

"TITE ENO TOMON ZHTEI;" : the Batrachomyomachia, Hellenistic epic parody, and early epic

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VI

ALEXANDER SENS

“ΤΙΠΤΕ ΓΕΝΟΣ ΤΟΥΜΟΝ ΖΗΤΕΙΣ;”:
THE *BATRACHOMYOMACHIA*,
HELLENISTIC EPIC PARODY, AND EARLY EPIC

Introduction

When Hellenistic poets like Theocritus or Callimachus adapted the diction and meter of Homeric poetry to goatherds, shepherds, and other humble figures, they expanded the range of approaches to ‘serious’ epic (Arist. *Po.* 4, 1448 b 34), which traditionally had as its focus the deeds of gods and heroes.¹ Indeed, the (often subtle and witty) reapplication of epic material to more ordinary figures from ‘everyday life’ — a shift whose tonal effect is notoriously hard to pin down — must be counted one of the hallmarks of learned Hellenistic verse. During the same period, however, other hexametric poets continued the long tradition, going back at least to Hipponax fr. 128 West² and the pseudo-Homeric *Margites* (for which, cf. Archil. fr. 303; Cratinus, fr. 368), of adapting Homeric language to humble themes for more straightforward comical effect (Arist. *Po.* 4, 1448 b 38–1449 a 2).³ These manifestly ‘parodic’ poems have

¹ Cf. M. FANTUZZI–R. HUNTER, *Tradition and Innovation in Hellenistic Poetry* (Cambridge 2004), 138–141.

² On this fragment, see now C.A. FARAONE, “Hipponax Fragment 128W: Epic Parody or Expulsive Incantation?”, in *Class.Ant.* 23 (2004), 209–245, arguing that it is a curse for expelling an enemy rather than parody such as later composed by Euboeus and others.

³ For Hegemon of Thasos, see S.D. OLSON–A. SENS (Eds.), *Matro of Pitane*

often been dismissed by scholars as subliterary, and the precise ways in which they engage with the archaic epic tradition at the verbal level have consequently received relatively limited attention.

In a recent study of the gastronomic parodies of the early Hellenistic poet Matro, Douglas Olson and I have argued that that poet's use of archaic epic not infrequently involves a more sophisticated familiarity with and approach to his models than has usually been allowed. In more than a few passages of his *Attic Dinner Party* (fr. 1 Olson-Sens = *SH* 534), for instance, Matro reworks disparate but thematically related models in ways that seem to imply that he expected at least some members of his audience to recognize specific antecedents and derive amusement from the way in which he redeploys them.⁴ In the present paper, I would like to focus on what is probably the most famous work of ancient Greek epic parody, the *Batrachomyomachia*, a poem attributed in antiquity to Homer or to a certain Pigres but almost certainly the product of the Hellenistic period.⁵ That poem, which seems to show evidence of familiar-

and the Tradition of Epic Parody in the Fourth Century BCE. Text, Translation, and Commentary (Atlanta [Oxford] 1999), 7–9. For the *Δειλιάς* of Nicochares mentioned by ARIST. *Po.* 2, 1448 a 13, see FANTUZZI–HUNTER (*op.cit.* above n.1), 138–139.

⁴ OLSON-SENS 21, expanding on a view of Matro advanced by E. DEGANI, “Problems in Greek Gastronomic Poetry. On Matro’s *Attikon Deipnon*”, in *Food in Antiquity*, ed. by J. WILKINS–D. HARVEY–M. DOBSON (Exeter 1995), 413–428. B.I. PELTZER, *De parodica Graecorum poesi et de Hipponactis, Hegemonis, Matronis parodiarum fragmentis* (Monasterii 1855) and H.G. PAESSENS, *De Matronis parodiarum reliquiis* (Monasterii 1856) also saw Matro as a clever and learned writer on other grounds.

⁵ The poem, first mentioned MART. 14.183 and STAT. *Silv.* 1 *praef.*, has been variously dated to the 5th (most recently L.J. BLIQUEZ, “Frogs and Mice and Athens”, in *TAPhA* 107 [1977], 11–25) or even 6th centuries (e.g. A. LESKY, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* [Bern and München ³1971], 111 n.3), but the linguistic evidence assembled by J. WACKERNAGEL, *Sprachliche Untersuchungen zu Homer* (Göttingen 1916), 188–199 strongly suggests that the poem was the product of the (late) Hellenistic period, and as do the points of contact between the poem and passages of Callimachus and Moschus (cf. below, n.6). For discussion with bibliography, cf. M.L. WEST, “Near Eastern Material in Hellenistic and Roman Literature”, in *HSCP* 73 (1969), 123 n.35; H. WÖLKE, *Untersuchungen*

ity with refined Hellenistic poetry like Callimachus' *Aetia* and Moschus' *Europa*,⁶ continues to be denigrated as having little literary merit,⁷ and despite several important studies by Wölke, Glei, and Fusillo, among others, over the course of the past few decades, critics have focused relatively limited attention on the precise mechanics of the poet's engagement with his epic models beyond the simple accumulation of parallels, which commentators tend simply to list without more detailed discussion.⁸ In at least some passages, however, a closer examination reveals that the poem's engagement with the traditions on which it draws is more subtle and sophisticated than has often been assumed. This does not mean, of course, that the poet consistently alludes to the tradition in the same learned way that, for example, Callimachus does. At a basic level, it seems obvious that the poet's goals were different from those of learned Alexandrians; the work, for instance, clearly lacks much of the metrical refinement one finds in Callimachus and his contemporaries. In some sense, therefore, the poem, like Matro's *Attic Dinner Party*, may thus serve as a test case for evaluating the extent to which some of the practices one usually associates with main-

zur *Batrachomyomachie* (Meisenheim am Glan 1978), 46–70; R. GLEI (Ed.), *Die Batrachomyomachie. Synoptische Edition und Kommentar* (Frankfurt am Main 1984), 34–36; M. FUSILLO (Ed.), [Omero.] *La Battaglia delle rane e dei topi. Batrachomyomachia* (Milano 1988), 39–43.

⁶ That vv. 78–81 referred to Moschus' poem was posited already by Leopardi. For discussion of this possible link, as well as of the supposed connection between vv., 3, 12, 116–118, 180 and various passages of Callimachus' *Aetia*, cf. WÖLKE 58–61, 114–119; GLEI 22.

⁷ E.g. K. DOWDEN, review of WÖLKE (*op.cit.*), in *CR* n.s. 30 (1980), 136: "one may perhaps wonder whether a poem of such irredeemable mediocrity is worth 164 pages of further elucidation, especially as Wölke is apparently under no illusions about its lack of literary merit"; A. CAMERON, *Callimachus and his Critics* (Princeton 1995), 276 describes the author as a poetaster.

⁸ The foundational collection of the poem's epic models is that of A. LUDWICH (Ed.), *Die Homerische Batrachomyomachia des Karers Pigres nebst Scholien und Paraphrase* (Leipzig 1896); cf. A. CAMEROTTO, "Analisi formale della *Batrachomyomachia*", in *Lexis* 9–10 (1992), 1–54. B. VINE, "BATR. 240: Toward the Stylistic Analysis of the *Batrachomyomachia*", in *Mnemosyne* 39 (1986), 383–385 is a useful exception to the tendency of scholars simply to accumulate parallels without discussing the ways in which they combined.

stream Hellenistic poetry in fact form part of a broader set of approaches that go beyond the narrow boundaries of the literary elite.⁹ How far one should be willing to push in allowing for refinement and sophistication in the poet's use of his models remains a thorny question. At the very least, however, in a number of passages the *Batrachomyomachia* becomes considerably richer and more interesting if readers apply some of the same strategies that now are taken for granted in reading learned Alexandrian poetry.

*Epic Parody and Generic Self-Consciousness:
The Batrachomyomachia and the Parodic Traditions of the
Hellenistic Period*

The loss of all but a few examples of Hellenistic parody makes it impossible to know the full range of its themes, but, so long as one is careful to avoid drawing generic lines too sharply and to allow for some overlap, the extant texts of likely Hellenistic date may be said to fall broadly into three main categories. The first of these is what might for want of a better name be termed the 'battle narrative', in which the grand language of Homer and Hesiod was used to recount fights between absurdly unHomeric human combatants, like the lowly bathmen of Euboeus' *Battle of the Bathmen*, or between animals, as in the *Batrachomyomachia*, in an apparently Hellenistic narrative recounting a war between mice and weasels,¹⁰ and perhaps in such undateable, lost poems as the *Arachnomachia* and *Psaromachia* that were said to have been composed as *παίγνια* by Homer (*Suda* ο 251; [Hdt.] *Vit.Hom.* p. 207 Allen).¹¹ A second

⁹ For the question of the extent to which Alexandrian 'values' were diffused in non-elite poetry, cf. M. FANTUZZI-A. SENS, "The hexameter of inscribed Hellenistic epigram", forthcoming in *Beyond the Canon*, ed. by M.A. HARDER et AL. (Leuven).

¹⁰ H.S. SCHIBLI, "Fragments of a Weasel and Mouse War", in *ZPE* 53 (1983), 1-25 = *SSH* 1190.

¹¹ The status of the *Geranomachia* that is mentioned along with them is especially problematic. Cf. WEST 124-125; WÖLKE 99-100; SCHIBLI 7-12.

type of parody used Homeric diction for 'philosophical' ends, playfully following the footsteps of earlier philosophers who used the dactylic hexameter as the medium for expressing their own serious ideas. Timo Phliasius, for instance, manipulates the language of Homeric epic to mock other philosophers in the two books of his *Silloi*, while Crates of Thebes plays with early hexametric and elegiac poetry (*inter alia*) to poke fun at his rivals and to express his own Cynic ideas. The best attested parodic theme, however, is gastronomic. In addition to the late Classical Sicilian poet Arcestratus' mock didactic *Hedypatheia*, in which the narrator presents himself as an expert on obtaining and preparing a variety of foodstuffs, we know of a series of narrative poems describing elaborate dinner parties. The best preserved of these is the *Attic Dinner Party* of Matro of Pitane (fr. 1 Olson–Sens = *SH* 534), a poem that opens with the narrator's request, closely modeled on the first line of the *Odyssey*, for the Muse's assistance in singing of δειπνα ... πολυτρόφα καὶ μάλα πολλά, though in fact the subject of the surviving verses is a single elaborate and contentious affair hosted in Athens by a prominent citizen, Xenocles, and attended by the narrator, by the Athenian politician Stratocles, and by the infamous parasite Chaerephon, all of whom squabble for the choicest morsels of food. Indeed, the exiguous fragments of other poems suggest that luxurious dinners and the voracious appetite of their attendees were common parodic themes, much as they are in the surviving fragments of Middle Comedy.¹² According to the epitome of Athenaeus (1.5a–b), the parodist Hegemon of Thasos, work-

¹² The interconnection between comedy and parody is well illustrated by the fact that a fragment of Plato Comicus' *Phaon* contains an extended passage of dactylic hexameter (fr. 189.9–22) in which Homeric language is distorted and applied to culinary topics; cf. S.D. OLSON and A. SENS (Eds.), *Arcestratos of Gela. Greek Culture and Cuisine in the Fourth Century BCE*. Text, Translation, and Commentary (Oxford 2000), xl–xliii. Hermippus fr. 63, an extended mock epic account of the places whence various goods (including but not restricted to foodstuffs) are imported, parodies the Catalogue of Ships (cf. R. KASSEL–C. AUSTIN *ad loc.*) and makes use of language drawn from throughout the Homeric poems.

ing at the end of the 5th century, composed a poem entitled *Deipnon*, of which nothing survives but which was presumably similar in content to the works of Matro. The only surviving fragments of an obscure and undated figure called Hipparchus treat gastronomic themes (*SH* 496–497), and two anonymous fragments of epic parody show an explicit interest in food (*adesp.parod.* fr. 4–5 Olson–Sens [= fr.incert. ii–iii Brandt]), while another (*adesp.parod.* fr. 3 Olson–Sens = fr.incert. i Brandt), modeled on Nestor’s after-dinner advice to the Greek chieftains at *Il.* 7.324, mentions a κόλαξ, “parasite” (for the terminology, cf., e.g., Alexis fr. 262).

It is impossible to believe that Hellenistic epic parody did not treat other themes as well — an epigram of Alexander Aetolus praises the pre-Hellenistic parodist Boeotus of Syracuse for using the splendor of Homeric language to talk about thieves and shoemakers, among others, though it provides no sense of the precise contexts in which he did so.¹³ Several passages of extant parody nonetheless seem to reflect a playfully self-conscious awareness of the boundaries between different ‘types’ of epic parody, and in particular to treat gastronomic parody in particular as an established form that could itself serve as a ‘foil’ for other sorts of parodic projects. A good example is provided by the longest surviving hexametric fragment of the Cynic parodist Crates of Thebes (*SH* 351), in which the poet describes an imaginary ideal city in which simple foods abound and from which parasites, gluttons, and civil strife are absent:¹⁴

¹³ ALEX.AET. fr. 5.5–8 Magnelli: ἔγραφε δ’ ὄνηρ // εὖ παρ’ Ὀμηρείην ἀγλαίην ἐπέων // πισσύγγους ἢ φῶρας ἀναιδέας ἢ τινα χλούνην // φλύοντ’ ἀνηρηῆ σὺν κακοδαιμονίῃ. The “hero” of the pseudo-Homeric *Margites*, a work attested already in the mid-fifth century (Cratinus fr. 368), was an extraordinarily bumbling fool; cf. OLSON-SENS, p.6. For a synoptic discussion of extant parody, cf. especially E. DEGANI (Ed.), *Poesia parodica greca* (Bologna 21983).

¹⁴ For discussion of this and other fragments of Crates, see M. NOUSSIA, “παρωδία e filosofia in Cratete Tebano”, in *La cultura ellenistica: il libro, l’opera letteraria, l’esegesi antica*, a cura di R. PRETAGOSTINI e E. DETTORI (Roma 2004), 127–135; EAD., “La Nekyia di Platone e di Cratete Tebano”, in *I luoghi e la poesia nella Grecia antica*, a cura di M. VETTA e C. CATENACCI (Alessandria 2005);

Πήρη τις πόλις ἐστὶ μέσῳ ἐνὶ οἴνοπι τύφῳ
καλὴ καὶ πείρα, περίρρυπος, οὐδὲν ἔχουσα,
εἰς ἣν οὔτε τις εἰσπλεῖ ἀνὴρ μωρὸς παράσιτος,
οὔτε λίχνος πόρνης ἐπαγαλλόμενος πυγῆσιν·
ἀλλὰ θύμον καὶ σκόρδα φέρει καὶ σῦκα καὶ ἄρτους.
ἐξ ὧν οὐ πολεμοῦσι πρὸς ἀλλήλους περὶ τούτων,
οὐχ ὄπλα κέκτηνται περὶ κέρματος, οὐ περὶ δόξης.

The opening verses of this passage closely parody the first lines of Odysseus' description of his fictive homeland Crete at *Odyssey* 19.172–177:

Κρήτη τις γαῖ' ἐστὶ μέσῳ ἐνὶ οἴνοπι πόντῳ,
καλὴ καὶ πείρα, περίρρυτος· ἐν δ' ἄνθρωποι
πολλοὶ ἀπειρέσιοι, καὶ ἐννήκοντα πόλεις·
ἄλλη δ' ἄλλων γλῶσσα μεμιγμένη· ἐν μὲν Ἀχαιοί,
ἐν δ' Ἐτεόκρητες μεγαλήτορες, ἐν δὲ Κύδωνες
Δωριέες τε τριχάϊκες δῖοί τε Πελαγοί·

In the first two verses, Crates' approach to his Homeric model resembles that used by epic parodists like Matro, who regularly borrows a hemistich or entire verse from an epic model, changing only a word or short phrase for humorous effect;¹⁵ in many cases, the new material phonetically resembles what it replaces, as happens here in the case of Κρήτη and Πήρη. Beyond that change, Crates alters γαῖ(α) to πόλις; πόντῳ to τύφῳ; περίρρυτος to περίρρυπος; and ἐν δ' ἄνθρωποι to οὐδὲν ἔχουσα, thereby replacing a phrase that signified the bountiful presence of men on Crete with one asserting the lack of everything on Pere. In the subsequent verses, however, the poet's parodic technique changes noticeably. In vv. 3–7, he departs from the language of his model and instead varies it thematically: whereas in Odysseus' description the salient characteristic of Crete is the

EAD., "Fragments of Cynic Tragedy", forthcoming in *Beyond the Canon*, ed. by M.A. HARDER et AL. (Leuven).

¹⁵ For Matro's approach to Homeric material, see below, pp.227–8. We have less surviving material from other late Classical or early Hellenistic parodists like Euboeus and Boeotus, but the exiguous fragments, taken in conjunction with the testimony of Alexander Aetolus, suggests that they had a similar approach.

presence of boundless numbers of men of diverse origins and cultures, in Crates Pere is defined by the absence of people of a certain sort; and whereas Odysseus calls attention to the ethnic diversity of the island's residents, Crates emphasizes the civic and social unity of his imaginary city.

As Maria Noussia has argued, these final verses allude to and engage with Socrates' description of the first and most natural city at Plato, *Resp.* 2.369 b–372 d, so that the epic parody of the first two verses serves as a foil for the poet's engagement with a very different sort of model in the balance of the fragment.¹⁶ For my part, I would like to suggest that, in structuring the fragment as he has, Crates also situates his poem in a larger parodic tradition whose themes and interests he acknowledges but rejects. As we have noted, one of the predominant themes of gastronomic parody, at least to judge from Matro's *Attic Dinner Party*, was the gluttonous and wanton behavior of dinner guests. Seen against this backdrop, the third and fourth verses of Crates *SH* 351 are striking. Although *LSJ* assign λίχνος the unique meaning "lewd" in this passage, the word's basic sense is "gluttonous" (cf. *Batrach.* 10 λίχνον ... γένειον), and there is no reason to think that it means anything else here. Gluttony and sexual appetites are treated as a unit, and the basic point of the lines is that parasites and gluttons do not come to Pere in search of lavish banquets, with all that they have to offer gastronomically and sexually, because there are none to be found on the island, which offers only simple, Cynic fare. Crates' engagement with literary models is thus complex: whereas the first lines of *SH* 351 clearly have the passage from the *Odyssey* as their direct linguistic model, the subsequent verses take on special point if one allows that the poet knew and was responding to a tradition of epic parody in which elaborate dinners and the wanton behavior of guests were prominent themes.¹⁷ Read

¹⁶ NOUSSIA, "παρωδία"; EAD., "Fragments".

¹⁷ For the sexual behavior of dinner guests, cf. MATRO fr. 1.121–122 πόρνοι δ' εἰσῆλθον, κοῦραι δύο θαματοποιοί, // ἄς Στρατοκλῆς ἤλαυνε ποδώκεας ὄρνιθας ὤς.

this way, Crates' poem does not merely parody Homer, but also tacitly assumes and calls attention to the existence of parodic poetry as a literary form that has its own set of generic expectations or codes. Having drawn heavily on a single Homeric passage in the first two lines, the poet, by suggesting that the Utopia he describes has no elaborate parties to entice parasites and gluttons,¹⁸ unexpectedly moves in a different direction and implicitly distances his work from another sort of epic parody in which Homeric models are used to describe the outrageous behavior of just such people. Thus the fragment is in a sense programmatic: the opening verses mark it as a parody of Homer, but what follows marks its divergence from what, the fragment implies, was a canonical parodic mode.¹⁹

In this sense, then, Crates' parody has as its 'target' not only the Homeric poems *per se*, but also other works that parody them. Such self-consciousness about the poem's place in a tradition of epic parody may find a parallel in the philosophical parodies of Timo Phliasius, the first book of whose *Silloi* opens with a parody of the invocation to the Muses that introduces the Catalogue of Ships (*SH* 775 - *Il.* 2.484; cf. the opening of Hermippus fr. 63). The use of the opening of a famous 'purple' passage of Homer is thematically appropriate to the catalogue of philosophers that follows, but it also serves as a generic marker, as an indicator that the poem will engage with Homeric models throughout, in much the same way that Matro adapts the opening of the *Odyssey* in the first verse of his *Attic Dinner-Party*. Little else that can be assigned to the first book of the *Sil-*

¹⁸ With the claim that Pere offers only simple produce, one might contrast the list of importable goods at Hermippus fr. 63.

¹⁹ The way in which *SH* 351 situates itself not only against Homeric epic but also the tradition of epic parody suggests that it represents the first lines of a poem, much as the parody of the opening of Solon fr. 13 W marks the beginning of an individual poem by Crates (*SH* 359). If so, the narrator's claim that the residents of Pere do not take up arms against one another over either material possessions or reputations may reverse the larger themes of the Homeric poems, and in particular the *Iliad*, which takes the origin of the strife between Achilles and Agamemnon as its narrative starting point.

loi survives, but Athenaeus 15.698 a (*SH* 776 = fr. 2 Di Marco) reports that at some point, the poet mentioned the parodist Euboeus of Paros by name, and although the precise nature of this reference and its position in the first book are now unfortunately lost, Marco Fantuzzi has offered the attractive suggestion that Timo mentioned Euboeus' parodies in order to locate his own engagement with epic in an ongoing parodic tradition,²⁰ presumably both to call attention to his stylistic debt to Euboeus and to make clear the ways in which, at least at the level of content, his own poetry differed from that of his parodic predecessor.²¹

These examples shed light on an extended passage of the *Batrachomyomachia* in which the mouse Psicharpax responds to the inquiry by the frog king Physignathus about his lineage. In a speech reminiscent of Glaucus' response to Diomedes in *Iliad* 6 (see below, pp.235-6), Psicharpax wonders why Physignathus wants to learn his race, then begrudgingly names his father and his mother, who raised him on "figs and dates and all sorts of foods" (σύκοις καὶ καρύοις καὶ ἐδέσμασι παντοδαποῖσιν). He concludes by rejecting the overture of friendship on the ground that frogs and mice, inasmuch as they live in different places, eat different foods (33-55):²²

σοὶ μὲν γὰρ βίος ἐστὶν ἐν ὕδασι· αὐτὰρ ἔμοιγε
 ὅσσα παρ' ἀνθρώποις τρώγειν ἔθος· οὐδέ με λήθει
 ἄρτος τρισκοπάνιστος ἀπ' εὐκύκλου κανέοιο, 35
 οὐδὲ πλακοῦς τανύπεπλος ἔχων πολὺ σησαμότυρον,
 οὐ τόμος ἐκ πτέρνης, οὐχ ἥπατα λευκοχίτωνα,

²⁰ FANTUZZI-HUNTER (*op.cit.* above n.1) 7.

²¹ Cf. M. DI MARCO (Ed.), *Timone di Fliunte. Silli*. Introduzione, edizione critica, traduzione e commento (Roma 1989), 43: "Proprio la menzione di Eubeo ... ma in modo ancor più diretto l'insieme di frammenti dei Silli ... ci mostrano tuttavia che la funzione che Timone assegna alla parodia non è più soltanto quella di un *divertissement* fine a se stesso; all'opposto, la parodia si fa strumento di una satira pungente e corrosiva, si pone al servizio di una *iambikè idea* in cui torna come a rivivere lo spirito dei giambografi arcaici e dei comici dell' *ἀρχαία*".

²² Vv. 42-52 are almost certainly an interpolation; cf. LUDWICH 335-336; GLEI 129-130.

οὐ τυρὸς νεόπηκτος ἀπὸ γλυκεροῖο γάλακτος,
 οὐ χρηστὸν μελίτωμα, τὸ καὶ μάκαρες ποθέουσιν,
 οὐδ' ὅσα πρὸς θοίνας μερόπων τεύχουσι μάγειροι, 40
 κοσμοῦντες χύτρας ἀρτύμασι παντοδαποῖσιν.
 οὐ τρώγω ῥαφάνους, οὐ κράμβας, οὐ κολοκύντας, 53
 οὐ σεύτλοις χλωροῖς ἐπιβόσκομαι, οὐδὲ σελίνοις·
 ταῦτα γὰρ ὑμέτερ' ἐστὶν ἐδέσματα τῶν κατὰ λίμνην.

Whereas frogs eat only raw, aquatic greenery (or so Psicharpax wrongly claims), the diet of mice consists of the “cooked” — of foods transformed by the art of the μάγειρος — including breads, cakes, cheese, and the other variegated creations.²³ Such elaborate food-lists are common in Middle Comedy, and the exuberance of Psicharpax’ interest in cuisine seems intended by him to illustrate the cultural sophistication of his race, but also, for the reader, affiliates the mouse and his kind with the sorts of gourmands whose behavior seems to have been a frequent source of humor on the comic stage, while the allegedly vegetarian diet of frogs finds an analogue in comic descriptions of an impoverished, rustic lifestyle (e.g. Poliochus fr. 2; Antiphanes fr. 225; Alexis fr. 167). The most obvious parallels for the contrast drawn by Psicharpax, however, are to be found in epic parody on gastronomic themes.²⁴ At Archestatus fr. 60.13–16 Olson-Sens, for example, the narrator denigrates legumes and fruits as a marker of ‘beggary,’ but goes on to recommend the Athenian flatcake, much as Psicharpax contrasts πλακοῦντες and other confections to the vegetarian fare eaten by frogs:

τὰ δ' ἄλλα γ' ἐκεῖνα τραγήματα πάντα πέφυκε
 πτωχείης παράδειγμα κακῆς, ἐφθοί τ' ἐρέβινθοι
 καὶ κύαμοι καὶ μῆλα καὶ ἰσχάδες. ἀλλὰ πλακοῦντα,
 αἰνῶ Ἀθήνησιν γεγεννημένον.

²³ Cf. WÖLKE 226–233.

²⁴ The parodic background is noted briefly by GLEI 21 and by FUSILLO 95, who primarily emphasizes the influence of comedy on the passage (“L’insistenza sulla sfera alimentare si richiama senz’ altro alla comedia (oltre alla poesia gastronomica pseudoepica)”).

So, too, the narrator of Matro fr. 1.111–18 Olson-Sens reports that he avoided the fruit offered as *tragemata*, but could not resist the flatcake:

δεύτεραι αὖτε τράπεζαι ἐφωπλίζοντο γέμουσαι·
 ἐν δ' αὐταῖσιν ἐπὴν ἄπιοι καὶ πίονα μῆλα,
 ῥοιαί τε σταφυλαί τε, θεοῦ Βρομίοιο τιθῆναι

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>

πρόσφατος, ἦν θ' ἀμάμαξυν ἐπίκλησιν καλέουσι.
 τῶν δ' ἐγὼ οὐδενὸς ἦσθον ἀπλῶς, μεστὸς δ' ἀνεκείμην.
 ὡς δε ἴδον ξανθὸν γλυκερὸν μέγαν ἔγκυκλον, ἄνδρες,
 Δῆμητρος παῖδ' ὀπτὸν ἐπεισελθόντα πλακοῦντα,
 πῶς ἂν ἔπειτα πλακοῦντος ἐγὼ θείου ἀπεχοίμην;

The mouse is thus depicted as the sort of opsophagetic character who — again to judge from the fragments of Matro and others — was a stock figure in Hellenistic epic parody, and Psicharpax' gastronomic logorrhea is thus ironic: though his account of the culinary sophistication of mice is, like the boasts of Iliadic generals, designed to show his own superiority, the association it creates between him and the buffoonish gourmands of the parodic tradition reveal him to be laughable. At the same time, Psicharpax' speech forms part of a self-referential game, since in both style and content his account of the foods he eats may be read as a sort of *gastronomic* set piece that has been incorporated into a larger *battle narrative*. In this sense, the passage acknowledges the range of parodic themes available to the poet — it is at least noteworthy in this regard that the speech is framed as a list of items that “do not escape the notice” of Psicharpax (34 οὐδέ με λήθει) — and thus, like Crates' claim that gluttons and profligates do not visit Pere, calls attention to the poem's position in a broader generic context. On such a reading, the author of the poem, like Crates, not only expands the range of his 'target' texts beyond 'serious' Homeric and post-Homeric hexameter models,²⁵ thereby treating gastronomic par-

²⁵ For the importance of “animal fable” as a source for the poem, cf. WÖLKE 91–98.

ody as a coherent type with its own set of conventions,²⁶ but also implicitly invites readers to consider the relationship of the *Batrachomyomachia* to the tradition of epic parody as a whole.

The 'epic technique' of the Batrachomyomachia

In the most basic sense, all epic parody depends on the disjunction between its form and its content — on, in other words, the application of epic meter and diction to fundamentally unepic characters,²⁷ be they humble bath men, thieves, shoemakers, or animals. The precise dynamics of the parodists' engagement with the actual text of Homer and Hesiod, however, is highly variable — sometimes, as we saw in the case of Crates, even within a single poem. The *Attic Dinner Party* of Matro may serve as a useful example of some of the possible approaches to epic models.²⁸ At one extreme in that poem are lines that combine short snatches of Homeric language (often used in the same metrical positions in which it appears in early epic) with other material, but that do not seem based on any particular epic models. More than half of the verses, however, draw on specific Homeric antecedents, and these cases fall into two categories. The first and most common of these are verses based on an entire Homeric line in which one or two new elements, often phonetically close to those they replace, have been introduced for humorous effect, as in the first verse of the poem, which evokes *Od.* 1.1, with the substitution of δειπνα for ἄνδρα, πολυτρόφα for πολύτροπον and και for ὅς; five of the next six verses employ a similar technique.²⁹ On occasion, the poet adapts a single Homeric passage of more than a single line. The

²⁶ The application of 'high-style' epithets to everyday foods, as especially in vv. 36–37, is a common technique of gastronomic parody.

²⁷ Cf. ALEX.AET. fr. 5.5–8 Magnelli (above, n.13).

²⁸ For full discussion, cf. OLSON–SENS (*op.cit.* above n.3) 20–24; F. CONDELLO, "Note al *Convivium Atticum* di Matrone (fr. 1 O–S = SH 534)", in *Eikasmos* 13 (2003), 133–150, esp. 133–136.

²⁹ Cf. OLSON–SENS 35.

poet's other major technique is to combine two Homeric half-lines — that is, the parts of the line leading up to and immediately following the 3rd-foot caesura — occasionally in unadapted form, but far more often slightly altered by the substitution of a single new element; indeed, one of the striking features of Matro's verse is that he almost never uses a Homeric line verbatim or combines two intact Homeric hemistichs.

At the same time, Matro's alterations of his Homeric and Hesiodic models almost always have some recognizable motivation in humor or grammar, and it is extremely rare for the poet to engage in what one might think of as 'variation for variation's sake' — that is, to introduce verbal changes to a model when they are not needed for the sake of a joke or to ensure grammatical or logical continuity. An isolated exception to this tendency is fr. 1.104 *αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δόρποιο μελίφρονος ἔξ ἔρον ἔντο*, a line which seems to overlay the phrase *δόρποιο μελίφρονος* (used in the same sedes at *h.Dem.* 2.129) on the common Homeric line *αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πόσιος καὶ ἐδήτυος ἔξ ἔρον ἔντο*. The change has no obvious comic purpose, and although it serves to take account of the fact that the sympotic part of the evening has yet to occur, Matro could, had he wished, simply have taken over verbatim the Homeric line *οἱ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν σίτοιο μελίφρονος ἔξ ἔρον ἔντο* (*Od.* 24.489).

In the *Batrachomyomachia*, one finds a very different sort of interaction with epic models. Study of the poet's engagement with the literary past is unfortunately complicated by the sorry condition in which the text has been preserved for us, and the fact that it is riddled with several obviously interpolated passages naturally allows doubts to arise about any particular verse, especially in cases where it is not universally transmitted by all branches of the tradition. So far as one can tell, however, the poet only on rare occasions uses a Homeric line in unaltered form,³⁰ with the effect of producing an amusing contrast

³⁰ 152 = *Od.* 23.130; 269 = *Il.* 8.132; 272 = *Il.* 13.99, etc. Verse 205, pre-

between the grandeur of the original context and the miniature scale of his own narrative. In the more numerous instances where a Homeric hemistich is redeployed in its original form, the other half of the line usually contains material that has been stitched together from more than a single source; only infrequently does the poet combine two half lines taken without some change from archaic epic and joined at the medial caesura (e.g. 231).³¹ The fundamental difference between the compositional technique of the *Batrachomyomachia* and that of Matro's parodies, however, lies in the fact that it is very rare for the humor of a given verse to depend on the introduction of a single incongruous word or two into a Homeric line or into a pair of epic hemistichs conjoined at the caesura. By far the largest number of lines draw on shorter snatches of epic language derived from multiple sources, including Hesiod as well as Homer, and in large part the poet seems interested in capturing an epic flavor without simply taking over long Homeric phrases unchanged.

Indeed, a fundamental aspect of the epic technique of the *Batrachomyomachia* is the author's apparent interest in varying his Homeric models, even when doing so has no particular humorous point. This is not to say that the poet does not often draw on Homeric formulae unchanged — far from it. But in a number of passages, the poet seems concerned to create the appearance of Homeric "formulariness"³² while simultaneously

served in one branch of the manuscript tradition, consists of the commonplace Homeric line δούπησεν δὲ πεσών, ἀράβησε δὲ τεύχε' ἐπ' αὐτῶ (e.g. *Il.* 4.504), which seems to have been introduced into the tradition as a variation of 204. SCHIBLI (*art.cit.* above, n.10) 4 notes that unlike the fragmentary *Battle of Mice and Weasels*, the *Batrachomyomachia* never draws on whole lines taken over intact from Homer for its speech introductions, but only uses Homeric half-line formulae.

³¹ In several cases, however, the alteration involved is minimal, and is designed only to ensure continuity of syntax or regularity of meter (e.g. 242, where κνήμην δεξιτερῆν of *Il.* 4.519 has been converted to the nominative).

³² CAMEROTTO (*art.cit.* above, n.8), who emphasizes the extent to which the poet reuses and alters his own language in different passages in order to create the appearance of formulaic variation; G.S. KIRK, *Homer and the Oral Tradition* (Cam-

engaging in the sort of analogical variation of his models that is typically associated with more 'refined' Hellenistic poetry.³³ An instructive example is to be found in v. 204 *κὰδ δ' ἔπεσεν πρηγῆς, ἀπαλάς δ' ἐκόνισεν ἐθείρας. κὰδ δ' ἔπεσεν* occurs commonly in verse-initial position in Homer, often followed by *ἐν κονίησι* (cf. *ἐκόνισεν*) but never in conjunction with *πρηγῆς*. That adjective is commonly conjoined with the aorist of *καταπίπτω* in other metrical position (cf. *Od.* 5.374 // *αὐτὸς δὲ πρηγῆς ἀλλὶ κάππεσε*; cf. *Il.* 16.310–311 *ὃ δὲ πρηγῆς ἐπὶ γαίῃ // κάππεσε*; 16.413–414 *ὃ δ' ἄρα πρηγῆς ἐπὶ γαίῃ // κάππεσεν*), but is used in a metrically and semantically equivalent context in the expression *ἤριπε δὲ πρηγῆς* (*Il.* 5.58; *Od.* 22.296), a phrase that, had he wished, the author of the poem could simply have taken over whole cloth.³⁴ The departure from the Homeric model has no humorous point, and seems to have been introduced to avoid taking over the Homeric phrase unaltered³⁵ — and perhaps to show the poet's cleverness in grafting one epic expression onto another. The phrase *στιβαρὸν δόρυ* at *Batrach.* 207 involves a similar variation. Both words in this expression appear in metrical *sedes* in which they also appear, separately, in early epic, and the expression as a whole seems intended to have a 'traditional' flavor, but the juncture itself is unHomeric.³⁶ when the adjective *στιβαρός* is used of spears in Homer, the weapon in question is called *ἔγχος*. Indeed, the poet had at his disposal the metrically equivalent formula *δολιχὸν δόρυ* (*Il.* 13.162; 15.474; 17.607; *Od.* 19.448), a phrase that, had the poet used it, would have been no less comically incongruous with the tiny size of the actual weapon than is the expression

bridge 1976), 188–190 = "Formular Language and Oral Quality", in *YCS* 20 (1966), 161–163.

³³ For discussion of these techniques, cf. M. FANTUZZI, *Ricerche su Apollonio Rodio* (Roma 1988), 7–46.

³⁴ Cf. *Batrach.* 214, a verse absent from one branch of the mss. tradition.

³⁵ By contrast, the use of *ἐθείρας* rather than *χαίτας*, as in *Il.* 21.407 *ἐκόνισε δὲ χαίτας*// is metrically convenient.

³⁶ For the phrase, cf. *Anacreontea* 28.9 West *στιβαρὸν δόρυ κραδαίνων*; QUINT.SMYRN. 1.236 *δόρυ στιβαρὸν*; OPP. *Hal.* 5.389.

employed by the poet.³⁷ In such cases, it is hard to see any specific motivation for the change in humor, meter,³⁸ or syntax, and the simplest conclusion is that the poet is interested, at least to a certain extent, in avoiding verbatim repetition of Homeric material.³⁹

One device commonly used by the author of the *Batrachomyomachia* when he does borrow directly from early epic is to link several short Homeric phrases via one or more common elements. Brent Vine has pointed out, for instance, that *Batrach.* 240 κείμενον ἐν δαπέδῳ λίθον ὄβριμον, ἄχθος ἀρούρης combines, in an "overlapping" fashion, the phrase λίθον ὄβριμον, found uniquely in Homer at *Od.* 9.305 (in the same verse position), with the expression ὄβριμον ἄχθος, a unique Homeric collocation at *Od.* 9.233 (at verse end) and the clausula ἄχθος ἀρούρης (*Il.* 18.104; *Od.* 20.379).⁴⁰ A similar technique may be seen in *Batrach.* 16 δῶρα δέ τοι δώσω ξεινήια πολλὰ καὶ ἐσθλά. Here, the first hemistich is adapted from *Il.* 22.341 δῶρα τὰ τοι δώσουσι πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ. The second half of the verse, on the other hand, combines, via the common element πολλὰ, the phrase ξεινήια πολλὰ, used by Homer at *Od.* 4.33 in the same metrical position, with the clausula πολλὰ καὶ ἐσθλά. A simple listing of these parallels is potentially misleading, since it might

³⁷ WÖLKE 157.

³⁸ A substantial number of passages involve changes to Homeric models that also happen to be metrically convenient for their context. Thus, for example, at v.106 ὕπτιος ἐξήπλωτο is a metrically convenient variation of the Homeric ὕπτιος ἐξετανύσθη, though of course the Homeric phrase could have been employed in the same metrical position had the poet chosen a word beginning in vowel as the next word.

³⁹ The fragmentary account of a war between weasels and mice takes over a line from the Catalogue of Ships all but unchanged (v.7 - *Il.* 2.700) and in two places (vv.13, 58) uses verbatim whole Homeric speech-introductory lines (a practice in which it differs from the *Batrachomyomachia*) but for the most part draws on and combines shorter epic phrases; cf. SCHIBLI 4-5.

⁴⁰ VINE (*art.cit.* above, n.8), who points out that at *Il.* 7.264 and 21.403, λίθον appears in the same metrical sedes and is followed in the next verse by κείμενον ἐν δαπέδῳ, the hemistich with which *Batrach.* 240 opens. Thus the verse may be understood as an example of compression of Homeric material, a phenomenon we will consider in more detail in a moment.

well leave the impression that the verse consists of an arbitrary jumble of Homeric phraselets, but in fact *πολλά και ἐσθλά* in Homer regularly appears (4 out of 7 occurrences) as part of the hemistich *κειμήλια πολλά και ἐσθλά* — that is, preceded by a word similar in phonetic shape to *ξεινήϊα* (*Il.* 9.330; 24.381; *Od.* 15.159; 19.272) — in contexts involving the giving of presents. Here, in other words, the lynchpin that connects the two phrases is not merely *πολλά*, but also the phonetic resemblance between *κειμήλια* in one model and *ξεινήϊα* in the other. Finally, we might note a closely related but slightly different technique at the end of v. 156 *ὅς τις σχεδὸν ἀντίος ἔλθῃ*, where the poet combines each of the two unique Homeric expressions that begin with *ὅς τις* and end with a 3rd-person form of the aorist *ἔλθ-* in the same verse positions — the first *Il.* 5.301 = 17.8 *ὅς τις τοῦ γ' ἀντίος ἔλθοι* and the second *Il.* 20.363 *ὅς τις σχεδὸν ἔγχεος ἔλθῃ* — in such a way that he substitutes the word found in one passage for the form found in the metrically identical position of the other.

In a number of instances, the poet's manipulation of Homeric material is more complex. An interesting case in point is *Batrach.* 228–229 *ἐγκέφαλος δὲ // ἐκ ῥινῶν ἔσταξε, παλάσσετο δ' αἵματι γαῖα*, a passage that notionally resembles *Od.* 9.290, where the brains of Odysseus' men are said to flow to the ground and moisten the earth (*ἐκ δ' ἐγκέφαλος χαμάδις ῥέε, δεῦε δὲ γαῖαν*). At a verbal level, the second half of v. 229 combines the phrase *παλάσσετο δ' αἵματι θώρηξ* (*Il.* 5.100) with the clausula *αἵματι γαῖα* (*Il.* 4.451; 8.65 *ῥέε δ' αἵματι γαῖα*; 10.484 *ἐρυθαίνετο δ' αἵματι γαῖα*). What makes this phraseology particularly interesting, however, is that in Homer the phrase *ἐγκέφαλος δέ* occurs in verse-final position, as in *Batrach.* 228, only in the recurring phrase *ἐγκέφαλος δὲ // ἔνδον ἅπας πεπάλακτο* (*Il.* 11.97–98 = 12.185–186 = 20.399–400). In that phrase, which seems to have been a source of some discussion among Alexandrian scholars,⁴¹ *πεπάλακτο* seems to mean that the brain

⁴¹ According to *Schol. A ad HOM. Il.* 11.97, Apollonius (presumably Apollonius of Rhodes) read *ἐγκέφαλονδε* in that line and athetized the next.

was splattered within the helmet, though the verb was said by *Schol. AbT ad Il.* 11.98 to mean “was moistened”, i.e. by the blood flowing into the wound. The composer of the *Batrachomyomachia* has taken over the clausula ἐγκέφαλος δέ // but slightly altered the point — here the damaged brain flows from the dead fighter’s nose — while retaining the idea of splattering, which he displaces to the ensuing clause. That the poet here is deliberately engaging with his Homeric models in a sophisticated rather than haphazard way is made more likely by the poet’s apparent reversal — in both word order and sense — of *Il.* 19.39 στάξε κατὰ ῥινῶν, ἵνα οἱ χρώς ἔμπεδος εἶη, where the point is that Thetis dripped nectar and ambrosia down over the nostrils of the dead Patroclus.

A similarly complex engagement with epic models, including not only Homer but also Hesiod, may be seen in *Batrach.* 207–208 τὸν δὲ πεσόντα // εἶλε μέλας θάνατος, ψυχὴ δ’ ἐκ σώματος ἔπτη. The phrase τὸν δὲ πεσόντα occurs in Homer at *Il.* 4.463, where it is also the object of a verb meaning to “take”, but where it appears at the opening rather than the conclusion of the verse. Although commentators regularly cite parallels from the Homeric epics, in fact the opening of *Batrach.* 208 compresses and adapts *Works and Days* 154–155 θάνατος δὲ καὶ ἐκπάγλους περ ἔοντας // εἶλε μέλας, λαμπρὸν δ’ ἔλιπον φάος ἠελίοιο, where θάνατος occurs in the same verse position and is similarly modified by μέλας but where the adjective and noun are separated from one another over two lines.⁴² The second hemistich, on the other hand, formally resembles expressions describing the soul’s departure from the body, like ψυχὴ δ’ Ἄιδόσδε κατῆλθεν (*Od.* 10.560), in which ψυχὴ δὲ also immediately follows the masculine caesura.⁴³ Its content, however, seems to rework the Homeric verse ψυχὴ δ’ ἐκ ῥεθέων πταμένη

⁴² There is a useful discussion of this passage in WÖLKE 157–158, who does not mention the Hesiodic model.

⁴³ Cf. in different sedes, *Il.* 23.100; 11.65; and in the same sedes but a slightly different context, *Il.* 11.538.

Ἄιδόσδε βεβήκει (*Il.* 16.856; 22.362), with the unHomeric phrase ἐκ σώματος serving as a virtual gloss on the Homeric phrase ἐκ ῥέθρων, an expression sufficiently striking as to warrant explanation by ancient critics (cf. *Schol. bT ad Il.* 16.856 ὅτι πνεῦμα ποιὸν ἢ ψυχὴ κατὰ παντὸς οἰκοῦν τοῦ σώματος; Hsch. ρ 186 ῥέθη· μέλη τοῦ σώματος. σῶμα).

Full appreciation of such passages thus requires that a reader recognize, at least in a general way, the Homeric expressions with which the poet works, though it does not seem to depend on the identification of the precise context from which they derive. As in Matro's poetry, however, the humor of the *Batrachomyomachia* sometimes depends on the recognition of the specific context from which the epic models are drawn. At *Batrach.* 248–249, for instance, a wounded fighter, apparently Physiognathus himself,⁴⁴ withdraws from battle and leaps into a ditch to avoid death: σκάζων ἐκ πολέμου ἀνεχάζετο, τείρετο δ' αἰνῶς· // ἦλατο δ' ἐς τάφρους, ὅπως φύγη αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον. In this case, almost the entire couplet is constituted from Homeric words and phrases reused, with little variation, in their original epic *sedes*. Thus the hemistich σκάζων ἐκ πολέμου derives verbatim from *Il.* 11.811, of the wounded Eurypylus; ἀνεχάζετο appears in its most common Homeric verse position (*Il.* 5.600; 11.461; 16.710; 17.108); and the final half of v.249 reworks the second hemistich of *Il.* 14.507 ὅπη φύγοι αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον. As commentators have noted, moreover, the clausula of v.248 has been taken over directly from *Il.* 5.352, where Aphrodite withdraws from battle after having been wounded (and chided) by Diomedes: ὡς ἔφαθ', ἢ δ' ἀλύουσ' ἀπεβήσετο, τείρετο δ' αἰνῶς. At a basic level, the use of the phrase in a parallel context — in each, a wounded “warrior” withdraws from battle — suggests that readers are meant to recognize and appreciate the source: the full

⁴⁴ Verses 247–254 seem to have been transmitted in confused order (cf. WÖLKE 220–221), and it seems reasonable to transpose vv.248–249 into the place occupied in the paradosis by the interpolated v.251, so that the sequence of the lines is 250, 248–249, 252 (cf. GLEI 194; FUSILLO 127).

humor of the phrase as it is reused in the *Batrachomyomachia* depends on the implicit contrast between the goddess Aphrodite (herself a bathetic, semi-comic figure in the Homeric context) and the wounded frog. So, too, at vv.10–11, where Psicharpax sticks his face in the marsh to drink (πλησίον ἐν λίμνῃ λίχνον προσέθηκε γένειον, // ὕδατι τερπόμενος μελιηδέι), some of the humor of the claim that the mouse was “delighting in the honey-sweet water” surely depends on our recognition of the Homeric model, *Od.* 11.582–584 Τάνταλον ἐσεῖδον ... // ἐσταότ' ἐν λίμνῃ· ἢ δὲ προσέπλαζε γενεῖω· // στεῦτο δὲ διψάων, πῖεῖν δ' οὐκ εἶχεν ἐλέσθαι, where Tantalus, though standing up to his chin in water, is unable to take any satisfaction from it or, for that matter, to enjoy the bountiful feast that surrounds him (*Od.* 11.588–592);⁴⁵ put differently, the verbal similarity between *Batrach.* 10 and *Od.* 11.583 sets up the sharp contrast between the two ensuing lines.

These are a relatively straightforward cases; a more complex example may be found at *Batrach.* 25–26, where Psicharpax responds to Physignathus' inquiries about his background:

τίπτε γένος τοῦμὸν ζητεῖς; δῆλον δ' ἐν ἅπασιν
ἀνθρώποις τε θεοῖς τε καὶ οὐρανόις πετεηνοῖς.

Commentators have noted that the passage thematically resembles *Il.* 6.145–151,⁴⁶ where Glaucus, in response to Diomedes' inquiry about his lineage, wonders why he asks, compares the races of men to falling leaves, and asserts that his race is widely known before recounting his background:

Τυδεΐδῃ μεγάθυμῃ, τίη γενεὴν ἐρεεῖνεις;
οἴη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
φύλλα τὰ μὲν τ' ἀνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη
τηλεθόωσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίνεται ὥρη·
ὡς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ ἢ μὲν φύει ἢ δ' ἀπολήγει.

⁴⁵ The contrast lends special point to the epithet λίχνον: Psicharpax drinks gluttonously; Tantalus not at all. For the text, cf. LUDWICH 324–325; WÖLKE 26 with n.56.

⁴⁶ GLEI 124; FUSILLO 92–93;

εἰ δ' ἐθέλεις καὶ ταῦτα δαήμεναι ὄφρ' εὖ εἰδῆς
ἡμετέρην γενεήν, πολλοὶ δέ μιν ἄνδρες ἴσασιν·

The connection between the meeting of Psicharpax and Physignathus and that of Diomedes and Glaucus is subsequently underscored by the reuse of *Il.* 6.150 in the Frog's response in v.62 (where ταῦτα refers to Physignathus' claims about the amphibious life he leads rather than to his lineage), but in vv.25–26 the borrowing is once again thematic rather than verbal, for the poet compresses Glaucus' speech while avoiding any direct repetition of its language.⁴⁷ Thus the question τίπτε γένος τοῦμόν ζητεῖς; recalls Glaucus' τίη γενεήν ἐρεεῖνεις;, but with every individual element varied: τίη becomes τίπτε, γένος is used instead of γενεή, and the unHomeric verb ζητέω takes the place of Homeric ἐρεεῖνω. So too, the Homeric warrior's claim that "many men know it" (*Il.* 6.151 πολλοὶ δέ μιν ἄνδρες ἴσασιν) finds a thematic but not a verbal parallel in Physignathus' assertion that his race is clear to all men, gods, and birds.

Verse 26 is missing from one branch of the tradition, and some scholars have questioned its authenticity. Against Wachsmuth's objection that the line amounts to inelegant and incongruous bragging,⁴⁸ it is sufficient to notice that such boasting plays on the characteristic behavior of Homeric heroes.⁴⁹ But, as Massimo Fusillo has noted, Psicharpax's enumeration of those to whom his kind is famous also plays to comic effect on the traditional tripartite division of the universe: in speaking only of the realms of earth (men) and sky (gods and birds), the mouse omits the aquatic world to which the frog belongs and thus justifies his interlocutor's ignorance of his background.⁵⁰ Onto the traditional pair "men and gods", Psicharpax grafts a

⁴⁷ WÖLKE 111–113 emphasizes the differences in the context and content of the two passages to argue against drawing a connection between them.

⁴⁸ C. WACHSMUTH, "Zu Batrachomyomachie", in *RhM* 20 (1865), 185; cf. LUDWICH 330.

⁴⁹ GLEI 125.

⁵⁰ FUSILLO 92–93. For triadic elements in the poem, see A. ESTEBAN, "Ratones, ranas y dioses: el esquema ternario de la *Batracomiomaquia*", in *CFC(G)* 1 (1991), 57–71.

third element, with the effect that birds are made the climactic and thus the most important item in the series, especially since they are given a conventional (though unHomeric) epithet of gods (e.g. *h. Cer.* 2.55; Aeschylus, *Ag.* 90). Some have seen in this sequence a possible reference to the primordial place of birds in the cosmogony given in the parabasis of Aristophanes' *Birds* (685ff.), but the emphasis that Psicharpax places on birds has a more obvious humorous point that is based as much in basic natural history as it is in literature: many birds eat mice, so that when the Mouse King asserts that his line is "clear" (δῆλον) to all of them, he is boasting about a fact that should be a source of special concern to him.

The joke is underscored in interesting ways by the verse's engagement with ancient epic. The phrase οὐρανόις πετεήνοις varies the Homeric ὑπουρανόις πετεήνοις, an expression that occurs in a single passage of early epic. At *Il.* 17.673–678, Menelaos, peering around the battlefield, is compared to an eagle that uses its extraordinary eyesight to locate, attack and kill a rabbit hiding in a bush:

ὡς ἄρα φωνήσας ἀπέβη ξανθὸς Μενέλαος,
 πάντοσε παπταίνων ὡς τ' αἰετός, ὃν ῥά τέ φασι
 ὀξύτατον δέρκεσθαι ὑπουρανόων πετεηνῶν,
 ὃν τε καὶ ὑψόθ' ἔοντα πόδας ταχὺς οὐκ ἔλαθε πτώξ
 θάμνω ὑπ' ἀμφικόμῳ κατακείμενος, ἀλλὰ τ' ἐπ' αὐτῷ
 ἔσσυτο, καὶ τέ μιν ὄκα λαβῶν ἐξείλετο θυμόν.

Read against this background, *Batrach.* 26 emerges as anything but an awkward and inept expansion of Glaucus' claim that many men know his race (*Il.* 6.151). Even without knowledge of the Homeric background, one may find humorous irony in Psicharpax's claim: for the race of mice, to be conspicuous among birds is by no means a good thing. But the language of the passage also evokes a specific Homeric passage that emphasizes a bird's ability to see a small, well-hidden creature even from a great distance.⁵¹ Thus, the adaptation of *Il.* 17.675 may

⁵¹ *Schol.* bT *ad HOM. Il.* 17.676–7 point out that the rabbit's position beneath a bush increases the difficulty of seeing it from afar.

be understood as an allusion in the richest sense: readers are invited to recognize the context in which the model occurs, and to allow that context to inform their reading. For those who are able to recognize it, the model not only underscores the point of the reference to birds, but also suggests the irony of Psicharpax' boast by emphasizing the grave danger inherent in being 'conspicuous'.

Something similar may be said about another model for the verse. Critics have noted that at a structural level v.26 seems modeled on Hes. *Op.* 277. That verse forms part a passage in which the narrator uses the behavior of animals as a foil for talking about human justice (*Op.* 274–278):

ὦ Πέρση, σὺ δὲ ταῦτα μετὰ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῆσιν,
καὶ νυ Δίκης ἐπάκουε, βίης δ' ἐπιλήθεο πάμπαν.
τόνδε γὰρ ἀνθρώποισι νόμον διέταξε Κρονίων,
ἰχθύσι μὲν καὶ θηρσὶ καὶ οἰωνοῖς πετεηνοῖς
ἔσθειν ἀλλήλους, ἐπεὶ οὐ δίκη ἐστὶ μετ' αὐτοῖς.

Although the issue treated in this passage is cannibalism rather than (as in *Il.* 17.675) the consumption of one species by another, the focus on the eating habits of animals may help to underscore the witty point of *Batrach.* 26. In any case, the second hemistich of *Batrach.* 26 combines two distinct models, both of which contain a reference to birds eating other creatures: onto the second half of Hes. *Op.* 277 (καὶ οἰωνοῖς πετεηνοῖς), the poet overlays a reworking of *Il.* 17.675 by substituting the adjective οὐρανίους, adapted from the Homeric ὑπουρανίων, for οἰωνοῖς. As such, the verse may be understood as an example of a phenomenon that occurs regularly in Matro, who often combines allusions to multiple, contextually related passages, as for example when he combines a reworking of the description of Ajax withdrawing under pressure with a passage from the Catalogue of Ships in which the same hero is mentioned.⁵²

Such passages ought to encourage us to be careful about dismissing the literary merit of the poet's engagement with epic

⁵² OLSON-SENS (*op.cit.* above, n.3), 21–2.

models, as if he drew at random on Homeric phraseology with no consideration of its original context. Indeed, in some cases, the poet's approach to his epic material resembles techniques used by Hellenistic poets whose sophistication can no longer be called into question. An interesting example is *Batrach.* 64, where Physignathus urges his newfound companion to mount his back "in order that rejoicing you might reach my home" (ὄππως γηθόσυνος τὸν ἐμὸν δόμον εἰσαφίκηαι). As in the case of numerous other passages of the poem, modern commentaries on v.64 list a series of epic models without providing any clear sense of how they might be related to one another or to the larger context. Ludwich *ad loc.* cites *Od.* 5.269 γηθόσυνος δ' οὔρω πέτασ' ἰστία δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς, *Il.* 20.336 μὴ καὶ ὑπὲρ μοῖραν δόμον Ἄιδος εἰσαφίκηαι, and [Hes.] *Sc.* 45 ἀσπασίως τε φίλως τε ἐὼν δόμον εἰσαφίκανεν. His list is taken over by Gleii (p.136), who adds Mosch. *Eur.* 117 and observes that the reminiscence of the Iliadic passage (with its reference to Hades) is "fast makaber" given ensuing events.

Closer inspection, however, suggests that the verse's engagement with epic models might be considerably more nuanced and sophisticated than scholars have allowed. First, it is important to note that γηθόσυνος is not restricted to *Od.* 5.239, but occurs in a number of other passages of early epic as well (e.g. *Il.* 4.272, 326, 7.122, 18.557; *Od.* 11.540; *h.Ahpr.* 217).⁵³ In the majority of its epic occurrences, the adjective either occurs at the head of the verse or falls immediately after the bucolic diaeresis. Its metrical position in *Batrach.* 64, however, has only a single epic parallel, *Il.* 13.82, a verse not mentioned by any of the commentators. Ludwich's (and later Gleii's) privileging of *Od.* 5.239 over *Il.* 13.82 and the other epic passages in which the word occurs thus seems to depend on his recognition of a contextual parallelism: in both the *Batrachomyomachia* and the *Odyssey* the adjective is used of someone embarking on a sea

⁵³ The treatment of epic models by CAMEROTTO (*art.cit.* above, n.8) is also selective.

voyage "home" (though in the former case the home in question will be that of Psicharpax' would-be host rather than, as in the case of Odysseus, his own).

Even if one does not draw this association, Physignathus' expectation that his interlocutor will reach his home "rejoicing" turns out to be deeply misguided, since the trip he invites him to take ends in his death. The irony is increased, however, if one recognizes a specific thematic reminiscence of the *Odyssey*, where the hero's joyous departure from Calypso's island soon gives way to shipwreck: read against that passage, attentive readers understand what Physignathus does not, namely that, like Odysseus' raft for the epic hero, the frog will prove a less than secure mode of transportation for Psicharpax. On this reading, the single word γηθόσυνος sets up a larger parallelism between Psicharpax' ill-fated voyage and Odysseus' departure from Calypso's island, and prepares for a further point of contact between the two episodes, for as commentators have noticed, the description of the death of Psicharpax, weighed down by his fur despite all his struggles (91f.), resembles, at a thematic level (though once again not in its specific phraseology), the near-drowning of Odysseus (*Od.* 5.319ff.), weighed down by his wet clothes.

There is, however, more to be said about the engagement with epic models in this passage. The final phrase δόμον εἰσαφί- κηαι occurs at Hes. fr. 283 (εὔ νῦν μοι τάδ' ἕκαστα μετὰ φρεσὶ πευκαλίμησι // φράζεσθαι· πρῶτον μὲν, ὅτ' ἂν δόμον εἰσαφί- κηαι, // ἔρδειν ἱερὰ καλὰ θεοῖς αἰειγενέτησιν), but at a phonetic and grammatical level the end of the line more closely resembles a passage of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 195.45 = *Sc.* 45) ἀσπασίως τε φίλως τε ἐὼν δόμον εἰσαφίκανεν (cf. τὸν ἐμὸν δόμον εἰσαφίκηαι), describing Amphitryo's arrival home. This passage is routinely cited without further discussion by commentators, but so far I can determine, it has not been explicitly observed that the points of contact with it are not restricted to the second hemistich, since γηθόσυνος in the first half of *Batrach.* 64 is close in sense to ἀσπασίως τε φίλως τε in the Hesiodic

passage. If one found the verse in a poem by Callimachus — to pick only the most obvious poet — one would have no trouble assuming that he had taken over and slightly adapted — by converting the verb from third to second person and the pronoun from third to first person — the second hemistich of the Hesiodic verse, while ‘glossing’ the first hemistich, and in particular ἀσπασίως, with a different, semantically identical word, which he places in the *sedes* in which it occurs least often in early epic. In short, we would likely assume, because such a specific connection *could* reasonably be drawn, that it *should* be drawn, and the slight circularity involved would be justified by the regularity with which similar arguments could be made about other passages of the poet’s work. In the case of the *Batrachomyomachia*, we are likely to be far more restrained in our assumptions; perhaps we need not be.

In this light, as a final case of the complexity of the poet’s engagement with his models, let us return to look more closely at the opening scene of the narrative, in which the frog Physignathus espies and addresses Psicharpax, who has come to the edge of the marsh for a drink following his escape from a weasel: τὸν δὲ κατεῖδε // λιμνόχαρις πολύφημος, ἔπος δ’ ἐφθέγγετο τοῖον (11–12). Since the frog does not give his name until v.17, the reader who reaches v.12 initially cannot know whether πολύφημος is to be understood as an adjective or a proper noun.⁵⁴ That the adjective plays on the name of the Cyclops of Homer’s *Odyssey* has been recognized at least since the 16th century, when Leonhartius Lycius observed that “πολυφήμου epitheto admirabili ioco usus est propter ambiguum significationem, et proprium hoc nomen tributum immani illi et hominum devoratori Cyclopi.” As Gleii has observed, moreover, the epithet (which occurs in the same *sedes* as a proper name at *Od.* 1.70), is thematically appropriate, since like the Cyclops Physignathus goes on to ask his

⁵⁴ One branch of the tradition (l) transmits πολύφωνος, apparently originating as a gloss. Cf. LUDWICH 326; GLEI 118–119. Λιμνόχαρις and Πολύφωνος are transmitted as proper names in v.212.

interlocutor who he is and what he wants, and since the treatment the guests are afforded in each case turns out to be highly problematic (though the Frog is at least interested in guest-friendship and gift exchange). The point can be turned in a different direction: the sly equation of Physignathus with Polyphemus creates expectations that are fulfilled in humorous ways in the ensuing narrative, in the sense that like Polyphemus, Physignathus is a disastrously bad host.

As critics have recognized, the opening verse of the frog's speech reworks Polyphemus' first words to Odysseus at *Od.* 9.252. Physignathus' opening query in v.13, ξείνε, τίς εἶ; converts to the singular the plurals of Polyphemus' first words ὦ ξεῖνοι, τίνες ἐστε;. The frog's second question πρόθεν ἦλθες ἐς ῥόνα;, on the other hand, involves a more complex engagement with its Homeric model (πρόθεν πλεῖθ' ὑγρά κέλευθα;). Polyphemus' question naturally assumes that Odysseus and his men are sea voyagers who have reached his land by ship, and at first glance, Physignathus' question seems to be roughly equivalent, since asking "whence have you reached the shore" would be a perfectly acceptable way to inquire whence someone has sailed. In the *Batrachomyomachia*, however, the relative positions of the frog and mouse reverse those of Odysseus and Polyphemus: whereas in the *Odyssey* Polyphemus dwells on land, and his visitors arrive by sea, here Psicharpax has reached the shore by land, and his would-be host addresses him from the water. Although it is possible to understand this reversal as deriving solely from engagement with the Homeric model, the language of the passage and in particular its description of Physignathus as a λιμνόχαρις πολύφημος takes on special point if it is read against the representation of the Cyclops in post-Homeric poetry.

An important source of humor in the famous and influential treatment of Polyphemus' love for the sea-nymph Galatea in Theocritus 11 is that the Cyclops has no gills (54–55) and cannot even swim (60–61), so that he must be reduced to pleading his erotic case from the shore. Precisely how the matter was handled in Philoxenus' famous but now poorly preserved

dithyramb is not wholly clear,⁵⁵ but the divide between the terrestrial Polyphemus and the aquatic object of his desire was a recurring theme not only in Hellenistic poetry, which regularly emphasizes the Cyclops' position on the shore — consistently described as an ἡών (Theoc. 11.14; Bion fr. 16 Reed; [Bion] 2.1–3; [Mosch.] 3.58–63; cf. *Batrach.* 13) — or shows him looking wistfully towards the sea from land (Hermesianax fr. 1, p.96 Powell δερκόμενος πρὸς κῦμα, μόνη δέ οἱ ἐφλέγετο γλήν), but also in Roman wall painting (O. Touchefeu-Meynier, *LIMC* VIII 1 (1997), 1018, with nos. 55–60; Philostratus, *Im.* 2.18). The question of whether Polyphemus could actually swim, indeed, seems to have been treated as a point of poetic 'controversy' by Posidippus, who in an epigram that clearly alludes to Theocritus' treatment of the Cyclops represents him as diving frequently with Galatea (19.7–8 Austin–Bastianini),⁵⁶ and a painting from the "House of Livia" on the Palatine (*LIMC* VIII 1, no.54) shows Polyphemus standing in water up to his chest and gazing at Galatea as she rides a sea-horse.⁵⁷ Seen against this background, the description of Physignathus as a λιμνόχαρις πολύφημος in v.12 may perhaps be read as a literary joke that depends on the well established (though not surprisingly variable) tradition that distinguished sharply between the terrestrial

⁵⁵ A letter of Synesius (*Epist.* 121) reports that Odysseus promised to use his magic powers to help Polyphemus win Galatea's love, if only the Cyclops would release him from his cave. That this passage might derive from Polyxenus was first suggested by T. BERGK (Ed.), *Poetae Lyrici Graeci* (Leipzig 21853, 31867, 41882) and is now generally accepted; cf. J.H. HORDERN, "The *Cyclops* of Philoxenus", in *CQ* N.S. 49 (1999), 445–455, esp. 450–451; E. LIVREA, "Un epigramma di Posidippo e il *Cyclops* di Filosseno di Citera", in *ZPE* 146 (2004), 41–46.

⁵⁶ Cf. R. HUNTER, "Notes on the *Lithika* of Posidippus", in *Labored in Papyrus Leaves*, ed. by B. ACOSTA-HUGHES–E. KOSMETATOU–M. BAUMBACH (Cambridge, MA and London 2004), 103–104; V. RAIMONDI, "Αἰπολικὸς δύσερος in Posidippo 19 A.–B.: un richiamo al Ciclope innamorato infelice di Theocr. *Idd.* 6 e 11", in *Posidippo e gli altri*, a cura di M. DI MARCO–B.M. PALUMBO–E. LELLI (Pisa–Roma 2005), 133–146, esp. 145–146. LIVREA (*art.cit.* above, n.55) plausibly argues for the dependence of Posidippus' treatment on Philoxenus' dithyramb.

⁵⁷ Cf. G. BASTIANINI–C. GALLAZZI–C. AUSTIN (Eds.), *Posidippo di Pella. Epigrammi*, *Papiri dell'Università degli Studi di Milano*, 8 (Milano 2001), 131.

Polyphemus and the aquatic Galatea: the frog is πολύφημος (a word that readers may initially take as a proper name) but also takes pleasure in the water.⁵⁸ In this sense, the poem's use of the Homeric episode may be mediated by the post-Homeric development of the Cyclops story. On this reading, which is supported by the poet's apparent familiarity with other Hellenistic poetry, the post-Homeric treatment of Polyphemus as a landlocked lover lends special resonance to the evocation of the (Homeric) Cyclops episode as a model for the encounter between Physignathus and Psicharpax. Like Theocritus 11 and its successors, the scene in the *Batrachomyomachia* depends on the unbridgeable gap between those who are able to swim and those who cannot, but here it is the neo-Cyclops Physignathus who can survive, and thrive, in the water.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ LUDWICH 325–326 and other recent editors print λιμνόχαρις, arguing that the word means “decoration of the marsh” *vel sim.*, but that sense is difficult, and λιμνοχαρής, “delighting in the marsh”, the form preserved by some mss. and by Methodius and presupposed by the *scholia ad loc.*, is perhaps to be preferred; cf. WÖLKE 258–259.

⁵⁹ I am grateful to Marco Fantuzzi, Charles McNelis, Rebecca Miller, and S. Douglas Olson for their reactions to earlier drafts of this paper.

DISCUSSION

Chr. Tsagalis: What about the way the *Batrachomyomachia* treats names? In the case of Φυσίγναθος, apart from the anatomical background of the name, it seems that there is some sort of playful allusion to the man-eating Cyclops of the *Odyssey*. On the other hand — given a late dating of the *Batrachomyomachia* — do you think that Ψιχάρπαξ may be a variant of Ψυχάρπαξ pointing to the mouse's death in the *Batrachomyomachia*? This might be reinforced by your observation that — unlike Odyssean Odysseus — Psicharpax will have an ill-fated voyage that will lead to his death. In this light, one is tempted to ask the question whether name-parody in this work is based both on the Homeric pre-life of the main characters and/or their 'present' life in the *Batrachomyomachia*.

A. Sens: Yes, the poet's manipulation and play with names is an interesting mark of his sophistication, as of course it is for Homer as well. As for the specific instance you mention, it is certainly possible that a Greek reader might have heard a pun on Ψυχάρπαξ / Ψιχάρπαξ though I wonder whether the doomed mouse can really be thought of a "Soul-snatcher". In any case, one would have to admit that the pun would be a faint one, given that there do not seem to be clear textual pointers to it.

G. Danek: In *Batrach.* 156, ὅς τις σχεδὸν ἀντίος ἔλθῃ, kombiniert der Dichter zwei unterschiedliche homerische Modelle, weil keines von den beiden allein für seinen eigenen Zweck brauchbar ist. Mein Eindruck ist, dass diese Methode die sprachliche Grundlage für dieses Gedicht bildet: die einfache Übernahme von homerischen Formeln/Formulierungen, mit Adap-

tationen an den neuen Kontext. Damit müsste aber noch nicht notwendig eine parodistische Absicht verbunden sein, genauso wie in den späten Homer-*Zentonen* der Gebrauch der homerischen Sprache nicht parodistisch ist.

A. Sens: While I agree that neither of the poet's models for v.156 would have fit the context exactly, that fact alone did not require him to manipulate and combine these two particular passages — the very two places in which ὅς τις ... ἔλθ- occurs. In this particular case, I think that the practices of a poet like Apollonius of Rhodes might be a better point of comparison than those of later writers of Homeric *centos*. But it is certainly true that it is sometimes hard to gauge the precise difference in tone between a poem like the *Batrachomyomachia* and 'serious' Hellenistic poems in which Homeric language is reapplied to unHomeric subject matter.

E.J. Bakker: Your reading of the *Batrachomyomachia* opens up interesting perspectives on Homeric diction as a "κόσμος ἐπέων", a language in its own right in which you could express yourself in a time well beyond the life of the oral tradition as envisaged by Parry and Lord. Even for us modern scholars and our students it makes somehow more sense to 'compose' Homeric hexameters than, say, Sophoclean trimeters. In this regard I was wondering about your remarks on the text's transmission, its interpolations, etc.: couldn't our received text represent some kind of learned/playful tradition of parodic epic discourse? Some of the 'interpolations' (e.g. line 26) in any case certainly improve on the text's quality and humoristic value.

A. Sens: I absolutely agree that the place of epic in Greek culture — and in Greek education — must have contributed to making it an almost irresistible target of parody, and that many readers of the *Batrachomyomachia* may well have been tempted to try their own hand at improving the text. I also suspect that the very irreverence of parody was part of the appeal to inter-

polators (I think, for example, of forgeries of Petronius' *Satyricon*). It is also certainly true that, given the state of the text, we can never be absolutely sure that a given line was present in the original version. Still, I think that the parodic approach I have described is sufficiently well distributed throughout the poem that, with due caution, one can talk about the poem as a whole as the work of *an* author.

M. Fusillo: Although the *Batrachomyomachia* is certainly a text particularly apt to be interpolated for the reasons E. Bakker clearly described, I think that this paper brilliantly showed an authorial strategy in the pseudo-Homeric poem, especially regarding the recreation of a Homeric 'flavour' and the intentional evoking of narrative contexts.

M. Fantuzzi: About the mouse's disparagement of the vegetarian diet of frogs, which you connect to Archestratus's statement that "legumes and fruits are a marker of beggary", I wonder whether we may see in this passage another example of the relationship between Crates and gastronomic parody. Indeed, we also find in Crates *SH* 359 the precise opposition — though of course from a completely different perspective — between the *δαπάναι τρυφεραί* (11) and the narrator's appeal to the Muses and Hermes for *χόρτος δουλοσύνης* (4). This stance clearly has a Hipponactean matrix (cf. fr. 36.6 Degani), as is also proved by the Hipponactean invocation to Hermes (on which cf. M. Noussia, in the proceedings of the conference: *La cultura letteraria ellenistica: persistenza, innovazione, trasmissione*, Roma, 19-21 Sept. 2005), but certainly was an especially widespread Cynic theme. Should we think that the Cynic 'beggar's' diet, or Crates' text advertising it, may have especially attracted the attention of both Archestratus and the author of the *Batrach.*, or the other way round? We would thus have a further element in the net of interlacing connections between parodic poetry and Crates, which you have perfectly highlighted at the beginning of your paper.

A. *Sens*: Thank you for reminding me of this passage of Crates, which fits my argument nicely. Given the rise in interest in food in general from at least the beginning of the 4th century, I think it is perhaps more likely that Crates is reacting to the sort of elaborate and expensive dining recommended by poets like Arcestratus and described by Matro and others than that those poets (and the author of the *Batrach.*) were thinking specifically of the Cynic position. Indeed, Arcestratus, in particular, seems in other passages of his poem to be criticizing those who have the money to spend on food (and the desire to spend it) but not the proper culinary knowledge to do it well.

A. *Rengakos*: Are there any allusions in the *Batrachomyomachia* to questions of Homeric *Textkritik* and interpretation comparable to those found in the major Hellenistic poets (e.g. Callimachus or Apollonius of Rhodes)?

A. *Sens*: I have not found any examples thus far, but a fuller investigation might prove interesting.

P. *Chuvin*: Une remarque très accessoire à ce brillant et solide exposé. Au début du poème, le rat Psicharpax rencontre la grenouille Physignathus et se vante de son origine (d'après *Il.* 5, Diomède et Glaucos). Il lui dit: "Ma famille est célèbre chez tous les hommes, chez les dieux et chez les oiseaux dans le ciel". Vous avez bien remarqué que les oiseaux 'connaissent' les rats des champs ou musaraignes, qu'ils attrapent et mangent. Mais les oiseaux représentent pour les grenouilles un danger non moindre que pour les rats, et illustré dans la littérature (la fable). Y a-t-il une explication?

A. *Sens*: You are absolutely correct, of course, and that fact from natural history may well increase the humor. In the end, though, it seems to me that what matters most here is the speaker Psicharpax' own failure to recognize the dangerous implications of his own boast.