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Meta-Epic Reflection in Twenty-First-Century Rewritings of Homer, or: The Meta-Epic Novel

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Abstract

The present article discusses meta-epic reflection in a selection of twenty-first-century novels based on Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. It defines instances of "metagenre" and "metageneric texts" as texts which, explicitly or implicitly, reflect upon the nature of another genre or of their own genre; novels which comment on the features of the epic qualify as "meta-epic novels."

In its main part, the article distinguishes between three modes of meta-epic reflection in the contemporary novel. It briefly discusses Daniel Mendelsohn's *An Odyssey: A Father, a Son and an Epic* (2017) as an affirmative take on the ancient genre and Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005) as a subversive one. Subsequently, it focusses on Natalie Haynes's *A Thousand Ships* (2019) as an ambivalent approach to the epic. In this novel, meta-epic reflection takes centre stage through the character of Calliope, the ancient muse of epic poetry, who advocates a reform of her own genre: dissatisfied with its patriarchal traditions, Calliope calls for a new kind of epic which foregrounds the fates of the female characters. *A Thousand Ships*, which narrates the tragic stories of the women affected by the Trojan War, adheres to the rules of this new sort of epic. Adapting a term from Henry Fielding, the article reads *A Thousand Ships* as a "tragic epic poem in prose"—a prose epic for a twenty-first-century readership.

1. Introduction[1]

The first two decades of the twenty-first century have seen the publication of an astonishing number of novels based on Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. For instance, Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* (2018) has the slave Briseis tell her version of the Iliadic events in the Greek war camp, Madeline Miller's *Circe* (2018) paints a complex picture of the sorceress Circe, who is infamous for turning Odysseus's comrades into pigs, Miller's previous *The Song of Achilles* (2011) depicts a homoerotic relationship between Patroclus and Achilles, and Stephen Fry's *Troy* (2020) provides a panoramic portrayal of the rise and fall of the ancient city.

A substantial number of these novels do not only retell or rewrite Homeric myths but also address how these myths are passed on through the ages, e.g. by way of the oral tradition or written epics. More specifically, some novels comment and reflect upon the nature of the genre to which their ancient predecessors belong, hence upon the characteristics of the heroic epic. Some ponder the features of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in particular, some the nature of the epic more generally and, consequently, some their own generic status between novel and epic. Thus, they are fictional texts which explicitly or implicitly reflect upon the nature of a specific literary genre; in other words, they are instances of "metagenre."

In the following, I will first of all define the terms "metagenre" and "metageneric text" as they will be applied in the present article. Subsequently, I will briefly illustrate the wide range of ways in which twenty-first-century Homeric rewritings reflect upon the ancient epic by pointing out the different functions of meta-epic reflections in two such rewritings: Daniel Mendelsohn's *An Odyssey: A Father, a Son and an Epic* (2017) exudes a contagious enthusiasm for Homer's *Odyssey* and the epic genre whereas Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005) subverts and mocks the epic tradition. In the main part, I will focus on Natalie Haynes's *A Thousand Ships* (2019), which, in its attitude towards the ancient epic tradition, occupies an intermediate position between Mendelsohn and Atwood. In this novel, meta-epic reflection takes centre stage through the character of Calliope, the ancient muse of epic poetry herself. As I will show, Calliope is not a supporter of the genre she personifies. Dissatisfied with its patriarchal traditions, she advocates a reform of the epic, recommending that her genre should foreground the fates of the female characters on both sides of epic conflicts. Borrowing from Henry Fielding, I will suggest that, thanks to Calliope's interference, the novel *A Thousand Ships* becomes a "tragic epic poem in prose" and thus a representative of the reformed kind of epic favoured by Calliope.

2. Metagenre: A Definition

In recent decades, literary studies have seen a proliferation of neologisms introduced by the prefix "meta," among them "metafiction," "metanarrative," "metatheatre"—and "metagenre." The prefix "meta" has been transferred to literary studies from linguistics, where a "metalanguage" is a language about another language, i.e. a language A, or "metalanguage," that allows linguists to talk about a different language B, or "object language" (*OED*, s.v. "metalanguage" and "object language" 2.; see also Niederhoff's introduction to the present issue of *Connotations* 3-4). The prefix "meta" indicates that the metalanguage is set "on a higher level" than the object language.

When understood along these lines, an instance of "metagenre" or a "metageneric text" is a passage or an entire text which, either implicitly or explicitly, comments on the genre of another text; as an instance of genre A (meta-level) which reflects upon genre B (object-level), it requires the simultaneous presence of two different genres in a single text. In the following, I will deal with a specific form of metagenre, which I suggest to call the "meta-epic novel": a novel which comments upon the nature of the epic, i.e. a novel *about* the epic. In other words, the novel is the "medium" or "locus" of the metageneric reflection while the epic is its "object" (for the differentiation between "medium" or "locus" and "object," see e.g. Hauthal 84 and Wolf 33-34); as the "medium" of the discussion, the genre of the novel is a mere instrument and relegated to the sidelines while the genre of the epic, as the "object" or topic of the discussion, is at the centre of attention. In this context, "meta-epic" serves as an attribute that characterises a particular type of novel.

Admittedly, levels A and B may also fall together. For instance, the term "metafiction" is usually employed by critics for a piece of fiction that reflects either upon fiction in general or plainly upon itself; the meta-level and the object-level are identical, and the metafictional text becomes self-reflexive or self-conscious. When the prefix "meta" is used to signify self-reflexivity (and it is so widely employed in this sense that it has almost become synonymous with "self-reflexive"), an instance of "metagenre" or a "metageneric text" is a (part of a) text which comments upon the nature of the text's own genre. For instance, a "meta-novel," or more precisely a "meta-novel novel," is thus a novel that reflects upon the characteristics of the novel, i.e. a novel *about* the novel.[2] More generally, Burkhard Niederhoff in his introduction to the present volume of *Connotations* defines "metagenre" as "the self-examination of a literary text that is focused on, and limited to, its own genre" (7).

Needless to say, the two types of metageneric reflection—"other-reflexive" and "self-reflexive," so to speak—cannot always be neatly distinguished. Robert M. Philmus characterises "metageneric texts" as texts which "implicitly comment on the genre(s) in relation to which they define themselves" (313).[3] Philmus may focus on the self-reflexive dimension of metageneric passages, yet his brief definition of "metageneric texts" indicates that texts can comment upon several genres simultaneously and thus also upon genres they are not ascribed to themselves. This definition is close to the understanding of the term I will apply in the main part of the present article because it implies that instances of "metagenre" and "metageneric texts" are passages or entire texts which ponder literary genres—either different genres or the ones they belong to; in the former case, metageneric reflection has an "other-reflexive" quality, in the latter case, it has a "self-reflexive" one. In both other- and self-reflexive cases, I allow for implicit as well as explicit genre-related references. In this emphasis on the distinction between other- and self-reflexive cases of metagenre, my approach differs from Niederhoff's.

In the following, I will show that the Homeric rewritings examined are both other- and self-reflexive and that their other-reflexiveness contributes to their self-reflexiveness. As meta-epic novels, they have an other-reflexive dimension because, being examples of genre A, they comment on the nature of genre B. Still, I will also demonstrate that the novels appropriate characteristics of the epic, thus blurring the boundaries between the distinct genres. Hence, they have a self-reflexive quality because, imitating features of the epic, they become modernised, or reformed, epics which ponder their own innovative status between the two established genres.

3. Meta-Epic Reflection in Twenty-First-Century Rewritings of Homer: Three Modes

3.1 Mendelsohn's *An Odyssey*: The Affirmative Mode

Rewritings of the Homeric epics differ in whether and, if so, how they comment upon the ancient genre; they vary in the degree, manner and purpose of their meta-epic reflections. My first example is Mendelsohn's *An Odyssey: A Father, a Son and an Epic*, which carries its meta-epic nature in the (sub-)title. This book, which among other labels has been dubbed an "intergenerational *Bildungsroman*" (Riley 268), is best described as an amalgam of novel and autobiography, interspersed with scholarly interpretations of the *Odyssey* written for a popular audience. Mendelsohn, who teaches classics at Bard College, NY, is an academic and a writer. In *An Odyssey*, he narrates how his father, a retired scientist, sat in on one of his undergraduate classes on the *Odyssey*, and how he and his father subsequently went on an "*Odyssey* cruise" through the Mediterranean. Large sections of the book are explicitly meta-epic of the other-reflexive type: they depict a twenty-first-century classroom scenario in which Mendelsohn teaches his students (and his father) the characteristics of the ancient epic. In many scenes set in the classroom and in lengthy passages that provide clarifications for readers who are new to the classics, Mendelsohn introduces and explains typical characteristics of the genre, such as epic similes (73-74), epithets (e.g. 62-63, 70, 73), and proems (10-15). Consider the following example:

> I talked about the stock epithets, so useful for quick identification of the characters, so crucial for oral composition. I told them [the students] to look out for "epic similes": passages in which the poet pauses to compare a character or an action in his fabulous tale, sometimes at considerable length, to something belonging to the everyday world of his audience—of *us*. (73; emphasis in original)

The meta-epic nature of the book relies strongly on explicit references to the ancient genre. Handling the epic in the manner of scholarly debate, the book supplies students and readers with the background information necessary to interpret the *Odyssey*. Mendelsohn and his students then analyse the *Odyssey* together in class, moving through the epic from Book 1 to Book 24 in the course of the semester.

In the classroom scenes and in the additional explanations, students, father and readers learn about the ancient world and its literature. Hence, the meta-epic nature of the book pursues a didactic and edifying goal: Mendelsohn means to inform and instruct, not only his undergraduates and his father (as an academic at Bard College) but also his readers (as the author of *An Odyssey*), and he intends to enable the latter group to pick up the *Odyssey* and to appreciate it. He generates interest in a poem whose characteristics are alien to today's readers. Besides, Mendelsohn may appear to be teaching objective facts, but he frequently refers to the epic(s) with epithets such as "classical" (10), "famous" (14) and "great" (55). The professor of classics does not merely lecture his audience on the features of the epic, but he also instils into them the greatness and artistry of the ancient genre. This favourable depiction of the genre is fully in line with the portrayal of its particular representative, the *Odyssey*, valued and cherished by almost every character in the book: from Mendelsohn and his own mentors over his father and his students to the tourists on the cruise liner. In the end, the students write him flattering emails about how much they enjoyed the class and benefitted from his father's presence (see 273-77). On a more personal level, the *Odyssey* helps Mendelsohn and his father to bond after decades of strained relations. Reading and discussing the ancient epic accordingly has a positive effect on their father-son-relationship. The affirmative attitude towards the epic genre is also foregrounded through the self-reflexive dimension of some metageneric elements, among them various parallels between the plots of the *Odyssey* and of Mendelsohn's book as well as the very structure of the latter, as it is divided into sections titled "Proem (Invocation)," "Telemachy (Education)," "Nostos (Homecoming)," etc.[4] Consequently, Mendelsohn's book is imbued with a sense of awe and respect for the epic as a genre and its specific example, Homer's *Odyssey*. The meta-epic nature of *An Odyssey* conveys Mendelsohn's enthusiasm for the classical languages and their literature in general[5] as well as for the *Odyssey* and the ancient epic more specifically.

3.2 Atwood's *The Penelopiad*: The Subversive Mode

While Mendelsohn's *An Odyssey* depicts a realistic twenty-first-century scenario in which academics and students explicitly discuss the genre of the epic (just like the writer and readers of the present article may do), Atwood's *The Penelopiad* is set among the original mythological characters. In long sections of the novel, Penelope serves as a cheeky, smart and provocative first-person narrator who tells her story with the benefit of hindsight. Penelope frequently refers to the conventions of the epic (in a manner more indirect than that of Mendelsohn's characters), and she mocks these conventions with dry comments on the customs of her age, its myths and gods, and also its songs and literature. She may never use the term "epic," but whenever she mentions the songs, stories and poems that circulated during and after her lifetime (e.g. 34, 39, 45, 49), she evidently refers to the oral tradition which preceded the written epics that have come down to us.

In doing so, Penelope pokes fun at the stylistic conventions of epics; for instance, she mocks their vocabulary. To indicate that some time has passed she states at one point: "The sun rose, travelled across the sky, set. Only sometimes did I think of it as the flaming chariot of Helios. The moon did the same, changing from phase to phase. Only sometimes did I think of it as the silver boat of Artemis" (81). Penelope alludes to the epic convention of signalling the beginning of a new day through a standardised reference to the movement of the heavenly bodies. She suggests that, while ordinary people think of the moon and other trivial objects in a direct and straightforward manner, singers use stock phrases of a poetic nature to refer to the most mundane issues. Thus, epics employ a fixed set of sophisticated vocabulary which embellishes real life. In a similar manner, Penelope alludes to the traditional epithets. Here's what she says about Menelaus: "The best that was claimed of Menelaus, once they started putting him into the poems, was that he had a very loud voice" (34). Clearly, Penelope refers to the epithet "master of the war-cry" (as it is translated by Hammond),[6] which politely conceals the fact that Menelaus is stupid and coarse (77) behind a somewhat flattering attribute. Likewise, she exposes the convention that depicts every female character as a superlative beauty rivalling the goddesses. In spite of her own average appearance, the singers describe her as "radiant as Aphrodite," which in Penelope's sarcastic opinion qualifies as nothing but "the usual claptrap" (28).[7]

Additionally, Atwood's novel questions the general truth value of the stories about Penelope's famous husband as we are familiar with them from Homer's epic. Commenting upon the various rumours which are spreading through Ithaca, Penelope states:

> Odysseus had been in a fight with a giant one-eyed Cyclops, said some; no, it was only a one-eyed tavern keeper, said another, and the fight was over non-payment of the bill. […] Odysseus was the guest of a goddess on an enchanted isle, said some; […] she'd fallen in love with him and was feeding him unheard-of delicacies by her own immortal hands, and the two of them made love deliriously every night; no, said others, it was just an expensive whorehouse, and he was sponging off the Madam. (83-84)

Penelope implies that Odysseus's celebrated adventures, i.e. his encounters with giants, witches, and goddesses as narrated in the *Odyssey*, are nothing but sailor's yarn—or perhaps poet's yarn. The singers, whom she calls "minstrels," seize upon the rumours and turn them into songs, but in the process they "embroidered them considerably" (84). Whenever the singers have several versions of the same event available, they choose the most flattering one when they perform in front of Penelope (84)—"[t]he improbably heroic versions, we are invited to notice, are Homeric," as Sarah Annes Brown points out (213). Penelope thus doubts the truth of the stories as they have come down to us through Homer's epic. Here, too, she suggests that the epic genre has a tendency to embellish the truth. She may at times refer to one particular epic, but her remarks, especially those pertaining to the stratagems of the singers, indicate that she means the genre as a whole. Besides, as has often been argued, the truth value of Penelope's own narration is likewise questioned in *The Penelopiad*, especially by the "Chorus Line" of the maids, who, unjustly hanged by Odysseus and Telemachus, doubt Penelope's sincerity and marital fidelity (e.g. 147). As Susanne Jung puts it, "[t]he reader is offered a myriad of stories, theories, points of view of what might have happened, but knowledge of the 'truth' of what happened is forever deferred" (52). Thereby the maids' "Chorus Line" adds to the novel's subversive depiction of the *Odyssey*.

Mendelsohn's *An Odyssey* and Atwood's *The Penelopiad* deal with the epic tradition in very different ways. Mendelsohn's book treats the *Odyssey* as a work of literature and an object of scholarly debate, and it handles the epic tradition in the manner of academic discussion and literary analysis; by contrast, Atwood's novel rewrites the original *Odyssey* in the form of a literary parody, and it depicts the epic tradition from the inside, i.e. from the perspective of the characters who are part of it. Besides, while Mendelsohn's characters admire the ancient world and its literary forms, Atwood's narrator and characters make fun of them; while Mendelsohn's professor and students analyse and interpret ancient epics to get to their core and discover their meaning, Atwood's *The Penelopiad* questions the very existence of any true meaning of epic stories; and while Mendelsohn's take on the epic is serious and affirmative, Atwood's is comic and subversive.

3.3 Haynes's *A Thousand Ships*: The Ambivalent Mode

3.3.1 Excursus: Fielding and the "Epic-Poem in Prose"

In the following, I mean to show that, in its attitude towards the epic, *A Thousand Ships* occupies an intermediate position between Mendelsohn and Atwood: it is critical of the ancient genre, but it also makes explicit suggestions for reform. Let me begin, however, with a few historical and theoretical considerations. When the novel as we know it today was still in its infancy, various authors traced its origins back to ancient genres.[8] In his preface to *Joseph Andrews* (1742), for instance, Henry Fielding connects his novel to the epic tradition, calling it a "comic Epic-Poem in Prose" (49).[9] Drawing upon Aristotle, who famously divides drama into comedy and tragedy and, along the same lines, epic into a comic branch (e.g. Homer's lost *Margites*) and a tragic branch (e.g. Homer's *Iliad*) (Fielding 49; Aristotle chs. 2 and 4), Fielding claims that romances share many salient features with epics, differing only in one crucial characteristic, namely that they are written in prose rather than in verse (49). Consequently, romances, i.e. works of narrative fiction, should be regarded as epics.

Fielding thus calls *Joseph Andrews* an "epic in prose." Subsequently, he argues that prose epics are likewise divided into comic and serious/tragic ones. Here is an overview:

Drama:	Comedy	Tragedy
Epic:	Comic epic ex.: Homer, *Margites* (lost)	Tragic epic ex.: Homer, *Iliad*
	Comic romance "comic Epic-Poem in Prose" ex.: Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*	Tragic/serious romance

Joseph Andrews, Fielding's example of a "*comic* epic in prose," treats characters of inferior status in a light and cheeky manner. Besides, it features parody and burlesque (50) when it subverts the epic style. In other words, *Joseph Andrews* is comic precisely because of its ironic play with epic conventions, such as epithets, formulas and similes.

Leaving Fielding's argumentation behind, I contend that *Joseph Andrews* is "comic" due to its mock-heroic nature and "epic" not only because it is a piece of narrative fiction, but more particularly because it imitates stylistic features of the epic (similes, epithets, etc.). It is thus "more epic" than other pieces of narrative fiction as it makes use of quintessential features of the epic. Finally, let me emphasise that the overview in the previous paragraph is somewhat deficient because it leaves a gap below the "tragic/serious romance." Fielding implies the type of narration that is missing here, but never mentions it explicitly. Still, it follows from Fielding's argumentation that the gap can logically be filled with the term "tragic epic-poem in prose." I will come back to this concept.

3.3.2 Meta-Epic Reflection in Haynes's *A Thousand Ships*

Fielding provides me with a model for my own argument: like *Joseph Andrews*, *A Thousand Ships* should be regarded as an "epic in prose"; like *Joseph Andrews*, *A Thousand Ships* follows the epic tradition in some respects yet modifies it in others; and, like *Joseph Andrews*, it calls for a reformed kind of epic. However, in contrast to *Joseph Andrews*, it is primarily tragic rather than comic.

A Thousand Ships offers a panoramic portrayal of the Trojan War, foregrounding the fates of the many female characters affected by the siege and fall of the ancient city. The title of the novel refers to the (more than) one thousand ships which supposedly sailed from Greece to Troy.[10] It brings to mind the male warriors on their journey to the battlefield, raising expectations that the novel will focus on heroes well known from Homer's epics. However, *A Thousand Ships* defies such expectations: instead, the novel treats the thousand(s of) female characters affected by the war, replacing the *Iliad*'s catalogue of ships and its male Greek warriors with the stories of the wives, mothers, sisters and daughters on both sides of the conflict. What is more, the title appears to be a specific allusion to Helen herself, who is famously referred to as "the face that launched a thousand ships" in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (5.1.90).[11] The elliptical nature of the quotation from Marlowe ("a thousand ships") elides the woman ("the face"). This also has a bearing on the feminist theme of the novel, which does the very opposite: it gives priority to the female characters whose experiences are often neglected if not outright omitted in the ancient stories. Each of the 43 chapters is dedicated either to one female character or to a group of female characters. Among them are Creusa, Briseis and Chryseis, Oenone, Penthesilea, Laodamia, Iphigenia, and many others. All chapters revolve around the war in Troy: some are set before, some during, some after the campaign. This creates thematic unity. Moreover, the chapters are also connected through recurring characters: while many women are only permitted a single chapter, Penelope is allowed seven chapters, the Trojan Women eleven, and Calliope also seven.

Calliope, the muse of epic poetry, in particular holds the many disparate stories together. She is granted the very first and the very last chapter of the novel so that the sections about the other women are both framed by and interspersed with Calliope's chapters. In her own chapters, Calliope serves as a first-person narrator. At the beginning, she is approached by a poet who asks her to help him compose an epic about the Trojan War (the name of the poet is never mentioned, yet his characteristics identify him as "Homer").[12] In her attempt to inspire this poet with the type of epic she wants him to create, Calliope shows him the stories of the women affected by the war. Thus, all the other chapters are, it might be argued, narrated by her; they are intradiegetic narratives which Calliope, whose chapters serve as the frame narrative, presents to the poet.[13]

Calliope does not only hold the separate episodes of *A Thousand Ships* together. She is also the primary reason why the novel is an instance of metagenre. Calliope's mere presence as the muse of epic poetry hints at the novel's meta-epic nature, i.e. at its metageneric quality of the other-reflexive kind. Besides, Calliope mentions thematic and stylistics characteristics of the genre she personifies. For instance, she points out in passing that epics deal with military conflicts and issues of state (1, 267), feature a large number of—mostly male—characters (1, 176) and cover a well-known range of stories, which they tell and retell again and again (1, 108). Calliope also touches upon the use of epithets (40) and the composition in metre (1).

In addition to such explicit, genre-related references, *A Thousand Ships* uses stylistic features apt for epics. Like an epic, the novel begins with the invocation of the muse—"Sing, Muse" (1)—, and it harks back to this invocation at the very end: "Sing, Muse, he said. And I have sung. / I have sung of armies and I have sung of men," Calliope states (339). The latter part of the quotation is less indebted to Homer's epics than to the beginning of Virgil's *Aeneid* ("ARMA virumque cano" I.1—"I sing about arms and the man," my translation),[14] yet it supports the notion that Haynes's *A Thousand Ships*, like Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, which employs epic similes, epithets and formulas, imitates certain facets of the epic genre. Also like an epic, the novel contains a considerable number of similes. For instance, a poet is likened to a warrior (1), Achilles to a lion (e.g. 103, 240), and his victims to grain ears (240). The similes in *A Thousand Ships* are not as elaborate and extended as many of the epic similes in the ancient tradition,[15] yet the frequent use of similes in the novel mirrors their use in the original genre. This connection is further emphasised by the vehicles in *A Thousand Ships*, which, like the lion and the grain stalks, are likewise reminiscent of the vehicles in the ancient tradition. The occasional use of epithets (e.g. "Odysseus of the many wiles" 193) has a similar effect.

However, Calliope does not emerge as a supporter of her own genre—at least not in its conventional form. *A Thousand Ships* occupies a position half-way between Atwood's *The Penelopiad* and Mendelsohn's *An Odyssey*: it is critical of the ancient genre, but it also offers specific suggestions for reform. When Calliope is approached by "Homer," she rejects him, for she does not want to help him compose another epic poem. Why not? And what does she mean to teach him instead?

Calliope claims that there are enough epics circulating already and that the world does not need another one. Here is what she says:

> […] it is surprising that he [the poet] hasn't considered how many other men there are like him, every day, all demanding my unwavering attention and support. How much epic poetry does the world really need?
>
> Every conflict joined, every war fought, every city besieged, every town sacked, every village destroyed. Every impossible journey, every shipwreck, every homecoming: these stories have all been told, and countless times. Can he really believe he has something new to say? (1)

Calliope is annoyed and bored by the endless line of poets who file up to ask her for help. Besides, she suggests that the need for epic poetry is marginal, even more so since it is pointless to narrate the same old stories once again. As her repetitive list of topics indicates ("Every conflict […] every homecoming"), epics are expectable and dull because of their limited range of topics and because their poets never add anything new to the tradition. Hence, Calliope sees no need for another epic, at least not in its conventional sense.

Consequently, Calliope demands a reform of her own genre, by way of a change of topic. She may not call for a fundamental transformation (she means to stick to "war" as her quintessential theme), but she means to broaden the topic so as to make it more diverse and inclusive. To be specific, she wishes the poets to treat the fates of the female characters in a manner equal to that of the male characters. For Calliope, women's deaths—far away from the battle—can be just as "heroic" (i.e. brave and fearless) as those of the male warriors in combat (109) while, in life, women can likewise be as "heroic" (i.e. courageous and daring) as men. Calliope points this out in her comparison of the nymph Oenone, Paris's partner, to the Spartan king Menelaus, Helen's husband. According to Calliope, Oenone, who is deserted by Paris when he runs off with Helen, is just as heroic as Menelaus, who is deserted by Helen when she runs off with Paris (177). Calliope here draws attention to a widely forgotten story according to which Paris was in a relationship with Oenone and left both Oenone and their son behind on Mount Ida when he seduced Helen of Sparta.[16] Here's what Calliope has to say about this:

> If he [the poet] complains to me again, I will ask him this: is Oenone less of a hero than Menelaus? He loses his wife so he stirs up an army to bring her back to him, costing countless lives and creating countless widows, orphans and slaves. Oenone loses her husband and she raises their son. Which of those is the more heroic act? (177)

The implied answer is of course "Oenone's." Calliope suggests that Oenone's manner of dealing with her abandonment (i.e. raising her son) is more laudable and exemplary than Menelaus's (i.e. starting a war and causing the deaths of thousands of people). Put differently, Calliope regards the everyday life of a single mother on Mount Ida as more admirable than the deeds of a general leading an army into battle.[17]

Hence, Calliope's reformed kind of epic at least partly relies on a reformed kind of heroism. Considering the range of other characters in *A Thousand Ships*, this new sort of heroism emerges as a multi-faceted phenomenon. It *does* include courageous deeds (and death) on the battlefield, as in the case of the Amazon queen Penthesilea, an experienced warrior who joins the conflict on the Trojan side, duels with Achilles and is wounded fatally by him before he can recognize her as his equal and soul mate. Similarly, it can signify brutal and bloody revenge, as in the cases of Clytemnestra and Hecabe, who either murder (Clytemnestra) or blind (Hecabe) the man who is responsible for the violent death of their child. However, the heroism of *A Thousand Ships* is not restricted to combat and murder. It can also mean stoic acceptance of one's fate, as in the case of Oenone (see above), or dignity and self-control in the face of death, as in the cases of Iphigenia and Polyxena, who walk towards their respective sacrifices with composure. Heroism can also entail silent, benevolent self-sacrifice for the rescue of a companion, as in the case of Briseis, who hands over the herb which will protect her against being raped by her captor to her fellow captive Chryseis. And it can involve resilience and adaptability to hostile circumstances, as in the case of Andromache, who slowly learns to adjust to her new situation as concubine to the man who killed her infant son. As Haynes puts it in the afterword, "heroism is something that can reside in all of us" (345). Consequently, women can be as "heroic" as men, and therefore epic poetry, traditionally the realm of male heroism, should be concerned with women as much as with men.

Vice versa, Calliope also claims that whatever is considered "tragic" is worth narrating in an epic. For Calliope, "tragic" is linked to dramatic tragedy, and it implies mourning and lament. Consider her comments on the relation between "tragic" and "heroic" deaths:

> Men's deaths are epic, women's deaths are tragic: is that it? He [the poet] has misunderstood the very nature of conflict. Epic is countless tragedies, woven together. Heroes don't become heroes without carnage, and carnage has both causes and consequences. (108-09)

Calliope suggests that, if poets consider men's deaths epic but women's deaths tragic, then they have misconstrued how conflicts work. Men's heroic deaths on the battlefields, as they are narrated in epics, do not occur in isolation; they are accompanied by the tragedies of friends and family members, usually women, who mourn these deaths. Whenever someone dies heroically in the battle scene of an epic, there is also somebody in the background of the same epic who laments this warrior's demise. Therefore, any conventional epic is full of unspoken tragedies, occurring in the gaps of the poem. As Calliope puts it, "[e]pic is countless tragedies, woven together"—yet these tragedies are not related in the epic because it focuses on the fighting. Thus, any epic already consists of a collection of tragedies, but it relegates them to the background. Hence, if poets suppose that "[m]en's deaths are epic" (heroic and worth narrating in an epic), while "women's deaths are tragic" (lamentable and worth staging in a tragedy), then Calliope considers their assumption wrong (for women can likewise be heroic). Besides, even if the poets' view were correct, Calliope would say that it does not mean that women's fates are not worth narrating in an epic. After all, they are already part of the epic (in the background and in brief laments, e.g. by Andromache and Hecabe in the *Iliad*); they only need to be foregrounded.

Calliope's reform of her genre involves that epics should turn to the female characters and narrate their fates. This is of course what *A Thousand Ships* does—in the chapters not concerned with Calliope herself, but with Penelope, Andromache, Clytemnestra, Cassandra, Iphigenia, and the others. Calliope offers their stories to the poet so as to make him compose his poem about them. Consequently, within the diegetic world of the novel, the stories of Laodamia, Hecabe and so on are presented by Calliope to Homer; outside the world of the novel, readers have access to the very stories Calliope recommends to the poet—in the text of *A Thousand Ships*. In the end, Calliope is convinced that, no matter whether the poet follows her suggestions or not, the stories of the women will be narrated to a broader public at some point (see 339-40). This belief comes true immediately of course in the form of the novel in which it is expressed. *A Thousand Ships* tells the stories of the women, whereby the novel becomes the kind of "reformed epic" which Calliope advocates, and thus an instance of metageneric reflection of the self-reflexive type.

This feminist kind of epic depends on a variety of techniques to spotlight the experiences of the women. In some sections, *A Thousand Ships* stays close to its illustrious sources. The Penelope chapters, for instance, retell the events of her husband's journey, well-known from the *Odyssey*. However, they do so with a twist, for the first-person narrator Penelope complains about her spouse's long absence and implores him to return to Ithaca (e.g. 285), yet she also evaluates his adventures differently, e.g. when she explains his journey to the underworld by his self-importance and conceit (228). In other passages, *A Thousand Ships* uses its renowned model(s) merely as a springboard. The section dedicated to Briseis and Chryseis, for example, takes its cue from the characters of these names who figure in the *Iliad*, yet it expands upon and adds to the original. Since the *Iliad* has little to say about the two women, who are mostly treated like pieces of property, Haynes fills the ensuing gap with a narrative which is largely her own invention. Besides, in numerous chapters, she supplements Homer's epics with other ancient sources (e.g. Attic tragedy; see also below) and, in a considerable number of sections, she brings to the fore an array of largely forgotten female characters today only known by those who take a special interest in the classics (e.g. Theano, Laodamia). The novel's feminist agenda thus relies on retelling, re-evaluating, and inventing.[18]

The traditional sort of epic is a "heroic verse epic" (both "heroic epic" and "verse epic" are tautological in this context). By contrast, Haynes's reformed epic is, for the most part, a "tragic epic poem in prose"—a term which I borrow from Fielding. In accordance with his preface to *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding would probably contend that *A Thousand Ships* is tragic because, due to its subject matter, it corresponds to the *Iliad* and to dramatic tragedy rather than to the lost *Margites* and dramatic comedy. Calliope, who is more concerned with the difference between "tragic" and "heroic" (rather than between "tragic" and "comic"), would claim that *A Thousand Ships* is tragic as it explicitly argues that any epic of the *Iliad*-type is tragic due to the many tragedies that occur in the gaps and in the background; she would further maintain that the novel is tragic because it narrates these very stories, foregrounding the fates of the female characters, which have often been considered "tragic" rather than "heroic." Additionally, I would like to suggest that *A Thousand Ships* is also tragic in that it draws its inspiration not only from Homer's epics but also from the works of ancient tragedians.

Although *A Thousand Ships* revolves around the war in Troy, which is largely associated with Homer's epics, and although it explicitly and implicitly reflects upon the epic genre, surprisingly few of its chapters are derived from the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. Penelope's sections are the only ones which draw heavily upon the *Odyssey* while other chapters, e.g. the part about Briseis and Chryseis, are at least loosely inspired by the *Iliad* (see also above). Considering the marginal role of female characters in the epics, however, it is plausible that, in her attempt to tell the women's stories of the Trojan War, Haynes had to go beyond Homer if she did not want to invent everything. A substantial number of her chapters are based on Attic tragedy, in which female characters feature more prominently. Haynes names (many of) her sources in the afterword, among them Euripides's *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Trojan Women* as well as Aeschylus's *Oresteia* (341-42) as the primary sources for the chapters dedicated to Iphigenia, the Trojan Women and Clytemnestra. Here Haynes moves from heroic epic to tragic drama as her source text, a move that implicates a change from the battlefields to the domestic realm, from the male to the female sphere, and from admirable feats to pity and suffering. Her reformed epic tells many stories chiefly known from stage tragedy.

A Thousand Ships thus fulfils Calliope's requirements for a new sort of epic. However, there is a certain tension between Calliope's statements and the rest of the novel, or, to put it differently, between Calliope's theory and her practice. When Calliope finally comments "I have sung of armies and I have sung of men," this remark qualifies as ironic because singing of armies and men is precisely what Calliope tried to avoid. In other words, she may have sung about armies and men, but only in passing, relegating them to the background of the stories. Other discrepancies between her theory and her practice, however, appear to be less deliberate on Calliope's part. They indicate that composing the reformed epic that Calliope advocates is a challenging task which she is not quite up to. For instance, Calliope explicitly complains about the repetitiveness of the epic (every war, every conflict, and so on), yet *A Thousand Ships* may trigger the very same response in (some of) its readers. After all, *A Thousand Ships* retells, once again, the stories of Iphigenia, Clytemnestra and the Trojan Women—stories which readers who are familiar with the classics know very well from Attic tragedy and other sources. Besides, due to the great number and hence brevity of the chapters in *A Thousand Ships*, there is nothing particularly moving or innovative about Calliope's take on these characters—some sections simply repeat a familiar story on only a few pages.[19] Also, while brevity is certainly not a problem of the seven sections narrated by Penelope, large parts of them merely retell the established myth, for Penelope, in an artificial and implausible manner, writes letters to her famous husband in which she tells him the stories of his adventures as they will later be handed down in the *Odyssey*.

Likewise, Calliope may claim that she means to depict the "heroic" nature of women's deeds and behaviour, yet she does not do so in all cases. Some of the human characters are not treated well by her. The most blatant example is Helen, the famous (or infamous) epitome of female beauty over whom the war was supposedly fought. Helen features in the chapters on the Trojan Women just as she does in Euripides's *Trojan Women*, which is a crucial source for Haynes (see above). In these passages, Helen appears among the captured women of Troy and discusses with them the reasons for the war, putting the blame elsewhere, before she is led away by Menelaus (Euripides ll. 860-1059; Haynes 132-38, 178-82, 207-11). Surprisingly, however, she is not granted a chapter of her own.[20] If the title *A Thousand Ships* is supposed to be reminiscent of Marlowe's reference to Helen (see above), the title draws attention to a conspicuous absence at the very centre of the novel—for which panoramic portrayal of the women of the Trojan War would ever be complete without Helen? Calliope explains that she has an aversion to Helen (40) and that she does not want to describe her beauty, a subject of endless praise and admiration by male poets (212); other characters refer to Helen in even more openly disparaging terms, e.g. Theano (37) and Penelope (58). In any case, there is nothing "heroic" about a Helen who is not allowed a chapter of her own.[21]

Besides, Calliope seems to distinguish between the human and the divine characters. While most of the human characters are given a fair and serious treatment by her and exhibit behaviour which can in some way or another be considered "heroic," the divine characters are not.[22] The section dedicated to Aphrodite, Hera and Athena (139-56), for instance, stands in the mock-heroic tradition, portraying the Olympian trio as self-centred, petulant and childish (and Zeus as cowardly and incompetent). Other episodes show the immortals as indifferent and neglectful if not outright nasty. Let me suggest three explanations for Haynes's comic handling of the divine characters. Firstly, the powerful position of the goddesses in the ancient myths of Troy makes it difficult to portray them as victims. Therefore, Haynes underlines their negative sides to emphasise how the indifference of those in power contributes to the misery of the mortal women. Secondly, inhabiting the world of the mock-heroic, the chapters about the goddesses rely on a long tradition that exposes the flaws and weaknesses of the divine characters, and also of the epic genre as a whole. Haynes thus opts for a traditional sort of genre critique. Thirdly, *A Thousand Ships* draws not only on Homer's epics but also on many other ancient sources, especially on Attic tragedy (see above). Considering that the novel spotlights the unhappy fates of many female characters, it is a modern tragedy just as it is a modern epic. Interpreting the novel as a sort of tragedy, in which one dreary story of loss and suffering follows another one, allows readers to understand its humorous sections as comic relief.

Finally, Calliope's chapters are not the only parts of *A Thousand Ships* which are explicitly meta-epic. There may be occasional allusions to epics in various sections of the novel (e.g. in the Creusa chapter [18]), yet the most openly meta-epic chapters, next to Calliope's, are Penelope's. Penelope is the only other first-person narrator in *A Thousand Ships*, and in the letters to her absent husband she repeatedly voices some of the concerns and complaints also formulated by Calliope. She frequently mentions the performances by wandering bards who sing about the adventures of Odysseus on his journey home. Like Calliope, Penelope points out that bards tend to glorify heroic deeds on the battlefield but to overlook "the courage required by those of us who were left behind" (185). Besides, Penelope relates many of the stories she has heard the bards sing about her husband; thus she re-tells numerous episodes known from the *Odyssey*. In a manner reminiscent of, yet more serious than Atwood's Penelope, she indicates that she considers some of these tales, e.g. those about Odysseus's encounter with one-eyed monsters, unrealistic and unbelievable (157). She also suspects the bards to be skilled story-tellers who know very well how to arouse suspense (160) or how to manipulate and modify a story to appeal to the particular audience for which they are performing (e.g. 158, 184). While some of what Penelope has to say about bards is perfectly in line with Calliope's interaction with "Homer," her constant doubts about the truth value of the bards' performances seem to undermine any trust an audience can put in the epic genre (and thus in *A Thousand Ships* itself). If, however, readers understand Penelope's chapters as presented by Calliope to "Homer," they can also interpret them more specifically as undermining the male tradition and its fantastic stories.

4. Conclusion

The novel *A Thousand Ships* tells the stories of the female characters affected by the war in Troy. What is more, it comments on how these stories have been narrated (or: not narrated) in the epic tradition. Thanks to this kind of meta-epic reflection, *A Thousand Ships* becomes a "meta-epic novel" that voices a veritable critique of the ancient genre, or at least of some of its characteristics. To be specific, the novel does not seriously criticise the form of the epic (stylistic features are mentioned in a neutral manner, like epithets, or even imitated, like similes). Rather, the novel constitutes a critique of the content, in particular of the choice of characters (most of them male) and events (most of them on the battlefields or on adventurous journeys). *A Thousand Ships* does not stop here, however, but also takes the next step and offers a solution to the problem: it suggests that epics should turn to the female characters, traditionally relegated to the sidelines, and foreground their fates. This reformed kind of epic is at least partly based on a reformed kind of "heroism," which is not limited to feats on the battlefields but extends to resolute and courageous actions in other areas of life.

Like Mendelsohn's *An Odyssey* and Atwood's *The Penelopiad*, Haynes's *A Thousand Ships* is a hybrid text which crosses the borders between novel and epic. All three books reflect upon features of epics, and they also draw upon features of epics for their own structure and composition. As indicated above, Fielding would call them "epics" simply because they are pieces of narrative fiction. Besides, I argued that they are "more epic" than pieces of narrative fiction generally are. They are more epic than, let's say, Austen's *Emma* or Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* because of their subject matter and style, for, while neither *Emma* nor *Mrs Dalloway* relies upon ancient subject matter or imitates stylistic features of epics, the pieces of narrative fiction examined in the present article do both. Haynes's *A Thousand Ships*, for instance, treats the oldest and most conventional of all epic subject matters, the Trojan War, and it narrates the fates of many of its characters. Moreover, it imitates some characteristics of the epic style, such as the invocation of the muse and the use of similes. Hence, in subject matter and style, *A Thousand Ships* resembles the ancient epic more than most novels do. In the afterword, Haynes herself refers to *A Thousand Ships* as "my attempt to write an epic" (345). The modern epic is a prose narrative which draws upon features of the ancient epic; it is a continuation of the ancient epic in the form of the novel. In Haynes's case, it is a tragic—and feminist—epic in prose.

A Thousand Ships, *An Odyssey* and *The Penelopiad* are epics written for the twenty-first century. After all, the novel is, one might say, the epic of the eighteenth to twenty-first centuries; the "prose epic" has long replaced the verse epic as the narrative genre which reaches the largest audience. Besides, the three books examined in the present article are epics for a twenty-first-century audience because they address issues that appeal to a wide readership. Ancient myth continues to fascinate people, and in particular the female perspective on well-known stories has recently found a global audience through novels like Atwood's *The Penelopiad* but also Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* and Miller's *Circe*, which I mentioned in the introduction. A significant number of other novels fall into the same category, among them Ursula K. Le Guin's *Lavinia* (2008), Emily Hauser's *For the Most Beautiful* (2016) and, most recently, Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne* (2021) as well as Claire Heywood's *Daughters of Sparta* (2021).[23]

Finally, I would like to return to the concept of "metagenre" and address two myths surrounding self-conscious literature. First, it has sometimes been suggested that the tendency of literary texts to revolve around literary texts is a symptom of crisis or an indicator of the "literature of exhaustion," as it was called by John Barth in 1967. However, it has likewise been observed that self-reflexivity in literature can stimulate development and even advance the evolvement of new (sub-)genres (e.g. Hauthal). The examples discussed in the present article suggest the latter, namely that metareferences in fictional texts can be productive. The very existence of novels inspired by epics, i.e. of hybrid texts of two long-standing genres, proves that processes of self-reflexivity can be innovative and creative. Furthermore, neither of the texts declares the end of the epic, let alone the novel. On the contrary, they ensure that the epic lives on in a new form, and they mark the evolution of the novel in fresh and unexpected directions. Second, it may appear that literary self-reflexivity primarily serves a comic function, as in the mock-heroic tradition and in other self-reflexive games, because metareferences destroy illusion, create distance between audience and text, expose literary conventions, etc. Historically, as Werner Wolf points out, metareferences feature in dramatic comedies and comic novels more frequently than in tragic or serious texts, and it is only in the twentieth century that metatexts of a serious nature figure prominently (71-72). In line with Wolf's observation, my above analysis has shown that twenty-first-century metageneric reflections are just as likely subversive and comic (Atwood's *The Penelopiad*) as they are affirmative (Mendelsohn's *An Odyssey*) or tragic and serious (Haynes's *A Thousand Ships*).[24] While Mendelsohn's and Calliope's/Haynes's metageneric comments may raise the occasional smile, their overall tendency is a sombre examination of the nature of the epic. In their explicit references to the epic, these meta-epic novels investigate the features of the ancient genre in a manner comparable to that of academics who discuss a literary text.

Let me end with another remark about self-reflexivity. The analysis of *A Thousand Ships* has illustrated that the distinction between metagenre as "other-reflexive" and metagenre as "self-reflexive" can be difficult to uphold. On the one hand, the novel explicitly comments on the nature of the epic. In this context, I used the term "meta-generic reflection" to denote references to a genre B in an instance of another genre A, and I described *A Thousand Ships* as a "meta-epic novel," i.e. a novel which makes (critical) observations about the epic. On the other hand, I contended that *A Thousand Ships* may legitimately be considered an "epic" itself because it appropriates and imitates features of the epic. Consequently, *A Thousand Ships* is a modern epic which explicitly reflects upon and implicitly emulates the ancient epic. Its other-reflexive nature is tantamount to an explicit critique of the ancient epic while its self-reflexive dimension allows it to compete with and improve its predecessor, and hence to contribute to genre development. If, then, we regard *A Thousand Ships* and similar novels as epics for our time, their meta-epic reflections are self-reflexive reflections. Thereby, *A Thousand Ships* and similar texts become "meta-epic epics" in the end.

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NOTES

[1] This article is based on a talk which I presented at the 16th International *Connotations* Symposium "Metagenre" in 2021. I would like to thank the participants of the conference for their helpful comments and suggestions during the discussion of my paper.

[2] Lowenkron coins the term "metanovel" and applies it to a novel revolving around a novel; discussing early plays by Eugene O'Neill, Pettit defines "metacomedy" as a comedy which exposes the conventions of its own genre; reading David Mamet's *Oleanna*, Mason understands "meta-tragedy" as a metatheatrical tragedy; and analysing sonnets by E. E. Cummings, Huang-Tiller discusses "metagenre" with the help of a "meta-sonnet," which is a self-reflexive sonnet. For Giltrow, "meta-genres" are texts which prescribe or comment upon the nature of a genre; this includes guidelines how to compose a particular type of report as well as remarks by a professor about a student's essay. For Hauthal, a "meta-genre" is a

literary genre whose members share metareferential features, such as fictional metabiographies, which reflect upon the features of biographies. For this specific type of meta-genre, see also Nadj.

[3] Philmus discusses works of science fiction by Stanislaw Lem as metageneric texts.

[4] Structural parallels of this kind are also pointed out by Riley, who reads Mendelsohn's *An Odyssey* as a Telemachy (268-78).

[5] This enthusiasm is perhaps best encapsulated in the passage in which Mendelsohn relates his first encounters with the Greek language: "More than anything I *loved* the elaborate *richness* of the verbal system. […] What *thrilled* me above all were the *fantastically* metastasizing verb tenses, the shifts in time signaled by prefixes that agglomerated *like crystals*, by endings that pooled at the ends of the words *like honey* that has dripped off a spoon onto a saucer." (115; emphases added)

[6] The reference is to the epithet "βοὴν ἀγαθὸς" (e.g. *Iliad* 2.586 and Hammond 33).

[7] In a similar fashion, Staels claims that *The Penelopiad* "undermine[s] high Homeric style" and relies on a "debunking of epic events and characters" (107). Nischik also points out that Penelope "subverts the Homeric epic, elevated style" (263) and generally "question[s] epic authorities and norms" (264).

[8] Previously, William Congreve linked his "novel" *Incognita* (1692) with the dramatic tradition. In his view, drama is superior to any other genre, wherefore he imitates its features (*Preface* 33-34).

[9] As has been pointed out, Fielding intends to raise the status of his own work (e.g. Watt 239, 258).

[10] The precise number listed in the catalogue of ships in Book 2 of the *Iliad* is 1,186. Yet, as Gilbert shows, "one thousand ships" is a stock phrase already used in ancient texts.

[11] The reference is to the A-Text.

[12] The poet is old, blind, and successful, and he wishes to compose an epic about the subject matter of the Trojan War (2, 267).

[13] In case it may seem questionable whether *A Thousand Ships*, with its 43 chapters and myriads of characters, can legitimately be called a "novel," I would like to emphasise the following: first, all chapters focus on essentially the same topic, i.e. the Trojan War, which allows for thematic unity. Second, the chapters are often smoothly connected through transitions from one episode to the next. In several instances, chapters are dedicated to characters whose names are mentioned at the end of the previous section, as when the "Penthesilea" chapter (46-56) immediately follows a mentioning of the death of the Amazon queen in a conversation between Hecabe and Polyxena (45). Last but not least, all chapters are linked through Calliope, who presents them to the poet to make him compose his epic.

[14] Fairclough in the Loeb Classical Library edition renders the passage as "ARMS I sing and the man."

[15] For the differentiation between short and long similes in Homer, see, for instance, Edwards (102).

[16] For Oenone, see Graves (159.h, q and v, and 166.e).

[17] This passage has frequently been foregrounded in reviews of the novel, e.g. by Lowry in *The Guardian* (n. pag.).

[18] For Haynes's sources, see also her afterword (341-45).

[19] In a review in *The Spectator*, Womack raises similar issues. He criticises Haynes for being "too faithful" to her ancient models and he points out "that the multiplicity of viewpoints means that quite often we get straightforward retellings of very well-known myths" (n. pag.).

[20] That Helen is not given a chapter of her own is also noticed by Brilke and Werner (106), who conducted an interview with Haynes in which they asked her many pertinent questions, for instance about her reasons to exclude Helen. Haynes answered that she did not exclude Helen deliberately but left her out for compositional reasons (111-12).

[21] Haynes makes up for this neglect by dedicating a chapter to Helen (57-84) in her non-fiction book *Pandora's Jar: Women in Greek Myths* (2020).

[22] As Haynes herself puts it in the interview conducted by Brilke and Werner, "[t]he chapters with goddesses are generally quite funny, the chapters with Trojan women are quite sad and the chapters with Greek women can go in both ways" (111).

[23] The recent rise of women's rewritings of the classics has been remarked upon, for instance, by Brown and by Theodorakopoulos; the significance of women's rewritings of Homer in particular has been pointed out by Gentzler and especially in the collection *Homer's Daughters: Women's Responses to Homer in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, edited by Cox and Theodorakopoulos. However, the popularity of twenty-first-century Homeric rewritings is by no means restricted to feminist adaptations, as testified by Mendelsohn's *An Odyssey*, Fry's *Troy* (mentioned in the introductory section) and a variety of other works, such as David Malouf's *Ransom: A Novel* (2009), and Zachary Mason's *The Lost Books of the Odyssey* (2010).

[24] For functions of metareferences, see also Wolf (64-68).

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