Transgressive Toys:  
A Semantic Analysis of ἄθυρμα in Archaic and Classical Greek  
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1. Introduction

This paper seeks to understand the connotations and semantic field of the word ἄθυρμα in archaic and classical Greek. The brief definitions offered by the major Greek dictionaries seem insufficient to accurately capture the meaning of ἄθυρμα. Cunliffe offers ‘a plaything,’ or in the plural, ‘gewgaws.’ LSJ has a slightly longer definition, suggesting ‘plaything,’ ‘toy,’ ‘beautiful objects,’ ‘adornments,’ ‘delight,’ ‘songs,’ and ‘battle.’ Even this definition does not include all the meanings of ἄθυρμα. In archaic hexameter poetry, ἄθυρμα refers to a child’s toy, jewelry, a sandcastle, and a tortoise shell that later became Hermes’ lyre. The noun stands as a proxy for the Achaean wall in the Iliad, and the hundred-headed narcissus flower in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter. In later Greek, ἄθυρματα belong to the Muses, to Ares, and on the tragic and comic stage. The diverse contexts in which the noun ἄθυρμα appears necessitates a more thorough exploration of the word’s semantic meaning. This exploration will begin with an overview of the etymology of ἄθυρμα.

The noun ἄθυρμα is a derivative of the verb ἄθύρω, “to play.” The verb ἄθύρω is rare in prose and used only in the present tense form. Chantraine translates the derivative ἄθυρμα as ‘toy,’ ‘game,’ or ‘amusement,’ translations which are also offered by Cunliffe and LSJ. The usual verb to describe children’s play, Chantraine notes, is παίζω, whereas

1 For rarity in prose, see Chantraine (1968: 28). For use of the verb only in the present see Frisk (1972: s.v. ἄθύρω).
ἀθόρω is often used to talk about dance or playing a musical instrument. In archaic Greek, the noun ἀθύρμα is only attested in archaic hexameter poetry in the forms ἀθύρμα and ἀθύρματα. In later Greek, Bacchylides uses the dative and genitive plurals (ἀθύρμασι and ἀθύρματοι). The diminutive form ἀθύρματοι appears once in writings of Philoxenus of Cythera and twice in Imperial Greek, in the writings of Athenaeus and Lucian.

The α- prefix in ἀθόρω is not privative, but is a copulative prefix Proto-Indo-European *sny-. Frisk points out the connection of the word to Baltic and Slavic languages: Russian дурь (‘folly’) and Lithuanian padurmai (‘with impetuosity’) are related to the Indo-European stem dhýer- (‘whirl, storm, hurry’). The stem dhýer- is also related to Khaling dur, dura, meaning ‘dizziness,’ ‘tomfoolery,’ and—a meaning of particular interest for this paper—“anesthetization.”

The following sections of this paper explore the uses of ἀθύρμα in archaic and classical Greek. The first section discusses archaic hexameter poetry, beginning with Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey and concluding with the Homeric Hymn to Demeter and the Homeric Hymn to Hermes. Throughout these sections, I will show that the word ἀθύρμα is used in transgressive contexts and is reductive, diminishing, or devaluing; for the poet

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2 Chantreina (1968: 28). Chantreina also offers μυγνέων and σχιστάν as synonyms for ἀθόρω. For ἀθόρω used in a musical context, see Plato, Laws, 796b: “and at Athens too, our Maiden, gladdened by the pastime of the dance, thought that one must not play with empty hands” (ἦ δὲ αὖ ποι οὐ τὰ ἑλπὶ κόρη καὶ ἀθόρω, εὑρανθέσθαι τῇ τῆς χορείας παιδίς, καὶ τὰς ἀθύρματος σιν ἐχθῆς δεῖν ἀθύρωμα). This passage also connects the verb ἀθόρων (‘to play’) with the idea of childhood: τῇ τῆς χορείας παιδίς (the pastime of the dance).

3 Frisk (1972: s.v. ἀθόρω). For ἀθύρμασι, see Bacchylides, Epigrams 6.313.3, 6.1.3; for ἀθύρματοι see Bacchylides Dithyrambs 4.57. For the diminutive form, see Philoxenus, Fragmenta e.24; Ath. Deginosophias 14.50.56 (Kaibel edition); Lucian, Dialogi marini 1.5.2.

4 Roberti Becces (2010: 1).

5 Frisk (1972: s.v. ἀθόρω).


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to make something an ἄθυρμα is an act perhaps best paralleled by Latin *diminuere*, ‘to violate’, ‘to destroy by outrage’, ‘to diminish,’ or ‘to lessen.’ An ἄθυρμα reduces the importance of an object, diminishes the consequences of a transgressive act, and devalues the perspectives and objectives of characters on one side of a poem’s conflict. Furthermore, an ἄθυρμα is frequently an item involved in gift-exchange and signals to the audience that a gift-exchange is incomplete or transgressive. The subsequent sections demonstrate that this more nuanced understanding of ἄθυρμα augments or improves our understanding of its use in lyric, tragedy, and comedy.

2. *Archaic ἄθυρματα*

A. Apollo’s ἄθυρμα in the *Iliad*

Given the militaristic and violent content of the *Iliad*, it is not surprising that the word ἄθυρμα appears only once in the poem. It *is* surprising, however, that the word appears not when Hector comforts his wife and newborn child nor when Thetis reflects on Achilles’ childhood, but rather when Apollo casts down the wall of the Achaeans.

To understand the use of ἄθυρμα in the *Iliad*, it is necessary to understand that the construction of the wall itself was transgressive. Garcia notes that the transgressions of the Achaeans in construction their wall are twofold—the Achaeans not only neglect their sacrificial obligations before constructing the wall, but also fail to seek divine approval for their initial plan to build the wall.⁸ Poseidon laments these oversights of the Achaeans (7.448–453):

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⁷ Lewis and Short, s.v. *diminuo*.
Do you not see, that now again the long-haired Achaeans have built a wall to defend their ships, and around it driven a ditch, but did not give to the gods illustrious hecatombs? Surely, its fame will spread as far as the morning light, and they will forget that wall that I and Phoebus Apollo built for the warrior Laomedon with much toil.

While Poseidon is displeased with the Achaeans’ omission of “glorious hecatombs” (κλειτάς ἐκατόμβας, 7.450) for the gods, his primary objection to the wall is that the fame of the wall will eclipse that of the Trojan wall that he and Apollo built. ⁹ Zeus’ response to Poseidon equates the kleos of the Trojan wall to the kleos of Poseidon himself (7.456-458):

ἀλλὰς κεῖν τις τοῦτο θεῶν δείσεις νόμιμα,  
δειχνέον ἄρα ναύαρτορος λαέρας τε μένος τε  
σὸν δ’ ἢτοι κλέος ἔσται δὴσον τ’ ἔπικινεταί ἡώς.

Some other god might fear this scheme, one who is much weaker than you in strength of hand and might; surely, your own fame will spread as far as the morning light.

Zeus says here that Poseidon’s kleos will “spread as far as the morning light” (δὴσον τ’ ἔπικινεταί ἡώς, 7.458), using the same language that Poseidon used to describe the kleos of the Achaean wall a few lines earlier on 7.451. It seems difficult to believe that

⁹ This is one of two competing explanations for the building of the Trojan wall in the Iliad. In this passage from book 7, Poseidon assigns Apollo an active role in the construction of the Trojan wall, but in book 21, Poseidon claims to have built the wall alone while Apollo herded cattle (cf. 21.446-7).
the wall of the Achaeans—built in one day with a foundation of funeral mounds—could compete with the Trojan wall so as to be a threat to Poseidon’s own kleos.\textsuperscript{10}

The idea that the Achaean wall is a threat to Poseidon’s own kleos requires that the poem be aware of its own resolution; for such a threat to exist, the Achaean wall must actually outlast the Trojan wall—and it does. The beginning of book 12 makes it clear that the Achaean wall is only destroyed after the fall of Troy (12.10-12):

\begin{quote}
οῖρα μὲν Ἐκτόρ οὐδὲς ἔην καὶ μήνι Ἀχιλλεὺς
καὶ Πριμοῖο ἀνακτὸς ἀπόρρητος πόλις ἔπλεν,
τόφρα δὲ καὶ μέγα τεῖχος Ἀχαίων ἐμπεδοῦν ἦν
\end{quote}

As long as Hector was alive and Achilles filled with wrath and the city of lord Priam was not sacked, so long the great wall of the Achaeans stood firm.

Garcia notes that the temporal words in this passage “locate the destruction of the Achaean wall far in the future.”\textsuperscript{11} For example, the audience is assured that “as long as” (οῖρα μὲν, 12.10) Hector lived, then “for so long” (τόφρα δὲ, 12.12) would the wall of the Achaeans still stand. “But when” (ἂντὰρ ἔπει, 12.13) the Greeks left behind the defeated Trojans, “then indeed” (ὅπερ τότε 12.17) Poseidon and Apollo met with Zeus and destroyed the Achaean wall.\textsuperscript{12} These lines confirm Poseidon’s fears: the Achaean wall will outlast the Trojan wall that he and Apollo had built, and is a real threat to his own kleos.

\textsuperscript{10} Scodel (1982: 34). The attribution of kleos to a god in these lines is quite unusual, as is the attribution of kleos to the Achaean wall itself. Normally kleos is “almost exclusively used as an attribute of human agents” (Bassi (2014: 132)). In the Iliad, the only other object to be attributed kleos is Nestor’s shield (cf. Hom. Il. 8.192)—notably, while the Achaean wall is ascribed kleos by Poseidon, the Trojan wall never is (Ibid.).

\textsuperscript{11} Garcia (2013: 107).

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
However, the gods’ destruction of the Achaean wall ironically achieves the opposite of its intended effect. When Zeus assures Poseidon that he need not worry about his kleos, he advises Poseidon to destroy the Achaean wall (7.461-3):

tεῖχος ἀναρρήξας τὸ μὲν εἰς ἄλα πάν καταχεῦαι,
ἂντις δ’ ἡμῶν μεγάλην ψαμάθοις καλύψαι,
ὅς κέν τοι μέγα τεῖχος ἀμαλδύνηται λχαίων
tear the wall apart and heap the whole of it into the salt sea,
and bury again the entire great shore with sand,
so the Achaean’s great wall is obliterated.

Apollo heeds Zeus’ advice, destroying the wall as if he is a child scattering sand, covering the wall (Hom. Il. 15.363). Warriors in the Iliad only attain their kleos “after...death, or in the language of the poem, after death has ‘covered’ (καλύπτω)” them. Often the phrase “darkness covered his eyes” (σκότος ὀσσε κάλυψε) is used as a euphemism for death, “constitut[ing] a rhetorical deferral in which death is a disappearance rather than non-existence.” Zeus uses the same language to describe the destruction of the wall, telling Poseidon and Apollo that after they destroy the wall, they should “cover it with sand” (ψαμάθοις καλύψαι). When Apollo covers the wall with sand, he creates the conditions necessary for the Achaean wall to ‘achieve’ kleos, rather than destroying the wall’s kleos. Furthermore, the destruction of the wall, built out of the connected funeral mounds of the Achaean soldiers, leaves the bodies of the Achaean soldiers laying on the beach without funeral markers. In this way the wall’s destruction not only protects Poseidon’s kleos, but also places the kleos of the dead fighters “in danger of

perishing forever into the depths of time.” However, when the wall is “covered”
(καλύψατ) with sand, the Greek warriors entombed beneath the wall receive a “covering”
as well. The wall's covering “thus constitutes a euphemistic or compensatory reference”
for the kleos of the perished Greek warriors. In addition, because the warriors are buried
by the sand resulting from Apollo’s destruction, the covering of the wall is also symbolic
of Apollo’s divine power.

Homer narrates that Apollo casts down the wall of the Achaeans as if he has made
it into a “plaything” (αθύρματα) (15.360-367):

τῇ ἐ�τῷ γε προχέοντο φαλαγγηόν, πρὸ ᾿Απόλλωνος
αἰγίδος ἔχον ὡρίτμον· ἔρρειε τοὺς Ἀχαιόν
ὑπὸ μάλα, ὡς ὅτε τις ψάμαθον πᾶς ἄγγει καλάσσεις,
ὅς τε ἔτει σὺν ποίησις αθύρματα νηπιέσθησιν
ὅνας τυχός συνέχεις ποσίν καὶ χεράτιν ἄθορόν.
ὅς ὅτα ποῦ νῦν θείος Φοῖβος πόλυν κάματον καὶ οἴζον
σύγχεσις Ἀργείων, αὐτοίσι δὲ φύζαν ἐνδόρροις.

There the Trojans poured forth in battle ranks, Apollo at the front
holding the prized aegis; he threw down the wall of the Achaeans
without effort at all, as a child tumbles sand by the sea,
who when in his childish way has made his play-castle,
sweeps it away again with his feet and hands, still playing—
so then you, Apollo to whom we cry aloud, destroyed the work of much toil and
friendship,
of the Argives, and aroused the terror of panic upon them.

By redefining the destruction of the wall as a child’s tantrum, the poem simultaneously
punishes the Achaeans for their lack of piety when constructing the wall and diminishes
the consequences of Apollo’s destruction of the wall.

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17 Translations of the Iliad are from Alexander (2015).
The language used to describe Apollo’s destruction of the wall also reveals the fruitlessness of such an action. The word used to describe the manner in which Apollo destroys the ἄθόρματα in 15.363 is νηπιέσσιν, ‘in his childishness.’ The word νηπιές is also used to describe how the suitors challenge Odysseus in the Odyssey: “Eupeithes was their leader in their foolishness” (τοῖς δ’ Εὐπειθῆς ἣρησατο νηπιέσσι, 24.469). Both in these lines from the Iliad and in the Odyssey, νηπιές describes a foolish, childish, and ultimately unsuccessful action. In other words, νηπιές indicates when a character’s action has the opposite or less than its intended effect. The use of νηπιές again reveals the poet’s knowledge of the Iliad’s end; the bard knows that even though Apollo does destroy the wall, his destruction does not succeed in destroying the wall’s kleos.

At the beginning of book 12, the audience is informed that the Achaeans wall will also be destroyed by flooding rivers, let loose by Apollo and Poseidon (12.19-23):

δόσοι ἅπ’ Ἰδαίον ὀρέων ἀλαδε προφέουσιν,
Ῥησός ό’ Ἑπτάπορος τε Κάρησός τε Ροδίος τε
Γρηγυκός τε καὶ Αἰσθησ κιὸς τε Σκάμανδρος
καὶ Σιμώες, ὄθι πολλὰ βοῶρια καὶ τρυφάλειαι
κάπτεσον ἐν κοίνηι καὶ ἦμιθεῖαν γένος ἀνδρῶν·

All the rivers that stream from the hills of Idea to the sea—Rhesos and Heptaporos and Karesos and Rhodos and Granicus and Aisepos and shining Scamander and Simois, beside which many ox-hide shields and crested helmets had fallen in the dust, along with the race of half-divine men.18

The language of this passage is unusual. Most of the rivers listed here are never mentioned again elsewhere in the epic; while Achilles fights the river Scamander later in

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18 I have translated ἦμιθεῖαν γένος ἀνδρῶν as the “race of half-divine men,” while Alexander’s translation reads “race of almost divine men.”
the poem, the other rivers are not mentioned anywhere else.\textsuperscript{19} The use of the term ἡμίθεοι near the end of this passage is also unique; this is the only passage in Homer where heroes are referred to as ἡμίθεοι or otherwise placed in a different ontological category as later people.\textsuperscript{20} By placing this division between the Iliadic heroes and later men, the Trojan war forms a “boundary between the heroes and later, weaker generations, or between mythical and truly historical time.”\textsuperscript{21} In this way, Scodel argues, the Trojan war “functions as a myth of destruction, in which Zeus brings about the catastrophe in order to remove the demigods from the world and separate men from gods.”\textsuperscript{22} Scodel compares the \textit{Iliad} to the myth of the Deluge in Near Eastern mythology, arguing that both destruction myths function to “divide the present age and its world order from an earlier...time.”\textsuperscript{23} The destruction of the Achaean wall, then, serves not only as a

\textsuperscript{19} The similarities between the wall of the Achaeans and Achilles himself have not gone unnoticed. The wall of the Achaeans is a temporary and inadequate replacement for the sulking Achilles who has withdrawn from battle. Because Achilles has withdrawn from battle, the Achaeans are in need of a wall, which explains the sudden appearance of the wall in book 7. Achilles himself points out to Odysseus the connection between the wall and his own absence (9.348-51):

\begin{quote}

η μὲν δὴ μάλα πολλὰ πονήσατο νόσφιν ἐμεῖο,
καὶ δὴ τεῖχος ἔδειμεν, καὶ ἔλασε τάφρον ἐπ’ αὐτῷ
εὐρείαν μεγάλην, ἐν δὲ σκόλοπας κατέπηξεν.
ἀλλ’ ὁδ’ ὡς δύναται σθένος Ἐκτόρος ἀνδροφόνοι.

To be sure, he has done a great deal of work without me; he has now even built a wall, and driven a trench around it, broad and long, and planted stakes inside; but not even so will he be able to withstand the strength of man-slaying Hector.
\end{quote}

Achilles is right: the wall is ultimately destroyed, while Achilles must return to the battlefield to defeat Hector. The poet builds a clear parallel between the wall and Achilles by having the wall destroyed by flooding rivers. While the rivers (including Scamander) destroy the Achaean wall, Achilles is able to defeat the river Scamander. Cf. Boyd (1995).

\textsuperscript{20} Scodel (1982: 34).
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 36.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 40.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
temporary replacement for Achilles, but also symbolizes the end of the whole Heroic age. Porter makes the same point:

[T]he Trojan war marks the dividing line between mythical and historical time and a final separation of the divine and the human. After Troy, we enter into history, leaving myth definitively behind... Seen in this light, Troy is not only a monument, whether of the past or of the poetic imagination; it is a bulwark against human obliteration. But Troy is this only insofar as it survives in memory. Following a Kafkaesque logic, we could say that you can be sure you are alive so long as you can tell yourself that Troy no longer exists.

Likewise, following Porter’s logic, we could say that you can be sure that history has begun—that the age of heroes has ended—so long as you can tell yourself the Achaean wall has been destroyed. The Achaean wall—a mortal artifact constructed without the instruction nor approval of the gods—is destroyed in Poseidon and Zeus’ final attempt to preserve the preeminence of the divine. The necessity of the wall’s destruction is highlighted by the “Olympian overcompensation” in the wall’s destruction—the gods take nine full days to destroy a wall the Greeks built in one day. Poseidon’s need to destroy the Achaean wall demonstrates his fear of mortal power and mortal achievement. Yet, as I have suggested above, the destruction of the Achaean achieves the opposite of Poseidon’s desire effect.

At the final moment of the Achaean wall’s destruction, we are given a simile that reduces the Achaean wall to an ἄθρωμα and Apollo to a child. Although Richard Martin does not mention this simile specifically in his introduction to Lattimore’s Iliad, his discussion of other Homeric similes sheds light on the function of the one at hand:

26 Ibid., 10.
Similes work like miniature lyric poems enabling a narrator to express a range of attitudes toward the story being told. They are the link to the consciousness of the poet; through them an audience, almost unconsciously, takes on his panoramic view. 27

The bard, aware of the actual consequences of the wall’s destruction, uses νηπιές to characterize Apollo’s destruction as foolish; in the same line, he refers to the broken pieces of the Achaeans wall as ἄθωρματα.

By referring both to the wall as an ἄθωρμα and Apollo as a child, the bard is able to characterize Apollo’s actions as childish while still punishing the Achaeans for their impiety in the wall’s construction and showing the caprice of Apollo’s power. Instead of a violent description of the Olympian gods unwittingly bringing an end to the mythic age, the audience receives a seemingly inconsequential description of a child’s tantrum and a child smashing his own toys. In this way, we can begin to construct a more specific semantic meaning for ἄθωρμα: here, an ἄθωρμα diminishes the significance of Apollo’s action in the Iliad, provides a sheltered outlet for Apollo’s rage, and allows the poet to side-step discussion of the end of the mythic age and continue towards the end of the epic.

**B. ἄθωρμα in the Odyssey**

In the Iliad, ἄθωρμα is used to help the poet negotiate the power hierarchies between himself, mortals, and divine beings. Similarly, in the Odyssey, ἄθωρμα is used to highlight class hierarchies, and in particular, to differentiate between acceptable (aristocratic) and unacceptable types of trade and gift-exchange in the poem.

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A discussion of ἄθυρμα necessitates a discussion of the *Odyssey*’s treatment of the Phoenicians throughout the work. The Phoenicians are stereotyped as traders in the *Odyssey* and are characterized throughout the epic as deceitful people. In book 14, Odysseus mentions a Phoenician trader in the false narrative he spins for Eumaeus:

“Then a Phoenician man knowing guileful tricks came, a greedy knave, who had done much damage to men” (δὴ τότε Φοῖνιξ ἠλθεν ἄνηρ ἀπατήλας εἰδὼς, τρόκτης, δὲ δὴ πολλὰ κάκ᾽ ἀνθρώποις εὕρεται, 14.288-9). The poet describes the Phoenicians similarly in book 15, when they are referred to as “exceedingly crafty” (πολυπαίπαλοι, 15.416) and again as “greedy knaves” (τρόκται, 15.419). Furthermore, when Odysseus recounts to Athena a false story in which he kills Idomeneus’ son, Orsilochus, he mentions that he secured travel to Pylos or Elis on a Phoenician ship; this ship is blown off course, but Odysseus is sure to mention that “[the Phoenicians] did not wish to cheat me” (οὐδὲ ἤθελον ἐξαπατῆσαι, 13.277). The clarification that these Phoenician sailors did not intend to cheat Odysseus implicitly suggests that one would expect typical Phoenician sailors to do the opposite and thus reinforces the stereotype of the Phoenician trader.

Descriptions of Phoenician traders as cheating and deceitful are often juxtaposed with Odysseus’ mechanisms of gaining wealth. For example, when Odysseus, composing a false narrative for Eumaeus, describes meeting the τρόκτης Φοῖνιξ ἄνηρ in book 14, just two lines earlier he has commented that “I gathered much wealth among the Egyptians, for all men gave me gifts” (πολλὰ δ᾽ ἄγειρα χρήματ' ἄν' Ἑλλήνων ἄνδρας, δίδοσαν γὰρ ἀπαντεῖς, 14.285-6). This suggests that although the Phoenician traders’

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28 LSJ, s.v. τρόκτης offers “greedy knaves” as the translation for *Od*. 14.289 and *Od*. 15.416.
method of gaining wealth made the trader αὐτός, gaining wealth through gift-giving is actually honorable—Hence, Odysseus ascribes this method of wealth acquisition to himself within his false narrative. Warfare and plundering are other acceptable methods of wealth acquisition. While Odysseus (falsely) tells Athena that he killed Orsilochus, he says he did so because Orsilochus “wished to rob me of all the booty from Troy, for the sake of which I had endured grief in my heart, piercing through the wars of men and grievous waves” (με σπειρέσαι τῆς ἠλίδος ἥθελε πάσης Τροϊῶδος, τῆς εἶνεκ’ ἐγὼ πάθον ἄλγης θυμό, ἀνθρώπων τε πολέμους ἄλγειαν τε κύματα πείρων, 13.262-4). We see here two contrasting forms of gaining wealth. While it is acceptable and even honorable for Odysseus to gain wealth through fighting and subsequently plundering a city, it is not acceptable for Orsilochus to rob Odysseus. While a modern reader might equate the plundering of a city with robbery, the Odyssey distinguishes between goods gained through heavily ritualized and divinely inspired warfare and goods gained through highway robbery.

One scene in the Odyssey involving a Phoenician, however, runs counter to the stereotype of the cheating, deceitful Phoenician. In book 4, Telemachus receives a silver bowl as a gift from Menelaos. Menelaos tells Telemachus that he had been given this bowl by the king of Sidon, whom he calls a ἡρως (4.617). I. J. Winter offers an explanation for this seemingly uncharacteristic description of a Phoenician, writing that Menelaos’ reference to the king of Sidon as a ἡρως both “acknowledge[es] his gift within the frame of appropriate Greek standards of hospitality” and “establishe[s] [the men] as equals, Menelaos having been received in Sidon as Telemachus was now received in
Sparta."²⁹ That is, the elite figures in the *Odyssey* are participating in a form of ‘trade,’
where items of value are circulated between households by means of gift-giving. The
example of the king of Sidon allows us by contrast to see that the general characterization
of Phoenician trade in the *Odyssey* aligns with a non-elite, likely middle-class
perspective.

Furthermore, when elite figures like Menelaos *do* participate in traditional trade,
aristocratic trade is distinguished from lower-class trade by its primary motivation; in
contrast to lower-class traders who are primarily motivated by profit, aristocratic traders
are primarily motivated by reciprocal exchange. At the beginning of book 4, Telemachus
admires Menelaos’ palace, noting the “gleaming of the bronze” (χαλκοῦ τε στεροπῆν,
4.72) and the “gleaming of gold and amber, of silver and of ivory” (χρυσοῦ τ’ ἕλεκτρου
τε καὶ ἀργύρου ἡδ’ ἐλέφαντος, 4.73). Menelaos tells Telemachus whence he had gathered
this wealth, listing Cyprus, Phoenicia, Egypt, and Libya as stops along his voyage (4.83-5).
The places from which Menelaos’ gains his wealth are common stops on
Mediterranean trade routes, suggesting that Menalaos’ wealth “owes as much to the
profits he earned trading as it does to gifts and treasures from other kings.”³⁰ Menelaos,
instead of focusing his speech on the wealth he gained on the voyage, describes his eight
year expedition as “wandering” and highlights how he suffered when he came to possess
all this wealth. He laments, “Much did I suffer and wandered much before bringing all
this home in my ships” (.SpringApplication πολλὰ παθὼν καὶ πόλλα’ ἐπαληθείς ἡγαγότιν ἐν νησί,
4.81-2), and says he “wandered” (ἐπαληθείς, 4.83) to Cyprus, Phoenicia, and Egypt;

while he was “wandering” (ἡλόμην, 4.91) and “bringing together much property” (πολὸν βίοτον συναγείρων, 4.90), someone killed his brother—so really, he takes “no pleasure” (οὐ τοιχώρων, 4.93) at all in the wealth he brought home. In contrast to lower-class Phoenician traders described in other passages in the Odyssey, Menelaos does not emphasize profit, but instead “emphasizes the reciprocity of commercial exchange conducted among peers.”31

Let us now return to a discussion of ἀθυρμα, the first use of which is in book 15 when Eumaeus is describing his childhood to the beggar Odysseus (15.413-419):

τῆσιν δ’ ἀμφοτέρησι πατὴρ ἐμὸς ἐμβασίλευε,  
Κτήσιος Ὄρμενίδης, ἐπιείκελος ἀθανάτοισιν.  
ἐνθα δὲ Φοινικὲς ναυσικλυτοὶ ἤλυθον ἄνδρες,  
τρόκτατα, μυριὶ ἀγοντες ἀθυρματα νηὶ μελαίη.  
ἔσκε δὲ πατρὸς ἐμὸι γυνὴ Φοινίσσᾳ ἐνὶ ὀίκῳ,  
καλὴ τε μεγάλῃ τε καὶ ἀγία ἐργα ἑδύα.  
τὴν δ’ ἄρα Φοινικὲς πολυπαίπαλοι ἢπερότευον.

And over both of these cities there was one king, my father, Ktesios, Ormenos’ son, in the likeness of the immortals. There came Phoenician men, famous seafarers, gnawers at other men’s goods, with countless pretty things stored in their black ship. Now in my father’s house there was a Phoenician woman, both beautiful and tall, and skilled in glorious handiwork, and yet these Phoenicians, subtle men in their talk, beguiled her.32

Though Eumaeus’ and Odysseus’ conversation is on its face between a swineherd and a beggar, both participants are in reality elite characters. The beggar is Odysseus, and Eumaeus is a “leader of men” (ὁρχαμος ἄνδρον, 15.389) whose father was a king who ruled (ἐμβασίλευε, 15.413) over two cities. In this conversation, both characters

31 Ibid., 49.  
32 Translations of the Odyssey are by Lattimore (1967).
differentiate aristocratic trade from lower-class Phoenician trade. The ‘beggar’ inquires about Eumaeus’ childhood (15.384-8):

ή διεξαρθέο τπόλεις ἄνδρον εὐρυάγημα,
ή ἦν ναιστάσσε πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ,
ή σὲ γε μουνῳδέντα παρ’ οἴκεσιν ὂ παρὰ βουσίν
ἀνδρές δυσμενέες νησιῶν λάβον ἥδ’ ἐπέρρασαν
τοῦτ’ ἄνδρος πρὸς δόμαθ', ὥ δ’ ἄξιον ὅνον ἔδοκε.

Was there some storming of your wide-wayed city of people, where your father and the lady your mother lived, or were you caught along alone beside your sheep and your cattle? And was it enemy men who carried you in their ships and sold you here in this man’s house, being paid a fair price for you?

In these lines, Odysseus acknowledges Eumaeus’ elite status by referring specifically to his mother as πότνια, ‘mistress,’ or ‘queen.’ At the same time, the ‘beggar’ protects the aristocratic reputation of his alter-ego by affirming that if Eumaeus’ had been sold in this man’s (τοῦτ’ ἄνδρος, 15.388) house, surely the sale was for a fair price—an equal exchange, not for profit. Contrast this with the description of the Phoenicians who kidnapped Eumaeus, who “traded and piled up much substance” (ἐν νη ὁ λαμφρή βίοτον πολὺν ἐμπολόων, 15.456). The stereotype of the deceitful Phoenician is used in this passage to elevate Odysseus’ position by contrasting elite trade that is ἄξιον (“fair,” 15.388) with lower-class trade for profit.

The types of wealth gained through aristocratic and lower-class trade are also presented differently in this passage. When Odysseus participates in aristocratic trade that is ἄξιος, he gains elite wealth in the form of Eumaeus, who is literally an elite character. However, the Phoenicians’ ship is full of ἀθόρματα. Eumaeus’ use of ἀθόρματα to

33 Cunliffe, s.v. πότνια. In Homer, πότνια is a title of honor given to goddesses or, when joined with μήτηρ as it is here, means ‘lady mother.’
characterize the material goods the Phoenician’s carry in their ship denigrates the Phoenician’s wealth. That is, in this passage, the lexeme ἀθύρματα diminishes the value of the Phoenician’s wealth, and emphasizes the transgressive nature of trade for profit in the Odyssey.

The second use ἀθύρματα in the Odyssey also functions to distinguish elite and lower-class forms of trade and gift-exchange. In book 18, we are given a brief description of the maid Melantho’s childhood. Melantho was raised in Odysseus’ house, but ultimately betrays Odysseus and Penelope by sleeping with the suitor Eurymachus and—arguably—revealing that Penelope has been unwraving Laertes’ shroud at night. When Melantho was a child, Penelope cared for her like her own daughter and gave her ἀθύρματα (18.320-326):

ὡς δραθ’, αἰ δ’ ἐγέλασαν, ἐς ἀλλήλως δὲ ἱδοντο. τὸν δ’ αἰσχρὸς ἐννυπε Μελανθῷ καλλιστήρος, τὴν Δολίος μὲν έτυκτε, κόμισσα δὲ Πηνελόπεια, παιδὰ δὲ ὡς ἀτύπαλλε, δίδου δ’ ἂρ’ ἀθύρματα θυμὸν. ἀλλ’. οὖδ’ ὡς ἔχε πένθος ἐνι φρεσί Πηνελοπείης, ἀλλ’. ἂ γ’ Εὐρυμάχῳ μισγέσκετο καὶ φιλέσκειν. ἂ ὦ’ Ὀδυσσῆ’ ἐννυπεν ὀνειδεῖον’ ἐπέεσσοι

So he spoke, and they burst out laughing and looked at each other; but Melantho of the lovely face shamefully scolded him. Dolios was her father, but Penelope had taken her in, and cared for her like a daughter, and cheered her with presents; but even so her heart had no sorrow for Penelope, but she used to sleep with Eurymachus, and she was his sweetheart. Now she spoke to Odysseus and gave him a scolding.

By setting up Melantho as a foil for Telemachus, the poet is able to show that Melantho’s deceitful nature is not a result of Penelope’s parenting, but rather a result of Melantho’s low-class status. Melantho and Telemachus are both raised by Penelope in the absence of
their fathers, making them natural foils for each other in the poem.\textsuperscript{34} Furthermore, both Melantho and Telemachus inherit key characteristics from their fathers: Telemachus inherits his father’s worthiness and leadership ability, and Melantho inherits her cunning from her father Dolios, whose name suggests his own trickster traits.\textsuperscript{35} While Telemachus grows up to be an honorable family-defending man, Melantho grows up to be a traitorous, promiscuous member of the household.

The poet is able to articulate a relationship between social class and morality by contrasting the types of deceit practiced by Penelope and Melantho. A key example is Penelope’s loom-weaving trick. While Penelope’s loom-weaving trick is presented as virtuous, since it is done out of Penelope’s loyalty to Odysseus, Melantho’s revelation to the suitors that Penelope has been unwrapping Laertes’ shroud is seen as traitorous.\textsuperscript{36} This ‘double standard’ suggests that “Homer is interested in establishing normative expectations for Odysseus’s and other characters’ uses of deception through its consequences within this low-status family.”\textsuperscript{37} The use of deception by upper-class characters is a positive trait, but the use of deception by lower-class characters such as Melantho is not.

Furthermore, upper-class characters are able to use their deceit to control lower-class characters. Penelope is able to control the actions of the suitors—convincing them to continue waiting for Odysseus’ homecoming—by deceiving them by unwrapping Laertes’ funeral shroud at night. Laertes is also involved in weaving deception: Penelope

\textsuperscript{34} For a discussion of Melanthios and Melantho as lower-class foils for Telemachus, see Haller (2013: 281-5).
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 284.
\textsuperscript{36} For Melantho as the revealer of the loom trick, see Haller (2013: 276) and Vlahos (2011: 38).
\textsuperscript{37} Haller (2013: 269).
hopes that if Laertes hears of her current situation that he will "weave out the design in his heart" (εἰ δὴ ποῦ τινα κείνον ἐνι φρεσί μήτων ύφηνος, 4.739). From Penelope’s deception, we learn that "proficiency in δόλος is thus a key attribute in maintaining political control of social inferiors." Melantho, however, unravels Penelope’s deception by revealing it to the suitors. This suggests that Penelope did not successfully assimilate Melantho into her own aristocratic world: Melantho does not cooperate with Penelope’s elite use of deceit, but rather actively works against it.

Melantho’s unsuccessful incorporation into Penelope’s household is due to a mutual misunderstanding of the gift-exchange of ἀθόρματα that occurs in Melantho’s childhood. As I have argued, the primary purpose of aristocratic trade is an exchange of goods between equals, while lower-class trade is motivated by profit. Eumaeus and Odysseus, as two elite characters, both understand this distinction and take care to contrast the two forms of trade in their speech. When Penelope gives ἀθόρματα to Melantho, she is attempting to participate in an aristocratic gift-exchange that establishes a social alliance between herself and Melantho. Melantho, as a lower-class character, fails to correctly participate in this system of elite trade. Melantho accepts the ἀθόρματα, but never reciprocates with her allegiance to Penelope. Instead, Melantho profits by gaining ἀθόρματα but giving nothing herself. Not only does Melantho never reciprocate the gift-exchange with allegiance to Penelope, she also continues to actively transfer goods from the house of Odysseus to the suitors in her adulthood in the form of sexual favors and information.  

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38 Ibid., 276.
39 Ibid., 279.
We saw in the *Iliad* that the bard’s knowledge of the ultimate consequence of the Achaean wall’s destruction resulted in his choice of ἀθρομα to describe the wall. Similarly, here the bard’s knowledge of the ultimate failure of Penelope and Melantho’s gift-exchange results in his choice of ἀθρομα to describe the object of exchange. By using ἀθρομα, the poet diminishes the significance of their gift-exchange, signaling to his audience the incomplete and unsuccessful nature of the gift-exchange.

This interpretation, however, assumes Penelope’s good intentions and sincere attempt to participate in an elite gift-exchange with Melantho. In the above interpretation, the gift-exchange fails to incorporate Melantho into the household because Melantho fails to understand the elite world. We must also consider the possibility that Penelope fails to understand the lower-class world. That is, we must consider the possibility that the poet is complicit in the elite perspective. Instead of making a sincere attempt at gift-exchange with Melantho, Penelope intentionally gives Melantho low-value objects (ἀθροματα), presuming that Melantho would not know the difference. In this second interpretation, the ἀθροματα themselves become a δόλος and are another attempt by Penelope to use cunning to control lower-class characters. The likening of ἀθρομα to δόλος is not unique to the *Odyssey*: we see the association persist as we move from Homeric epic to the Homeric Hymns.

**C. Persephone’s ἀθρομα in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter**

The opening of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter introduces the audience to the four key players in the Hymn and establishes that the poem will tell the familiar story of the abduction of Persephone. By the end of the first three lines, the audience knows “fair-tressed Demeter” (Δήμητρ’ ἕκομοιν, 1), Demeter’s “slim-ankled” daughter Persephone
(θυγατρα τανύσφυρον, 2), and “heavy-thundering and mighty-voiced” Zeus (βαρύκτυπος εὐρύσπα Ζεός, 3), who gave Persephone to Hades (Hom. Hymn Dem. 8-18):

νάρκισσον θ’, δὲν φύτε δόλον καλυκῶπιδι κούρη
Γαία Άδως θηλήσα λαρισσόμενη Πολυδέκτη,
θαυμαστὸν γανόωντα σέβας τὸ γε πάσιν ἱδέοιαθι
ἀθανάτων τε θεοῖς ἡδὲ θνητῶς ἀνθρώπωις
τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ ρίζῃς ἁκατόν καρα ἔξεπερφύκη
cως’ ἠδὶστ’ ὀδύ, πᾶς τ’ οὐρανὸς εὐρύς ὅπερθεν
γαλά τε πᾶσι’ ἐγελάσασε καὶ ἅλμυρόν οἴδομα θαλάσσης,
ἡ δ’ ἀρα θαυμβήσασ’ ὁρέξατο χερσίν ἅμ’ ἄμφω
καλὸν ἀθυρμα λαβεῖν: χάνεν δὲ χθόνιν εὐφυάγυμα
Νύσσον ἀμ πεδίον τῇ ὄρουσιν ἀναξ πολυδέγμον
ἲπτοις ἀθανάτωι Κρόνου πολυνύμοιοι νύσσ.”

[Persephone plucked] the narcissus,
which Earth grew as a snare for the flower-faced maiden
in order to gratify by Zeus’ design the Host-to-Many,
a flower wondrous and bright, awesome for all to see,
for the immortals above and for mortals below.
From its root a hundredfold bloom sprang up and smelled
so sweet that the whole vast heaven above
and the whole earth laughed, and the salty swell of the sea.
The girl marveled and stretched out both hands at once
to take the lovely toy. The earth with its wide ways yawned
over the Nysian plain; the lord Host-to-Many rose up on her
with his immortal horses, the celebrated son of Kronos[.]40

The noun ἀθυρμα in line 16 is a proxy for the hundred-headed narcissus flower that Gaia creates as “bait” (δόλον, 8) for Persephone. There are several aspects of the flower’s
description that require close examination: (1) the flower is a narcissus flower; (2) Gaia
creates the flower and the flower has ἕκατον κάρα; and (3) the flower is called an ἀθυρμα
at the moment that Persephone reaches out to grab it.

(1) Narcissus. The narcissus flower is symbolic of the metaphorical death of both
Persephone and her virginity. The etymological root of narcissus is narc, from Greek

40 Translation of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter are by Foley (1994).
νάρκη meaning “numbness” or “deadness.” Persephone’s reaching towards the narcissus flower leads to her kidnapping and relocation into the underworld, the land of the dead. Though Persephone as a divine member of the Olympian pantheon cannot die in the mortal sense, her placement in the underworld causes Persephone to experience the emotional trauma of death because it separates her from her mother. While all marriages separate mothers from their daughters, typical marriages, both mortal and immortal, do not do so permanently. The marriage of Hades and Persephone requires a more permanent separation of Persephone from Demeter, a trauma parallel to the trauma of losing a loved one permanently to death. The separation of Persephone from Demeter is permanent because Demeter, the goddess of vegetation and other things, is unable to cross into the realm of Hades, the god of death. We might also view Persephone’s kidnapping as the symbolic death of her virginity, since flowers and meadows are often seen as symbols of virginity. Furthermore, since plants and life have an ancient association, the flowers in Persephone’s meadow also symbolize her “life and her death, which in this case is also her marriage.”

(2) ἐκατὸν κάρα The detail that this Narcissus flower was both made by Gaia and has one hundred blooms resonates with another creature of Gaia’s, the Ἐκατόγερα, or her hundred-handed children that, according to Hesiod, became the guards of the gates of

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41 LSJ, s.v. νάρκη.
42 Rudhardt (1978: 8).
45 For the ancient association between plants and life, see Alexiou (2002:195). For Persephone’s marriage as symbolic of her death, see DeBlois (1997: 250).
Tartarus. While in Theogony the Hundred-Handers become the guards that ensure the Titans’ endless suffering, in the Hymn to Demeter the hundred-headed Narcissus is the mechanism by which Persephone is made to suffer without her mother in the underworld. Gaia brought forth the Hundred-Handers to upset the political order of the gods; in contrast, Gaia’s willing participation in the abduction of Persephone is evidence that Gaia no longer wishes to destabilize the political order of the gods. The Hymn notes that Gaia, though she produces the flower willingly, only does so “in order to gratify by Zeus’s design the Host-to-Many” (Διὸς βούλησεν χαριζομένη Πολυδέκτη, Hom. Hymn to Dem. 9). Not only does Gaia produce the flower, she does so knowing the purpose is to snare Persephone: we are told that Gaia grows a δόλον, ‘bait’ or a ‘trick’ (Hom. Hymn to Dem. 8).

In the story of the Hundred-Handers in Theogony, Zeus gives his daughter Kymopoleia to Briareos (819), just as in the Hymn to Demeter Zeus gives his daughter Persephone to Hades. In giving Kymopoleia and Persephone to Briareos and Hades, respectively, Zeus, Hades, and Briareos are established as participants in a divine gift-exchange. Here, the theoretical lens presented in Gayle-Rubin’s 1975 essay “The Traffic in Women” offers a useful perspective on how the exchange of women is used in Theogony and the Hymn to Demeter to negotiate Olympian political power.

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46 See Theogony 624, 639, 714, 734, 735.
48 Foley’s commentary suggests that the present participle χαριζομένη does imply a sense of purpose; in Foley’s interpretation, Gaia’s “cooperation with Zeus” foreshadows the compromise between men and women (Zeus and Demeter) at the end of the Hymn.
Rubin writes that “the significance of giving is that is expresses, affirms, or creates a social link between the partners of an exchange.” The giving of women, however, is “more profound than the result of other gift transactions, because the relationship thus established is not just one of reciprocity, but one of kinship.” The kinship relationship that is formed through the traffic in women, Rubin explains, is exclusively between men; the women are the mechanism by which kinships are created. Rubin takes care to point out that even if a woman’s wishes are taken into account, she is unable to alter the nature of the exchange; men are still the beneficiaries.

The exchanges of women in both Theogony and the Hymn to Demeter establish relationships of kinship between Zeus and his new sons-in-law, affirming Zeus’ position as the leader of the gods. In Theogony, Zeus creates a social link between himself and the guardians of Tartarus by giving Kynomopoleia to Briareos. This assures that Briareos is content with the current hierarchy of power, in which Zeus rules and Briareos guards those who could threaten Zeus’ rule. Likewise in the Hymn to Demeter, in giving Persephone to Hades, Zeus performs an act of gift-giving that assures Hades’ contentment with the current Olympian political order. Rubin argues that the exchange of women is “profound” because it establishes a kinship system. The exchange of immortal women, then, is particularly “profound” because it establishes an immortal kinship system. When Zeus gives his immortal daughters as gifts to Hades and Briareos, he establishes eternal power hierarchies. In the case of Persephone, Rubin’s observation that

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49 Rubin (1990: 43).
50 Ibid., 44.
51 Ibid., 45.
52 Ibid.
“the weight of this entire [kinship] system may come to rest upon one woman kept in a miserable marriage” is then particularly poignant.53

Just as Persephone is used by Zeus to negotiate Olympian political power, she is used to maintain stability in the divine timē economy in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. At the beginning of the *Hymn*, Persephone is without any timē, and therefore as Clay argues has “no place in the divine pantheon, because a god without timē is scarcely a god at all.” The flower that Persephone reaches for—a one-of-a-kind hundred-headed flower created by Gaia—is certainly valuable enough to constitute the beginning of Persephone’s collection of timē. However, the *Hymn* actively avoids discussions of Persephone as a possessor of any timē by (1) destroying the flower before Persephone ever actually possesses it, and (2) referring to the flower as an ἄθρομα instead of a νάρκισσον. These two details reshape the argument of the *Hymn*. The *Hymn* is not about Persephone’s place in the divine timē economy, but rather about how Persephone herself is used to maintain the stability of the divine timē economy, of which gift-giving is a central component. Demeter is able to disrupt the divine timē economy by allowing crops and vegetation to wither and die. Because crops are a central component of sacrifice, killing them also prevents gift exchange in the form of sacrifice between mortals and gods.

Though Persephone reaches for the flower, before she is able to grasp it “[t]he Earth with its wide ways yawned over the Nysian plain” (χάνε δὲ χθόνιν εὐρύγαμνα Νόστον ἄμπεδον, *Hom. Hymn to Dem*. 16-17). By preventing Persephone from

53 Ibid., 63.
possessing the flower, the poet is able to avoid dealing with Persephone’s entrance into the divine timē economy and casts Persephone not as possessor, but as possessed.

According to Rubin, because Persephone herself is functioning as timē exchanged between Hades and Zeus, it must be the men who benefit from the exchange and not Persephone.54

(3) Æ̂̂̂̄̂̂̂̂̂θυρμα The substitution of the term Æ̂̂̂̂̂̂θυρμα for νάρκισσον diminishes the value of the one-of-a-kind νάρκισσον in the eyes of the other characters in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter. At the moment that Persephone reaches for the flower, the νάρκισσον becomes simply a child’s toy, holding little-to-no significance for characters besides Persephone. However, the flower remains significant from Persephone’s perspective. The significance of the flower from Persephone’s perspective is emphasized by the poet’s use of θαμβέω (‘to be astounded’) to describe Persephone’s reaction to the flower.55 The use of θαμβέω in this line is unique in comparison to the verb’s traditional usage in hexameter poetry and thus signals to the audience that the use of Æ̂̂̂̂̂̂θυρμα here may be innovative.

In archaic hexameter poetry, θαμβέω is typically used to describe how people “marvel” at divine beings. In the Iliad, Achilles “marvels” at Athena when she appears to him in book 1 (1.199); Helen is “struck with wonder” by Aphrodite before she decides to leave her husband (3.398); the Achaeans are “seized with wonder” at the flashing thunder sent by Zeus (8.77). When Priam supplicates Achilles in book 24, he is described as “godlike Priam” (Πρίμαμος θεωδέα, 4.483) and Achilles “marvels” (θαμβήσεν, 24.483)

54 Ibid., 45.
55 L.SJ, s.v. θαμβέω, ‘to be astounded.’ Cunliffe, s.v. θαμβέω, ‘to wonder,’ ‘be struck with wonder or astonishment.’
at him. Priam's description as "godlike" makes it appropriate for the bard to use θαυμάζω to describe how both Achilles and an observing crowd wonders at Priam (24.483-4). In the Odyssey, Telemachus marvels at Athena (1.323) and in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, other goddesses marvel at Apollo when he is born (135).

In addition to divinities themselves, birds that are sent by divine beings are sources of astonishment. In the Iliad, people are "seized with wonder" when Meriones shoots a dove from the sky (23.881). In this scene, Meriones is only able to shoot the dove because Apollo has allowed it; King Teucer, who had forgotten to promise a sacrifice to Apollo, was unable to hit the dove in a shooting contest, but the more pious Meriones hits the dove with ease. Second, people 'wonder' at the eagles sent by Zeus after Telemachus has finished speaking at the assembly on Ithaca (2.155). In both cases, the birds are symbolic of divine origin or control.

The only characters not explicitly identified as divine who merit the use of θαυμάζω when others gaze upon them are Odysseus and Telemachus. Odysseus is marveled at once in the Iliad after Ajax throws him down upon the ground during a wrestling match (23.728). In the Odyssey, the servants in the house of Aeolus 'marvel' at Odysseus when he arrives (10.63) and Telemachus 'marvels' at Odysseus after his transformation from beggar to hero (16.178). Even while Odysseus is disguised as a beggar, the suitors are described as 'marveling' at him (17.367). The souls in the underworld marvel at the work of Odysseus by 'wondering' at the procession of souls of the suitors slain by Odysseus at the end of the poem (24.101). Telemachus is marveled at twice by his mother Penelope, both times after he asserts himself and instructs her to return to her chambers (1.360, 24.354). The suitors also marvel at Telemachus' assertion
of masculinity when Telemachus sails off to search for news of his father (4.638). By using the verb θαμβέω to describe these responses to Odysseus and Telemachus, the bard suggests that both figures are meant to be seen as divine.

The words νάρκισσον, ἄθυρμα, and θαμβέω function together in this passage. By substituting ἄθυρμα for νάρκισσον, the poet diminishes the value of the flower and avoids Persephone’s entrance as an active agent in the divine timē economy. Instead, Persephone is an object of timē herself, given as a gift by her father Zeus to maintain the status quo of Olympian political power. At the same time, the verb θαμβέω preserves the significance of the flower in Persephone’s perspective. As shown above, the use of θαμβέω suggests a divine characterization or origin. Persephone “marvels” at the νάρκισσον at the same time the νάρκισσον becomes an ἄθυρμα: the νάρκισσον is at once a divine flower and an inconsequential toy, valuable enough to reach for and marvel at, but not valuable enough to threaten the stability of Olympian power. This innovative combination of two lexemes with traditional meanings thus allows the poet to achieve an impressive effect—two rival perspectives on the same object. Preventing a child from reaching a toy is an action with little consequence; while stealing timē from Persephone by intentionally preventing her from reaching it would instead make the myth part of a conversation about timē and theft—and this is the task of the Homeric Hymn to Hermes.
D. ἄθυρμα in the Homeric Hymn to Hermes

The Homeric Hymn to Hermes, although it is considerably later than the other Homeric Hymns, is the earliest extant work devoted to Hermes.\(^{56}\) Nevertheless, the Hymn's parallels to Homeric epic and thematic similarity to the other Homeric Hymns merit its inclusion in this section of analysis.\(^{57}\) The Homeric Hymn to Hermes tells the story of a god who is born, threatens the current organization of the cosmos, and then settles into his rightful place in the Olympian political structure.\(^{58}\) The “zigzag” narrative structure of the Hymn to Hermes reflects the “movements of the god as he sets about acquiring his time through indirection.”\(^{59}\) This “zigzag” structure takes shape from the moment that Hermes is born. As soon as Hermes is born, “having leapt up, he sought the cattle of Apollo” (ἄλλος γὰρ ἀνατέθαμεν θόρυβος Απόλλωνος, 22).\(^{60}\) Hermes, however, is immediately distracted from this task when he encounters a tortoise, whom he addresses as a dinner companion (31-33):

χαῖρε φιδέν ἐρώτεσσα χοροτάτη δαιτὸς ἐταῖρη,
ἀσπασίη προφανεία: πόθιν τόδε καλὸν ἄθυρμα.
αἰόλον ὀστρακον ἔσσω χέλυς ὀρεσί ζόουσα;\(^{61}\)

\(^{56}\) For the Hymn as the first extant work devoted to Hermes, see Johnston (2002: 109). For the Hymn as later than the other Homeric Hymns, see Clay (1989: 95). Scholars place the Hymn anywhere between the seventh and fourth centuries. As Johnston notes, the placement of the Hymn in the seventh century is based on the “dubious grounds that the Hymn would refer only to places that still existed at the poet’s time” (Johnston, 109n1, cf. Allen, Halliday, and Sikes [1936]: 275ff.). Janko and Kirk both place the Hymn in the late sixth century and Janko mentions the mix of non-Homeric vocabulary with archaisms in the Homeric Hymn to Hermes (Janko [1982: 136, 137]) Kirk [1985: 74]).

\(^{57}\) For the Hymn to Hermes parallels to Homeric epic see Shelmerdine (1986: 49-63). For the Hymn to Hermes as thematically similar to the other Homeric Hymns, see Clay (1989: 95-151).


\(^{59}\) Ibid., 106.

\(^{60}\) Translations of the Homeric Hymn to Hermes are my own unless otherwise noted.

\(^{61}\) The formula καλὸν ἄθυρμα occurs only four times, including in this passage. In the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, Persephone reaches for a καλὸν ἄθυρμα (16); in the Epigrams, καλὸν ὀστράκον is dedicated to Pan (6.37.3), and the Suda uses καλὸν ἄθυρμα in reference to this passage from the Epigrams (s.v. ἄθυρμα). In the Epigrams and the Homeric Hymn to Hermes, the formula occupies the last metrical position, but in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter the formula is line-initial.

29
Hello my lovely, dancing dinner companion, welcome appearance. From where is this lovely toy, this speckled tortoise-shell you wear, tortoise living in the mountains?

Anticipating the lyre-making possibilities of the tortoise, Hermes refers to the tortoise as χοροίτυπος (31), something that “beats the ground in the choral dance.”62 Furthermore, by addressing the tortoise as δαίτος ἐταγη (31), Hermes simulates a guest-host relationship between himself and the tortoise; ultimately, however, Hermes is quite a bad host.63 After addressing the tortoise, Hermes returns to the cave with the tortoise (39-40):

'Ὡς ἄρ' ἔφη· καὶ χερσίν ἀμί· ἀμφότερησιν ἁείρας ἄν εἴη θέα δόμα φέρον ἑρατείνον ἄθυρμα.

Thus he spoke, and having lifted [the tortoise] with both hands he went again inside his home carrying the lovely toy.

Inside the cave, Hermes kills the tortoise and removes it from the shell (41-2), before transforming the shell into a lyre (46-51). After the shell is made into a lyre, it is still referred to as an ἄθυρμα (52-3):

αὐτῷ ἐπεὶ δὴ τεῦξε φέρον ἑρατείνον ἄθυρμα πλήκτρω ἐπειρήτιτες κατὰ μέλος[.]64

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62 L.S.J., s.v. χοροίτυπος.
63 The words δαίτος and ἐταγη appear together only four times in archaic hexameter poetry, and only three times with the meaning intended here. Two of the uses are in the Homeric Hymn to Hermes (31, 436). In the Odyssey, where in Odysseus' home on Ithaca “the lyre, which the gods have made the companion of the feast, sounds” (ἐν δὲ τε φόρμης / ἡμέρας, ἢν ἄρα δαίτα θεοὶ ποιήσαν ἑταγήν, 17.270-1). The final appearance of δαίτος and ἐταγη together is in book 3 of the Odyssey, when Nestor's companions prepare a feast (3.33-4):

ἐνθ' ἄρα Νέστωρ ἦστο σύν υἱόσιν, ἀμφὶ δ' ἑταγην
δαίτε ἐντυνόμενοι κρέας τ' ὥπτων ἄλλας τ' ἐπειρήσων.

Nestor sat with his sons, and around his people, preparing the feast, were roasting meats and putting others on spits.
64 The formula ἑρατείνον ἄθυρμα appears only in the Homeric Hymn to Hermes (40, 52) in the last metrical position.
And when he made it, carrying the lovely toy
he tried a measure with a plectrum.

Hermes’ reference to the tortoise-shell as an ἀϑυρμα characterizes the shell as having little value. In the *Homerica Hymn to Demeter*, the characterization of the narcissus flower as an ἀϑυρμα allowed the flower to be destroyed with no repercussions directly related to its destruction. In addition, the value of the narcissus flower is diminished by use of ἀϑυρμα as a proxy for the flower, but retained in Persephone’s perspective by the use of θαμβέω. In a similar way, Hermes’ renders his theft of the tortoise-shell inconsequential by calling it an ἀϑυρμα. This is aided by Hermes’ initial distinction of the tortoise itself and the tortoise-shell. In Hermes’ first address to the tortoise, he notes that its shell is an ἀϑυρμα—an object it carries, rather than something vital to its existence.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the use of σύμβολον (30) is significant. A σύμβολον is an omen and often has divine connotations, allowing one to have “divine levels of wisdom”.⁶⁶ By calling the tortoise-shell a σύμβολον (30) when he first encounters it, Hermes demonstrates that he already recognizes the value of the tortoise-shell already holds value, though its value will not be realized by the audience until much later in the *Hymn*.⁶⁷

The contradictory characterizations of the shell as an ἀϑυρμα and a σύμβολον are in accordance with the other contradictory language in this passage. The poet first describes the tortoise as “waddling, walking on its feet” (σαῦλα ποσίν βαίνουσα, 28). The meter also emphasizes the slow, heavy movements of the tortoise; the line begins with a dactyl (σαῦλα πο-), but slows as it moves into two spondees that describe how the

⁶⁵ Bungard notes Hermes’ failure to understand the tortoises’ shell as necessary for life; see Bungard (2012: 455).
⁶⁷ For divine connotations of σύμβολον, see Struck (2004: 91).
tortoise is walking (-σιν βαίνουσα). However, when Hermes addresses the tortoise, the tortoise is “dancing” (χοροττόπε, 31). Hermes’ attribution of χοροττόπε to the tortoise foreshadows the transformation of the tortoise-shell into the lyre. When Hermes sees the tortoise, he is not simply a child seeing a toy, but is in fact already prepared “to employ the tortoise for his overall project of obtaining a place among the Olympians.”68 The use of paradoxical language in this foreshadows Hermes’ integration into the Olympian pantheon.69

The contradictory descriptions of the tortoise as σαύλα ποσιν βαίνουσα and χοροττόπε correspond to the roles the tortoise will play in life and death. Hermes himself notes the different functions the tortoise has alive and dead (37-8):

\[\text{ἡ γὰρ ἐπηλυσίης πολυτήμονος ἐσσεα ἔχμα} \]
\[\text{ζώουσιν δὲ θάνης, τότε (δ’) ἄν μάλα καλὸν ἀείδοις} \]

For living you will be a defense against baneful witchcraft, but in death you will sing very sweetly.

In life, the purpose the tortoise serves, protection against witchcraft, is reliant upon the tortoises’ vitality—dead, the tortoise is no longer apotropaic.70 Likewise, the tortoise is unable to be a “sweet song” while it is still alive. Thus, the tortoise-shell is an ἀθυρμα while the tortoise is alive, serving no purpose (at least for Hermes). In death, however, the tortoise-shell is transformed into a fast-moving lyre with significant value. During Hermes’ first encounter with the tortoise, the tortoise-shell is an ἀθυρμα, but by

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68 Bungard (2011: 147).
69 Ibid. Green (2005: 349) also argues that Hermes foresees his own placement into the Olympian pantheon based on the ‘proleptic hymn’ Hermes sings when he first plays the lyre (cf. Harden [2013: 20]).
70 For tortoises as protection against witchcraft, see Redfield (2003: 328-9) and Karanika (2012: 110). Later (ancient) authors also describe the tortoises’ apotropaic properties (cf. Pliny, Nat. Hist. 32.4 and Africanus, Geoponica 1.14.8). Aelian connects tortoises with specifically erotic spells (Aelian, Nat. Anim. 15.19).
the end of the _Hymn_, Hermes is able to use the tortoise-shell/lyre to produce a song worth fifty of Apollo’s cattle (437).

Only in death does the tortoise-shell acquire value and become useful to Hermes. This is also similar to the role Persephone plays for Zeus in the _Hymnic Hymn to Demeter_. In the _Hymnic Hymn to Demeter_, it is only after Persephone’s metaphorical death and marriage to Hades that she is useful to Zeus as a way of stabilizing his own relationship to Hades and the political order of Olympus. Zeus effects Persephone’s metaphorical death to secure his own Olympian status; Hermes effects the tortoises’ death in order to gain his own Olympian status. Hermes is able to transform the tortoise-shell into a lyre after the tortoise’s death. Hermes’ exchange of his song, produced by the lyre he made, for Apollo’s cattle not only “rearrange[s] boundaries around property but also around his own identity” because “the exchange of oaths and gifts between Hermes and Apollo allude to the protocols of ritualized friendship.”71 Because Hermes is able to participate in gift-exchange as Apollo’s equal, their transaction “indicates [Hermes’] change in status from outsider to member of...the Olympians.”72

**E. Conclusions on Archaic ἄθροματα**

In her investigation of the Hymnic Hymns as a distinct genre, Clay writes:

[The Hymnic Hymns] serve to complete the Olympian agenda and provide the clearest account of what I would call the politics of Olympus. At the core of each lies a concern with the acquisition of redistribution of _timai_ within the Olympian cosmos.73

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71 Fletcher (2008: 27).
72 Ibid., 28.
The uses of ἄθυρμα in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter and the Homeric Hymn to Hermes help the Hymns negotiate timē redistribution. In the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, the poet uses ἄθυρμα to avoid discussion of Persephone’s entrance into the divine timē economy. In the Homeric Hymn to Hermes, the use of ἄθυρμα disguises the transgressive nature of Hermes’ entrance into the divine timē economy. By calling the tortoise-shell an ἄθυρμα, the poet characterizes Hermes’ theft of the tortoise-shell as inconsequential to other characters in the Hymn.

Similar to how ἄθυρμα clarifies the politics of Olympus in the Homeric Hymns, in epic ἄθυρμα elucidates systems of power between lower-class and upper-class characters and between gods and mortals. In Homer’s Odyssey the uses of ἄθυρμα help the epic articulate a “discourse that is essentially aristocratic.”74 In one passage, Eumaeus employs the word ἄθυρματα to describe the contents of a Phoenician trading vessel. In doing so, Eumaeus diminishes the value of Phoenician wealth gained through middle-class trade, furthering the argument inherent in the Odyssey that the only acceptable types of trade are aristocratic exchanges primarily motivated by reciprocity among peers. In another passage, the poet reveals that Penelope gave ἄθυρματα to Melantho when Melantho was a child. This use of ἄθυρματα highlights the futility of gift-exchange between upper-class and lower-class characters—only characters who subscribe to upper-class values can participate in successful gift-exchange.

Each use of ἄθυρμα in archaic hexameter poetry is located in a transgressive context and has a diminishing effect. Apollo’s destruction of the Achaean wall displaces

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74 Thalmann (1998: 1).
the tombs of dead Achaean warriors and symbolizes the end of the mythic age; by replacing the Achaean wall with ἀθόρματα, the bard diminishes the gravity of Apollo’s destruction and allows the *Iliad* to continue. By calling the Phoenician’s goods ἀθόρματα, Eumaeus diminishes the value of wealth gained through trade. To further promote the *Odyssey*’s aristocratic narrative, the bard uses ἀθόρματα to diminish the significance of gift-exchange between upper-class Penelope and lower-class Melantho. The use of ἀθύρμα as a proxy for the narcissus flower diminishes the value of the flower at the moment that Persephone reaches for it, avoiding discussion of Persephone as a participant in the divine *timē* economy. On the other hand, the use of ἀθύρμα as a proxy for the tortoise-shell in the *Hymn to Hermes* diminishes the value of tortoise-shell at the moment that Hermes steals it and enables the *Hymn*’s discussion of Hermes’ entrance into the Olympian pantheon.

3. Uses of ἀθύρμα in Lyric Poetry

A. Sappho’s ἀθύρματα

Sappho makes innovations to the usage of the noun ἀθύρμα, rejecting the *Odyssey*’s characterization of ἀθύρματα as a type of diminished wealth and recharacterizing ἀθύρματα as desirable, luxurious wealth. Sappho does, however, use ἀθύρμα in transgressive contexts in a way similar to archaic hexameter poetry.

Sappho first uses ἀθύρματα to describe the contents of Hector’s ship, as it is bringing Andromache from Thebes (fr. 44.5-10):
Sappho 44 is the longest of Sappho’s extant fragments and tells the story of Hector and Andromache’s wedding. The content, meter, and form of the poem allude to the *Iliad.*

The intended performance context for the poem is unclear. Some scholars have argued that the poem was intended to be performed at a wedding, but others have noted that such a performance would be inappropriate because “the Homeric elements of fr. 44 suggest the death of Hector and imply the subsequent enslavement of Andromache.”

Schrenk argues that Sappho 44 alludes specifically to two episodes in the *Iliad:* Andromaches’ discovery of Hector’s death (10.466-472), and the recovery of Hector’s corpse (24.699ff). In particular, Schrenk claims that the items Sappho includes on the ship in fr. 44 are Andromache’s dowry, and their similarity to the items in Priam’s treasury suggests that this dowry ultimately becomes Hector’s ransom in the *Iliad.*

Sappho lists “gold” (χρύσια, 8), “purple robes” (πορφύρα καταθμενα, 9), and “silver

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75 Greek text is from Campbell (1982). Unless otherwise notes, translations are my own.
76 Rayor (2014: 112); Spelman (2016: 3).
77 For Sappho 44 as an epithalamium, see Page (1955: 71-74) and Campbell (1983: 167-8). For the inappropriateness of Sappho 44 as an epithalamium, see Dale (2011: 58); Shrenk (1994: 144); Parker (2005: 18n5).
cups” (ἀργύρα... ποτήρια, 10). In the *Iliad*, Hector’s ransom includes peploi (πέπλους, 24.229), gold (24.232), and a cup (δέπας περιχαλλές, 24.234).79

I argue that not only is Sappho referencing Hector’s and Andromache’s tragic ends through her list of items onboard Andromache’s ship in fr. 44, but also that Sappho’s inclusion of ἀθόρματα on the ship is a reference to Astyanax’s story (9). In the *Iliad*, we are told that Astyanax “stopped playing like a child” (παύσατο τε νηπιαχεῖον, 22.502) before “he would sleep in bed in his nurses’ embrace” (εὐδέοις’ ἐν λέκτρουσιν ἐν ἀγκαλίδεσσι τιθήνης, 22.503). The verb νηπιαχεῖον (< νηπιαχεῖο) is related to the adjective νηπίαχος, the epic diminutive of νήπιος, which is itself the adjectival form of the noun νηπίε.80 As discussed in the previous section, νηπίε describes not only a childish action, but a foolish and fruitless one as well. In this case, Astyanax’s actions are fruitless because he will never “stop his childishness.” Astyanax is thrown off the Trojan wall before he has a chance to leave infancy. The ἀθόρματα on the ship in fr. 44 are not only “trinkets” that are part of Andromache’s dowry, but also toys that are a reference to the tragic fate of Astyanax. Sappho, already invoking the language of Homeric epic in fragment 44, uses ἀθόρματα to reference the transgressive murder of Astyanax.

Sappho’s second use of ἀθόρματα appears in a fragmented poem addressed to the god of dreams (fr. 63.1-10):81

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79 Ibid.
80 LSJ, s.v. νηπίαχος.
81 Campbell (1982: 103n1).
δνοιρε μελαινα[  
φ[ο]τας ητα τ' ὑπνος[  
γλοκες δ[ε]ος, η δειν' ονιας μ][  
ζα χρωις εχην ταν δυναμ[  
ελπις δε μ' εχει μη πεδέχη]ν[  
mηδεν μακαρον ελ[  
oυ γαρ κ' εον ουτοι[.]'.  
ἀθυρματα κα. [  
γενοιτο δε μοι[  
τοις πάνται[  

Dream...black (night)... you come  
whenever sleep...sweet god, truly (from)  
sorrow powerfully...to keep separate the (power)  
...(but) I have hope that I shall not share...  
nothing...of the blessed (gods)...for I  
would not be so...trinkets...and may I  
have...them (all)...  

There is too much text missing from this passage to allow for a complete analysis. I do,  
however, want to suggest that in this passage, there might exist a “characteristically  
Sapphic celebration of luxury.” The luxuriousness prized in Sappho’s poetry was  
“foreign...to pure Atticism, to the cold clear light of classical prose and poetry.”  
Sappho’s use of ἀθυρματα characterizes her confident materialism as transgressive,  
demonstrating that her prized luxuriousness sharply contrasts the feminine cultural norms  
in the Homeric poetry that came before her. Sappho’s materialism and focus on  
luxuriousness may, however, also be a generic difference: lyric poetry prizes sexuality,  
eroticism, and luxuriousness while epic does not.

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82 Translation by Campbell (1982: 103-4).  
84 Ibid., 176.
B. Apollo’s ἄθυρμα in Pindar

Pindar’s Fourth and Fifth Pythian Odes were both written to celebrate the victory of Arcesilas, but the odes are substantially different. Pythian 4’s extended mythological narrative about Jason and the Argonauts overshadows the conventional celebratory motivation for epinician poetry. In contrast, Pythian 5 is a “straightforward victory ode,” but stands out from Pindar’s other odes in the “extraordinary prominence” it attributes to the charioteer Carrhotus rather than the victor.85 This section will explore how Pindar’s use of κόμος and ἄθυρμα in Pythian 5 characterizes two types of gift-exchange in the poem: the aristocratic gift-exchange between poet and host, and the divine gift-exchange between Apollo and the victor.

Early in Pythian 5, Pindar uses the noun κόμος to describe the ἄθυρμα of Apollo (20-23):

μάκαρ δὲ καὶ νῦν, κλεεννας ὡτι
eὐχος ἡδη παρὰ Πυθιάδος ἵπποις ἑλῶν
dεδεξαι τόνδε κόμον ἄνερον,
Απολλόνιον ἄθυρμα.

Now you are blessed also, because,
having already seized victory with your horses in the sacred Pythian festival,
you have accepted the celebration of men,
the delight of Apollo.86

Apollo appears alongside κόμος again in Pindar’s Pythian 8 (17-20):

86 Translations of Pindar are my own unless otherwise noted. I take Eckerman’s suggestion in translating κόμος as ‘celebration,’ although Eckerman does not mention Pythian 5 in his analysis. In contrast to the translations of Race (1997: 311), Svarlien (1991), and Sandys (1915: 237), Eckerman argues that “κόμος never means... ‘chorus,’ ‘ode,’ ‘procession,’ or ‘band of revellers’ in the extant epinician odes of Pindar and Bacchylides and offers ‘celebration’ as an all-inclusive definition (302).
διόμητον δὲ κεραυνῷ
tόξοι τ’ Ἀπόλλωνος: δὲ εὑμενεῖ νόος
Σέναρκεῖον ἐδέκτο Κύρραθεν ἐστεφανωμένον
ὑόν ποιεῖ Παρνασσιδῆ Δωριῶ τε κόμῳ.

[Typhon and the king of the Giants] having been overpowered
by the thunderbolt and arrows of Apollo, he who with gracious mind
received Xenarces of Cirrha crowned
with Parnassian laurel and with Dorian celebration.87

In both of these passages, ownership of the κόμος is attributed to Apollo. In the former
from Pythian 5, the κόμος ἀνέφων (22) are equated to Ἀπόλλωνι ἀθυρμα (23) and the
victor himself receives (δέδεξαι, 22) the κόμος. In the latter passage, the κόμος is
Δωριῶς (20) and the victor is received (ἐδέκτο, 19) by Apollo with celebration (κόμῳ,
20). In order for Apollo’s reception of the victor to be done in the manner of celebration,
Apollo must be the origin of the κόμος in the first place. In each passage, the verb
dέχομαι is “clearly a decorous formal term for the act of receiving and welcoming a
κόμος.”88

The use of κόμος in the context of giving and receiving suggests that the κόμοι
“function in the context of gift-exchange.”89 Mackie argues that the “epinician ode repays
the athlete’s debt to the gods in the victor’s debt.”90 Furthermore, Mackie argues, the
poet’s request for future blessings from the deity on the victor’s behalf establishes a
continued relationship between the victor and the deity. Because the deity has “‘accepted’

87 Race glosses ποῖα as “laurel” (1997: 341).
88 Mullen (1982: 25). For other examples of the reception of κόμος with δέχομαι see Olympians 4.9, 6.98,
89 Eckerman (2010: 306n18).
the κόμος as a gift or thank-offering," he "will be obliged to be beneficent in the future".\(^9\)

There is also a second exchange occurring as well: the exchange between the poet and his host. In epinician poetry, the poet occupies the "solo role of an authoritative xenos or guest-stranger who is obliged by the rules of xenia… to praise a counter-xenos, his host."\(^2\) Miller notes the tension between paradigmatic material about the past and the need to celebrate the current victor in Pindar’s poetry.\(^3\) Mackie extends Miller’s argument and characterizes the tension between paradigmatic material and the current victor as a tension between the old and the new:

I suggest that the poet sets up this rhetorical opposition between the past and present themes because pleasing, or appeasing, certain members of his audience depends on it. The epinician poet has a delicate balance to strike. On one hand, he flatters his victors when he likens them to heroes from the past. But too much focus on these heroes… might anger the victor if it seems to distract attention from his own “new” victory.\(^4\)

I expand Mackie’s argument to suggest that there is also a tension between victor and charioteer. When a charioteer also has elite status (such as in Pythian 5), there is a tension

\(^9\) Ibid.

εξίνος εἰμί: σκοτεινὸν ἀπέχον γόγον
ὐδάτος ὡτε ῥοῖς φίλον ἐς ἄνδρ᾽ ἄγον
κλῖς ἐτήσιμον αἴνεσιον

I am his guest-friend; holding back dark censure, I shall praise, leading true fame like streams of water to a man who is a friend.

\(^3\) Miller (1982: 219).
\(^4\) Mackie (2003: 45). See also Ibid., 43.
between the charioteers' completed ('past') aristocratic accomplishment and the victor's ('present') aristocratic celebration (κομος).

Because guest-friendship is established between poet and host, the poems focus on the achievements of the victors and rarely give any attention to the chariot drivers themselves.\(^{95}\) The rare occasions that the charioteers are given recognition are when the drivers are "aristocratic friends of the victor, like Carrhotus and Cnopiadas, or hired charioteers who had won great prominence through their driving, like Nicomachus."\(^{96}\) The recognition given to Carrhotus in Pythian 5 is the most substantial recognition given to a driver in Pindar's odes.\(^{97}\) In Pythian 5, Pindar praises Carrhotus' abilities as a charioteer (49-51):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ἐν τεσσάρακοντα γὰρ} \\
\text{πετόντεσσιν ἀνίχνοις ὄλον} \\
\text{διόροιν κομίζας ἀταρβεῖ φρενί,}
\end{align*}
\]

For among forty fallen drivers, having preserved your entire chariot with a fearless mind

In these lines, it is "less the Games themselves" that excite Pindar, but "more the steadfast control of the driver."\(^{98}\)

Both Mackie (2003) and Nagy (1990) present Pindaric ode as a form of compensation for the athlete.\(^{99}\) As Nagy notes, the Greek word epi-nikion "literally means something like 'that which is in compensation for victory.'"\(^{100}\) Furthermore, the


\(^{96}\) Nicholson (2005: 93). Carrhotus is allegedly Arcesilas' brother-in-law, but as Race comments, there is no evidence for that relationship outside of the scholia (Race [1997: 307]).


\(^{99}\) Nagy (1990: 142).

\(^{100}\) Ibid.
epi- portion of epi-nikion “corresponds to the usage of the preposition epi,” suggesting that an epi-nikion is composed for or to a specific person.\(^{101}\) In Pythian 5, the poem itself is called a λατήριον δαπανήν, a “compensation for the reward” (105).\(^{102}\)

Pythian 5 is therefore located in the center of the negotiation of two gift-exchanges. First, there is an exchange of victory and κόμος. The victor repays the deity for his gift of victory through the κόμος, which takes place while the ode is being performed.\(^{103}\) Second, there is an exchange of poem and financial compensation between the poet and victor/host. This exchange is completed as the audience receives the poem.

As discussed above, there is tension in Pythian 5 between the celebration of victor and charioteer. By using ἄθυρμα in line 23, the poet implicitly suggests that the exchange of κόμος for victory between the victor and Apollo is transgressive. The κόμος becomes an Ἀπολλόνιον ἄθυρμα (5.23) rather than a Δωρεάν κόμος (8.20). Furthermore, if we consider the diminishing effect of ἄθυρμα argued in the previous section, the poet’s use of ἄθυρμα becomes a way to diminish the significance of the κόμος given by the victor to Apollo, leaving the gift-exchange incomplete and allowing for the possibility of the completion of the exchange by the charioteer at a later time.

**B. Truth and Toys: Bacchylides’ Innovations**

An understanding of ἄθυρμα as connotative of transgressive gift-exchange sheds light on Bacchylides’ poetry as well. There are three uses of ἄθυρμα in Bacchylides’ poetry: one in an epigram, one in victory ode 9, and one in dithyramb 18. My analysis

\(^{101}\) Ibid., 142n38.

\(^{102}\) Cf. Mackie (2003: 97) and Nagy (1990: 140-2). Note that in line 105, the “compensation” is the poem, and the “reward” is the victory granted by Apollo to the victor.

\(^{103}\) For a discussion of the κόμος being celebrated while the ode is performed, see Nagy (1994: 25) and Eckerman (2010: 303).
will begin with the dithyramb, where Bacchylides’ writes of the “playthings of Ares (ἀρηῶν δ’ ἄθυρμάτων, 18.57). This dithyramb is the second of two works about Theseus; in this antistrophic poem, Theseus comes towards “splendid Athens” (φιλαγγάους Ἀθάνας, 18.60), but the chorus is unaware of his identity as he approaches the city.104 The last lines of the play are delivered by Aegis, who describes the man walking toward Athens to the chorus (18.46-60):

δύο ροι φώτε μόνοις ἁμαιτεῖν
λέγει, περί φαινόμεναι δ’ ὅμοις
ξίφος ἐρείν ἐλεφαντόκεφον
ξέστους δ’ ἐν χέρεσι’ ἀκοντας
κήτυσκον κυνάν Λάκαιο-
ναν κρατός πέρι πυρσόχαϊτου
στέρνοις τε πορφύριον
χιτών’ ἁμφι, καὶ σύλλοιν
Θεσσαλὼν χλαμύδ’ ὁμμάτων δὲ
στυλβεῖν ἀπὸ Λαμνίαν
φοίνισσαν φλόγα παιδα δ’ ἐμμεν
πρόθεσιον, ἀρηῶν δ’ ἄθυρμάτων
μεμνήθαι πολέμου τε καὶ
χαλκοκτύπου μάχας
διήκειαι δὲ φιλαγγάους Ἀθάνας.

Only two men accompany him
he says; around his glistening shoulders
he has an ivory-hilted sword;
in his hands he has two polished spears;
he has a well-made Laconian helmet
around his red-haired head,
a purple tunic
around his chest, and a woolly
Thessalian cloak; and from his eyes
flash crimson Lemnian
flame; but he is a boy
in the prime of his youth, intent on
the playthings of Ares, and war
and bronze battle

104 Secret knowledge, known only by some characters, is a common element of dithyramb; see Kowalzig (2013: 5). On the significance of this dithyramb’s antistrophic structure, see Battezzato (2013: 96).
and he seeks splendid Athens.

The performance context of this dithyramb is critical to an understanding of ἄθυρμα in these lines (it is, as I argue below, another example of transgressive gift-exchange). Dithyrambs generally have a “high degree of polis-encomium” in which poets, chori, and audience members celebrate the city’s cultural and religious institutions.  

Specifically, Bacchylides’ 17 and 18 serve as ways for Athens to celebrate its own role in the end of the Persian Wars. As Fearn argues, these dithyrambs were not reserved for performance in Athenian festivals, but were likely performed on places such as Delos as a way for Athens to assert cultural and political supremacy over its allies. The Panhellenic elements of Bacchylides 18 support the idea of its performance outside Athens. Theseus approaches the city with a “Laconian helmet” (κυνέαν Λάκαυναν, 50-1) a “Thessalian cloak” (Ὀσσαλαν χλαμύδ’, 54) and “Lemnian flame” (Λεμνίαν φλόγα, 55-6) in his eyes. All of these items are related to war and “symbolize a Panhellenic strength that Theseus is bringing to Athens.”

Bacchylides 17, a commission by the Keans, provides evidence for the “metaphorical association of choral performance and the payment of tribute.” The content of the dithyramb, Theseus’ defeat of the Minotaur, is symbolic of Athens own place as commander, savoir, and protector of Ionian Greece.  

By so characterizing their relationship to the Keans, the Athenians are able to use choral lyric poetry to establish

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105 Fearn (2013: 135).
106 Ibid., 138.
107 Ibid., 139.
108 Wind (1972: 519).
109 Fearn (2013: 149).
110 Ibid., 247.
cultural dominance over the Keans. In this way, “choral and ritual methods (cultural influence) paved the way for more obvious and less subtle financial ones.”\textsuperscript{111} In particular, in Bacchylides 17 and 18, Athens uses a “renovated Theseus” to assert imperial control.\textsuperscript{112} Choral poetry then becomes a type of gift-exchange in which, on the surface, the Keans contribute financial resources in exchange for poetry, but also in which the Keans trade their cultural and political autonomy for the security provided by an alliance with Athens.

The “playthings of Ares” (ἀρητῶν ή ἄθυρματων, 57) in Bacchylides 18 are a symbol not only of Athens’ as a great force in war, but also as an imperial power who expects and demands recognition from the allies it protects. In the dithyramb, the “playthings of Ares” are listed as distinct from war itself. The youth is coming for both (τε, 58) the playthings of Ares (ἀρητῶν ή ἄθυρματων, 57) and (καὶ, 58) war (πολέμου, 58). The youth is intent not only on war, but also on the greatness and devotion from allies that war brings. I have shown previously that ἄθυρμα carries the connotation of a transgressive gift exchange. In this way, Bacchylides’ dithyramb suggests an incomplete or insignificant gift exchange between Athens and its allies. I also want to suggest that the object of exchange may be tribute that the allies pay to Athens. In this scenario, an incomplete gift exchange would be one in which the allies do not pay sufficient (in the eyes of the Athenians) tribute.

Bacchylides’ final two uses of ἄθυρμα are in reference to the “toys of the Muses” (Odes 9.87, Epig. II=F.G.E. Anth. Pal. 6.313). However, it is almost certain that the

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 149.
epigram was not composed by Bacchylides, but rather by a Hellenistic author; since this analysis is concerned with the semantic meaning of ἀθωρμα only through the fifth century, I will move on to Bacchylides’ ninth ode.\footnote{113}

In Pindar’s poetry, I discussed the relationships between deity, host, and poet. Bacchylides poetry complicates those relationships by including the Muses in the exchange of praise and glory. Bacchylides’ Ode 9 is the only extant ode for Phleious and the only other surviving reference to Phleious from this period other than Pindar’s Nemean 6.\footnote{114} In Ode 9, Bacchylides writes (9.82-7):

\footnote{113} In the epigram—which is only spuriously attributed to Bacchylides—Bacchylides ask Victory to crown him with garlands in the “toys of the Muses”:

Κούρα Πάλλαντος πολιοίνω, ποτνα Νίκα,
πρόφορον Κρανάους ἀμερόντα χορόν
αἷν ἐποπτύνιος, πολέως δὲ ἐν ἀθωρμα Μουσάν
Κηρὰ ἅμφωτῆ Βυσσυλίδη στεφάνους.

Famous daughter of Pallas, revered Victory, 
may you always watch over kindly the charming chorus 
of the sons of Cranau* and crown Bacchylides of Ceos 
with many garlands in the toys of the Muses.

Campbell includes the epigram with Bacchylides, but notes that it is probably Hellenistic (Campbell [1992: 317n1]). Jebb (1905: 424) and Snell (1971: 121) hesitantly attribute the epigram to Bacchylides, but Page (1981: 151) notes that this epigram has “no parallel in the time of Bacchylides or for long afterwards,” and that a “dedicatory epigram which says nothing whatsoever about a dedication cannot come from the time of Bacchylides, and would be a freak at any time.”

The epigram was published in Meleager’s anthology (the Palatine Anthology), where it fits so conveniently it is almost certain Bacchylides was not the author. Prayers to Nike become common in fourth century at the ends of Menandrian plays (cf. Dyscolus 968-9, Samia 736-7, and Sicyonius 422-3) and appear in Theocritus’ prayer to Herakles in the Antinoe Papyrus (Gutzwiller [1998: 304, 305n143]). The epigram likely appeared last in Meleager’s anthology and constituted Meleager’s own prayer for victory (ibid. 305). The poem that most likely opened the anthology is another Hellenistic composition (this one attributed to Simonides) that pairs nicely with ‘Bacchylides’ epigram both in its content and its language (see 62 and 27 FGE). The poem attributed to Simonides asks for Apollo’s favor for the dedicatory book and also ends with the word στέφανος (ibid. 306). Neither of the epigrams attributed to Bacchylides or Simonides are “truly inscriptions,” and “it is all the more likely that Meleager found them in a Hellenistic collection of pseudoinscriptional verse, a book that he in turn recalls by his significant re-use (306).

\footnote{114} Fearn (2003: 348).
τὸ [γέ] τοι καλὸν ἔργον
gνησίων ὑμίνων τυχόν
ὑγιόν παρὰ δαίμονι κεῖται
σὺν δ’ ἀλαθεία βροτῶν
cάλλιστον, εὐπερ καὶ θάνη τις,
λειτεῖται Μουσᾶν βαθυζῶνον ἀθυρμα.

This fine deed having gained
legitimate hymns
remains high alongside the gods.
With the truth of mortals
the most beautiful plaything of the deep-girded Muses
is left behind when one dies.\textsuperscript{115}

Campbell notes that that ἀθυρμασὶ Μουσᾶν in these lines is the “celebratory poem.”\textsuperscript{116}

While I agree with Campbell that the ἀθυρμασὶ Μουσᾶν are a proxy for the poetry itself,
I also argue that Bacchylides choice to use ἀθυρμα in these lines characterizes mortal
truth as less significant and adheres to the poetic tradition that the Muses are the source of
truth.

These enigmatic lines from \textit{Ode} 9 necessitate a discussion of the relationship
between truth, falsehood, the Muses and poetry; the equally enigmatic lines of Hesiod
will serve as a starting place. At the beginning of \textit{Theogony}, Hesiod describes how the
Muses taught Hesiod his own song while they admonished him and other shepherds (26-8):

ποιμένες ἄγραιλοι, κἀκε ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες οἶνον,
ἰδμὲν ζεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοιον ὁμοία,
ἰδμὲν δ’ εὖτ’ ἐθέλομεν ἄληθεα γηρύσασθαι.

Field-dwelling shepherds, ignoble disgraces, mere bellies:
we know how to say many false things similar to genuine ones,
but we know, when we wish, how to proclaim true things.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{115} Greek text is from Campbell (1992). English translations of Bacchylides are my own.
\textsuperscript{116} Campbell: (1992: 167n3)
\textsuperscript{117} Translation by Most (2018).
There are a variety of interpretations for these lines. Pucci explains that these lines “should be understood as a strong indictment of the powerlessness and ignorance of men before the poetic logos.”118 Bowie argues that this is a “clear division not simply of Muses’ utterances but of poets into two classes: some tell the truth, some do not.”119 Hesiod, then, is a poet who does tell the truth; by including these lines, as Wheeler claims, he is intentionally juxtaposing himself to Odysseus.120 Furthermore, Hesiod is only able to tell the truth because he invokes the Muses: “ordination by the Muses guarantees access to divine truth (which is...specifically contrasted with human falsehoods)”121 Bowie, however, disagrees with Wheeler and believes that it is “more likely that Hesiod’s Muses might be asserting that they make poets sing what they mistakenly hold to be true, for instance a Theogony which offers the wrong genealogies for gods.”122 This releases the poet from blame should he utter a falsehood. Because a poet receives truth from the Muses and is unable to compare his song with “the things as they are,” any falsehoods sung by the poet as a result of the Muses’ inspiration are functionally true.123 Thus, although the information received by the poet from the Muses may be false or true, it is always true in the world of mortals.

From the first lines of Theogony, Hesiod casts the Muses as the origin of truth and the mechanism by which mortals themselves sing about those truths. In contrast to, for example, Homer’s Iliad, where the Muse herself is asked to sing, Theogony begins (1):

\[118\] Pucci (1977: 12).
\[121\] Wheeler (2002: 34).
\[122\] Bowie (1993: 21).
\[123\] Pucci (1977: 13).
Moussáoν Ἐλικονιάδον ἀρχόμεθ' ἀείδειν

Let us begin to sing from the Heliconian Muses

Calame notes the uniqueness of the passages’ focalization. Regarding the prologue of Theogony, Calame writes:

Deserving first mention is the assumption, on two occasions, of the song of the Muses and its contents by the I. the subordination of the musical activity of the Muses to the act of the I. represents a reversal of the third type of enunciative shifting-in: no longer does the I ask the Muses (you) to sing for it; rather, it evokes by itself the Muses in the act of singing (in the third person). The Muses are no longer in the narratee position, a projection of the narrator; they are not the themes of the narration uttered by the I.¹²⁴

The beginning of Bacchylides’ 9 produces a similar effect;¹²⁵ the first line of the ode is a traditional invocation of the Muses where, to borrow Calame’s language, the I requests the Muses “think” for it, but in the third line the I begins the hymn by itself without the Muses (1-6):

δόξαν ὁ χρυσαλάκατοι Χάριτες
πεισίμβροτον δοήτ’ ἐπεὶ
Μουσάν γε μιοβλεφάρον θεῖος προφάτας
εὐτυχος Φλειώντα τε καὶ Νεμειῶν
Ζηνὸς εὐθαλές πέδον
ὑμνεῖν

Graces with distaffs of gold, give the honor which persuades mortals because the divine spokesman of the violet-eyed Muses is ready to sing of Phleious and and the flourishing plain of Nemean Zeus.

¹²⁴ Calame (1995: 47). Calame defines three types of ‘enunciative shifting-in.’ The first, which is the most common, is when the first-person speaker (I) is the subject of the verb that means “sing” or “begin” (36). The second type also includes an “actant you” that is the subject of the verb and “does not refer to the god or to the person who represents the theme of the poem, but to the Muse invoked in the singular or plural” (37). The third type of enunciative shifting-in is the rarest and occurs when I and you appear together. In this case, “the actential position of the narratee is occupied, as in the preceding case, by the Muse or Muses invoked in the vocative case; the verb of which the Muses are the grammatical subject is against a verb meaning ‘to sing’ or ‘to recite’ (39).
¹²⁵ For a discussion of how epinician ode relies upon oral traditions (including Hesiod), see Nicholson (2015: 5).
In the openings to their respective poems, Hesiod and Bacchylides remove the muse from the narratee position and position themselves as the narrators and owners of the poem. At the same time, however, by invoking the Muses in the third person, the poets can assure their audience that everything they say is Muse-given truth. Hesiod and Bacchylides can present their poems as mortal achievements while maintaining that their contents are divine truth.

With this and all prior discussions of the semantic meaning of ἀθυρμα in mind, let us return to the passage from Bacchylides. Translations of these lines have typically taken lines 9.82-4 and 9.85-7 as supporting each other; that is, typical translations equate the “fine deed having gained legitimate hymns” (καλὸν ἔργον γνησίων ὑμῶν τυχόν, 9.82-3) with the “most beautiful plaything of the Muses left behind when one dies” (κάλλιστον, ἐπὶ καὶ θάνῃ τις, λε[i]πταί Μοῦσαι[ῶν βαθυζώνων ἀθ]υρμα, 9.86-7).\(^{126}\) When, however, we consider the contrast between mortal achievement and divine truth that Bacchylides presented at the beginning of the ode, these two sets of lines are read as contrasting ideas. In the ode, only one of the ideas is explicitly identified. There is a “fine deed” (καλὸν ἔργον, 82) which earns “legitimate hymns” (γνησίων ὑμῶν, 83) and “remains high alongside the gods” (ὑπὸ παρὰ δαίμονι κείτα, 9.84).

The presence of “a fine deed” (καλὸν ἔργον, 9.82) implicitly suggests that there can be “a bad deed” (κακὸν ἔργον)—or at least a deed that does not merit such praise.\(^{127}\)

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\(^{127}\) The particles γε (82) and δὲ (83) might also implicitly suggest that there are two contrasting options being presented here. The particle γε can be used to heighten a contrast or opposition, or to emphasize an alternative (cf. Hom. Od. 2.313, Herod. Hist. 1.11). Smyth gives an example of γε with δὲ when presenting a contrast, citing Eur. And. 239: σο δ' ὀδ λέγεις γε, ὅρης δὲ μ' ἐλεύσον δώῃ (Smyth 2824).
The other type of deed, then, is one which has not earned a “legitimate hymn” (γνήσιον ὄμνοι 9.83). This lesser deed is left behind after death, rather than that remaining alongside the gods, because no poet immortalized the deed in a legitimate (γνήσιος) poem. Furthermore, illegitimate hymns are left behind “with the truth of mortals” (σὺν δ’ ἀλαθεία βροτῶν, 9.85). Above, I established that Bacchylides’ poem, though a mortal achievement, presents divine truth. Bacchylides 9 is then a legitimate (γνήσιος) hymn. In contrast, hymns left behind “with the truth of mortals” are illegitimate and unable to successfully preserve the kleos of deeds. Bacchylides emphasizes the illegitimacy of such hymns by characterizing them as ἄθυρματα (9.87). The use of κάλλιστον emphasizes their inherent illegitimacy: even the “most beautiful” ἄθυρμα is still not immortalized in the heavens.

This use of ἄθυρμα is subtly different than the previous uses I discussed in archaic poetry and Pindar’s odes. While previously the use of ἄθυρμα had a diminishing effect (e.g., Persephone’s narcissus, the Achaean wall), in Bacchylides 9 ἄθυρμα is used to describe something which is already diminished. Bacchylides uses ἄθυρμα as a proxy for a poem which the audience already knows is not a “legitimate poem,” which is not immortalized after death, and which is left with the truth of mortals—and illegitimate type of truth in poetry. Bacchylides is evidence of a slight shift in the semantic meaning of ἄθυρμα, from diminisher to diminished.

4. ἄθυρμα in Greek Dramatic Poetry

A. Aeschylus’ ἄθυρματα in Theoroi

My analysis of ἄθυρμα may also help resolve textual issues, such as the meaning of ἄθυρματα in Aeschylus’ satyr drama Theoroi. In Theoroi (“The Sacred Delegation”),
Dionysus interrupts satyrs placing masks in their own likeness on the front of the temple of Poseidon.\footnote{Sommerstein (2009: 83) offers two titles for the play, including Theoroi and “At the Isthmian games”; On the masks as depictions of the satyr’s own faces, see Ibid. and O’Sullivan (2000: 357). On the temple in the satyr play as the temple of Poseidon, see Sommerstein (2009: 83) and Ussher (1977: 297).} Dionysus chastises the satyrs for their disloyalty because they have been training for the Isthmian games and injuring themselves in the process (30-31, 34-5):

\[
\text{\textit{ός ε\v{e}ξερθεῖς ἱσθεμαστικήν [...]ν,}}
\]
\[
\text{κούκ ἡμέλησας, ἀλλ’ ἐγεμνάζ[νοι κα]λάς}.\textsuperscript{129}
\]
\[
\text{...}
\]
\[
\text{σο δ’ ἱσθεμάξεις καὶ τρόποις κα[νχψ μ]αθόδιας, βραξ[ν’] ἄσκεις, χρήματα φθείρον ἐμὰ[.]}.\textsuperscript{130}
\]

that you were polishing up your Isthmian [wrestling], and that you hadn’t neglected it, but were in good training.

... but you’re learning a new way of life, that of Isthmian athletes, exercising your arms and injuring this property of mine.\footnote{Greek text and English translations of Aeschylus are from Sommerstein (2009).}

Later in the play, someone brings the satyrs νεοχμά ἀθύρματα (86). There is debate over what the νεοχμά ἀθύρματα are and the identity of their bearer. The Loeb text, which is reproduced below, tentatively identifies the bearer as Dionysus (85-93):

\begin{align*}
\text{ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ (?)} & \quad \text{DIONYSUS (?)} \\
\text{ἐπι [τ]ά κανά ταῦτα μα[νχψ]ν[ειν] φιλεῖ[τ].} & \quad \text{Since you are set on lea[rn]ing these new ways, I [br]ing you [here (?)] some novel \textbf{toys}, [f]reshly fa[shioned] on the [ad]ze\textsuperscript{132} and the anvil.} \\
\text{ἐγὼ [φέρο ν]υ νυχμά [ ] [...] ἀθύρματα,} & \quad \text{Here is the first of the play[thing]s for you.} \\
\text{ἀπὸ [ςκε]πάρνου κάκα[νον ν]εόκτ[τιον.]} & \quad \text{\textbf{}\textbf{}} \\
\text{του[τί τό] πρὸδον ἐκτε ν[τί ν] παγ[νίων].} & \quad \text{\textbf{}}
\end{align*}

\footnote{“There is probably a double entendre in this sentence: πάλη and its derivatives, (ἐ)στρεφθεῖμα, γυμνάζόμαι, and references to the Isthmuses, were all capable of being understood in sexual senses...Palaestra, Gymnasium and Isthmias were all names of real or fictitious hetaira—\textit{which might suggest an alternative explanation for the state of the satyrs’ phallah!” (Sommerstein (2009, 89n7)). Cf. Henderson (1975: 137-8, 169, 176).}}

\footnote{Sommerstein (2009: 91n9) notes that Dionysus’ “property” is the satyrs’ own bodies.}

\footnote{Equivalent to Latin ascia, a craftman’s axe. Cf. Italie (1964: 275).}
ΧΟΡΟΣ
έμοι μέν ούχι: τὸν φίλον νειμόν τινι.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ (?)
μὴ ἀπευπε μηδ' ὁρνηθος οὖνεκ', ὅγαθε—

ΧΟΡΟΣ
τί δὴ γανούσθαι τούτο; καὶ τί χρήσομαι;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ (?)
ἤνερ μεθείλ[ε]ε τῇ[ν] τέχνην, ταύτη
πρεπ[ε]ι—

ΧΟΡΟΣ
τί δρᾶν; τί ποιεῖν; [τοῦ]πάπλουν μ´ οὐχ
ἀνδάν[ε]ι

CHORUS
Not for me! Give it to one of my friends.

DIONYSUS (?)
Don't refuse, my good fellow, just
because of an evil omen, to—

CHORUS
To get what pleasure out of this? And
what use will I make of it?

DIONYSUS (?)
It is appropriate to the new trade you have
taken up—

CHORUS
For doing what? For what activity? I don't
like [this] equipment!

Sommerstein identifies the unknown character as Dionysus and claims that the
νεοχμὰ άθόρματα are probably “shackles which [Dionysus] will make [the satyrs] wear if
they remain disobedient to him. 133 Dionysus is one of three major competing
explanations for the identity of the character speaking to the satyrs in this passage.
Sommerstein dismisses the idea that the character may be the new protector of the satyrs,
who is returning with javelins, which he calls νεοχμὰ άθόρματα. 134 Ussher (1977) makes
the case for Hephaestus, who is already associated with ironworking and who is
elsewhere associated with satyrs. 135 Ussher also identifies as the νεοχμὰ άθόρματα as
javelins (which require two hands to use) and explains that the satyrs had to hang their
masks on the temple so that they could practice for the games. 136

134 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
I agree with Sommerstein’s identification of the character as Dionysus (although, as discussed below, I disagree that the νεωχυρά ἀθόρματα are shackles). Ussher’s argument that the character is Hephaestus is self-fulfilling, relying on his argument that “a neat conclusion would be given if the satyrs sailed away from the Isthmos with Hephaestus (as they sail away with Odysseus in the Cyclops).”¹³⁷ Ussher presents no other evidence that points to Hephaestus having a role in this play. Other arguments that this character is not Dionysus, but rather a new patron or protector of the satyrs, rely on the idea that Dionysus would not have given “gifts” (such as the ἀθόρματα) to the satyrs after they disobeyed him. The problems with this interpretation are twofold. First, Dionysus’ previous lines are clearly a threat (78-9):

\[
\text{ταῦτ᾽ οὖν δακρύσεις οὐ καπνῷ [ \\
\text{παρόντα δὲ ἔγγυς οὔχ ὅρῆς τα]}
\]

For this you’ll shed tears, and it won’t be [because you’re stung by (?)] smoke! Don’t you see [your bonds (?)] here, close by?

The audience would expect Dionysus to follow up on this threat, as he does if Dionysus is the bearer of ἀθόρματα. Second, as Sommerstein notes, a patron of athletes would not typically refer to athletics as [τ]ἀ καινὰ ταῦτα (85).¹³⁸

I disagree with Sommerstein’s interpretation of ἀθόρματα as ‘shackles.’ First, no extant portion of the Greek text suggests ‘shackles’ over any other object “made with adze and the anvil” (87). Instead, I agree with other scholars that the ἀθόρματα are more likely ‘javelins’ or another type of athletic equipment. If the ἀθόρματα are javelins,

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¹³⁷ Ibid., 298.
Dionysus’ line that the ἀθόρματα are “appropriate to the new trade you have taken up” (ἡπερ μεθεύξεστιν τήν τέχνην, ταύτη πρεπεῖ εἰ, 92) also makes more sense. Furthermore, the substitution of ἀθόρματα for javelins is more similar to the previous uses of ἀθώρμα we have seen involved in transgressive gift exchanges. The idea of satyrs participating in athletics is itself transgressive. O’Sullivan argues, “The idea that satyrs might be athletes is just the sort of incongruous humour we would expect of this kind of drama (to say nothing of exactly how they have been training their arms!).”

It seems probable that when Dionysus says “This here is the first of the playthings for you” (τούτῳ πρῶτῳ ἐξίς σοι τῷ παίγνιον, 88) that he is presenting a javelin to the satyrs. By physically presenting a javelin onstage but referring to the javelin as an ἀθώρμα, Dionysus diminishes the significance of the javelin (and athletics) and makes the activity appropriate for satyrs. At the same time, Dionysus insults the satyrs by implying that they are incapable of participating in true athletics.

B. Euripides’ ἀθόρματα in Auge and Hypsipyle

The noun ἀθώρμα appears three times in Euripides’ fragmentary plays, once in Auge and twice in Hypsipyle (in Hypsipyle, it appears once in two different manuscripts). Most of the play Auge is lost, although the extant fragments have been arranged based on the plotline of a late Armenian version of the myth attributed to Moses of Chorene. The testimonia give conflicting summaries of the play, although the general plotline remains the same. In both versions, Heracles rapes Auge, a priestess of Athena, while she is participating in nocturnal rites. She gives birth to Telephus, and when her father finds

out what happens, he orders them killed. One manuscript says that Auge’s father ordered Telephus exposed and Auge thrown in the sea, but Heracles finds a ring he had left behind (or that Auge had torn off during the rape) on an exposed baby; Heracles then acknowledges his son and rescues Auge (*Auge* test. *iib*). In another version, Auge and Telephus are locked in a chest and thrown in the sea, but Athena bears the chest safely across the sea until it lands at the mouth of the Caicus river. Teuthras rescues the two, marring Auge and adopting Telephus (*Auge* test. *iv*). The fragments of concern to this analysis do not depend on selecting one of these plotlines over another.

In the various fragments presented below, Auge and a nurse are likely deciding how they will save Telephus after her father orders him killed when Heracles enters and asks (272):

\[
\text{ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ?} \\
\text{τίς δ’ οὐχὶ χαίρει νηπίους ἄθωρμασιν;}
\]

\[
\text{HERACLES?} \\
\text{Who does not take pleasure in childish toys?}^{141}
\]

In this fragment ἄθωρμα appears again with νηπίη (cf. Hom. II. 15.363). As discussed above, νηπίη signals not only a childish action, but a foolish one that does not achieve the desired effect. Heracles tells the audience himself that his rape of Auge was unintentional in another fragment (272b=265N):

\[
\text{ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ} \\
\text{νῦν δ’ οἶνος ἐξέστησέ μ’ ὁμολογῶ δὲ σεάδικεῖν, τὸ δ’ ἀδίκημ’ ἐγένετ’ οὐχ ἐκούσιον.}
\]

\[
\text{HERACLES} \\
\text{As it is, wine made me lose control. I admit I wronged you, but the wrong was not intentional.}
\]

---

141 Greek text and English translation are from Collard and Cropp (2008).
The nurse also comments that “action attempted also tends to go wrong” (καὶ τοῦτοιχορεῖν γ’ ἐξαμαρτάνειν φύλει, 271b). The nurse’s comment emphasizes the connotations of foolishness of νηπίεια. These fragments are also consistent with the use of ἀθαρσία in transgressive gift-exchange; rape is certainly transgressive, and it a type of exchange in which, here, Heracles receives physical pleasure and Auge receives a child. Furthermore, by reducing the act of rape to “childish toys” (νηπίους ἀθαρσίαν, 272) Heracles diminishes the significance of his transgression and releases him from moral culpability for the things that go wrong later in the play.

Like Auge, Euripides’ Hypsipyle is also fragmentary. Hypsipyle, one of Euripides’ “latest and most elaborate tragedies,” features a complicated plot. Hypsipyle gives birth to two sons by Jason while the Argonaut’s are on Lemnos, but Jason leaves with his sons. Hypsipyle flees Lemnos after refusing to kill her father when the other women of Lemnos decide to kill all the men. She is kidnapped, sold as a slave to Lycurgus, and becomes the nurse to Lycurgus’ and his wife Euridyces’ son, Opheltes. Jason dies and his sons end up in Nemea, where Hypsipyle welcomes them into Lycurgus’ house as guests. Hypsipyle then leads the Athenian seer Amphiaraus to a spring so that he can gather fresh water for sacrifice and at the spring the baby Opheltes is killed by a serpent. Amphiaraus smooths over Euridyce’s and Hypsipyle relationship, and Opheltes’ funeral is celebrated with games. These games become the Nemean games, in which Hypsipyle’s sons compete, redeeming Hypsipyle. Hypsipyle and her sons return to Lemnos.\(^{143}\)

\(^{142}\) Collard and Cropp (2008: 251).
\(^{143}\) Plot from Collard and Cropp (2008: 251-2).
There are two different manuscripts for Hypsipyle in which the noun ἀθυρμα appears, each time in the same lines. Page and Collard and Cropp disagree on the line’s location within the play, however. Collard and Cropp place the fragment with ἀθυρμα in the middle of the play, likely when Hypsipyle is opening the door to Euneos and Thoas (752d.1-7):

ΥΨΙΠΥΛΗ

ηξε[ι ......]σπ,.[......ἀ]θυρμα[τία
σάς [ό]δυρμών ἐκγαλη[νει ν]φρένας,
ὑμεῖς ἐκρούσατ’ ὃ νεανιά[ι, πύλα];
ὅ μακαρία σφόν ἢ τεκό[στ’, ἢ]πις ποτ’ ἢν
τί τῶ[ν]δε μελαθρον δε[όμε]νοι
προσήλθετον;

HYPSSIPYLE

...will come...toys which (will) calm your mind from crying. Was it you, young men, who knocked at the door? O happy the mother that bore you, whoever she was! Why have you come to this house, and what do you want from it?144

Page’s text (1941) positions the fragment as the first extant line of the play and reconstructs the text differently (1-2):

ΥΨΙΠΥΛΗ

ηξε[ι πατηρ οὐ] σπά[νι ἔχον ἀ]θυρματα
σάς ὀδυρμών ἐκγαλη[νει ν]φρένας.

HYPSSIPYLE

Father comes soon! Many a pretty toy he brings you to soothe your heart from sorrow.145

In both passages, the exchange of toys between the father (presumably the one bringing toys to Opheltes in the former passage as well), and Opheltes will never be completed because Opheltes dies before his father returns. Here, ἀθυρμα again becomes the object

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144 Greek text and English translations are from Collard and Cropp (2008).
145 Greek text and English translation from Page (1941).
involved in an incomplete gift-exchange. The poet anticipates that the exchange of toys between Opheltes and his father will remain incomplete and foreshadows Opheltes death.

**C. Crates’ and Cratinus’ Comic ἄθωρματα, and Other Fragments**

This section briefly explains the uses of ἄθωρμα in the comic fragments of Crates and Cratinus drawing upon the semantic analysis of ἄθωρμα presented throughout this paper. The noun ἄθωρμα appears in a short fragment by Crates. Similar to the use of ἄθωρμα in Euripides’ *Aige*, it here appears in a sexual context (fr. 23):

> καὶ μάλας ἀφροδισίους ἄθωρματαν ἡδῶν
> γὰρ κάκεινο τὸ δράν, λέγεσθαι δ’ οὗ καλόν.

And especially in the Aphrodisian playthings.
For it is sweet to do this, but it is not pretty to talk about.¹⁴⁶

Crates’ use of ἄθωρμα characterizes sexual activity as a transgressive exchange between two people. By qualifying that the sexual act is sweet, but “not pretty to speak of” (λέγεσθαι δ’ οὕ καλόν), Cratinus characterizes the act as transgressive. Although this passage is removed entirely from context, generic conventions of comedy also allow for the possibility that the “Aphrodisian playthings (ἀφροδισίους ἄθωρματαν, fr. 23) are an actual figure (likely a woman, although possibly a man dressed as a woman) brought on stage and used as comic object.

Cratinus uses ἄθωρμα again in an even shorter fragment (fr. 152):

> νεοχυμὸν <τι> παρῆξθαι ἄθωρμα.

Bring a new toy on stage.

¹⁴⁶ Greek text is from Storey (2011). English translations is my own.
The brevity of this fragment prevents an extended analysis. The inherently transgressive nature of Comedy, however, might suggest that in this fragment, ἄθυρμα becomes the vehicle by which comedy is exchanged between playwright and audience.\textsuperscript{147} Although we are again without context, the “new toy” could quite possibly be an actual comic object brought out on stage—a flute girl, a wine skin, or a phallus.

A fragment by Eupolis provides only two words (fr. 46):

άνδρογώνον ἄθυρμα

androgynous toy\textsuperscript{148}

There is even less context here than in the above fragments by Crate and Cratinus. An “androgynous” (άνδρογώνον) toy might be a person on stage, either a woman dressed as a man or a man dressed as a woman. The inclusion of “toy” (ἄθυρμα) may also suggest the presence of a double-ended sex toy intended for use by both men and women.

The final use of ἄθυρμα is too fragmentary to offer commentary on, but I will include it here for the sake of completeness. Epicharmus uses the noun ἄθυρματα in fragment 84:\textsuperscript{149}

...ing and...
...toys...
...for me and (up?)...\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{147} On comedy as inherently transgressive, see Walin (2012: 1, 168).
\textsuperscript{148} Greek text from Storey (2011). English translation is my own.
\textsuperscript{149} Iamblichus, the third century AD philosopher, attributes a use of ἄθυρμα to Heraclitus as well, but the use of the word appears to be Iamblichus’ choice; “Heraclitus thought that human opinions are children’s toys” (Ἡράκλειτος παιδον ἄθυρματα νενομένεν εἶναι τὰ ἄνθρωπα δοξάσματα, fr. D6); Greek text and English translation from Laks (2016).
\textsuperscript{150} Greek text from Austin (1972). English translation is my own.
4. Conclusion

This paper has offered an analysis of every occurrence of the noun ἀθυρμα in archaic and classical Greek. In the Iliad, I have argued that the use of ἀθυρμα diminishes the significance of Apollo’s destruction of the Achaean wall, allowing the bard to avoid discussion of how such an action ironically symbolizes the end of the Heroic Age. The Odyssey forms the basis of my analysis of the noun ἀθυρμα’s involvement in gift-exchange. Eumaeus’s use of ἀθυρμα to characterize the wealth of Phoenician traders exposes the elite view of trade articulated by the Odyssey, and the bard’s use of ἀθυρμα to characterize Penelope’s gift to young Melantho similarly reveals the Odyssey’s restriction of gift-exchange to characters who ascribe to upper-class values. The Homeric Hymns reinforce the association of ἀθυρμα with gift exchange. In the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, the bard’s use of ἀθυρμα removes Persephone from the gift-exchanges that occur in the Hymn, allowing Persephone herself to be the tīmē exchanged between Zeus and Hades. Finally, in the Homeric Hymn to Hermes, Hermes’ cleverness is demonstrated as he transforms an ἀθυρμα into an item worthy of exchange for Apollo’s cattle, securing his own place in the Olympian pantheon. The uses of ἀθυρμα in archaic hexameter poetry suggest that an ἀθυρμα often signals an incomplete gift exchange and has a diminishing or lessening effect.

This understanding of ἀθυρμα allowed for new interpretations of passages from lyric poetry and Greek dramatic poetry. Andromache’s ship in Sappho 44, I argue, carries not only luxurious items for Andromache, but toys that will belong to Astyanax. The use of ἀθυρμα in Pindar’s fifth Pythian ode highlights the tension between the multiple gift-exchanges occurring in the poem. This theory of ἀθυρμα was then applied to
Bacchylides' dithyramb "Theseus for the Athenians," in which I argued that such an understanding of ἄθυρμα allows the dithyramb to be read as Athenian imperialist propaganda. In Bacchylides 9, this understanding of ἄθυρμα allows for a better understanding of the contrast between legitimate and illegitimate poetry offered by Bacchylides. Understanding ἄθυρμα as a symbol of transgressive gift-exchange also provides a clearer reading of Aeschylus' *Theoroi*, where I argue that Campbell's identification of the speaker in line 85 as Dionysus is correct, but that the use of ἄθυρμα guides us toward an image of javelins on stage, not shackles. In Euripides' *Auge*, Heracles uses ἄθυρμα to diminish the significance of his own transgressive act, and in *Hypsipyle*, ἄθυρμα signals to the audience that a promised gift-exchange is transgressive because it will not occur before Opheltes' death.

The noun ἄθυρμα is used not only to describe but also to diminish the significance of an object or action. In archaic and early classical Greek poetry, the lexeme appears in scenes of gift exchange, connoting that some form of transgression has occurred. From a narratological perspective, ἄθυρμα also makes it possible for a poet to present multiple perspectives on a single object or event, as we see in the *Iliad* and the *Homerian Hymn to Demeter*. Several occurrences of ἄθυρμα also suggest that the lexeme may have a unique connection to song and/or Apollo; this connection could be productively explored in a subsequent study.
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