

## THE VIEW FROM OLYMPUS: THE MUSES' SONG IN THE *HOMERIC HYMN TO APOLLO*\*

Apollo travels from Pytho to Olympus, and the other gods greet his arrival (186–93):

ἔνθεν δὲ πρὸς Ὀλυμπον ἀπὸ χθονὸς ὥς τε νόημα  
εἶσι Διὸς πρὸς δῶμα θεῶν μεθ' ὀμήγουριν ἄλλων·  
αὐτίκα δ' ἀθανάτοισι μέλει κίθαρις καὶ αἰοιδή.  
Μοῦσαι μὲν θ' ἅμα πάντα ἀμειβόμεναι ὅτι καλῆ  
ἕμνευσίν ῥα θεῶν δῶρ' ἄμβροτα ἦδ' ἀνθρώπων  
τλημοσύνας, ὅς' ἔχοντες ὑπ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι  
ζώουσ' ἀφραδέες καὶ ἀμήχανοι, οὐδὲ δύνανται  
εὐρέμεναι θανάτοιο τ' ἄκος καὶ γήραος ἄλκαρ.

From there he goes quick as a thought from the earth to Olympus, to the house of Zeus, in order to join the gathering of the other gods. Immediately the immortals concern themselves with lyre music and song. All the Muses together, responding with their beautiful voice, hymn the divine gifts of the gods and the endurance of men, all that they have from the immortal gods and yet live ignorant and helpless, unable to find a remedy for death and a defence against old age.

Lines 189–93 describe a song of the Muses that expresses a divine view on the human condition. Scholars uniformly hold that the Olympians rejoice in hearing about how they themselves inflict pain on mankind. Thus Förstel, for example, writes that this passage presents the gods as, in a certain general sense, the source of human sorrows and finds here 'a unique testimony to Greek pessimism'.<sup>1</sup> But such an interpretation depends on a number of debatable philological premises. This article advocates a new reading which better accords with usage, syntax and thematic context. I first treat interrelated semantic and grammatical difficulties in lines 189–93 and then situate the Muses' song within the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* as a whole. At stake here is nothing less than the theological outlook of the poem.<sup>2</sup>

Most scholars have understood θεῶν δῶρ' ἄμβροτα (190) to mean the privileges that the gods themselves enjoy, in particular immortality;<sup>3</sup> some recent scholars instead

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<sup>1</sup> K. Förstel, *Untersuchungen zum Homerischen Apollonhymnos* (Bochum, 1979): 'ein einzigartiges Zeugnis des griechischen Pessimismus' (228); 'in einem gewissen allgemeinen Sinn ... Urheber dieser Leiden' (230). Throughout I refer to the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* as we have it. My arguments would be compatible with a range of theories about the genesis of this text.

<sup>2</sup> I write 'theological' advisedly: cf. A. Henrichs, 'What is a Greek god?', in J.N. Bremmer and A. Erskine (edd.), *The Gods of Ancient Greece: Identities and Transformations* (Edinburgh, 2010), 19–39, at 21–2.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. H.G. Evelyn-White, *Hesiod. The Homeric Hymns and Homericica* (London, 1914), 339; T.W. Allen, W.R. Halliday and E.E. Sikes, *The Homeric Hymns* (Oxford, 1936<sup>2</sup>), 228; J. Humbert, *Homère*.

understand this to mean the gifts which the gods give to mortals.<sup>4</sup> The latter sense is preferable. In early Greek epic, ‘the gifts of the gods’ *uel sim.* often describes gifts which the gods give to men, and never describes gifts which the gods themselves receive.<sup>5</sup> If θεῶν δῶρ’ (190) had that unparalleled sense here, then one would be faced with an awkward question: from whom did the gods receive these gifts? Personified Fate, one might be tempted to reply, but the question itself is strange. Finally, if θεῶν δῶρ’ ἄμβροτα (190) is included within the larger category of ὄς’ ἔχοντες ὑπ’ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι (191),<sup>6</sup> as I will argue that it is, then these must certainly be gifts which men receive from the gods.

If θεῶν δῶρ’ ἄμβροτα (190) describes gifts that gods give to men, are these gifts good or bad or a mixture of both good and bad? In early Greek epic, the gifts of the gods can be good or bad or a mixture of both good and bad.<sup>7</sup> Context is decisive in each case. The gifts of our passage have been interpreted as bad<sup>8</sup> or as a mixture of both good and bad,<sup>9</sup> but these gifts are qualified with the significant adjective ἄμβροτα (190). In early Greek epic, this is standardly an honorific word applied to things associated with the gods. In the numerous instances when it describes things given from the gods to mortals, these are invariably desirable things.<sup>10</sup> The gifts of the gods are probably desirable here too.<sup>11</sup>

Scholars have long translated τλημοσύνας (191) along the lines of ‘sufferings’,<sup>12</sup> but Heitsch makes a powerful case for instead taking it to mean ‘endurance’.<sup>13</sup> Nowhere

*Hymnes* (Paris, 1936), 87; F. Càssola, *Inni omerici* (Milan, 1975), 123, 498–9; Förstel (n. 1), 228; A. Miller, *From Delos to Delphi: A Literary Study of the Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (Leiden, 1986), 69.

<sup>4</sup> E. Heitsch, ‘ΤΑΗΜΟΣΥΝΗ’, *Hermes* 92 (1964), 257–64, picking up an idea from D. Ruhnken, *Homeri Hymnus in Cererem* (Leiden, 1782), 16–17 (on *Hom. Hymn* 2.147); F. De Martino, ‘Il canto delle Muse nell’*inno omerico ad Apollo*’, *GFF* 5 (1982), 39–47, at 41–2; W.G. Thalmann, *Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Epic Poetry* (Baltimore, 1984), 82; N.J. Richardson, *Three Homeric Hymns: To Apollo, Hermes, and Aphrodite* (Cambridge, 2010), 112.

<sup>5</sup> An inexhaustive but representative list: *Il.* 3.64–6, 16.381, 16.867, 18.84, 19.3, 19.18, 19.368, 20.265, 20.268, 21.165, 21.594, 24.527–33; *Od.* 7.132, 18.142; *Hom. Hymn* 2.147–8, 2.216–17, 5.212, 10.2; Hes. *Op.* 718; [Hes.] *Sc.* 123, 415. Cf. N.J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford, 1974), 192–3 (on *Hom. Hymn* 2.147–8) and M. Forderer, *Anfang und Ende der abendländischen Lyrik. Untersuchungen zum Homerischen Apollonhymnus und zu Anise Koltz* (Amsterdam, 1971), 187, who collects passages and concedes that ‘Dieser Gebrauch von δῶρα für das Wesen der Götter ist ...—für uns—singulär’. The posited usage would be not only unparalleled but probably also elliptical to the point of obscurity.

<sup>6</sup> For the dative, see E. Schwyzer, *Griechische Grammatik. Auf der Grundlage von Karl Brugmanns griechischer Grammatik* (rev. A. Debrunner), 4 vols. (Munich, 1934–71), 2.525–6; LSJ<sup>9</sup> s.v. ὑπό B.II.1–2.

<sup>7</sup> Thalmann (n. 4), ch. 3. See further S.R. Van Der Mije, ‘Achilles’ god-given strength’, *Mnemosyne* 40 (1987), 241–67.

<sup>8</sup> Heitsch (n. 4), 263.

<sup>9</sup> Richardson (n. 4), 112.

<sup>10</sup> *Il.* 16.381, 16.670, 16.680, 16.867, 17.194–5, 17.202; *Od.* 5.346–7, 7.260, 7.265, 18.191. ἄμβροτα (*Hom. Hymn* 3.190) need not mean ‘immortal’ but can rather mark an association with the divine: Risch in *LfggrE* s.v.; Richardson (n. 4), 112; A. Vergados, *The Homeric Hymn to Hermes* (Berlin, 2013), 287–8 (on *Hom. Hymn* 4.71).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. B. Heiden, ‘Imagination versus necessity in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*’, *Gaia* 18 (2015), 145–56, at 153 n. 10.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Evelyn-White (n. 3), 339; Càssola (n. 3), 123, 498; Förstel (n. 1), 228; M.L. West, *Homeric Hymns, Homeric Apocrypha, Lives of Homer* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), 84; J.S. Clay, *The Politics of Olympus: Form and Meaning in the Major Homeric Hymns* (London, 2006<sup>2</sup>), 55; C. Semenzato, *À l’écoute des Muses en Grèce archaïque: La question de l’inspiration dans la poésie grecque à l’aube de notre civilisation* (Berlin, 2017), 114–15.

<sup>13</sup> Heitsch (n. 4). Cf. P. Smith and L.T. Percy, *The Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (Bryn Mawr, 1981), 15; De Martino (n. 4), 42; Thalmann (n. 4), 80; Richardson (n. 4), 112.

else in extant ancient Greek literature does the noun mean ‘suffering’.<sup>14</sup> The forthcoming *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* s.v. recognizes ‘endurance’ as the sole attested meaning of the noun, and with good reason. We expect *τλημοσύνη* (at *Hom. Hymn* 3.191 and not in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*) to relate to *τλήμων* (at *Il.* 5.670 and elsewhere) much as *φραδοσύνη* (at *Hom. Hymn* 3.99 and not in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*) relates to *φράδμων* (at *Il.* 16.638) or much as *ζηλοσύνη* (at *Hom. Hymn.* 3.100 and not in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*) relates to *ζηλήμων* (at *Od.* 5.118).<sup>15</sup> Before the fifth century, *τλήμων* and related words convey an idea of endurance or daring rather than suffering, although this last sense comes to predominate in later texts.<sup>16</sup> Wilson writes that ‘only in Bacchylides [5.153] does *τλήμων* first collapse into the sense of “wretched”, “miserable”’.<sup>17</sup> We should hesitate to attribute to *τλημοσύνας* (*Hom. Hymn* 3.191) a meaning which is certainly not attested anywhere else and which would probably be anachronistic for our passage.<sup>18</sup>

ὄς’ (191) does not agree with *τλημοσύνας* (191), although it is often translated as if it did.<sup>19</sup> It will not do to take ὄς’ (191) as the equivalent of ὄς. The passages which Heitsch adduces as ‘distant analogies’ are not convincing.<sup>20</sup> One might instead understand an omitted genitive: ‘endurance [of all those things], as many as men have ...’.<sup>21</sup> The grammatical phenomenon is common enough,<sup>22</sup> but it would be harsh here. Words from the *τλη-* stem do not take a genitive of the thing endured, and so it would be difficult for ancient audiences to supply a missing genitive in our passage.

Two simpler solutions also deserve consideration. First, the antecedent of the neuter plural ὄς’ (191) may be the neuter plural δῶρ’ (190; cf. *Il.* 3.65–6). On this reading, the genitives θεῶν (190) and ἀνθρώπων (190) mark a polar contrast reflecting the two separate topics of the Muses’ song:<sup>23</sup> gifts that come from the gods and acts of endurance that belong exclusively to men. The plural *τλημοσύνας* (191) makes the abstract noun concrete and refers to specific instances of endurance.<sup>24</sup> The Muses here, like the *Deliades* earlier in the poem (158–61) or the Muses in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (36–52), sing first of the gods and then of men.<sup>25</sup> The bipartite subject of their song is reflected

<sup>14</sup> A search of the *TLG* may now corroborate the arguments of Heitsch (n. 4).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. O. Zumbach, *Neuerungen in der Sprache der Homerischen Hymnen* (Winterthur, 1955), 8.

<sup>16</sup> *τλήμων*: *Il.* 5.670, 10.231, 10.498 and 21.430 with Führer in *LfgGE* s.v.; *Hom. Hymn* 4.296 with J.T. Katz, ‘*Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 296: *τλήμονα γακτρος ἐριθον*’, *CQ* 49 (1999), 315–19, at 317; *Tyrtaeus* 12.18 W<sup>2</sup>; *Thgn.* 196; *Anac.* 347 fr. 1.7 *PMG*; *Pind. Pyth.* 1.48. *πολυτλήμων*: *Il.* 7.152; *Od.* 18.319. See below on *δυστλήμονες* (*Hom. Hymn* 3.532).

<sup>17</sup> J.R. Wilson, ‘*ΤΟΛΑΜΑ* and the meaning of *ΤΑΛΛΑΣ*’, *AJPh* 92 (1971), 292–300, at 293.

<sup>18</sup> W. Porzig, *Die Namen für Satzinhalte im griechischen und im indogermanischen* (Berlin, 1942), 223–4 observes that *Archilochus*’ *τλημοσύνην* (13.6 W<sup>2</sup>, discussed below) means what we would expect it to mean (‘regelrechte’) but writes of our passage that ‘es liegt also schon die jüngere Bedeutung von *τλήμων* zugrunde, der wir erst in der Tragödie begegnen’. This formulation calls suspicion upon itself.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Càssola (n. 3), 123: ‘le sventure degli uomini, che essi ricevono dagli dei immortali’; M. Crudden, *The Homeric Hymns* (Oxford, 2002), 29: ‘those pains that humans endure at the hands of immortal gods’.

<sup>20</sup> ‘entfernte Analogien’: Heitsch (n. 4), 263 n. 1: *Il.* 11.237–8, 21.166–7; *Od.* 9.51–2, 12.74–5.

<sup>21</sup> Heitsch (n. 4), 263; cf. Thalmann (n. 4), 80.

<sup>22</sup> H.W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (rev. G.M. Messing) (Cambridge, MA, 1956), 564–5.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. E. Kemmer, *Die polare Ausdrucksweise in der griechischen Literatur* (Würzburg, 1903), 77–90.

<sup>24</sup> So Heitsch (n. 4), 263; cf. the works cited in note 27 below and B.L. Gildersleeve, *Syntax of Classical Greek from Homer to Demosthenes*, 2 vols. (New York, 1900–10), 1.22: ‘pluralizing abstract nouns makes them concrete’.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Od.* 1.338; *Hes. Theog.* 99–101.

in the bipartite structure of the following relative clause: ὄς' ἔχοντες ὑπ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι (191) looks back to the gifts of the gods, while the ensuing description of mortal weakness (from ζώουσ', 192, to the end of the sentence) looks back to what men must endure.

Despite the merits of this reading, I prefer to construe somewhat differently. The inherently inclusive ὄς' (191) ('all that, as many as') may be most naturally taken to include as its antecedent *both* the feminine plural τλημοσύνας (191) *and* the neuter plural δῶρ' (190).<sup>26</sup> On this reading, τλημοσύνας (191) is a different part of what men have from the gods. Thematic parallels support this interpretation. In Archilochus, the gods granted men the same noun in the singular: ἀλλὰ θεοὶ γὰρ ἀνγκέστοισι κακοῖσιν | ᾧ φίλ' ἐπὶ κρατερὴν τλημοσύνην ἔθεσαν | φάρμακον ... τλήτε (13.5–10 W<sup>2</sup>), 'but since, my friend, the gods have established mighty endurance as a palliative for incurable ills ... endure'. In *Iliad* Book 24 the Fates, according to Apollo, gave men an enduring heart (τλητὸν γὰρ Μοῖραι θυμὸν θέσαν ἀνθρώποισιν, 49). In our passage, too, human endurance is a gift from on high. τλημοσύνας (191) would either be a 'distributive' plural, reflecting the fact that the gods give endurance to many men,<sup>27</sup> or the plural would be more or less equivalent to the singular.<sup>28</sup>

On the interpretation advocated here, δῶρ' ἄμβροτα (190) describes positive gifts, while τλημοσύνας (191) describes a positive capacity for enduring negative things, which are not said to be bestowed by the gods. If either of these instead referred to bad things, then one would expect the rest of the sentence, which describes human suffering, to depict these divinely apportioned evils as the source of that suffering.<sup>29</sup> But this is not what we get. Men are 'ignorant' (ἀφραδέες, 192) not because of what the gods give to them but just because of how human beings are.<sup>30</sup> Death and old age (193) are not gifts from the gods; human mortality, like divine immortality, is not a gift from anyone but simply a given.<sup>31</sup>

Since lines 190–1 refer to two sorts of good things, we should follow West in taking the participle ἔχοντες (191) as concessive: 'all that they have from the immortal gods *and yet* live witless and helpless' (my emphasis).<sup>32</sup> Here men are 'helpless' (192) not because of, but rather despite, all that they have from the gods.<sup>33</sup> Rather than stressing

<sup>26</sup> As a variation on this interpretation, one could also, perhaps less naturally, understand ὄς' (191) as part of a 'lilies of the field' construction (also commonly known as prolepsis: K–G 2.577–9) in apposition; cf. λίην γὰρ κατὰ κόμην Ἀχαιοῶν οἶτον ἀειδεῖς, | ὄσς' ἔρξαν τ' ἔπαθόν τε καὶ ὄσς' ἐμόγησαν Ἀχαιοὶ (*Od.* 8.489–90); μνησάμενοι φιλότιτος ἐνήεος, ὄσσα παθόντες (*Hes. Theog.* 651).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. K–G 2.16; J.B. Hainsworth, 'The plural of abstract nouns in the Greek epic', *BICS* 4 (1957), 1–9; V. Bers, *Greek Poetic Syntax in the Classical Age* (New Haven, 1984), 34–8, 52–4; G.L. Cooper, *Greek Syntax. Volume 3: Early Greek Poetic and Herodotean Syntax* (Ann Arbor, 2002), 1931–3. For abstract nouns as the gifts of the gods, see e.g. *Il.* 1.72, 6.156–7, 24.30; *Od.* 5.437, 6.181, 13.45–6; *Hom. Hymn* 15.8, 20.8.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. C. Brügger, M. Stoevesandt and E. Visser, *Homers Ilias. Gesamtkommentar. Zweiter Gesang* (B). *Faszikel 2: Kommentar* (Basel, 2003), 190 (on *Il.* 2.588).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Förstel (n. 1), 230: 'Die Menschen haben so viele Leiden [= τλημοσύνας (191)], weil sie unverständlich und hilflos sind' (my emphasis).

<sup>30</sup> See Richardson (n. 5), 243–4 (on *Hom. Hymn* 2.256–8).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. e.g. *Il.* 16.441–2; *Od.* 3.236–8. Greek literature in general, and Homeric poetry in particular, is notably uninterested in aetiological explanations of why human beings die: M. Davies, 'The ancient Greeks on why mankind does not live forever', *MH* 44 (1987), 65–75.

<sup>32</sup> West (n. 12), 84.

<sup>33</sup> R.P. Martin, *Healing, Sacrifice and Battle: Amechania and Related Concepts in Early Greek Poetry* (Innsbruck, 1983), 26 observes that here ἀμήχανοι (192) 'is glossed by' οὐδὲ δύνανται | εὐρέμεναι θανάτοιο τ' ἄκος καὶ γήραος ἄλλαρ (192–3). As δέ often has the force of γάρ, so

the extent of the evils that the gods give to men, ὅς' (191) stresses the extent of their aid. Here the Olympians are presented as 'the givers of good things' (δοτῆρες ἐάων, *Od.* 8.325).<sup>34</sup> It is not necessarily that, in the world of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the gods are never responsible for giving anything bad to mortals,<sup>35</sup> but rather that the Muses' song of celebration,<sup>36</sup> like the framing hymn itself, focusses on divine benefactions rather than malefactions. Here encomiastic rhetoric is as important as cosmology.

On the usual reading of our passage, the gods enjoy hearing about the sufferings which they themselves inflict on men. This might strike us as grotesque,<sup>37</sup> but it is easy to imagine how, with some historicizing, our modern sentiment might turn out to be an argument for, rather than against, this reading. Yet, it is not easy to provide such historicizing arguments. The disconcerting thing about the standard interpretation of our passage is not that the gods give bad things to men, but rather that they blithely rejoice in recounting how they do so (cf. παίζουσ', 201; παίζοντα, 206). One would want a convincing parallel not for the gods taking pleasure in inflicting suffering on some particular mortal(s) for some particular reason(s), however capricious those reasons might be, but rather for the gods taking pleasure in perpetually inflicting suffering on mankind for no particular reason at all. The closest thing to such a parallel would seem to be the embittered words of Achilles in *Iliad* Book 24: ὡς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι, | ζῶειν ἀχνημένοισι· αὐτοὶ δέ τ' ἀκηδέες εἰσί, 'for thus the gods spun the thread of fate for wretched mortals, to live in grief; they themselves are without sorrow' (525–6). It is questionable whether such a bleak world-view is appropriate to the hymnic genre in general and to this hymn in particular. We expect hymns not only to please divine addressees but also to present deities who are not highly unsympathetic to their mortal worshippers.<sup>38</sup> Certainly the rest of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* does so.

The unusual and difficult language of the Muses' song in lines 189–93, I suggest, expresses the same theological vision that is expressed more clearly and at greater length throughout the rest of the hymn. We need not necessarily assume that the theology of the Muses' song is consistent with that of the framing poem,<sup>39</sup> but the structure of the text encourages one to look for congruity. The Muses' performance on Olympus,

here οὐδέ may virtually be the equivalent of οὐ γάρ: cf. J.D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles* (rev. K.J. Dover) (Oxford, 1954), 169–70.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Hes. *Theog.* 46, 633, 664; of Hermes at *Od.* 8.335 and *Hom. Hymn* 18.12, 29.8.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Democ. B 175 DK = D303 Laks–Most.

<sup>36</sup> The whole context in general and ὑμεῖσιν (*Hom. Hymn* 3.190) in particular suggest a song of praise. If Choricus of Gaza (13.1 = p. 175 Foerster-Richtsteig) can be relied upon in this regard, in Pindar the Muses hymned 'the benefactions of Zeus to mankind' (τὰς τοῦ Διὸς εἰς ἀνθρώπους φιλοτιμίαις): see E. Prodi, 'Text as paratext: Pindar, Sappho, and Alexandrian editions', *GRBS* 57 (2017), 547–82, at 563–4.

<sup>37</sup> For a modern poetic response to this reading of the Muses' song, see A.R. Shapiro, 'Old joke', in *The Dead Alive and Busy* (Chicago, 2000), 3–4.

<sup>38</sup> See the diverse texts assembled in W.D. Furley and J.M. Bremmer, *Greek Hymns* (Tübingen, 2001). Theocritus 26 would not, I think, serve as a straightforward counterexample. For the positive reciprocity between men and gods that often structures cultic worship and hymns, see, respectively, R. Parker, 'Pleasing thighs: reciprocity in Greek religion', in C. Gill, N. Postlethwaite and R. Seaford (edd.), *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece* (Oxford, 1998), 105–25 and W.H. Race, 'Aspects of rhetoric and form in Greek hymns', *GRBS* 23 (1982), 5–14, at 8–10. Both scholars rightly highlight the centrality of χάρις.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. H.S. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods: Wayward Readings in Greek Theology* (Leiden and Boston, 2011), 159–60.

as scholars have not failed to observe,<sup>40</sup> has obvious connections with the performance of the Deliades (156–64) and also with the performance of the bard of this very hymn (165–78). Like the Muses' singing in Hesiod's *Theogony* (11–21, 36–52, 65–79) or in Pindar (*Nem.* 5.22–5, *Isthm.* 8.56a–60, fr. 31) or in Theognis (15–18) or like other divine performances elsewhere in the *Homeric Hymns* (4.418–33, 19.27–31, 27.16–20), here too the Muses' song serves as an inset parallel for the framing song (cf. ὕμνευειν, 190, of the Muses; ὕμνήσωειν, 158, of the Deliades; ὕμνήσω, 19; ὕμνέων, 178; ὕμνήσω, 207, all of the hymnic speaker).

Like the Muses, the blind bard of Chios sings about the relationship between men and gods. Like the Muses, the blind bard of Chios focusses on divine benefactions. Leto gave birth to Apollo as 'a delight to mortals' (χάρμα βροτοῖσι, 25), and this description proves to be programmatic.<sup>41</sup> In this poem Apollo features as a lover—quite literally—of mortals, and a serial one at that (ἐνὶ μνηστῆριον ... φιλότιτι, 208). The god, 'a delight to mortals' (25), also slays an inhuman monster who was 'an evil bane to living mortals' (ζωοῖσι κακὸν δῆλημα βροτοῖσιν, 364; cf. πῆμα βροτοῖσιν, 306) and 'did many evils to men on the earth' (κακὰ πολλὰ | ἀνθρώπους ἔρδεσκεν ἐπὶ χθονί, 302–3; cf. 355). The deity of this hymn is not an avatar of love for mankind or their saviour from suffering, but benefactions to mankind repeatedly feature in his own explicitly stated and honour-driven motivations (ἀνθρώπων, 248; πᾶσι, 253; ἀνθρώποις, 288; πᾶσι, 293; βροτοῖσιν, 364). Both the Delian and the Pythian sections of this hymn emphasize, in different ways, how the divine gifts of Apollo benefit mankind.

Apollo's birth transforms the uninhabited Delos into a scene of collective human joy (146–55). There mortals who cannot 'find a remedy for death and a defence against old age' (οὐδὲ δύνανται | εὐρέμεναι θανάτοιο τ' ἄκος καὶ γῆρας ἄλκαρ, 192–3) transiently approach the intransient state of the gods through their worship of him: φαίη κ' ἀθανάτους καὶ ἀγήρους ἔμμεναι αἰεὶ | ὅς τὸτ' ἐπαντιάσει' ὅτ' Ἰάονες ἀθροοὶ εἶεν, 'one who encountered the Ionians then, when they are gathered together, would say that they are immortal and ageless forever' (151–2).<sup>42</sup> Apollo is not responsible for human mortality, but he is responsible for an enduring cultic institution through which that human frailty is nearly, if only for a moment (τότ' ... ὅτ', 152), transcended.

Apollo also establishes an oracle in Delphi through which he discloses the will of Zeus to men (132, 252–3, 292–3; cf. 393–6, 484). He thus alleviates, if only partially, the inherent ignorance of mankind (ἀφραδέες, 192).<sup>43</sup> Apollo is not responsible for human ignorance, but he is responsible for an enduring cultic institution through which men attain knowledge otherwise unavailable to them. In this hymn, the gifts of the gods are good and work to mitigate, not exacerbate, mortal frailties.

<sup>40</sup> E.g. S. Lonsdale, 'Homeric Hymn to Apollo: prototype and paradigm of choral performance', *Arion* 3 (1994/5), 25–40; M.-C. Leclerc, 'Cheminevements vers la parole. Notes sur l'*Hymne Homérique à Apollon*', *Pallas* 59 (2002), 151–65, at 153 and 156–7.

<sup>41</sup> Common language for the gods, especially in the context of their birth: cf. χάρμα βροτοῖσιν, *Il.* 14.325 (Dionysus); ἀθανάτοις θνητοῖσι τ' ὄνεαρ καὶ χάρμα, *Hom. Hymn* 2.269 (Demeter); χάρμα μέγ' ἀνθρώποισι, *Hom. Hymn* 16.4 (Asclepius); ἀνδράσι χάρμα φίλοις, *Pind. Pyth.* 9.64 (Aristaeus); further examples are collected in K. Keyssner, *Gottesvorstellung und Lebensauffassung im griechischen Hymnus* (Stuttgart, 1932), 121–3.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. J.T. Kakridis, 'Zum homerischen Apollonhymnos', *Philologus* 92 (1937), 104–8, at 105; A. Heubeck, 'Gedanken zum homerischen Apollonhymnos', in id., *Kleine Schriften zur griechischen Sprache und Literatur* (Erlangen, 1984), 171–86, at 183–4.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Förstel (n. 1), 233; Clay (n. 12), 55–6; Richardson (n. 4), 113.

When asked by the Cretans how they will live off the infertile land of Delphi, Apollo, with a smile (ἐπιμειδῆσας, 531), addresses them with language that recalls the Muses' song: νήπιοι ἄνθρωποι, δυστήμονες, οἱ μελεδῶνας | βούλεσθ' ἀργαλέους τε πόνους καὶ στείνα θυμῷ, 'ignorant mortals of misplaced endurance, you who want anxieties, hard labours and difficulties for the heart' (532–3). As their unfounded concerns for their livelihood show, the Cretans share in the ignorance common to mankind (νήπιοι, 532; cf. ἀφραδέες, 192). The god cures this common ignorance by disclosing the uncommonly blessed future which they will enjoy through their service to him (535–43).

As νήπιοι (532) looks back to ἀφραδέες (192), so δυστήμονες (532) recalls τλημοσύνας (191). Scholars generally translate δυστήμονες (532) along the lines of 'suffering hard things' (LSJ<sup>9</sup> s.v.),<sup>44</sup> but this interpretation is questionable. The -τήμων stem is, before the fifth century, unlikely to convey the idea of suffering by itself (see pages 2–3 above). Perhaps the δυσ- prefix here adds the notion of suffering ('enduring *bad things*'), but it seems more probable that the following relative clause helps to explain this rare word.<sup>45</sup> The Cretans are δυστήμονες (532) not because of what they suffer—they are not suffering anything at the moment—but rather because, as Apollo ironically alleges, they act as if they *want* (βούλεσθ', 533) to endure 'anxieties, hard labours and difficulties for the heart' (532–3). Their ritual office entails that they will not have to undertake the common human hardships of making a living off of the land (528–30, 535–7). δυστήμονες (532) may thus be translated as 'of misplaced endurance'.

Apollo does not inflict suffering on his Cretan officiants or act with malicious intent towards them (οὐ τι κακὰ φρονέων, 482); he makes them honoured and prosperous (478–85, 521–2, 536–9). If they some day fall under the power of others (542–3), then this will be because they disregard the god's prophetic warning and succumb to vices inherent to mankind: they will have other men as their masters if 'there will be any rash word or deed or *hybris*, as is the way of mortal men' (ἤε τι τηύσιον ἔπος ἔσεται ἤε τι ἔργον, | ὕβρις θ', ἢ θέμις ἐστὶ καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων, 540–1).<sup>46</sup> These particular mortal men will suffer not because of, but rather despite, all that they have from the gods.

Among the gifts of the gods is song (δῶρα θεῶων, Hes. *Theog.* 103; cf. 93), the realm of the Muses and of Apollo himself (cf. *Hom. Hymn* 3.131, *Hom. Hymn* 25). The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* hints self-reflexively at how this gift too may palliate

<sup>44</sup> E.g. Harder in *Lfgre* s.v.: 'something like miserably *struggling on*'; West (n. 12), 113: 'of misplaced suffering'; F. Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek* (transl. R. Barritt-Costa et al.) (Leiden and Boston, 2015), s.v.: 'very unhappy, unfortunate, wretched'; compare and contrast Thalmann (n. 4), 92: 'poor enduring ones'. The other early instantiations of this rare adjective, both from fragmentary contexts, look related to our passage: Soph. fr. 555.8 *TrGF* (χεῖρὶ τῇ δυστήμονι), from a description of men labouring to make a living from the sea (cf. *Hom. Hymn* 3.528–30; R. Carden, *The Papyrus Fragments of Sophocles* [Berlin, 1974], 99); Orph. fr. 396.14–15 Bernabé (ἄφρονε[σ] ἀνθ[ρῶ]ποι, δυστήμονες [οὔτε κακοῖο | αἴσαν ἐπ]ερ[χο]μένου π[ρ]ογνόμονες οὔτ' ἀ[γ]α[θοῖο]), verses of debated date and provenance: see B. Currie, *Homer's Allusive Art* (Oxford, 2016), 81–4 with bibliography.

<sup>45</sup> C. Brügger, *Homer's Iliad: The Basel Commentary. Book XXIV* (transl. B.W. Millis and S. Strack) (Berlin, 2017), 179 (on *Il.* 24.479): 'explanatory relative clauses are used *inter alia* with rare words that apparently require explanation ... or they serve to amplify/clarify the significance of a word in context'.

<sup>46</sup> Together with most scholars, I take this as a *post eventum* prophesy: cf. M. Chappell, 'Delphi and the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*', *CQ* 56 (2006), 331–48, at 332–4.

human suffering. The blind bard imagines a visitor to Delos conversing with the Deliades (166–70):<sup>47</sup>

ἐμεῖο δὲ καὶ μετόπισθε  
 μνήσασθ', ὅπποτε κέν τις ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων  
 ἐνθάδ' ἀνεῖρηται ξείνος ταλαπεῖριος ἐλθών·  
 ὦ κούραι, τίς δ' ὕμιν ἀνὴρ ἡδιστος αἰοιδῶν  
 ἐνθάδε πωλεῖται, καὶ τέφ' ἔρπεσθε μάλιστα;

Remember me in the future, whenever some mortal man, a stranger who has endured trials, comes here and asks, 'o maidens, which singer who visits here is most pleasing to you, and whom do you most enjoy?'

Someone who has endured trials (ταλαπεῖριος, 168) seeks a beautiful song that will draw his mind away from his cares.<sup>48</sup> The faceless portrait of this stranger invites audiences to reflect on the nature of their own pleasure in the hymn of the blind bard from Chios. Like Apollo's Delian festival and his Delphic oracle, this song in celebration of the god may also help to alleviate, but not erase, human pain.

In this hymn the gods too take pleasure in song but not as a relief from pain. On the usual reading of lines 189–93, the Olympians rejoice in hearing about how they themselves make human beings miserable. On the interpretation of the Muses' song advanced here, the nature of their pleasure is less malevolent and more complex. The Olympians celebrate their own power to give good things to men, but the Muses' song also includes humans bearing those pains which none the less define mortal existence. As the Phaeacians enjoy poetry about war in *Odyssey* Book 8, so for the gods human pain, transmuted through poetry, becomes a source of pleasure.<sup>49</sup> As in Pindar's *Isthmian* 4 Ajax's deadly serious exploits in battle and suicide become, through Homer, a theme for later men to 'play with' (λοιοῖσι ἀθύρειν, 39),<sup>50</sup> so for the gods of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* a song about mortal suffering becomes a source of sport (παίζουσι', 201; παίζοντα, 206). So far from feeling that human sorrow is cheapened by providing entertainment for the gods, one might feel that it is instead dignified by becoming the object of their attention.<sup>51</sup> The immortals on Olympus, in a scene of supreme happiness, are not wholly absorbed in their own magnificence but turn their minds to mortal hardships on earth.

<sup>47</sup> On this imagined interaction, see H.L. Spelman, 'Event and artefact: the *Hymn to Apollo*, archaic lyric, and early Greek literary history', in F. Budelmann and T. Phillips (edd.), *Textual Events: Performance and the Lyric in Early Greece* (Oxford, 2018), 151–71.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Hes. *Theog.* 98–103; Miller (n. 3), 62–3; Heiden (n. 11), 152. ταλαπεῖριος describes one who has endured trials (τλάω + πεῖρα): J.B. Hainsworth in A. Heubeck, S. West and J.B. Hainsworth, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey. Volume 1: Introduction and Books I–VIII* (Oxford, 1988), 322; M. Chappell, 'A commentary on the Homeric hymn to Delian Apollo, with prolegomena' (Diss., UCL, 1995), 270–1; R. Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* (Leiden and Boston, 2010), s.v.

<sup>49</sup> For pleasure from poetry about pain, see C.W. Macleod, 'Homer on poetry and the poetry of Homer', in C.W. Macleod, *Collected Essays* (Oxford, 1983), 1–15, at 8 and 11; S. Halliwell, *Between Ecstasy and Truth: Interpretations of Greek Poetics from Homer to Longinus* (Oxford, 2011), 25–6, 55–76 and *passim*.

<sup>50</sup> See H.L. Spelman, *Pindar and the Poetics of Permanence* (Oxford, 2018), 56–7, who notes the 'ludic connotations' (at 56) of the infinitive.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford, 1980), ch. 6 on the 'divine audience' of the *Iliad*.



This passage may indeed deserve a special place among the evidence for ‘Greek pessimism’,<sup>52</sup> but the pessimism at issue pertains to human beings, not to the gods. The Muses’ song combines a view of divine benefactions that is profoundly optimistic with a view of the human condition that is profoundly pessimistic—or, we might prefer to say, realistic. Within their performance, the spectacle of human pain serves to enhance, by contrast, the beatitude of the immortals.<sup>53</sup> Within the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* as a whole, this dark view of human life provides a foil that brings out the brilliance of Apollo and his ‘divine gifts’ (190) to wretched mortals. The Muses’ song about the relationship between men and gods expresses a different perspective on the same world that is depicted throughout the rest of this hymn. By allowing its audiences to glimpse the world as the gods see it, the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* may help some mortals to understand a little bit better their own very different place within that shared world.

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<sup>52</sup> Förstel (n. 1), 228.

<sup>53</sup> Clay (n. 12), 55: ‘the gods’ celebration ... is enhanced or at least remains incomplete without a reminder of the afflictions of mankind’.