers at Troy (197).

The *Hymn to Aphrodite* (To the Same) (#6) (21 lines in Greek; 32 in Chapman). This hymn charmingly embellishes Hesiod's account of Aphrodite's birth from the sea as told in the *Theogony* (188–200), though there is no mention of her birth from Heaven's genitals. In this hymn, the Horae (Seasons) attend Aphrodite as she comes ashore. Angelo Poliziano, a scholar and poet whom Chapman admired, draws from this hymn in his *Stanze Cominciate per la Giostra del Magnifico Giuliano de' Medici* I.99–101 (1478), and it is Poliziano's poem which influenced Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (c. 1485). Spenser also draws from this hymn in *The Faerie Queene* 4.12.2 (1596). The last lines of the hymn explicitly refer to rhapsodic performance, perhaps at Aphrodite's ancient sanctuary at Paphos, though nothing in the hymn indicates the date of composition.

The *Hymn to Dionysus* (#7) (Bacchus or The Pyrats) (#7) (59 lines in Greek; 103 in Chapman). This hymn is our earliest source for the famous story of pirates attempting to abduct Dionysus. Dates from the seventh to fifth century have been suggested for the hymn, most likely placing it before a black-figure cup by Exekias (circa 530 BCE) depicting Dionysus reclining on board a ship with a grape vine sprouting above the mast and dolphins dancing around the vessel. Because of the hymn, some imagine that the dolphins, a commonplace image for the sea on vases, stand in for the pirates. In the sixth century, in ritual the

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arrival of the god featured men carrying a seated Dionysus in an ivy-wreathed ship with his priest as helmsman. Nothing in the poem reveals a probable place of composition.

The *Hymn to Ares* (Mars) (#8) (17 lines in Greek, 36 in Chapman). This hymn is probably by the Neoplatonist Proclus (fifth century CE) and found its way into this collection by accident. The hymn does not follow the typical formulaic structure of the others; furthermore, its string of epithets is characteristic of late hymns, as is the double focus on anthropomorphic and planetary aspects of the god. The poet's prayer to Ares is also anomalous.

The *Hymn to Artemis* (Diana) (#9) (8 lines in Greek; 15 in Chapman). Nothing in the hymn suggests the date of composition, though Smyrna was destroyed around 600 BCE. The hymn was probably performed there or for a festival at Apollo/Artemis/Leto's cult center at Klaros near Smyrna.

The *Hymn to Aphrodite* (Venus) (#10) (6 lines in Greek; 12 in Chapman). Like #6, this hymn stresses Aphrodite's presence on Cyprus; the prominence of Cypriote Salamis (cf. 5.292) in the hymn may indicate that it was performed there. There is no evidence for dating. In the echo of *himertos* / *himeroeis* (*amabilis* in Dartona's Latin translation), the hymn draws attention to the similarity between Aphrodite's allure or love-liness and that of song. Chapman renders two of the three appearances of the word with "desire."

The *Hymn to Athena* (Pallas) (#11) (5 lines in Greek; 10 in Chapman). There is no evidence within the hymn to suggest date or locale of composition. As a god's power is realized both in a positive and in a negative form, here Athena is both "Patronesse of Cities" and sacker of cities, a role she performs with Ares, though Chapman stresses that "at both times Shee / All injur'de people sets on foot and free."

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The *Hymn to Hera* (Juno) (#12) (5 lines in Greek; 8 in Chapman). This hymn stresses Hera's regality, suggested in her epithet golden-throned, and her revered status, quite unlike Zeus's humiliating treatment of her in the *Iliad* or her rage at Zeus in the *Theogony* and the *Hymn to Apollo* #3 for usurping the female power to give birth. Nothing in the hymn suggests a date or place of performance.

The *Hymn to Demeter* (Ceres) (#13) (3 lines in Greek; 8 in Chapman). Though it is the shortest of the hymns, it still shows hymnic features at both opening and close. It also emphasizes the bond between mother and daughter. It is not possible to determine the date or place of composition.

The *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods* (#14) (6 lines in Greek; 10 in Chapman). This hymn refers to the ancient Anatolian Mother Goddess, who by the seventh century BCE is known as Cybele, though in this hymn she is not named. The date and place of composition are uncertain.

The *Hymn to Heracles the Lion-Hearted* (Hercules) (#15) (9 lines in Greek; 16 in Chapman). This hymn stresses the eventual immortality of one born from a mortal woman and a god, a process of deification that Heracles first experiences formally in the sixth century in Attica. The hymn may therefore be from that time and locale. The epithet "lion-hearted" (*leontothumos*) is elsewhere unattested in Greek.

The *Hymn to Asclepius* (Aesculapius) (#16) (5 lines in Greek; 8 in Chapman). Asclepius, the son of Apollo and a mortal woman named Coronis, is a physician and here a "worthy King." According to Pindar, he was killed by Zeus for bringing a mortal back to life; in the Hellenistic period at Epidaurus and Kos, he was worshipped as a god. This hymn offers no

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hint of the standard story that Coronis was killed by Apollo (or Artemis) for sleeping with a man, the baby being rescued by Apollo from his mother's womb and entrusted to the Centaur, Chiron, who taught him the art of healing. It is difficult to determine the time or place of composition.

The *Hymn to the Dioscuri* (Castor and Pollux) (#17) (5 lines in Greek; 10 in Chapman). This hymn seems to be an abbreviated version of #33.

The *Hymn to Hermes* (Mercurie) (#18) (12 lines in Greek; 18 in Chapman). In the Greek, 18.2–10 is almost identical to 4.2–10 though one would never know that from Chapman's different translations of these two passages. The first ten lines of Hymn 18 comprise one sentence in the Greek text, a feat Chapman imitated in 18.1–14.

The *Hymn to Pan* (#19) (49 lines in Greek; 84 in Chapman). Pan, son of Hermes, is an Arcadian god, who is also worshipped in Athens after the Battle of Marathon (490 BCE). His popularity grew throughout Greece in the fifth century. This is one of the latest hymns, dating most likely from 500–450 BCE and of unknown provenience. Lines 28–34 appear to be influenced by the fifth-century *Hymn to Hermes* (#4), lines 2–4.

The *Hymn to Hephaestus* (Vulcan) (#20) (8 lines in Greek; 12 in Chapman). As happens in this hymn, Athens linked Athena and Hephaestus: "Who, with the skie-eyd Pallas, first did give / Men rules of buildings, that before did live / In Caves and Denss and Hills like savage Beasts"; the city even honored them in a shared cult. The idea of human evolution from a primitive state was made popular by the sophist Protagoras in the fifth century. It is possible that the hymn is from Athens toward the end of that century.

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The *Hymn to Apollo* (Phoebus) (#21) (5 lines in Greek; 8 in Chapman). The Peneus referred to in line 3 was a river in Thessaly. Callimachus in the *Hymn to Apollo* (line 7) and in the *Hymn to Delos* (lines 375–85) also associates Apollo with the swan, though this evidence need not indicate either place or time of composition.

The *Hymn to Poseidon* (Neptune) (#22) (7 lines in Greek; 10 in Chapman). There is no record of Poseidon being worshipped at (Mt.) Helicon in Boeotia. The cities Helice and Aegae near Corinth were sacred to Poseidon (*Iliad* 8.203) and he was worshipped as *Helikônios* among the Ionian cities on the Asia Minor coast. It is tempting to think that there is some confusion about place names in the hymn. Both the time and place of composition remain uncertain.

The *Hymn to Zeus* (Jove) (#23) (4 lines in Greek; 10 in Chapman). Zeus's sexual union with Themis (Law, Custom) is especially significant in the *Theogony* 901–6. Their children, the three Horae—Eunomia (Good Governance), Dike (Justice), and Eirene (Social Peace)—allow Olympus and the human polis to keep Eris's (Discord's) children—Dusnomia, Pseudea (Lies), and Neikea (Quarrels)—at bay. The low profile of Zeus in the hymn collection and the number of allusions to—or parallels with—the *Theogony* suggest that the collection as a whole was thought to complement Hesiod's creation poem.

The *Hymn to Hestia* (Vesta) (#24) (5 lines in Greek; 9 in Chapman). Hestia is often referred to as the first- and last-born from Cronus, as she was the first to be conceived (and swallowed) and therefore the last to be regurgitated from Cronus's stomach. She is thus Zeus's oldest and youngest sister, a virgin goddess and guardian of both the urban and domestic hearth. Though she is associated with Apollo at Delphi in this

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hymn, the invocation to Zeus may refer to a location other than Delphi and the house may be a temple of the two gods rather than a private home. It is difficult to determine either the time or place of the hymn's composition.

The *Hymn to the Muses and Apollo* (#25) (7 lines in Greek, 8 in Chapman). This hymn paraphrases *Theogony* 1, 94–7, 104.

The *Hymn to Dionysus* (Bacchus) (#26) (13 lines in Greek; 22 in Chapman). This hymn refers obliquely to Dionysus's birth from Zeus's thigh. The last lines show that it was performed annually at a festival, though it is impossible to determine where and when it was composed.

The *Hymn to Artemis* (Diana) (#27) (22 lines in Greek; 36 in Chapman). This hymn shows similarities with the long hymn to her brother, *Hymn to Apollo* (#3), and probably dates from the same time.

The *Hymn to Athena* (Pallas) (#28) (18 lines in Greek; 26 in Chapman). The hymn's celebration of the birth of Athena (which so enraged Hera) is also celebrated in the *Theogony* 886–90 and 924–26 and in sixth-century vase paintings as well as in sixth-century choral lyric poets like Stesichorus. Hesiod does not mention that she was born in full armor, though this is a common feature in sixth-century poetry and art. As with Hymn #27, the style of this hymn has much in common with the *Hymn to Apollo* (#3).

The *Hymn to Hestia* (Vesta and Mercurie) (#29) (14 lines in Greek; 30 in Chapman). Both gods were associated with the protection of the home and it is possible that this may be a private hymn. We do not hear elsewhere that Hestia was the first to receive libations, though her prominence as a hearth goddess would make this practice likely. Elsewhere, Hermes also appears to be

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honored with the last libation (cf. *Odyssey* 7.137–38). Nothing in the hymn indicates either the place or time of composition.

The *Hymn to Earth, Mother of All* (#30) (19 lines in Greek; 33 in Chapman). This hymn describes Earth's natural bounty, though unlike many of the other poems in the collection, this one is free of personification (parents, sexual partners, children). It thus is probably of late composition.

Hymns to Helios (Sun) (#31) (19 lines in Greek; 36 in Chapman) and *to Selene* (Moon) (#32) (20 lines in Greek; 28 in Chapman). Neither deity was important in cult. Stylistic analysis suggests single authorship and late composition for both hymns.

The *Hymn to the Dioscuri* (Castor and Pollux) (#33) (19 lines in Greek; 26 in Chapman). Frequently in myth, these twins are regarded as mortal. In other versions, Castor is mortal, fathered by Tyndareus, while Poulydeuces is immortal, sired by Zeus on the same night as Tyndareus fathered Castor. When Castor is killed, his brother forsakes his immortality so that the twins may spend half their time together in the underworld and half on Olympus. In local Spartan cult both may have been elevated to divine status. Scholars see parallels with the *Hymn to Dionysus* (#7), another "mortal god." Nothing is said in the hymn of their sisters, Clytaemnestra, daughter of Tyndareus, and Helen, sired by Zeus in swan form. The twins' association with stormy seas and rescuing sailors is traditional but odd as Sparta is an inland city. A sixth-century inscription from the island of Kephallenia, north and west of Sparta, combines a phrase from line 9 of the hymn and *Iliad* 2.631, perhaps suggesting an early date for this hymn.

Poem to *Xenoi* (Men of Hospitality) (5 lines in Greek; 8 in Chapman). How this poem (not a hymn) got into this collection is not clear. It is not found in all of the manuscripts.

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Batrachomyomachia (303 lines in Greek; 444 in Chapman). The hostilities between frogs and mice begins innocently enough when the king of the frogs, Cheekpuffer or Puffjawe (Physignathos) kindly offers to convey Crumbsnatcher or Filchcrumble (Psicharpax) on his back across a lake. Events turn sore when the frog, threatened by a water snake, dives deep into the water, causing the poor mouse to expire in the water. Parodying epic scenes and formulae, it offers an amusing spoof on Homer and was attributed to him by some in antiquity; others assign composition to a Carian by the name of Pigres. In Spondanus's *Homeri Quae Extant Omnia* and in Chapman's *The Crowne of all Homers Workes*, the mock epic comes after the *Odyssey* and before the *Hymns*. In modern times, it is rarely read and, if published at all, it comes after the *Hymns*, as for example in West's Loeb edition that includes both the hymns and Homeric apocrypha. It is first mentioned in the first century CE and is probably of that era. The tradition of animal stories, as in Aesop's Fables and this epic narrative, is certainly as old as Homer's heroic epic. Much of the humor consists in burlesque epithets and ponderous preposterous polysyllabic proper names. Chapman, like Aldus Manutius in his Latin gloss accompanying Spondanus's Greek text, merely transliterates the Greek names, failing thus to capture much of the humor in the mock epic but, especially with alliteration, he makes a noble stab at rendering the poem's light tone; for example, "Limnocharis, beholding Polyphon / Thus done to death, did, with as round a stone . . ." (306–7). While Coleridge was wrong about the date of composition, his assessment conforms with the view of many today: "I am so dull, that neither in the original nor in any translation could I ever find any wit or wise purpose in this poem. The whole humor seems to lie in the names. The frogs and mice are not frogs or mice, but men, and yet they do nothing that conveys any satire. In the Greek there is much

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beauty of language, but the joke is very flat. This is always the case in rude ages;—their serious vein is inimitable,—their comic low, and low indeed. The psychological cause is easily stated, and copiously exemplifiable.”²⁶ Homer and Pigres were also credited with composing the satiric *Margites* (*margos* = impetuous), a poem (mostly lost except for a few lines found on papyri) about a simpleton, born of rich parents, who among other travails needs to be coaxed with ludicrous difficulty on his wedding night to perform his marital duties.

The Epigrams are culled from the pseudo-Herodotean *Life of Homer* and other late documents such as the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, a text which in its present form dates to the Antonine period (second century CE) but derives from a fourth-century BCE Athenian source, if not from an earlier one. Unlike Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, many of these short poems are in the first-person singular and offer facts about Homer’s life that some in antiquity took as gospel but to which the Alexandrian librarians paid little heed. Other epigrams offer words of wisdom or give voice to a place, a tombstone, a tree, or a person from Homer’s epic poems. Compared to his rousing Iliadic fourteeners and his more delicate pentameter couplets of the *Odysseys* and *Hymni*, Chapman’s pentameters in his translations of the epigrams show him struggling. But, having completed them, he is free to write:²⁷

The Worke that I was borne to doe is done.
Glory to Him that the Conclusion
Makes the beginning of my life; and Never
Let me be said to live, till I live Ever.

²⁶ Whalley, ed., *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 12:II, p. 1126.

²⁷ Chapman’s epigram at the end of *The Crowne of all Homers Workes*, lines 2–4.