

Towards a Typology of *Makarismos*: Revisiting the Homeric Reflections of a Speech-Genre

The Solonian view against pronouncing anyone ‘blessed’ rooted in traditional wisdom projects an ideology that is not always supported by ritual practice. The ‘makarismos’ is a marked form of address from one individual to others in what appears to have originated from a setting of mystery cults. A formal proclamation of the ‘blessed’ status, it is meant to address someone who has *seen* the mysteries, and *experienced* true knowledge of communication with the divine (Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* 1987: 16-17). As such it implies notions of inclusion and exclusion. From that perspective it also delineates a movement of one individual to become part of a group. The most common remnant and reflection of the *makarismos* in ancient Greek (excluding contexts such as the biblical *makarismoi*) which stems from a stylized tradition of praise is the one we find in nuptial contexts, where the groom and/or bride, or even their kin and family are pronounced as ‘makares’ (as also in Hesiod, fr. 211 Merkelbach-West).

The purpose of this paper is to consider first what narrative context presents the platform for a formal proclamation of ‘blessed’ (without looking at formulaic reference to the gods as ‘makares’). After a very brief overview of these attestations, I analyze some pivotal moments where such addresses are conferred in Homer. A *makarismos* may at first glance seem a formalized speech act that confers a profound judgment about human existence, but, as I argue, is rooted in a tradition of ritual canonization that codifies patterns of reciprocity, appropriation of the other, and negotiates relations. The most eloquent examples and the only that have attracted attention concerning this otherwise understudied feature are from the *Odyssey* (6.158 and 11.483), both used by Odysseus, where the first is part of a *captatio benevolentiae* strategy at the island of the Phaeacians, and the latter in the Underworld addressed indirectly to Achilles. While at one level it confers honor to the addressee(s), in reality it is speech-act that is more revealing for the figure(s) who practices it. A whole etiquette of proper behavior is lurking behind conventional usage, which can be as revealing for those proclaimed ‘blessed’ people as for its practitioners.

The Iliadic references, though, offer what appears to be an older and more formalized usage of the *makarismos*, and the association with the notion of *makar*. The second part of the paper will focus on

references from Iliad, and in particular, on the usage by Priam in the *Teichoskopia* section, where Priam in his address to Helen uses arguably a type of stylized discourse that is expectedly associated with someone who is both older and a king. But the puzzling *makarismos* he utters for Agamemnon (*Il.* 3.182-190) can give us a deeper understanding of how his style works, when we examine further the parameters of time and space in the storytelling embedded in his address. While acknowledging cyclic evocations here (namely the tradition of the suitors of Helen, some of whom are mentioned in the *Teichoskopia* in the exact same order as in the Hesiodic *Catalogue*), Priam's speech is in perfect accord with his presence throughout the poem. He appropriates the other. He provides a brief story that brings the space of Phrygia and a distant time of the past, and through that shows movement, appropriation of the other, and inclusion of the Achaeans in ways that can be further revealing about the ritual origins of the *makarismos* and can even offer suggestions about the *makarismos* as a speech genre on its own.