

# The Sacrifice of Eumaeus Reconsidered

*A. Petropoulou*

**I**N HOMER it is generally self-evident that sacrificial gifts are intended for the divinity to whom the sacrifice is offered. The sacrifice of Eumaeus at *Od.* 14.414–56 is an exception: no specific divinity is mentioned as the recipient, but there are four successive offerings (422, 427–29, 435f, and 446), of which three—the first and the last two—are said to be for the immortal gods, the nymphs and Hermes, and the everlasting gods respectively. This peculiarity led E. Kadletz to ask recently whether Eumaeus’ sacrifice is dedicated to “Hermes and the nymphs” or to the gods in general.<sup>1</sup> Kadletz argued for the latter, whom he understood to be the recipients of first fruits from the animal’s hair (422) and raw meat (427–29), and of the so-called ἄργματα (446). This latter offering, he maintained, consists of first fruits not of solid food but of the libation of wine poured by Eumaeus at 447. On the other hand, Kadletz assumed that the cooked meat offering dedicated by Eumaeus to the nymphs and Hermes (435) forms no part of the sacrifice proper. He suggested that this offering was destined for deposition at some rustic marker sacred to Hermes, perhaps a herm situated close to a shrine of the Ithacan nymphs mentioned elsewhere in the poem.

My aim here is to re-examine this passage, focusing on the four offerings it comprises. I shall argue that Eumaeus’ sacrifice differs from others in Homer because it is meant to be an offering only of

<sup>1</sup> “The Sacrifice of Eumaios the Pig Herder,” *GRBS* 25 (1984 [hereafter ‘Kadletz’]) 99–105. The following will be cited as indicated: K. F. AMEIS, C. HENTZE, and P. CAUER, edd., *Homers Odyssee* II<sup>9</sup> (Leipzig/Berlin 1910 [‘Ameis-Hentze’]); H. BEER, Ἐπιγραφὴ und verwandte Ausdrücke in griechischen Weihinschriften (Würzburg 1914 [‘Beer’]); W. BURKERT, *Homo Necans*, tr. P. Bing (Berkeley 1983 [HN]), and *Greek Religion*, tr. J. Raffan (Oxford 1985 [GR]); J. CASABONA, *Recherches sur le vocabulaire des sacrifices en Grec* (Aix-en-Provence 1966 [‘Casabona’]); J. U. FAESI, *Homers Odyssee* III<sup>7</sup> (Berlin 1885 [‘Faesi’]); D. GILL, “Trapezomata: A Neglected Aspect of Greek Sacrifice,” *HThR* 67 (1974 [‘Gill’]) 117–37; K. LEHRS, *De Aristarchi studiis Homericis*<sup>3</sup> (Leipzig 1882 [‘Lehrs’]); K. MEULI, “Griechische Opferbräuche,” *Phyllobolia für Peter Von der Mühl* (Basel 1946 [‘Meuli’]) 185–288. See also A. Petropoulou, *Studies in Greek Cult and Sacrificial Ritual* (diss. Colorado 1984) 9–30.

‘first fruits’; and that the animal is sacrificed in honor not of any god but of the guest (Odysseus) being received within Eumaeus’ shelter. The offerings in question are consecrated to two groups of divinities, the ‘Olympian’ gods and the nymphs and Hermes, representing the heavenly divinities and the local rural deities of Ithaca respectively. It will be argued specifically that the ἄργματα (446) are first fruits of the portions of cooked meat distributed by Eumaeus to his companions and himself, and that the first fruits of the animal’s raw meat (427–29) are consecrated in the place of the thigh bones (μηροί), which are the god’s share of the victim at the standard animal sacrifice. I shall show, finally, that the portion for the nymphs and Hermes is also an ἀπαρχή (first fruit) consecrated *in situ*, *i.e.*, on the house table.

## I

Kadletz (100–03) thought that the recipients of sacrificial offerings at *Od.* 14.422 and 446 are the gods in general, to whom, he argued, the sacrifice is made. As we shall see, however, the stipulated recipients of these offerings constitute a distinct category of divinities. There are three references to them, of which the first two appear in the opening lines of the sacrificial scene (420–24):

. . . οὐδὲ συμβώτης  
 λήθεται ἄρ’ ἀθανάτων φρεσὶ γὰρ κέχρητ’ ἀγαθῆσιν  
 ἀλλ’ ὄ γ’ ἀπαρχόμενος κεφαλῆς τρίχας ἐν πυρὶ βάλλειν  
 ἀργιόδουτος ὕος, καὶ ἐπέυχεται πᾶσι θεοῖσι  
 νοστήσαι Ὀδυσῆα πολύφρονα ὄνδε δόμονδε.

The gods to whom Eumaeus burns hairs from the victim’s head (422) and addresses a prayer (423) are mentioned as ἀθανάτων and πᾶσι θεοῖσι respectively. The latter are evidently the “immortal” gods (ἀθανάτων), *i.e.*, the recipients of the burnt offering (ἐν πυρὶ βάλλειν) which is consecrated with a prayer (ἐπέυχεται). This offering is a first fruit gift, as the word ἀπαρχόμενος indicates.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, at 446 Eumaeus sacrifices first fruits (the ἄργματα)<sup>3</sup> to the “everlasting gods”: ἦ ῥα καὶ ἄργματα θῦσε θεοῖσι αἰειγενέτησι.

In Homer the ἀθάνατοι (οἱ πάντες θεοὶ οἱ θεοὶ αἰειγενέται) are not the

<sup>2</sup> For the rite of ἀπάρχεσθαι κεφαλῆς τρίχας see S. Eitrem, *Opferfritus und Voropfer der Griechen und Römer* (Oslo 1915) 344–72, 413. For Eitrem this hair sacrifice is a “selbständige Opfergabe,” while Burkert takes it as an act of “beginning” by means of which “the inviolability of the sacrificial animal has been abolished irreversibly” (*HN* 5, *GR* 56).

<sup>3</sup> A *hapax legomenon* for ἀπαρχαί: see Eust. *Od.* 1767 *ad* 446; W. Dindorf, ed., *Scholia graeca in Homeri Odysseam* II (Oxford 1855) 597 *ad* 446.

gods in general but only the “Olympian gods dwelling in wide heaven.”<sup>4</sup> The Olympian or heavenly identity of these gods is indicated clearly in the episode of the cattle of the Sun (*Od.* 12.335ff), where the divinities to whom Odysseus and Eurylochus address themselves are variously called “all gods dwelling on Olympus” (πάντεσσι θεοῖσι οἱ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσιν, 337), “immortals dwelling in wide heaven” (ἀθανάτοισι, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν, 344), “the gods” (θεοῖσι, 356), the “immortal gods” (θεοῖσι μετ’ ἀθανάτοισι, 370), “the everlasting gods” (θεοὶ αἰὲν ἔόντες, 371), and “the immortals” (ἀθανάτοισι, 376). It follows that Eumaeus begins (422) and ends (446) his sacrifice of offerings with first fruits consecrated not to the gods in general but only to the Olympian gods.

Regarding what sort of firstlings the ἄργματα are and how they are sacrificed (θῦσε), Kadletz (101f) argued that θύω, a verb referring in Homer to the burning of solid food offerings,<sup>5</sup> is occasionally used of liquids. As evidence he adduced an ambiguous passage in the *Odyssey* (15.222, 258, 260) in which the verbs θύω and σπένδω are used alternatively. On the basis of this text, Kadletz maintained that ἄργματα are firstlings “of the wine, the libation which Eumaios pours after the solid sacrifice has been made and the supper portions distributed, but before the wine is passed around the table” (446–48):

ἦ ῥα καὶ ἄργματα θῦσε θεοῖσι αἰειγενέτησι,  
σπείσας δ’ αἶθοπα οἶνον Ὀδυσσῆϊ πτολιπόρθῳ  
ἐν χείρεσσι εἶθηκεν.

The text was accordingly translated by Kadletz: “He spoke and poured the first fruits into the fire in honor of the immortal gods. Then, having poured this libation, he placed the gleaming wine into the hands of Odysseus, sacker of cities.”

My first objection is that θῦσε cannot be translated as a synonym of σπένδω, *i.e.*, as ‘poured’, since θύω and σπένδω denote two different rites. The action indicated by θύω in Homer is that of θυμιάω, ‘burn so as to produce smoke’, as is made clear in the scholia.<sup>6</sup> Consequently θῦσε should be rendered as ‘burned’<sup>7</sup> or ‘made go up in smoke’<sup>8</sup> but never as ‘poured’. In view of this, σπείσας (447) cannot summarize the

<sup>4</sup> See F. Jacobi, Πάντες θεοί (diss.Halle 1930) 1–5; for the meaning of αἰειγενέτης as ‘semper existens, aeternus’ see H. EBELING, *Lexicon Homericum* (Leipzig 1885 [hereafter ‘Ebeling’]) s.v.

<sup>5</sup> Casabona 69–72; P. Chantraîne, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris 1968–80) s.v. (2).

<sup>6</sup> See Lehrs 82 s.v. θύειν; cf. LSJ s.v. θυμιάω.

<sup>7</sup> Ameis-Hentze 54 ad 446, “verbrennen”; Casabona 72, “faire brûler.”

<sup>8</sup> Burkert, *GR* 67: “he makes first bits, *argmata*, go up in smoke.”

preceding line, as Kadletz maintains and translates (102). Whatever the ἄργματα may be, the object of σπείσας is οἶνον, and its precise translation should be: “having poured a libation of wine.” As to Kadletz’s argument that θύω at 15.222 and 260 is used with a liquid offering (*i.e.*, a libation of wine), because it supposedly describes the same action as the σπένδω at 258, the evidence is not conclusive. Not only has the accuracy of this latter text been doubted,<sup>9</sup> but also several attempts have been made to attribute to θύω a broader sense than that of θυμιάω.<sup>10</sup> Casabona (72) seems to suggest that θύω refers not only to the burning of offerings but also to the sacrificial ceremony as an ensemble, of which the libation forms a part. This reading would exclude Kadletz’s interpretation of ἄργματα as the first drops of Eumaeus’ libation of wine (σπείσας).

The ἄργματα must be first fruits of *solid food burned* (θῦσε) by Eumaeus in the fire, and so they have always been understood.<sup>11</sup> It is mistaken, however, to identify them either with the meat offering at 427–29, which is similarly described with the word ἄρχομαι,<sup>12</sup> or with the portion of food for the nymphs and Hermes.<sup>13</sup> Eumaeus burns the former offering *during* the animal sacrifice, while the ἄργματα are burned *after* the sacrifice is over. In fact the ἄργματα belong to the sacrificial context of the meal, which opens with the distribution of cooked (=roasted) meats at 432. The cooked meat offering for the nymphs and Hermes (435) forms part of the same context, but is demonstrably different from the offering at 446. The ἄργματα are expressly said to be first fruits of food, while the meat for the nymphs and Hermes is merely referred to as a “portion” of cooked meat, τὴν μὲν ἴαν (*sc.* μοῖραν). Second, the recipients of these two offerings are not the same divinities. The portion of meat is for the nymphs and Hermes, the ἄργματα are for the “everlasting” gods, *i.e.*, the Olympi-

<sup>9</sup> See J. W. A. Kirchhoff, *Die homerische Odyssee* (Berlin 1879) 507; Ameis-Hentze 70 *ad* 222.

<sup>10</sup> Lehrs 83; H. von Fritze, *Die Rauchopfer bei Griechen* (Berlin 1894) 3f.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Chantraine (*supra* n.5) *s.v.* θύω (2): “Le verbe est rare chez Hom[ère] . . . où il désigne toujours l’offrande aux dieux par combustion, notamment de nourriture ou de prémices.” An exception is LSJ, who explain θύω (A)(I.1) as “offer by burning meat or drink to the gods,” citing as a ‘drink-offering’ the ἄργματα and the offering at *Od.* 15.260.

<sup>12</sup> The error seems to derive from the scholiast cited by Eustathius (*Od.* 1767 *ad* 446 and 448), who read 446–48 as an epitome of the preceding short description of the sacrificial act and took ἄργματα as a reference to the offering previously indicated by ἀρχόμενος at 428. The passage is understood in the same way by Faesi (77 *ad* 446) and D. B. Monro, *Homer’s Odyssey II* (Oxford 1901) 40 *ad* 446.

<sup>13</sup> So Ameis-Hentze 54 *ad* 446, followed by the majority of scholars: cf. J. Van Leeuwen, *Odyssea* (Leiden 1917) 408 *ad loc.*; W. B. Stanford, *The Odyssey of Homer*<sup>2</sup> II (London 1958) 234 *ad* 446f; Casabona 70; further citations at Kadletz 101.

ans. Finally, to judge from the use of two different verbs (*θήκεν*, 436; *θύσε*, 446), the manner in which these offerings are handled is not the same. Consequently, the *ἄργματα* are an offering of cooked (=roasted) meat separate from the portion for the nymphs and Hermes. It is important to note that they are consecrated at the beginning of the meal, *i.e.*, *before* the companions touch their food and drink (453).<sup>14</sup>

Is it possible to define *ἄργματα* even more precisely? Eumaeus first divided all the roasted meats into seven portions (434). Then, with a prayer, he served up one portion for the nymphs and Hermes and distributed the remainder to each of the companions (435f). In doing so, he honored Odysseus with the chine of the pig (437f). Odysseus thanked him (439–41), and Eumaeus urged Odysseus to eat and enjoy what was before him (443–45). Thereupon Eumaeus sacrificed *ἄργματα* and, after making a libation, served Odysseus wine and proceeded to sit before his own portion of food (447f). Given that the sacrifice of *ἄργματα* comes *after* the distribution of food, the first fruits must be small bits of roasted *meat* taken from the portions already distributed by Eumaeus to his companions and himself. This interpretation accords with a Homeric scholium explaining the *ἄργματα* as τὰς ἀπαρχὰς τῶν μερίδων (Dindorf II 597 *ad loc.*). *μερίς* is another word for *μοῖρα* = portion, this latter word occurring twice in the description of the meal, at 434 (πάντα διεμοιρᾶτο δαΐζων) and 448 (ὁ δ' ἔζετο ἦ παρὰ μοίρη).

This definition of *ἄργματα* is also supported by *Il.* 9.219f, which is the earliest evidence for the offering of this sort of first fruits. The scene is Achilles' reception of the Achaean embassy. The host cuts up the backs of a sheep, a goat, and a swine, which are then spitted on skewers and roasted (206–15). There follows the distribution of bread by Patroclus (216f) and of the roasted meats by Achilles (217: ἀτὰρ κρέα νείμειν Ἀχιλλεύς). Thereafter Achilles takes a seat at the table (218), urging Patroclus to make sacrifice to the gods, and the latter burns the so-called *θυηλάς*<sup>15</sup> (=first fruits): θεοῖσι δὲ θῦσαι ἀνώγει Πάτροκλον, ὃν ἑταῖρον· ὁ δ' ἐν πυρὶ βάλλε θυηλάς (219f). Here, too, it is

<sup>14</sup> That the *ἄργματα* are the *ἀπαρχαί* regularly offered to the gods at a meal has been argued independently by Meuli and by Delight Tolles, *The Banquet-Libations of the Greeks* (diss. Michigan 1943) 10f, who notes that custom required that a small first share (*ἀπαρχαί*) of daily food be burned at the hearth for the gods. Tolles suggested that the *ἀπαρχαί* included also a gift of wine, supporting her view with reference to Eumaeus' *ἄργματα* (446) and libation (447). Cf. B. Mader in B. Snell *et al.*, *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos* I (Göttingen 1979) s.v. *ἄργματα* B, who accepts with some hesitation Meuli's brief definition (214 n.1) of *ἄργματα* as "die kleinen Teile, die regelmässig vor Beginn des Essens ins Feuer geworfen werden, ganz ähnlich wie in Rom," which he understands as first fruits of *meat*.

<sup>15</sup> For the formation and meaning of the word *θυηλαί* see Casabona 121f; Chantraine (*supra* n.5) s.v. 2 *θύω* A3.

only after the distribution of meats that a sacrifice of first fruits is offered. The implication is that *θυηλαί*, like *ἄργματα*, are small bits of meat that Patroclus takes from the portions already distributed by Achilles. The gods (*θεοῖσι*) to whom Achilles urges that this ‘first fruit’ sacrifice be given are again not the gods in general but only the Olympian gods.<sup>16</sup> The text also sheds light on the precise action denoted by *θύσαι*: Patroclus “tossed” first fruits of food into the fire (*ἐν πυρὶ βάλλε*). Clearly, then, in this particular usage *θύω*=*θυμιάω* is equivalent to the phrase *ἐν πυρὶ βάλλω*.<sup>17</sup> Thus *ἄργματα θύσε* at *Od.* 14.446 should be interpreted as “he sacrificed, throwing first fruits into the fire.”

The *ἄργματα* and the first fruits from the victim’s hair are not the only sacrificial offerings devoted to the Olympian gods. At *Od.* 14.427–29, while the other swineherds are butchering the slaughtered animal, Eumaeus is busy trimming and burning some meat. The recipient of this offering is not named; but as the “immortal” gods—*i.e.*, the Olympians—are the only deities mentioned thus far, the meat must be for them. The distinction between this gift and the *μηροί* (the burning of which serves as a culmination of the standard animal sacrifice) has never been properly made. Yet what Eumaeus does at 427–29 is the key to understanding his unique offering. For the sake of comparison, therefore, it will be helpful to review the ordinary Homeric sacrifice.

As soon as the victim is slain, those assisting the sacrificer cut off the *μηροί* (=thigh bones),<sup>18</sup> cover them with double folds of fat on which they place slices of raw meat, and burn the whole on firewood until it is incinerated. Over the burning offering they occasionally pour wine. If we set aside the libation, which is not a consistent element, the description of the above acts is always formulaic (*Il.* 2.423–25):<sup>19</sup>

*μηρούς τ' ἐξέταμον κατὰ τε κνίσση ἐκάλυψαν  
δίπτυχα ποιήσαντες, ἐπ' αὐτῶν δ' ὠμοθέτησαν.  
καὶ τὰ μὲν ἄρ' σχίζησιν ἀφύλλοισιν κατέκαιον.*

Eumaeus’ procedure is described quite differently (427–29):

<sup>16</sup> See Jacobi (*supra* n.4) 1, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Lehrs 83: “*θυμιάσαι* (*i.e.* *θύσαι*) quidquid est ἀπαργμάτων . . . flammae injicere.”

<sup>18</sup> Meuli (215ff) has argued that the *μηροί* burned to the god consist, in Homer, of the animal’s thigh bones; his view has met with general acceptance: see W. Burkert, “Greek Tragedy and Sacrificial Ritual,” *GRBS* 7 (1966) 105 n.38, and *HN* 13.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Il.* 1.460–62; *Od.* 3.456–59, 12.360f.

αἶψα δέ μιν διέχευαν· ὁ δ' ὠμοθετεῖτο συβώτης,  
 πάντων ἀρχόμενος μελέων, ἐς πίονα δημόν.  
 καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐν πυρὶ βάλλε, παλύνας ἀλφίτου ἀκτῆ.

While the swineherds are cutting up the slaughtered animal, Eumaeus places on thick fat bits of raw meat that he has cut “taking the beginning from all the victim’s limbs.” Then he sprinkles the offering with barley and tosses it into the fire.

In the description of Eumaeus’ actions, only ὠμοθετεῖν appears also in the more conventional passage. Sprinkling raw meat with ground barley is unusual,<sup>20</sup> but the most important anomaly is the omission of the treatment of the thigh bones, which Kadletz does not address. This lack of any reference to the *μηροί*, noted in several commentaries,<sup>21</sup> is not accidental:<sup>22</sup> they are not mentioned because they are not offered to the immortal gods (*i.e.*, the Olympians). Instead, Eumaeus consecrates only bits of the animal’s raw meat that he has cut off, πάντων ἀρχόμενος μελέων. His procedure has no parallel, but it appears that he intends this offering as merely a first fruit, taken from the *entire* animal’s raw meat, which is simply thrown into the fire.<sup>23</sup> In the same manner Eumaeus burns the first fruits from the victim’s hairs (422) and the so-called ἄργματα. Therefore the sacrificial offerings for the Olympian gods are all first fruits that Eumaeus tosses into the fire.

As to the portion for the nymphs and Hermes (434–36),

καὶ τὰ μὲν ἑπταχα πάντα διεμοιρᾶτο δαίζων·  
 τὴν μὲν ἴαν νύμφησι καὶ Ἐρμῆ, Μαιάδος υἱεῖ,  
 θῆκεν ἐπευξάμενος, τὰς δ' ἄλλας νεῖμεν ἐκάστω,

the verb *θῆκεν* at 436 has been a stumbling block for commentators. Ameis-Hentze (53 *ad* 436) translate “legte hin” because they think that Eumaeus reserves the portion in order to sacrifice it at 446. In effect, they render *θῆκεν* as if it were ἀπέθηκεν and take the portion for the nymphs and Hermes to be the same offering as the ἄργματα. Faesi and Bérard understand *θῆκεν* differently: the former (76 *ad* 436) equates it with ἀνέθηκεν, the latter translates it as “offrit.”<sup>24</sup> It is

<sup>20</sup> P. Stengel, *Opferbräuche der Griechen* (Leipzig 1910) 64, explains: “So genoss man auf dem Lande das Fleische und so bot man es also auch den Göttern dar.”

<sup>21</sup> Faesi 75 *ad* 427; Ameis-Hentze 52 *ad* 428.

<sup>22</sup> As Stanford thinks (*supra* n.13: 232 *ad* 422–29).

<sup>23</sup> Sacrificial offerings of small size are always treated in this way in Homer: *cf.* the bulls’ tongues burned at *Od.* 3.341; also the first fruits of cheese and roasted meat at 9.231 and *Il.* 9.220 respectively. The sizable thigh bones in the text cited above, in contrast, lie on the firewood when they are burned.

<sup>24</sup> C. Bérard, *L’Odyssée II*<sup>2</sup> (Paris 1933) 191.

evident that both regard this portion as an offering separate from the ἄργματα. The majority of translators, however, follow Ameis-Hentze: they not only render θῆκεν as “set aside” but also identify the portion for the nymphs and Hermes with the ἄργματα.<sup>25</sup>

Kadletz (103f) retains the translation of θῆκεν as “set aside” but argues that Eumaeus set aside the portion to use it as a separate offering not relevant to the sacrifice in question. To support this view, he refers to the similarity, observed by Gill (134f), between the offering for the nymphs and Hermes, and the so-called *trapezomata*. The latter offerings are sacrificial meats consecrated by ‘deposition’ on the god’s sacred table in the Classical period.<sup>26</sup> Noting that Gill makes no suggestion about what Eumaeus does with the portion of meat he sets aside, Kadletz proposes that Eumaeus intended to deposit it elsewhere, possibly at some rustic marker sacred to Hermes where any wanderer might find it.

Kadletz’s suggestion seems to involve a misunderstanding of Gill’s argument. In its original formulation (Gill 134),

The setting aside of a portion of one-seventh for the Nymphs and Hermes is in principle no different from the practice of assigning *trapezomata* in the Classical period, except that here there is no special *trapeza* for them. Eumaios simply puts the meat aside on the house table at which he and his guests are eating.

Gill compared Eumaeus’ ‘setting aside’ of the portion for the nymphs and Hermes with the custom of ‘depositing’ *trapezomata* in order to show that Eumaeus’ gesture is an act of sacrifice by *deposition*. The only difference, Gill argued, is that Eumaeus’ sacrifice is offered not on a special *trapeza* but on the house table at which he and the others are eating. Thus, though Gill spoke of Eumaeus’ ‘setting aside’ of this portion, what he actually meant is that Eumaeus sacrifices it by ‘depositing’ it on the table.

That θῆκεν describes the very act of sacrifice by deposition<sup>27</sup> is also

<sup>25</sup> Compare the versions of the *Odyssey* by R. Fitzgerald (New York 1961: 272) and by W. Shewring (Oxford 1980: 175). R. J. Cunliffe, *Dictionary of the Homeric Dialect* (London 1924) s.v. τίθημι (1.a), also translates θῆκεν as “set aside,” although this rendering of τίθημι is without any parallel. Similarly Casabona (70) argues that “θῆκεν ne peut signifier ‘offrit’; c’est ‘mit de côté’, avec l’idée d’abandon définitif, conformément au sens de base de τίθημι.” At the same time Casabona rejects the idea that the offerings at 434f and 446 are different: “les ἄργματα offerts en 446 sont la μοῖρα de 434; les θεοῖσ’ αἰειγενέτησι de 446 . . . sont en fait Hermès et les Nymphes.”

<sup>26</sup> Gill 123ff. *Trapezomata* at the Greek *thysia* are also dealt with in Petropoulou (*supra* n.1) 30–62.

<sup>27</sup> The Homeric text refers to an εἰλεός (432) on which all the roasted meats are thrown. This εἰλεός is a *mensa culinaria* (‘kitchen table’: cf. Ebeling s.v.), more specifically a rather long table for the preparation of food before it is placed on the

indicated by ἐπευξάμενος: Eumaeus prays to the nymphs and Hermes because he consecrates the offering *in situ*. In fact τίθημι (θῆκεν) stands here not for ἀποτίθημι (=set aside) but for παρατίθημι, a verb commonly describing the consecration of *trapezomata* on the god's table by deposition.<sup>28</sup> The meaning of παρατίθημι is to 'serve before' or 'serve up' food (or drink: see LSJ *s.v.*); the verb is ordinarily applied to secular meals. The use of the simple form for the compound is common in Homer. In the *Odyssey*, for example, τίθημι stands for both ἀνατίθημι (12.347) and παρατίθημι (17.335). In the latter case the object of τίθημι is a portion (μοῖρα) of roasted meat set before a mortal guest. Similarly, the object of Eumaeus' θῆκεν is a portion of roast pork that is served up on the table for a group of deities invited as divine guests amidst the company of mortals.

Naturally the nymphs and Hermes are not expected to consume their portion of meat: Eumaeus' gesture is symbolic. It is very likely that, after the offering had served its purpose, it was 'desacralized' and used as an ordinary portion of food. This assumption is prompted by the way *trapezomata* for the gods are often disposed of in the Classical period: they are assigned as a *geras* to the priest, who is thus entitled to consume them after the sacred ritual is over (Gill 127–33).

Moreover, like the offerings for the Olympian gods, the portion for the nymphs and Hermes is also a first fruit gift (ἀπαρχή), for the ἀπαρχή is a gift given to the god as the *first* 'part of a whole' (Beer 10f). The offering for the nymphs and Hermes is the first of the distributed seven portions into which all the roasted meats are divided. That this *aparche* amounts to as much as one-seventh of the roast pork should not surprise us. The offer of first fruits, for example, amounting to one-tenth of the whole, was common and was known by the term δεκάτη (Beer 59f). The ἄργματα, on the other hand, are first fruits of which the amount is not specified; they are taken from the remaining six portions of food distributed among the companions. Likewise, the quantity of first fruits cut from the animal's raw meat (ῶμοθετεῖτο, 427) is not defined: we simply learn that they are taken from *all* the animal's limbs. The same is true for the forehead hairs of the victim (422). To conclude, both the Olympian gods and the nymphs and

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table board; see Σ A *ad Il.* 9.215 (Dindorf I 312), cited by G. Bruns, *Küchenwesen und Mahlzeiten* (=Archaeologia Homerica II [Göttingen 1970]) q51. There is no mention of a *trapeza* in our text, but this may be accidental—unless the meal is consumed at the εἰλεός.

<sup>28</sup> See LSJ *s.v.* παρατίθημι (1.b); cf. the Erythraean inscription in F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure* (Paris 1955) 24.15, 18, 22, 24.

Hermes receive sacrificial offerings that are (meant to be) mere first fruits, *i.e.*, gifts offered each time as 'part of the whole animal'.

## II

Although all offerings are, as I have argued, first fruits, their recipients belong to two distinct categories of divinities. The *ἀθάνατοι*, or *θεοὶ αἰειγενέται*—*i.e.*, the group of the Olympian gods—represent the higher, 'heavenly' divinities. This explains why Eumaeus *burns* their offering by tossing it into the fire: their savor and smoke rise up to heaven where these divinities dwell, as first described at *Il.* 1.317: *κρίση δ' οὐρανὸν ἵκεν ἐλισσομένη περὶ καπνῶ.*

The nymphs and Hermes, on the contrary, are known from post-Homeric times as a group of lower, pastoral deities<sup>29</sup> worshipped especially by shepherds.<sup>30</sup> It is therefore only natural that the swineherd Eumaeus should consecrate an offering to them. There is also another, intrinsic reason: in the *Odyssey* several eponymous nymphs, as well as Hermes, are presented as deities in close connection with rural Ithaca. These nymphs represent the spirits of local springs;<sup>31</sup> indeed, together with Hermes, venerated locally as the god of an Ithacan hill (16.471), they are the only rural deities of Ithaca mentioned in the poem.

The reason these particular deities are mentioned by the poet is significant. The grotto of the nymphs *νηιάδες*<sup>32</sup> is a salient and familiar feature of the harbor of Phorcys (13.102–12, 345–52), at which the Phaeacian ship puts in with Odysseus. The hero prays to them to assist his homecoming (356–60) and, following the instructions of Athena, stores inside their grotto the gifts of the Phaeacians (361–71). The spring of the nymph Arethusa is on the mountain above the harbor, located near the rock of the Raven (13.404–10, 14.1–4). The spring marks the way to the dwelling of Eumaeus, where the disguised Odysseus finds shelter before attempting to enter the palace. Further

<sup>29</sup> Already at *Il.* 24.614–16 and *Od.* 12.131f the nymphs are presented in their pastoral guise, though without any connection with Hermes; the latter deity appears as the protector of shepherds at *Il.* 14.490f and *Od.* 19.396f. For the companionship of the nymphs with pastoral deities, Hermes among them, see M. P. Nilsson, *GGR* I<sup>3</sup> 247, 249, 503; P. Raingeard, *Hermès Psychagogue: Essai sur les origines du culte d'Hermès* (Paris 1935) 487.

<sup>30</sup> Semonides (cited by Eustath. *Od.* 1766 *ad* 14.435) says that shepherds used to sacrifice to the nymphs and the son of Maia: see M. L. West, *Iambi et elegi Graeci* II (Oxford 1972) 107 no. 20.

<sup>31</sup> In the same capacity the nymphs later accompany Hermes: see Raingeard (*supra* n.29).

<sup>32</sup> For the association of the naiads with springs see Porph. *De antro nymph.* 13.

inland, in the grove close to the city, are a well-built fountain and an altar of the nymphs *κρηναῖαι* (17.204–11). These form the background of the scene in which Eumaeus and the disguised Odysseus encounter Melanthius and his fellow shepherds while on the way to the palace (212ff). At 17.240–46 Eumaeus prays to them to ensure the homecoming of his master. On the other hand, a “*Ἑρμαιοσ λόφος*”<sup>33</sup> is on the path followed by Eumaeus from the city back to his mountain shelter (16.471). From some point on this hill Eumaeus views the arrival of the suitors in the harbor (472–75), which he reports to Telemachus and the disguised Odysseus.

In short, the nymphs and Hermes are presented as rural deities of Ithaca whose sacred places serve as landmarks in the description of the homecoming of Odysseus. I suggest that this is why the poet makes Eumaeus sacrifice to these deities; the closeness of their relationship to Eumaeus and his companions is indicated by his gesture of honoring them with a portion of meat served up amidst the food of the mortals.

And yet, despite the consecration of sacrificial offerings to the two groups of divinities, neither the Olympians nor the nymphs and Hermes are the recipients of the animal sacrifice itself. Eumaeus orders his fellow swineherds to bring in the best male pig of his (master’s) herds because he intends to sacrifice it simply in honor of his guest (Odysseus in disguise). Eumaeus further remarks that the swineherds (himself included) would also profit from this sacrifice; and he justifies their feast by pointing out that they are the ones who bear the toil of caring for the pigs, while others (the suitors) devour their labor unpunished (414–17):

ἄξεθ’ ὑῶν τὸν ἄριστον, ἵνα ξείνῳ ἱερεύσω  
 τηλεδαπῶ· πρὸς δ’ αὐτοὶ ὀνησόμεθ’, οἳ περ οὐζῶν  
 δὴν ἔχομεν πᾶσχοντες ὑῶν ἔνεκ’ ἀργιοδόντων·  
 ἄλλοι δ’ ἡμέτερον κάματον νήποινον ἔδουσιν.

In other words, Eumaeus orders the slaughter of the choicest of his swine for the purpose of holding a feast in honor of his guest. In fact the verb *ἱερεύω* is used here in the sense not of *sacrificio* but of *mactō* (*victimam vescendi causa*)<sup>34</sup> though the act of killing retains a sacral aspect, for offerings are burned to the Olympian gods.

<sup>33</sup> Probably a natural element of the terrain: see Büchner, *RE* 8.1 (1912) 713 s.v. “*Ἑρμαιοσ λόφος*.”

<sup>34</sup> See Ebeling s.v. *ἱερεύω* (b); cf. Casabona 23ff; see also P. Vidal-Naquet’s structural approach to the use of this verb in *Myth, Religion and Society*, ed. R. L. Gordon (Cambridge 1981) 90.

It is precisely Eumaeus' primarily 'secular' intention that differentiates his sacrifice from the other Homeric sacrifices.<sup>35</sup> The Homeric sacrifice is always made to a god (or gods),<sup>36</sup> and for this reason the victim is shared between the god and the mortals. The god's share of the animal consists of the thigh bones (*μηροί* or *μηρία*), wrapped in fat, to which are added unspecified pieces of meat, as we have seen; the remainder of the victim is for the mortals. The sacrifice of Eumaeus is made, instead, in honor of a mortal guest. Thus the animal is not divided in the usual way, between the Olympian gods and mortals: it is reserved entirely for the mortals. Eumaeus consecrates only the first fruits to the Olympians, which are gifts given each time as a *first* 'part of the whole animal' (live, slaughtered), and it is his sacrifice of first fruits from the animal's forelock at 422 that is attributed to Eumaeus' piety: οὐδὲ συβώτης λήθετ' ἄρ' ἀθανάτων φρεσὶ γὰρ κέχρητ' ἀγαθῆσιν.<sup>37</sup> The consecration of first fruits from all the animal's raw meat (427–29) should probably be interpreted in the same way.

On the other hand, the sacrifice of first fruits to the gods at the beginning of the meal (435, 446) is to be understood in connection with the ritual performed at the consumption of food at home. For example, the portion 'served up' on the table for the nymphs and Hermes reminds us of the part of food that the Romans consecrated to the Lares on a small plate on the house table.<sup>38</sup> Originally rural deities inhabiting the *compita* (places where four properties bordered one another or where four streets met), the Lares were soon attached to the domestic hearth and the family.<sup>39</sup> The Romans honored them especially on occasions important for the family, such as birth or marriage, or the departure or homecoming of a family member.<sup>40</sup> This latter practice is of interest here because the occasion on which the nymphs and Hermes are honored in our passage is actually the homecoming of Odysseus, for which Eumaeus prays at 424. That this is, of course, unknown to Eumaeus and his fellow swineherds (who are

<sup>35</sup> Cf. J. Rudhardt, *Notions fondamentales de la pensée religieuse et actes constitutifs du culte dans la Grèce classique* (Geneva 1958) 255.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Il.* 1.444ff, 2.402ff; *Od.* 3.5ff and 419ff, 12.343ff.

<sup>37</sup> This piety is made evident throughout Book 14: cf. 56ff, 386ff, 402ff, 432ff, and 443ff.

<sup>38</sup> See G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (Munich 1902) 149, 345.

<sup>39</sup> According to the prevalent theory, formulated by Wissowa (*supra* n.38: 148–55; cf. K. Latte, *RR* 90–97). For an extensive bibliography on the controversial origin of the Lares and a critical review of the main schools of thought see D. G. Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion: The Evidence of the Household Shrines," *ANRW* II 16.2 (1978) 1563ff. At 1564 n.30 Orr cites Cic. *Leg.* 2.8.19 as evidence for the worship of Lares in groves.

<sup>40</sup> See Wissowa (*supra* n.38) 149f; cf. Latte (*supra* n.39) 93f.

unaware of the identity of their guest) does not affect my point. It is also noteworthy that in Ovid's *Fasti* (2.599–616) the Lares are presented as twins born by the naiad nymph Lara to Mercury. The closeness of the Lares to the nymphs and Hermes is evident.

As for Eumaeus' sacrifice of ἄργματα to the Olympian gods (446), this is the offer of ἀπαρχαί to the gods, a rite of the family's own domestic worship as it is exercised near the hearth.<sup>41</sup> In Homer the burning of ἀπαρχαί to the gods occurs always in scenes of private life, such as Achilles' reception of the embassy of the Achaeans (*Il.* 9.219f) or the breakfast of Odysseus and his companions at the cave of the Cyclops (*Od.* 9.231f). In other respects as well, Eumaeus' sacrifice of first fruits at the beginning of the meal is in harmony with several domestic elements that are absent from the standard Homeric sacrifice. First of all, the meal is twice called δόρπον (407f), a word denoting the evening meal taken after the day's work.<sup>42</sup> The food is indeed prepared after Eumaeus' fellow swineherds return with the herds they are leading to their pens for the night (410–12). Eumaeus, however, makes this 'evening meal' into a festive dinner because of his guest, in whose honor he orders the sacrifice of his best male pig (414–17). The ceremony combining sacrifice and meal focuses on the ἐσχάρα (hearth) beside which the swineherds make the pig stand (420): τὸν μὲν ἔπειτ' ἔστησαν ἐπ' ἐσχάρῃ. Into the fire of this hearth Eumaeus tosses his sacrificial offerings to the Olympian gods, *i.e.*, the first fruits of the victim's hair and of its raw and cooked meat.

One should perhaps draw a distinction between the sacrificial hearth (ἐσχάρα) used for chthonic sacrifices and the domestic hearth that serves as Eumaeus' home altar (ἐπ' ἐσχάρῃ). In Homer the word ἐσχάρα never signifies the 'sacrificial pit', as in later Greek,<sup>43</sup> and it never occurs in the description of a standard animal sacrifice. The ἐσχάρα in Homer is used for the domestic fireplace or hearth of the μέγαρον or any other sort of dwelling.<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, the phrase πυρὸς ἐσχάραι in the *Iliad* (10.418) signifies both the hearth of home and, by extension, the family.<sup>45</sup> ἐπ' ἐσχάρῃ at 14.420 therefore signifies the hearth of what is presented as Eumaeus' *domus*, a mountain hut (κλισίη: 45, 48, 408) turned by Eumaeus into a farm house (σταθμός, 504)

<sup>41</sup> See Tolles (*supra* n.14) 14 and n.20, citing Sjövall.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Ebeling *s.v.*; Cunliffe (*supra* n.25) *s.v.*

<sup>43</sup> See Steph. Byz. *s.v.* Βωμοί· καὶ βωμὸς ὁ τόπος τῶν θυσιαίων, ὁ πρὸς τὴν ἐσχάραν διάφορος· ὁ μὲν γὰρ οἰκοδομητός, ἢ δὲ σκαπτή; Phot. *s.v.* ἐσχάρα· ἐσχάραν φησι καλεῖσθαι Λυκοῦργος καὶ Ἀμμώνιος τὴν μὴ ἔχουσαν ὕψος, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ γῆς ἰδρυμένην· ἢ κοίλην.

<sup>44</sup> See Cunliffe (*supra* n.25) *s.v.* ἐσχάρῃ.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. W. Leaf, *The Iliad* I<sup>2</sup> (London 1900) 453 *ad* 418.

by the addition to it of a walled courtyard with pens inside for the sows and their piglets (5–16). It is also worth noting that Eumaeus' splitting kindling in order to light a fire inside the ἐσχάρη (κέασε ξύλα νηλέϊ χαλκῶ, 418) is an act, in Homer, always preliminary to home cooking.<sup>46</sup>

It is not mere coincidence that the animal slaughtered beside Eumaeus' hearth and singed over the fire (εὔσαν, 426) is a domestic swine,<sup>47</sup> reminiscent of their later association with the domestic hearth and Hestia.<sup>48</sup> The finishing touch to this scene focusing on the domestic hearth is the appearance of Mesaulius, who appears as a house servant to distribute bread (σίτον, 449) and to remove the leftovers from the table (455) when dinner is over.<sup>49</sup>

The first fruit offerings consecrated by Eumaeus directly before the consumption of food illustrate a widespread custom of offering to the god a part of the food consumed at home.<sup>50</sup> Eumaeus burns the ἄργματα for the Olympian gods at 446 because they are, in a general way, the 'Givers of Good'. Before doing so, however, he serves up on the table one of the seven portions of food for the nymphs and Hermes because they are Ithaca's rural deities and protect his herds and shelter. In more recent times, the Tartars also honored a similar pair of rural deities in like manner. Information about them is found in the narratives of the mediaeval travelers to Mongolia, Carpini and Marco Polo. This is what the latter says about them:<sup>51</sup>

But they have also a certain other god of theirs called Natigay, and they say he is the god of the Earth, who watches over their children, cattle, and crops. They show him great worship and honour, and everyman hath a figure of him in his house, made of felt and cloth; and they also make in the same manner images of his wife and children. The wife they put on the left hand, and the children in front. And when they eat, they take the fat of the meat and grease the god's mouth withal, as well as the mouths of his wife and

<sup>46</sup> *Od.* 15.322f, 20.161f. κείζω in the sense of producing firewood by splitting or chopping occurs only in the *Odyssey*.

<sup>47</sup> With the exception of *Od.* 6.104, all swine mentioned in Homer are 'domestic': see W. Richter, *Die Landwirtschaft in Homerischen Zeitalter* (= *Archaeologia Homerica* II [Göttingen 1968]) H65.

<sup>48</sup> Such livestock were kept in pens situated close to the home hearth and were sacrificed to Hestia; see Preuner in Roscher, *Lex.* 1 (1884–90) 2620f; cf. Süss, *RE* 8 (1913) 1277.

<sup>49</sup> The distribution of bread and the removal of leftovers never occur in the description of the Homeric sacrifice. The former act appears only in connection with scenes of private life: see *Il.* 9.216f.

<sup>50</sup> Beer 45–47.

<sup>51</sup> See H. Yule and H. Cordier, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo* I<sup>3</sup> (London 1903) 256f.

children. Then they take of the broth and sprinkle it before the door of the house; and that done, they deem that their god and his family have had their share of the dinner.

The broth is evidently sprinkled before the door of the house because Natigay is also the protector of the entrance and the door,<sup>52</sup> just as Hermes in post-Homeric times.<sup>53</sup> Despite the more subtle intellectual attitude towards divinity in Eumaeus' ceremony at 435, the manner in which "Natigay with his wife and children" and "the nymphs and Hermes" are worshipped, is, in these two instances, basically the same.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> In Carpini's account (cited by Yule/Cordier [*supra* n.51: 257 n.1]) the Tartars place the idols of the deities treated in this manner on either side of the door; the deities are said to be the guardians of the flocks.

<sup>53</sup> As protector of the entrance and the door, Hermes is called *προπύλαιος* and *στροφαίος*: see Nilsson, *GGR* I<sup>3</sup> 508.

<sup>54</sup> I thank my colleague, Dr Garth Fowden, for reading this paper.