

The Homeric use of *ὀνομάζω* in informal supplication

This paper examines the use of the Homeric speech introductory formula *ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἐκ τ' ὀνομάζεε*, which introduces direct speech and is employed forty-three times in the Homeric epics. A close examination that is sensitive to the individual contexts of each example and to their recurring uses, reveals a situation in which the speaker makes use of gestures or actions that are linked to supplication, while the imperative clauses that follow in the direct speech also lend it varying degrees of supplicative urgency.

I build on the long history of scholarship that explicitly addresses this expression, which puts forward claims that range from characterizations as an empty formula whose only purpose is to introduce direct speech within the demands of meter (Parry 1937), to arguments that point to its surrounding context to indicate emotional tensivity and affection (Calhoun 1935), or that emphasize the superiority of the addressor to the addressee (Couch 1937). This is supplemented by later views that mediate between the extremes of these claims (Edwards 1970, Riggsby 1992). In order to contextualize my argument within more recent conceptions about formulas involved in the introduction of direct speech, I engage with related scholarship on narration and narrative in the poems (de Jong 2004), as well as their use of conversation and speech presentation (Beck 2012). This picture is also enriched by examining Homeric metaphor within the context of speech introductions (Zanker 2019). I also examine the rituals and gestures that traditionally accompany acts of supplication, both its general features (Naiden 2006) and specifically features within the Homeric epics (Pedrick 1982).

When we examine this formula and its surrounding context with reference to the above scholarship, it is possible to classify it as a formula whose main purpose is to introduce a form of

supplication. The addressor starts by employing an arresting action to stop the addressee before initiating direct speech. These gestures convey a number of emotive ideas ranging from neutral, where the addressor simply stands before the addressee (*Il.* 14.297), to more desperate or violent actions as the speaker clings to or seizes their arm (*Il.* 6.253, 7.108, *Od.* 3.374, 8.291), as well as highly tender actions as the addressor caresses their hand (*Il.* 1.361, *Od.* 5.181). The speech that follows relies heavily on imperative clauses that can also imbue the associated speech with significant emotional overtones, as well as initiating a wide array of imperative appeals that, when taken with the associated gestures, takes on a tone that is decidedly supplicative in nature.

The emotional tenor stems not just from the situation governing the arresting action or the specific appeal but is also colored by the close personal relationships between the two individuals. These relationships can be familial, such as between spouses (*Il.* 6.406 & 485, 24.286), siblings (*Il.* 7.108), or parent and child (*Il.* 1.361, 5.372), or even those who are involved in a sexual relationship (*Od.* 5.181). However, where no direct familial relationship is clear, a sense of familiarity can be provided by the context of a host and guest interacting through a relationship bound by *ξενία* (*Il.* 18.384 & 483, *Od.* 2.302, 5.181, 6.254). These are accompanied by a few examples from both poems where the appeal occurs in traditional supplication scenarios, such as appeals on the battlefield (*Il.* 21.356) or in prayer (*Od.* 7.330). The result of this analysis is that the poet favors *ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἐκ τ' ὀνόμαζε* when initiating the direct speech associated with an informal supplicative act, especially between closely connected or related individuals.

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