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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Homer's Roads Not Taken

Stories and Storytelling in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Classics

by

Craig Morrison Russell

2013

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Homer's Roads Not Taken

Stories and Storytelling in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

by

Craig Morrison Russell

Doctor of Philosophy in Classics

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Alex C. Purves, Chair

This dissertation is a consideration of how narratives in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* find their shapes. Applying insights from scholars working in the fields of narratology and oral poetics, I consider moments in Homeric epic when characters make stories out of their lives and tell them to each other. My focus is on the concept of “creativity” — the extent to which the poet and his characters create and alter the reality in which they live by controlling the shape of the reality they mould in their storytelling.

The first two chapters each examine storytelling by internal characters. In the first chapter I read Achilles' and Agamemnon's quarrel as a set of competing attempts to create the authoritative narrative of the situation the Achaeans find themselves in, and Achilles' retelling of the quarrel to Thetis as part of the move towards the acceptance of his version over that of Agamemnon or even the Homeric Narrator that occurs over the course of the epic. In the second chapter I consider the constant storytelling that

occurs at the end of the *Odyssey* as a competition between the families of Odysseus and the suitors to control the narrative that will be created out of Odysseus's homecoming. The war that the two sides begin to fight literalizes the combativeness with which Homeric narratives are created.

The final two chapters consider the process by which the poet(s) of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have shaped the epics themselves. With special emphasis on the linear process through which oral poetry is created, I examine the gods for their role in managing and controlling plot. In the third chapter I consider ways in which gods represent the voice of the audience, and in which divine intervention allows the epics to be expanded and modified constantly through the process of composition in performance. In the fourth chapter, I read Zeus as a stand-in for the poet, and consider his words, actions, and Will as part of the machinery through which the poet controls the central plot of an epic poem.

The dissertation of Craig Morrison Russell is approved.

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2013

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Acknowledgements

It is my pleasure to give thanks to some of the people who have supported me as I wrote this dissertation (πληθὺν δ' οὐκ ἄν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω). First, I am extremely fortunate to have worked with such a insightful and supportive dissertation committee. My thanks to Joseph Nagy for his bottomless knowledge and kindness. I thank Kathryn Morgan for the intellectual rigor she always demands of me in exchange for subjecting my work to her own. I thank Mario Telò for dedicating so much of his time, energy, and intelligence to my work and myself, and for his unending support and mentorship. To the chair of my committee, Alex Purves, I can never express enough gratitude for the attention and care she has given this project from its inception and completion, and for the guidance she has offered towards my career and intellectual growth. I will always be in awe of her effortless brilliance as a reader, and grateful that she is willing to apply it to my work. I cannot imagine writing this dissertation with anyone else.

My gratitude to the UCLA Classics faculty for the encouragement and mentorship they have provided me. I have benefitted from all of their wisdom and experience in many ways, large and small, but I would like to particularly thank David Blank, Sander Goldberg, Michael Haslam, Sarah Morris, Amy Richlin, and Brent Vine for their intellectual and professional guidance. I thank David Maust and the California Classical Association for inviting me to present a version of my first chapter at their Fall Meeting in 2011, and the audience for their feedback.

To my colleagues in the UCLA Classics Graduate Program I express my gratitude for your friendship, for making this weird, maddening journey a bit more fun. I will always love arguing or agreeing (or anything in between) with ἄλλους τε καὶ Michael Brumbaugh, Grace Gillies, Rob Groves, Emily Kratzer, Hilary Lehmann, Alex Lessie, Kristie Mann, Kathy Piller, Charlie Stein, Justin Vorhis, Brian Walters. You each know why I mention your names, so you hardly need me to explain. Thank you.

Finally, my love and gratitude to my family for their love and support: to Dad, to Andrew, to Rob, to Lou, to Hunter, and of course to Jessie, with whom I mutually and perpetually bring grief and joy to enemies and friends.

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Introduction

This is a dissertation about creativity in Homeric storytelling. I explore moments in Homer when the multiform that is an unspoken tradition is transformed into the specific set of choices that are the text of an individual story or poem, such as we have in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. This consolidation of infinite possibility into a particular narrative has been described in at least two rather surprisingly complementary ways by Homerists. First, there is a narratological analysis — as employed in the work of scholars such as Irene de Jong and Scott Richardson¹ — which considers the stories presented in our texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as focalizations of a fabula. The distinction between story and fabula is built upon the basic concept that behind every narrative one tells is at least the notion of a real or realistic set of events and characters, of which this particular telling is only one of the countless ways these facts could potentially be presented. And second, there is what can broadly be termed “oral theory,” inspired largely by the seminal work of Milman Parry and Albert Lord.² Their basic argument is that the formulaic nature of Homer’s language and typical scenes is best explained by comparative evidence from oral traditions involving composition in performance, where to a certain extent every performance is unique, dynamically crafted by the singer to present the traditional material in a way best suited for each audience and setting. Until written texts come to be seen as the authoritative source for a traditional epic, an oral poem only exists as a notional entity in the minds of singers and audiences, except in the moments when it is given a particular shape in performance.

¹ For overviews of the application of narratology to Homer, see Schein (1991), and more generally the three-volume *Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative*: de Jong, Nünlist, and Bowie (2004), de Jong and Nünlist (2007), de Jong (2012).

² Oral theory has informed the work of a wide range of scholars; an idea of the range of uses to which it has been put can be found by comparing e.g. Nagy (1979), Pucci (1987), Foley (1999), Minchin (2001), Scodel (2002), Jensen (2011), Reece (2011). I discuss these issues further in Chapter Three.

In the four chapters that follow, I consider the question of Homeric creativity by examining moments of narrative creation from these two parallel perspectives. In the first two chapters, I take a view of the text from the inside, considering how characters within the poems create and manipulate stories based on events that have taken place in their own world — that is, the world that has been described to us by the Homeric Narrator.³ In the final two, I consider the text from the outside, in terms of its own creation as a probable product of performance in composition by a traditional poet. From both perspectives, we will locate creativity within a world that is somewhat in flux, that deals in multiple competing possibilities.

There is a fact about Homeric storytelling that has been voiced in several different contexts: it is always the exigencies of the present situation that determine what the past seems to have been, even if this process leads to contradictions with previously established fact. Malcolm Willcock demonstrates how the mythological stories of the past which characters within the poems tell each other are always employed as exempla, to make some pertinent point about the present, and how they often seem to take the liberties with the basic details of the myths for this purpose.⁴ Egbert Bakker describes how the very language of the poems constructs a past that constantly judges itself from an imagined perspective in the future — which is a reflection of the true nature of epic poetry, in which a present constantly uses itself as a standard against which to construct the mythological past.⁵

Significant for this discussion will be an article by Øivind Andersen which catalogs situations in the *Iliad* where characters tell stories whose veracity can be checked against some other part of the

³ Throughout this work I use the capitalized designation “(Homeric) Narrator” to refer to the narratological concept of the “primary external narrator/focalizer” through which the main narratives of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* are focalized. For the Homeric Narrator as a consistently portrayed “character” within the poems, see Richardson (1990).

⁴ Willcock 1964, 1977.

⁵ Bakker 2005: 92-113.

poem.⁶ For example, at *Iliad* 17.24-38, Menelaus has been taunted by the Trojan Euphorbus and responds: your brother Hyperenor taunted me too, right before I killed him. And yet when Menelaus killed Hyperenor at 14.516-519, it was a brief affair that began with their meeting, ended in death, and included no taunting. Through a careful reading of this and many other similar examples, Andersen argues that the text seems not to conceive of Menelaus as lying or misremembering, but of the past itself as a multiform, as something

open and available for convenient use. The past in the *Iliad* is heterogeneous and elusive and contains some mutually exclusive elements, introduced or adapted for different occasions. Perhaps the concept of an ‘instant past’ may convey something of the process involved.⁷

This observation will be one to which I return throughout this introduction and this work, as I consider examples of moments where Homer and his characters make convenient use of this heterogeneous past for their own creative purposes.

The first chapter centers around a reading of Achilles’ speech to his mother Thetis at *Iliad* 1.365-412. This is a fairly momentous speech — it is the longest in Book 1, it is the climax of the poem’s first episode, and it initiates the request for Zeus to give victory to the Trojans, the catalyst that sets the plot of the entire *Iliad* into motion. And yet, in defiance of modern literary expectations, the majority of Achilles’ 48 lines simply repeat (often in the same words as the Narrator) the plot of the *Iliad* up to that moment: Chryses, the plague, Agamemnon, the quarrel, Briseis. This fact by itself offers an example of Homeric poetry’s continual fixation on the process through which its own its own stories came into being: Achilles’ speech to Thetis would be the first version of *Iliad* 1 ever performed for an audience. Accordingly, I read Achilles’ and Agamemnon’s quarrel not as a dispute over women, or even over

⁶ Andersen 1990: 28

⁷ Andersen 1990: 41

abstract notions such as *timê* or *kleos* — it is a fight about authority, the ability both to command an army and to create a narrative. The Homeric hero's ideal is at one point described as “being a speaker of words and a doer of deeds” (*Iliad* 9.443: μύθων τε ῥητῆρ' ἔμεναι πρηκτῆρά τε ἔργων). Warriors' words in Homer are more than just talk; the most significant of their speeches are officially recognized performances before audiences. Well-executed speeches demonstrate the characters' status as great heroes as much as do their accomplishments in war.⁸

Achilles' re-narration of *Iliad* 1 to Thetis represents the final entry in a series of reciprocal attempts, largely by himself and Agamemnon, to control the narrative that will be made out of the situation they find themselves in. These attempts had begun with the assembly Achilles called at *Iliad* 1.54, and pervade their entire quarrel, as each man offers a parallel “reading” of the past, present, and future of their current crisis. By taking the opportunity to make a long speech to a friendly audience (his mother) with no opposing voice, Achilles is able to assert his own ultimate dominance as both warrior and narrator.

Much of this first chapter consists of a detailed comparison of Achilles' and the Narrator's tellings of the quarrel with Agamemnon. Achilles' own version is deceptively simple, summarizing the confrontation at the assembly itself in a few lines, a single item on his laundry list of plot points that lead up to his present situation and future request to Zeus:

τὰ δ' ἐπώχετο κῆλα θεοῖο
πάντη ἀνὰ στρατὸν εὐρὺν Ἀχαιῶν· ἄμμι δὲ μάντις
εὖ εἰδὼς ἀγόρευε θεοπροπίας ἐκάτοιο.
αὐτίκ' ἐγὼ πρῶτος κελόμην θεὸν ἰλάσκεσθαι.
Ἀτρεΐωνα δ' ἔπειτα χόλος λάβεν, αἶψα δ' ἀναστὰς
ἠπεῖλησεν μῦθον ὃ δὴ τετελεσμένος ἐστί.
τὴν μὲν γὰρ σὺν νηϊ θοῇ ἐλίκωπες Ἀχαιοὶ

⁸ See e.g. Martin (1989), Beck (2012).

ἐς Χρύσῃν πέμπουσιν, ἄγουσι δὲ δῶρα ἄνακτι.
τὴν δὲ νέον κλισίῃθεν ἔβαν κήρυκες ἄγοντες
κούρην Βρισηῖος τήν μοι δόσαν υἷες Ἀχαιῶν.

...and the god's arrows were upon us, all through the Achaeans' wide camp. A knowledgeable seer reported a message from far-shooting Apollo to us. Immediately, I was the first to order that we appease the god. Then anger seized Agamemnon, and at once he stood up and issued a threatening speech, which has just been carried out. One girl the sharp-eyed Achaeans are sending to Chryse on a fast ship; the other girl heralds have just come and taken from my tent — the daughter of Briseus, whom the sons of the Achaeans gave me. (*Iliad* 1.383-392)

Building upon past scholarship which has recognized differences in focalization,⁹ I explore the ways in which Achilles' version creates a new story of the quarrel that essentially replaces the Narrator's version over the course of the rest of the poem. In his retelling, there is no mention of the fact that the assembly was instigated by him, or that each of Agamemnon's statements and threats comes as a response to a targeted attack on his authority over the army. Achilles does not mention that when he ordered Agamemnon to appease the god, it was something Agamemnon had already agreed to do. In short, Agamemnon's perspective is entirely cropped out of the picture Achilles offers. Simply to present Agamemnon's choice as whether he wished to "appease the god" is to elide the fact that he was facing the same threat that Achilles now finds so intolerable: being ordered to give up his concubine for the good of the army. Just as a close reading of the speeches of the quarrel themselves reveals the two heroes creating competing narratives, a comparison of that episode with Achilles' speech to Thetis shows the triumph of his own version to the exclusion of that of the now-silenced Agamemnon.

Andersen argues for the "primacy of the present"¹⁰ as an Iliadic constant: the facts about the past will be adjusted (within reason) to more accurately accommodate every immediate situation. Perhaps

⁹ e.g. de Jong (1985b), Robbins (1990), Rabel (1997).

¹⁰ Andersen 1990: 42.

Achilles' cleverest narrative move in the part of the speech quoted above is to juxtapose his interpretation of what happened in the quarrel with an equally long description of his present situation: his *geras* Briseis has been taken and is in Agamemnon's possession. The present proves the past, so the past is shaped to be proof of the present. Agamemnon has Briseis and Agamemnon does not, so therefore it was Agamemnon who committed the outrage, and Achilles who suffered. Although Andersen concludes that, in the world of the *Iliad*, "no need is felt for a definitive version of the past because no use can be made of it," Achilles' and Agamemnon's readings of the quarrel do not have equal status as stories. As Achilles gains the upper hand on Agamemnon over the course of the poem, Agamemnon and the other characters come to speak of the quarrel in terms that match Achilles' one-sided telling better than the original nuanced clash of perspectives. The overall perspective of the *Iliad* is that of Achilles; it is his problems, not Agamemnon's, that the poem explores.

And yet this does not mean that Agamemnon's side of the argument is forgotten. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are poems that each focus largely on one dominant point of view — Achilles' young death is a tragedy; Odysseus's killing of the suitors is justified. But both poems also include characters with alternate readings of the heroes and situations. This is particularly true of the *Odyssey*, whose protagonist is, almost by definition, a character whose actions and nature can be interpreted multiple ways. In my second chapter I consider the end of the *Odyssey* as a part of the poem specifically devoted to the consideration of its ambiguous hero and the multiple narratives that could be constructed from his actions.

The ending of the *Odyssey* has long been deemed an "extended and rather battered engrafted tail."¹¹ There is a tradition, perhaps going back to antiquity, that in some sense the poem's real

¹¹ Ahl and Roisman 1996: 273.

conclusion comes at 23.296, when Odysseus and Penelope retire to bed after he kills the suitors and she confirms his identity. Interestingly, this shift from “pre-ending” to “post-ending” *Odyssey* is something the text itself seems to indicate, with a couplet occurring four lines later:

τῷ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν φιλόμητος ἐταρπῆτην ἐρατεινῆς,
τερπέσθην μύθοισι, πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐνέποντες

And then, after the pair had taken pleasure in the delights of lovemaking, they both began taking pleasure in stories, as they told them to each other... (*Odyssey* 23.300-301)

The parallelism between action and narration is highlighted by the double use of the verb *terpein* (“take pleasure”), which has particular associations in Homer with the enjoyment derived from epic poetry.¹² After the two are finished doing, they start narrating, which is precisely the change that occurs in the *Odyssey* itself. From this moment on, the story of the Odysseus’s *nostos* is retold again and again. First, Penelope and Odysseus fill each other in on what each experienced while the other was away. At the beginning of the final Book, the suitor Amphimedon gives a long speech (24.125-190) focalizing the Ithacan part of the *Odyssey* through the suitors. This finally culminates in the suitors’ families forming an impromptu mob to challenge Odysseus. The speech offered by Antinous’s father Eupheithes suggests the possibility of a parallel move back from narration to action:

ὦ φίλοι, ἦ μέγα ἔργον ἀνὴρ ὅδε μήσατ' Ἀχαιοὺς·
τοὺς μὲν σὺν νήεσσιν ἄγων πολέας τε καὶ ἐσθλοὺς
ᾤλεσε μὲν νῆας γλαφυράς, ἀπὸ δ' ᾤλεσε λαοὺς,
τοὺς δ' ἔλθων ἐκτείνε Κεφαλλήνων ὄχ' ἀρίστους.
ἀλλ' ἄγετε, πρὶν τοῦτον ἢ ἐς Πύλον ὦκα ἰκέσθαι
ἢ καὶ ἐς Ἥλιδα διάν, ὅθι κρατέουσιν Ἑπείοι,
ἴομεν· ἢ καὶ ἔπειτα κατηφές ἐσσόμεθ' αἰεὶ.
λῶβη γὰρ τάδε γ' ἐστὶ καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι,
εἰ δὴ μὴ παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φονῆας
τεισόμεθ'.

¹² Ford (1992: 52). In the chapter I discuss multiple ways in which this couplet highlights the notion of duality.

My friends, it is truly an egregious act this man has plotted against the Achaeans! One group he led out in ships, many good men; first he lost the hollow ships, and then he lost the men. Another group he killed upon his return, the best of the Cephallenians by far. But come on: before he rushes to Pylos or to divine Elis, where the Epeians rule, let's go. Otherwise, after he does this, we will be burdened with shame forever. For it will be a disgrace for future generations to hear this as well, if we do not get our revenge on the murderers of our sons and brothers. (*Odyssey* 24.426-435)

The facts about our hero are stacked in such a way as to create an entirely different story from that which the *Odyssey* itself largely highlights. By creating a parallel between the deaths of the companions and the suitors (τοὺς μὲν ... τοὺς δ'), Eupheithes suggests a despicable pattern of behavior: Odysseus has wiped out an entire generation of young men, the "best of the Cephallenians." This loss is measured not in wealth, love, or unborn offspring, but in their standing in a potential future narrative. If Odysseus is allowed to spread his version abroad, there will be disgrace (*lôbê*) for the suitors' families when this story is one day told.

In fact, the end of the *Odyssey* depicts the exact process by which Eupheithes' fears come true. The men Odysseus spares during his slaughter are specifically those whose function is to propagate a certain narrative. His bard Phemius, his herald Medon, and his seer Halitherses intervene immediately after, each using their skills to impose Odysseus's interpretation upon the audience of Ithacans. Phemius plays wedding music for passers-by to hear coming through the palace walls, rewriting the slaughter as a celebration. At the assembly of suitors' relatives, Medon and Halitherses follow up Eupheithes' speech (24.439-462) with counterarguments providing the Odyssean interpretation: Odysseus has the gods on his side, and it is the suitors who acted wickedly. Their survivors thus have only themselves to blame for not restraining their outrageous behavior. The Ithacans are brought around to this position by fear rather than persuasion: half of the mob runs away after the speeches from Odysseus's herald and the seer, and the other half relents after their army is defeated by Odysseus and his followers. The two sides

quickly make peace, bringing the poem to the ending that Zeus has just said (24.484-485) he prefers: that the suitors' families "forget" the deaths of their brothers and sons.

All this would seem to be compatible with Andersen's claim (and extend it to the *Odyssey*) that "inside as well as outside of the *Iliad*, 'facts' seem to have been rather fluctuating."¹³ Just as the first man over the wall can be sometimes Hector, sometimes Sarpedon, depending on which is a more useful past in the moment,¹⁴ the Ithacans can remember Odysseus as a righteous avenger or a cold-blooded murderer, depending on which provides the better back-story for their current relationship. Andersen's examples demonstrate that in many cases, this can be shown not to be a matter of characters misremembering to their own present advantage, "but rather that *Homer* here presents a slightly different situation."¹⁵ But as my first two chapters demonstrate, the changing past of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is not only a matter of Homer having a different past in mind for different parts of the poem. Because Homeric characters are shown intentionally altering and controlling the way other characters remember and interpret the past, it is legitimate to read the poems as intentionally presenting and suggesting competing versions of their own stories.¹⁶ The suitors' *Odyssey* and Agamemnon's *Iliad* exist in the background of both poems as silent counterpoints to the Odysseus's and Achilles' accounts of

¹³ Andersen 1990: 41.

¹⁴ Andersen (1990: 30) lists this as an example: Patroclus remembers a different version from what Homer narrated.

¹⁵ Andersen 1990: 31.

¹⁶ Andersen (1991: 44) takes issue with the statement of Thalmann (1984: 51) that the *Iliad* "derives wonderful effects from the resonances that run through it from the whole mass of other poems that must have been in the air..." He argues that, in an oral performance culture, no poem has any "existence" if it is not in the process of being performed, and thus the poem being performed has exclusive claim on their attention. I would agree with this statement on the level of *text* — oral poetry is less likely to produce specific fixed passages that can be "quoted" unless they are formulaic language not specific to one poem. But it seems impossible that no performer or audience member in Homer's oral performance culture would ever notice a similarity or difference with something they had heard before.

events. Whether the suitors' families truly forget the deaths of their sons and brothers or not, the *Odyssey* certainly contains multiple takes on the complex character of Odysseus.¹⁷

The second half of this dissertation shifts from an internal consideration of how characters construct narratives within the story-world to an external consideration of how the poems themselves are constructed as products of oral composition. When Achilles or Odysseus or Amphimedon the suitor re-narrate events from the poem's own main narrative, the Narrator's version provides an external standard against which to measure the level of creativity in their storytelling. For the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* themselves we do not have previous or alternative versions, although as oral compositions, they were certainly largely traditional in form and content.¹⁸ Just as the creativity of his characters can be located in the way they manipulate their own past, an oral poet's creativity can be found in the manipulation, not invention, of traditional stories. In my final two chapters, I consider divine intervention as a specific device by which an oral poet could expand and maintain the traditional plot of the poem he is performing.

The third chapter begins with a consideration of a specific element that is likely to have influenced the oral composition of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*: time. Roland Barthes argued that from the point of view of the structural analysis of a narrative, time exists only as an "illusion" created by the text.¹⁹ However, Genette's famous discussion of the presentation of time in Proust begins by considering the interplay of *erzählte Zeit* (to time that passes within the story world) and *Erzählzeit* (the time it takes to

¹⁷ For the multiplicity of Odysseus's character, see e.g. Stanford (1963), Peradotto (1990), Buchan (2004), Van Nortwick (2008).

¹⁸ It is claimed by some that the variant readings found in the earliest Homeric papyri represent legitimate alternatives that existed within a living performance tradition. Even if this is true, these alternate readings display a miniscule amount of variation compared to e.g. the Bosnian tradition studied by Parry and Lord. A range of positions can be found in Haslam (1997), Nagy (2001), Bird (2010), Reece (2011).

¹⁹ Barthes 1966: 252.

narrate the story) which is “a typical characteristic not only of cinematic narrative but also of oral narrative ... including the fully ‘literary’ level of epic recitation...”²⁰ Genette identifies this as a difference between “oral narrative” and “written narrative,” as the former, as a performance, has an inherent temporality associated with it, while the latter “has no other temporality than what it borrows, metonymically, from its own reading.”²¹ Because a performance of an oral poem imposes exact temporal parameters upon anyone who wishes to access it in its native format (unlike a novel, which can be enjoyed at leisure), I argue that a composition in performance must simultaneously impose certain parameters upon its own performer.

To illustrate the difference that this issue of temporality makes in our interpretation, let us return to Andersen’s argument about how Homer constantly re-invents the past to better explain the present. In the example I discuss, Menelaus responds to a boast by the Trojan Euphorbus by remembering a past “made up as a function of the present,” in which Euphorbus’s brother Hyperenor had also boasted before fighting Menelaus.²² Again, Andersen is clear that it is not a matter of Menelaus lying or misremembering, but Homer himself installing different pasts behind different moments of the present:

On the level of fiction, the present, ad hoc version of the past — in this case — is as valid as the earlier version in the narrative. On the other hand, to say that ‘the poet invented the story on the spur of the moment’ may seem to make Homer himself rather too involved in the affair, as if he were in the shoes of Menelaos. The discrepancy is not caused by a momentary need on the part of *Homer*. If Homer lets his characters say what the situation requires at a given moment, that does not mean that Homer himself is improvising on the spur of the moment.²³

²⁰ Genette 1980: 33.

²¹ Genette 1980: 34.

²² Andersen 1991: 29.

²³ *ibid.*

Here Andersen makes a similar assumption to Barthes: that any sense of temporality that is to be found in the narrative is only a manufactured illusion of a text which exists not temporally but spatially, as words fixed on a page. But if, as many have argued, the conclusion to be drawn from the observations of Parry and Lord is that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are the result of oral dictation without subsequent correction or editing,²⁴ it is not so impossible to imagine that the composer of our texts could in fact make a storytelling choice because of a “momentary need.” Specifically, such a poet would always be constrained by everything he has already said, and by the need to produce each new line more or less immediately after the previous one. With a reference to the image of chess tournaments where players must choose their moves linearly, and with time limitations, I use the phrase “ticking clock poet” as a shorthand for a bard composing under these conditions. But, as comparative research in oral performance traditions has shown us, this does not mean that singers completely improvise on the spur of the moment. Borrowing the term “mental text” from a researcher of African traditions, Minna Jensen describes how singers maintain a stable outline of a story in their minds, which is expanded or abridged in the act of performance — that is, by a ticking clock poet.²⁵

This is the lens through which I consider divine intervention. In the third chapter I go on to consider divine intervention as a way to expand the plot, with a particular focus on what I identify as one pivotal moment in the unfolding of the *Iliad*’s story: the transition between lines 7.16-7.17. This moment occurs in the context of Hector and Paris’s return from Troy to the battlefield:

Ἔνθ’ ἐλέτην δὲ μὲν υἱὸν Ἀρηϊθόοιο ἄνακτος
Ἄρνη ναιετάοντα Μενέσθιον, δὲν κορυνήτης
γείνατ’ Ἀρηϊθοὸς καὶ Φυλομέδουσα βοῶπις·
Ἐκτῶρ δ’ Ἡϊονῆα βάλλ’ ἔγχρῃ ὀξυρόεντι

²⁴ On the poems as texts dictated in this manner, see A. Parry (1966), Janko (1998), Jensen (2011), Reece (2011).

²⁵ Jensen 2011: 110.

αὐχέν' ὑπὸ στεφάνης εὐχάλκου, λύντο δὲ γυῖα.
Γλαῦκος δ' Ἴππολόχοιο παῖς Λυκίων ἀγὸς ἀνδρῶν
Ἴφινοον βάλε δουρὶ κατὰ κρατερὴν ὕσμινην
Δεξιάδην ἵππων ἐπιάλμενον ὠκείων
ῶμον· ὃ δ' ἐξ ἵππων χαμάδις πέσε, λύντο δὲ γυῖα.

τοὺς δ' ὥς οὖν ἐνόησε θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη
Ἀργείους ὀλέκοντας ἐνὶ κρατερῇ ὕσμινῃ ...

Then one man (Paris) caught the son of Lord Areïthous, Menesthius, who lived in Arne, whom the club-fighter Areïthous and cow-eyed Phylomedusa gave birth to, while Hector hit Eïoneus with his sharp spear in the neck, underneath his helmet of good bronze, and his body went limp. And Glaucus, son of Hippolochus, leader of the men from Lycia, hit Iphinous son of Dexias with his spear in the violent battle while he was jumping onto his swift horses and chariot, right in the shoulder. He fell from the chariot to the ground, and his body went limp.

Then, when the grey-eyed goddess Athena noticed these men killing the Argives in the violent fight ... (*Iliad* 7.8-18)

This divine intervention provides a sharp contrast with the material that comes before it. For less than ten lines the Trojans were given victory — a victory very compatible with the overall plan of the *Iliad*, the promise that Zeus has made to Achilles and Thetis to have Trojans kill Greeks in Achilles' absence. But this plan is derailed by Athena and Apollo, who will introduce an indecisive duel between Ajax and Hector that brings the day to a close, and postpones the incipient Trojan victory until night falls, at which point the Greeks build their wall. The next day, at the beginning of Book 8, Zeus issues an injunction against divine intervention, and a similar Trojan surge does lead to Greek retreat as Athena and Hera are unable to assist in an abbreviated day of fighting (the so called *cholos machê*, “stubby battle”) that lasts less than a Book.

Minna Jensen argues that the length and complexity of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are due to their nature as large-scale expansions of mental texts; she suggests that a way of identifying which parts are

expansions is to look to the old Analyst tradition of scholarship.²⁶ The interruption represented by Athena “noticing” (ἐνόησε) the Greek loss at 7.17 was taken by the Analysts as an interpolation, yet another point where one poet’s composition ended and that of another poet began.²⁷ If, as Jensen suggests, what the Analysts identified were points where the dictating poet expands upon the basic outline of a mental text by adding additional scenes,²⁸ it is significant that this expansion is surrounded by type scenes featuring divine intervention. In addition to sanctifying and magnifying human action by the very act of over-determining it with an extra layer of causation other than human intention,²⁹ intervention by the gods offers the singer a convenient tool with which to motivate and shape expansions upon the core plot of the mental text.

With a series of readings that considers the frequently-cited metaphorical role gods as stand-ins for the audience,³⁰ I argue that the speeches of gods during these divine intervention scenes often serve as a way to voice the dynamic between singer and audience that shapes an epic performance moment to moment. Gods not only “notice” human death, but often “pity” (ἐλέησε) it, and intervene to protect and to glorify their human favorites.³¹ In our passage, immediately after the pro-Achaean Athena notices the three Trojans kills and moves to intervene, she is interrupted by the pro-Trojan Apollo. At this point the two negotiate an intervention — the duel — that, as Ruth Scodel has argued, is specifically portrayed as a net gain in total fame and glory for both participants, while still honoring the presumptive victor, the

²⁶ Jensen 2011: 257.

²⁷ See e.g. Kayser (1881: 81-82), West (2011: 58-61).

²⁸ For this interpretation of the Analysts’ findings, see also Fenik (1974: 61-104).

²⁹ For “double motivation” by gods and humans, see Lesky (1961).

³⁰ See Griffin (1980).

³¹ Achilles’ first action in the *Iliad* (calling the assembly at which he will argue with Agamemnon) is an idea put in his mind by Hera, “because she was concerned for the Danaans when she saw them dying (1.56: κήδετο γὰρ Δαναῶν, ὅτι ῥα θνήσκοντας ὀρᾶτο.)

Greek Ajax, more than the presumptive loser, the Trojan Hector.³² I read the exchange between Athena and Apollo that both precedes and causes their duel as a way of voicing a likely range of response from various contingents the audience. Zeus's promise to Achilles and Thetis creates an overall plot that involves Achaeans losing rather than winning. Moves throughout the *Iliad* by the pro-Greek goddesses such as Athena to momentarily reverse this trend by inserting small episodes of Greek victory suggest that at least part of the audience is unhappy hearing their heroes lose. Nevertheless, the counter-argument of Apollo, which complains that Athena's sympathy is too one-sided, suggests voices in the audience that show at least some sympathy for the Trojans.

In the fourth and final chapter I continue this examination of the storytelling function of divine intervention by considering the god with the largest role to play: Zeus himself. If Athena, Apollo, and the rest of the lower divinities can voice implied responses by the audience, the words and will of the imperious, all-controlling Zeus serve as a natural place upon which to project the concerns of the author himself. I argue that not only is Zeus as a character often a metaphorical stand-in for the poet, but, as many have suggested, the significant and repeated phrase *Dios boulê* ("will/plan of Zeus") seems often to function as "a traditional equivalent to 'the plot of this epic'."³³ I suggest ways in which the presentation of the *Dios boulê* can be seen more specifically as a way for the ticking clock poet to specify the main plot of his mental text and keep this main plot and the various sub-plots organized.

As I discuss in the third chapter, *Iliad* 8 begins with a divine assembly scene in which Zeus commands the rest of the gods not to interfere with the battle any longer, as he now intends to fulfill his promise to Thetis by giving the Trojans victory, and threatens any god who gets in his way with a

³² Scodel 2008: 26-27.

³³ Fowler 2004: 230. For other definitions of the *Dios boulê*, see also e.g. Kullmann (1955), Redfield (1979), Allan (2008).

suggestion of over-the-top violence. Athena's (likely formulaic)³⁴ response to this threat illustrates how the interplay of divinities influences the shape of the unfolding story:

ὦ πάτερ ἡμέτερε Κρονίδη ὕπατε κρειόντων
εὖ νυ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν ὃ τοι σθένος οὐκ ἐπεικτόν·
ἀλλ' ἔμπηξ Δαναῶν ὀλοφυρόμεθ' αἰχμητῶν,
οἳ κεν δὴ κακὸν οἶτον ἀναπλήσαντες ὄλωνται.
ἀλλ' ἤτοι πολέμου μὲν ἀφεξόμεθ' ὥς σὺ κελεύεις·
βουλήν δ' Ἀργείοις ὑποθησόμεθ' ἢ τις ὀνήσει,
ὥς μὴ πάντες ὄλωνται ὀδυσσαμένοιο τεοῖο.

Our father, son of Cronus, highest of rulers: while we too are well aware that your might is unyielding, we do still mourn any Danaan spearmen who fulfill their wicked fate and die. Anyhow, yes, we will keep away from the war as you command, but we will suggest to the Argives whatever plan will benefit them, so that they are not all destroyed while you are angry. (*Iliad* 8.31-37)

This exchange between Athena and Zeus creates a definite hierarchy, which is absent from the interaction between Athena and Apollo in Book 7 that I consider in the third chapter. There, neither the pro-Trojan Apollo nor the pro-Achaean Athena were able to realize their ultimate goal (victory for the Greeks/Trojans) in the expansion that follows their intervention; therefore they negotiate for a totally self-contained episode (a non-lethal duel) that entertains without having any affect on the ultimate outcome of the plot.³⁵ In contrast, there is no question but that Athena is completely at the mercy of Zeus, as she begins by acknowledging. Even her lamentation about the Greeks whose deaths she must witness as part of Zeus's plan is couched in language accepting this as a necessity: they are only "fulfilling their fate" (οἶτον ἀναπλήσαντες) by dying. She knows she cannot prevent Zeus from enacting this plot,

³⁴ This speech is repeated verbatim by Hera at the end of Book 8 (32-37 = 463-468) when Zeus thwarts her attempt to intervene and save the Greeks.

³⁵ This is a description that can be said of many episodes in the Homeric poems; Scodel (1999: 12, 33, etc.) labels it "local motivation."

and thus asks only to help them endure the onslaught by offering them some vague and unspecified form of advice.

Both aspects of Athena's speech — her acceptance and her resistance — are relevant for our reading of Zeus as a stand-in for the poet. First, there is her acceptance of Zeus's ultimate authority to control the universe of the *Iliad*. Whereas she and the other gods can only "suggest" (ὑποθησόμεθ') a plan (βουλήν) for the Achaeans, the Narrator makes it clear from the beginning of the *Iliad* that Zeus's plan is being "brought to completion" (1.5: Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή). The threatening speech to which Athena is responding at the beginning of *Iliad* 8 contained his command that none of the gods "try to cut through my story (*epos*), but all of you approve it together, so that I can bring this work to completion very quickly" (8.8-9: πειράτω διακέρσαι ἐμὸν ἔπος, ἀλλ' ἅμα πάντες | αἰνεῖτ', ὄφρα τάχιστα τελευτήσω τάδε ἔργα), all of which suggests that what is really at stake here is the necessity of moving away from expansions and sub-plots and getting on with the *Dios boulê*, the main plot of the *Iliad*.

I read such statements as part of an overall strategy for managing the plot of an orally performed epic. Such a performance is only "improvised" on the level of the language which each line is composed in the moment — this is the sense in which Homer is a ticking clock poet. But the poet is guided in this process by his "mental text," which Jensen defines as a "variable template existing in the singer's mind, to be abbreviated or expanded according to circumstances and adapted to various modes of performance."³⁶ Throughout the poem, the *Dios boulê* serves a similar function, unfolding and evolving to foreshadow the next step of the plot that will be enacted. This process begins at the ending of the story I discuss in the first chapter: Achilles' retelling of the quarrel to Thetis in *Iliad* 1. Once Thetis

³⁶ Jensen (2011: 110). On the open-ended nature of this "plan," see also Minchin (2001) on the "scripts" which research in cognitive psychology has identified as a basic part of how oral storytellers of all types operate.

secures Zeus's assent to Achilles' request to allow a temporary Trojan victory in order to force Agamemnon to honor him properly, this becomes the *boulê* that must be carried out over the protests of Athena and the other pro-Achaean gods. At 8.370, Athena elaborates that she is forbidden from helping the Greeks because Zeus has "enacted the plans of Thetis" (Θέτιδος δ' ἐξήνυσε βουλάς). At the end of Book 8 (470-483), Zeus re-states his plan for Hera in terms that reveal a bit more of what is to come: the Trojan victory will not end until Hector kills Patroclus. At the beginning of Book 15 (49-77), he re-states the plan (and the injunction against divine intervention) with even more specificity: Patroclus's death will follow his slaying of Sarpedon, and be followed by Achilles' slaying of Hector, after which point nothing will remain to prevent the ultimate Achaean victory in the Trojan War.

This evolving plan of Zeus is often considered in terms of its effect on the audience, creating suspense through repeated (but incomplete) foreshadowing.³⁷ However, a complementary function of this structure is its potential use as a kind of beacon for the poet to follow as he structures his live performance. It has long been noted that, for the first fifteen books of the *Iliad*, only a small fraction of the poem has anything to do with this plan — and the parts that do are not spread evenly through these books, but largely isolated to a few sections (Books 1, 8, 11-12, 15).³⁸ In other words, it seems that the first part of the poem creates a binary opposition: it is either totally devoted to enacting the *Dios boulê*, or totally ignores it in favor of self-contained episodes. This is highlighted by Zeus's ban on divine intervention (mentioned at the beginnings of Books 8, 11, and 15) as well as the way in which Zeus's *inattention* is marked in sections during which he is not enforcing his will, such as the point at the beginning of Book 13 where Zeus "turned his bright eyes back away, and looked down upon the land of

³⁷ See e.g. Duckworth (1966: 54), Macleod (1982: 28), Taplin (1992: 142).

³⁸ Explaining this phenomenon was one of the central focuses of more than a century of Analytic scholarship; see West (2011: 48-68).

the horse-riding Thracians” (13.3-4: *πάλιν τρέπεν ὅσσε φαεινῶ | νόσφιν ἐφ’ ἵπποπόλων Θρηκῶν καθορώμενος αἶαν...*) after disabling the main Greek heroes and destroying their wall in 11-12. As the singer continually updates the plan of Zeus to specify the next major step in the narrative (Trojan victory, the death of Patroclus, the death of Hector), he creates a system by which the complex structure of the *Iliad*’s narrative becomes a series of binary choices. At 7.16 the next step in Zeus’s plan is the incipient Trojan victory, but this is delayed in favor of the self-contained episodes that fill Book 7, the duel between Hector and Ajax and the break from battle during which the Achaeans build their wall. So too at every narrative juncture, the poet makes a specific choice, either to begin narrating the next announced step of the *Dios boulê* or to introduce a new expansion, a plan by one of the other characters which delays the fulfillment of Zeus’s plan without doing anything to negate it.

This is the way in which Athena and the other gods must accept Zeus’s ultimate superiority in the divine and narrative hierarchy, but there is also the matter of their resistance against him. In the quote by Athena from *Iliad* 8 which we consider above, Zeus has promised to upturn the entire universe if the gods continue delaying his plan by interfering in the war, and yet Athena still feels the freedom to modify his demand: she will continue helping the Achaeans, but only with advice. This is not how one might expect the goddess to respond to this most severe threat of violence, and yet Zeus meets her bold counter-offer with affection rather than anger, smiling (8.38: *ἐπιμειδήσας*) and assuring her “I do not tell you this with serious intentions, but I want to be kind to you” (8.39-40: *οὐ νύ τι θυμῷ πρόφρονι μυθέομαι, ἐθέλω δέ τοι ἥπιος εἶναι.*) In the final part of this chapter, I consider how the all-powerful character of Zeus is molded through his interactions with the rest of the gods. His demand that they not interfere begins with a request that they “approve” his actions (8.8-9: *ἄμα πάντες | αἰνεῖτ’*), using the language of

epainos that David Elmer identifies as a metapoetic representation of the ways in which variant versions of myths are accepted by the “approval” of audiences.³⁹

The freedom of Zeus to act is similar to the creativity of storytellers such as Achilles, Odysseus, and Homer himself. Theoretically, there is nothing to stop them from creating any narrative universe they wish: humans can say, and Zeus can do, whatever they please. In practice, however, there are always limitations set upon the material they have to work with. If, as Andersen suggests, Homer’s characters and Narrator are free in the creativity with which they reshape the past, this freedom is circumscribed by the requirements of the present — by what internal and external audiences will accept as a back-story that could have led to the current situation. Therefore Achilles’ and Odysseus’s retellings of their own stories (in opposition to the versions of Agamemnon and the suitors) are creative not in their invention of detail, but in their ability to make what is already there into markedly different stories. Just as these characters’ ability to create is, in practicality, limited by their audiences’ knowledge of their own world, Zeus’s power seems to be limited by the acceptance of the rest of the gods. In Books 16 and 22, Zeus considers rescuing heroes that he favors, Sarpedon and Hector. In both cases, a goddess protest that while Zeus *could* save a “mortal man” who has been “long fated to his destiny” (16.441 = 22.179: ἄνδρα θνητὸν ἐόντα πάλαι πεπρωμένον αἴσῃ), the rest of the gods would not “approve” this decision (16.443 = 22.181: ἀτὰρ οὐ τοι πάντες ἐπαινέομεν θεοὶ ἄλλοι.) Applying the often cited equation that “fate” within the poems is roughly equivalent to “tradition” for the poet and audience,⁴⁰ one can see how this situation is equally applicable to an oral poet whose creative composition-in-performance consists of traditional material. Creating the story-world with only his words, the bard, like Zeus could theoretically say that

³⁹ Elmer 2013: 159-162.

⁴⁰ See e.g. Nagy (1979: 265-268).

Sarpedon kills Patroclus and Hector kills Achilles. Their potential creativity is limitless; the actual creativity of what they do is limited by what his audience is willing to listen to. But even if neither Zeus nor Homer is willing to defy fate/tradition, perhaps their most creative moves are their willingness to describe a scenario in which they do.

Chapter One

Achilles' and Agamemnon's *Iliad*

Why does Achilles' expository speech to Thetis occupy such a prominent position at the beginning of the *Iliad*? After summoning his mother, and before asking her to present his request to Zeus, Achilles gives a detailed summary of the situation the Achaeans find themselves in: Chryses, Chryseis, the plague, and the dispute with Agamemnon. A considerable portion of this narrative consists of verbatim repetition of sections from the Homeric Narrator's original telling.¹ At forty-eight lines (*Iliad* 1.365-412), it is the longest speech in Book 1, and yet the material it contains seems redundant, offering the audience of the *Iliad* little new information. It is easy to find an ironic wink or apology to the audience in Achilles' initial response to his mother's request for the story: "You know! Why should I tell you all of this when you already know it?" (1.365: οἴσθα· τίη τοι ταῦτα ἰδυίη πάντ' ἀγορεύω;) So why does Homer include it in his poem?

Scholarship has long treated this speech as a problem that needs solving. Naturally, the solutions offered for this problem have tended to align with each critic's beliefs about the nature of the *Iliad*. Those who envision Homer as a singular literary genius have seen fit to mark the passage as inferior poetry added by a later interpolator; this explanation seems to go back to at least the Alexandrian critic Aristarchus,² and was a natural fit for the nineteenth century Analysts whose literary interpretation revolved around isolating multiple levels of authorship that have accrued around a superior core text.³

¹ e.g. *Iliad* 1.171-175 = 1.12-16; 1.376-379 = 1.22-25. For my use of the designations "The (Homeric) Narrator" and "Homer," see the Introduction above.

² This is assumed from the fact that lines 1.366-392 are obelized in the Venetus A manuscript, with the accompanying assertion by the A scholiast on 1.365 that "the following twenty-seven lines are someone else's (ἄλλότριοι ἄρα οἱ ἐπιφερόμενοι στίχοι εἴκοσι ἑπτὰ). See Kirk (1985: 91).

³ For example, Lachmann (1847: 6) calls the entire Thetis episode at 1.349ff. the work of a second poet who "is not entirely successful at putting himself in unity with the first poet's way of thinking."

Following Milman Parry's demonstration of the oral nature of the poem's poetics, more recent critics have excused the speech's failure to live up to our literary tastes with an appeal to the storytelling techniques of a live and extemporaneous performance.⁴ I find both of these explanations, in their own way, dismissive, offering justification for (essentially) ignoring the passage rather than analyzing it.⁵ In this chapter I will argue that there is significance in the very act of repetition: by allowing Achilles to retell the episode, Homer symbolizes the transformation of the dispute with Agamemnon from action to story. For a significant portion of the poem, the narrative reins are handed over to Achilles, who is allowed not just to focalize the story, but to remake it. In place of the Narrator's more even-handed account, in which both Achilles and Agamemnon act in consistent and logical (if self-serving) ways, Achilles presents a version of the narrative in which he is clearly in the right and Agamemnon is clearly in the wrong. What I find noteworthy is not that Achilles would tell such a story, but that the poem seems to allow Achilles' version to crowd out even its own. As I will demonstrate, after the first Book of the *Iliad* the characters seem to remember Achilles' version of the dispute instead of the Narrator's — that is, instead of what really happened. Accounting for this fact will lead us to reconsider the kind of effect "focalization" through a character really has on a narrative.

My reading is built upon the work of recent critics who, influenced by the field of narratology, have offered interpretations of Achilles' speech that move beyond an attempt to justify the bare fact of the repetition of material and examine exactly how this repetition works within the narrative. The first

⁴ In his commentary, Willcock (1970: 25) explains that "the repetition of lines and even passages like this is a natural feature of oral poetry." So too Kirk 1985: 90-91. I imagine proponents of the evolutionary model of text formation (see e.g. Nagy 1996) would identify this passage as the kind of expansion individual performers might choose to include or exclude from any given performance based on the occasion.

⁵ I see this as somewhat analogous to the way in which, immediately following Milman Parry's description of the formulaic nature of Homeric epithets, many were ready to deny that there was any value in considering the meaning of these epithets at all in literary analysis of the poems, on the grounds that metrical considerations "forced" the poet to mindlessly use certain phrasing in certain situations; see my discussion in Chapter Three.

recent commentator to offer such an analysis was Irene de Jong, who first identifies Achilles' speech as part of a category she call the "mirror story", reflecting an event previously related in the text, and then explores subtle ways in which this version is "somewhat more subjective" than that of the Narrator due to the events being focalized through Achilles.⁶ Thus the repetition serves to characterize Achilles by illustrating his state of mind. In addition, de Jong examines how the speech functions rhetorically to persuade Thetis to carry out Achilles' request, affirming a general principle about narratives focalized through internal characters: "In the Homeric epics we never find an actor who tells a story without referring beforehand or afterwards to the actual situation in which he finds himself ... We may conclude that secondary stories never appear in isolation, but are always told for the argument of the speaker."⁷

Building upon de Jong, Emmet Robbins offers an interpretation of the speech that highlights a specific difference in Achilles' and the narrator's focalization: whereas the Narrator had described Chryses' departure as fearful (1.33: *ἔδδεισεν* δ' ὁ γέρων καὶ ἐπέθετο μύθῳ), in Achilles' telling, he is "angered" (1.380: *χωόμενος* δ' ὁ γέρων πάλιν ᾤχετο).⁸ Achilles' telling of the story thus demonstrates his "assimilation of Chryses' case to his own" as he projects his own reaction onto the priest — and Achilles adopts as his own model Chryses' strategy of appealing to a god (Apollo/Zeus) to bring destruction to

⁶ de Jong (1985a: 14). This article is noteworthy for being what I believe is the first piece of scholarship devoted exclusively to the analysis of Homeric epic by narratological methodology (anticipating de Jong's own more thorough treatment — albeit not of this passage — in de Jong 1987). On the category of the mirror story (= French *récit spéculaire*), see Létoublon (1983). The phrase is also used in a slightly different sense, of mythological paradigms used to reflect the events of the poem on a thematic level; see Andersen (1987: 8).

⁷ de Jong (1985a: 9). I should mention that on this point I find de Jong's argumentation slightly inconsistent: she begins by dismissing arguments that the speech's repetition is mere oral/epic convention — i.e. arguments for the external motivation for the speech — and concludes by determining that the speech is persuasive for Achilles — i.e. an internal motivation. The question is not whether it is logical for Achilles to make such a speech here, but whether it is logical for Homer to report it word-for-word in an extended piece of direct speech. This seems to me an elision of a difference de Jong would emphasize in later work (e.g. de Jong 1997: 309-310), the difference between the "key function" and "argument function" of a speech.

⁸ Robbins (1990:3). De Jong (1985a: 16) had mentioned this contrast between Achilles' and the narrator's characterization of Chryses, but did not attribute to this difference much significance beyond its indication of the difference in focalization.

the Greeks until the girl is returned. The function of Achilles' speech within the *Iliad*, Robbins concludes, is to establish a series of meaningful parallels between characters — not only Achilles and Chryses, but Achilles and Agamemnon as well. The reference to the earlier raid on Thebe with which Achilles begins his story⁹ establishes a contrast (sustained throughout the poem) between Achilles' normal conduct at war and that of Agamemnon, who regularly refuses ransom requests, and whom Achilles accuses of not having participated in these earlier raids.¹⁰

Achilles' speech is also the subject of an extensive analysis by Robert Rabel, a reading that contributes to Rabel's ultimate interpretation of the *Iliad* as a work in which every character is drawn with a unique point of view "completely independent of, and often even at odds with, the point of view of the poem's narrator."¹¹ Achilles' speech is offered as an example. Both Achilles and the Homeric Narrator set about to narrate the same story, providing an answer to the request set out in the proem: to tell a story starting at the beginning of his dispute with Agamemnon (*Iliad* 1.6: ἐξ οὗ δὴ τὰ πρῶτα διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε). But, says Rabel, the differences in the way Achilles and the Narrator tell their stories

⁹ This is the raid in which Agamemnon's slave Chryseis was captured. The bT scholia on *Iliad* 1.366 mention this as a defense against Aristarchus's athetization of this passage: the poet uses the speech to introduce this new piece of information and expand the scope of the narrative. Modern commenters have often raised the same point, e.g. Kirk (1985: 91), Latacz (2000: 132), West (2011: 93). "Thebe under Mt. Placus" (not to be confused with Greek or Egyptian Thebes) is, as we learn in *Iliad* 6, the home of Andromache's father, King Eetion, to whom Achilles gave an honorable funeral; her mother he respectfully ransomed. This earlier raid is referred to so often in the *Iliad* that some have adduced a separate "Hypoplacian Thebe" epic, or at least an independent tradition. See Leaf (1912: 242ff.), Zarker (1965), Taplin (1986). For the suggestion that the Hypoplacian Thebe material is part of an extended intertextual connection with the (suppressed) rival tradition of material about Boeotian Thebes, see Tsagalis (2007: 13-22).

¹⁰ Robbins (1990: 9-15). Robbins also discusses an interpretational issue with this passage which I will not: the fact that in his narration Achilles displays knowledge of information that he is not shown learning specifically (i.e. that Chryses prayed to Apollo to cause the plague). I am not as bothered by this aspect of Homeric storytelling as some have been; on the question, see Robbins's discussion on pp. 3ff., esp. his references to earlier scholarship at fn. 8.

¹¹ Rabel (1997: 20). It must be noted that Rabel's analysis is founded upon his unusual theory (described in detail at pp. 1-33 of the same work; it is based largely upon a novel reading of statements in Aristotle's *Poetics*) in which the voice of the Narrator is identified literally as the personified Muse(s), and her narration is set at odds with the point of view of the "implied poet" (i.e. Homer), who is in control of but in competition with the Muses. Homer the implied poet speaks in his own voice only in the various invocations, although his oppositional presence is apparently felt throughout the poem. While I am not convinced by this overall theory, I find much value in his readings of individual passages as representing the clash of distinct and competing points of view, and argue for a similar perspective in this chapter.

reflect the differences in their points of view: while the Narrator locates the beginning of this dispute at the arrival of Chryses to ransom his daughter (1.11-12), Achilles identifies as the beginning the Achaean campaign against Thebe (1.366), which led to the taking of Chryseis (and, in a related raid, Briseis). As Achilles sees it, this campaign is an example of Agamemnon fighting less and winning more; thus he chooses it as the beginning of his story of his dispute with Agamemnon as an act of rebellion against the Narrator.

I would like to explore Achilles' exercise of narrative control in more detail. Richard Martin has described how Homeric heroes are performers of speeches which "demand to be treated as 'poetic' performances,"¹² suggesting a certain kinship between these mythical warriors and an epic poet like Homer himself. By literally becoming a storyteller, presenting such a long and formal version of the dispute narrative to Thetis, Achilles, like the Homeric Narrator, authors an official version of what has happened — implicitly claiming the power, authority, and mastery that a narrator has over a story. This is, I think, at least partially a metapoetic gesture on Homer's part,¹³ this glimpse of the initial conversion of the chaotic and infinite happenings of the real world into a finite and ordered narrative, under the control of a single narrator, who has the power to make his interpretation of what has happened into fact in the eyes of his audience.¹⁴ With Achilles' speech, Homer suggests we are witnessing the very first

¹² Martin 1989:89.

¹³ For Homeric poetry as self-aware meditation on poetic creation one generally thinks of the *Odyssey*, with its multiple comparisons between Odysseus and a poet, and its inclusion of bards as characters. But there are metapoetic moments to be found in the *Iliad* as well — most obviously the famous moment (9.186-189) when Agamemnon's embassy finds Achilles "entertaining himself with a sweet-sounding lyre ... and singing the famous deeds of men," but also (as I mean to demonstrate in this chapter) the understanding shared by all the characters that their actions will be the subject of future songs. For readings of the metapoetics of the *Iliad* and its stance on poetry, see Marg (1957), Frontisi-Ducroux (1986), and Ford (1992).

¹⁴ When I speak of the narrator's power, I mean it in two distinct senses. First, there is the absolute godlike authority a narrator has over his or her story. Second, there is the sense in which, for the world of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the past can only be said to exist inasmuch as it is recreated in the present by poets and storytellers. See my discussion in the introduction.

performance of the same story he himself is telling. Achilles' actual argument with Agamemnon may be the beginning of his wrath and their strife, but Achilles' narration of the *story* of that argument to Thetis is the beginning of the poetic process — which continues throughout the poem, as the story of the dispute is told and retold — that will one day produce the *Iliad* itself, Homer's own ultimate retelling of this story.

But this poetic self-awareness is not the only feature of interest to be found in Achilles' speech. For one thing, it only operates externally: the metapoetic elements of the speech may have meaning outside of the poetic world — for Homer and his audience — but not for the characters within the poem, Achilles and Thetis. If we focus our attention on the level of the characters, we will see that Achilles' claim of narrative authority proves extremely significant within the poem as well. Indeed, Rabel reads the speech as offering a challenge to the narrator of the *Iliad* itself by constructing an alternate version of the beginning of the poem, as Homer "sets the major protagonist to work against the narrator in a dialectical exchange of competing points of view."¹⁵ But the reading that I would like to offer sets Achilles in competition with a different rival narrator: Agamemnon.

To illustrate how this narrative competition works, I will move back and forth between different parts of *Iliad* 1, from the Narrator's original account of the dispute as it actually unfolded¹⁶ to Achilles' later re-narration of it to Thetis. As we will see, the dispute itself and the speeches it consists of can be

¹⁵ Rabel 1997:47.

¹⁶ Here I will operate under the assumption that the Narrator's description of events is, by definition, "true" — i.e. that (as theorists of narrative have argued), there is an unspoken agreement between storyteller and audience by which, "as a world-creating utterance, the narrative discourse institutes some raw facts which cannot be called into question, even though the reader has access to them only through a verbal representation" (Ryan 1985:720-721). Thus I take it for granted that if a detail from a character's speech contradicts a statement made by the narrator, we can assume that the character's story is deviating from the way things "really happened". This is contra Rabel, who seems to imply that the reverse could be true: "The opening movements of the poem cannot adequately be comprehended, even that of the omniscient Muse(s)-narrator. In this regard, the poet sets the major protagonist to work against the narrator in a dialectical exchange of competing points of view" (Rabel 1997:47). For a critique of Rabel's theoretical framework, see Irene de Jong (2001b).

read as a battle of dueling narrators from the very beginning. Even as they participate in their world as actors, Achilles and Agamemnon are constantly working to construct and interpret a narrative of what is going on around them, providing a sort of live commentary on an *Iliad* in progress.¹⁷ At the heart of their argument are the competing and conflicting readings they offer of the current event — and future poem — they are participating in. When they part at the end of the dispute, even after mediation by Nestor, they are still in disagreement about what it meant. By then telling the tale to Thetis, Achilles is able to privilege his version; in a simultaneous move, Homer privileges Achilles' version too, by allowing Achilles this opportunity to take center stage and speak without Agamemnon or anyone else to oppose him. Over the course of the poem, we will see Achilles' interpretation become more dominant, until by the end it is perhaps the only one we, and the internal characters, can remember. But Achilles' account is not the only possible version of this story, not the only reading of the dispute. Although it is silenced, Agamemnon's interpretation of the story of their dispute is still present in the poem, voiced by him at the beginning and occasionally visible later, between the lines of the largely pro-Achilles narrative.

Let us begin with a brief look at Achilles' version of the story. The narrative portion of his speech (1.366-392) begins with a fairly thorough rehearsal of the antecedents to the dispute, beginning (as noted above) earlier than the *Iliad* itself began: he describes the Achaeans capturing Chryseis in a raid on one of the surrounding towns, Chryses unsuccessfully attempting to ransom his daughter and then seeking justice from Apollo, and the resulting plague the god sent against the Achaeans. Finally, Achilles arrives at the dispute itself; I will quote his account of it in full:

ἄμμι δὲ μάντις
εὖ εἰδὼς ἀγόρευε θεοπροπίας Ἑκάτοιο.

¹⁷ Cf. Martin 1989: 91: "If we stress the role of the performers within the poem, furthermore, and take seriously the speeches as actual moves in a social game, we can perceive that Homer makes implicit indications regarding heroic status with each new 'performance' he depicts."

αὐτίκ' ἐγὼ πρῶτος κελόμην θεὸν ἱλασκεσθαι.
Ἀτρείωνα δ' ἔπειτα χόλος λάβεν, αἶψα δ' ἀναστάς
ἤπειλησεν μῦθον, ὃ δὴ τετελεσμένος ἐστίν.

A knowledgeable seer reported a message from far-shooting Apollo to us. Immediately, I was the first to order that we appease the god. Then anger seized Agamemnon, and at once he stood up and issued a threatening speech, which has now been carried out. (1.384-388)

I am not the first to notice that this is not in perfect accord with the account we were given earlier in Book 1.¹⁸ Achilles describes the conflict as consisting of, essentially, three steps:

- A. Calchas reports his interpretation of the cause of the plague.
- B. Achilles recommends returning Chryseis to her father.
- C. Agamemnon becomes angry and threatens to take away Briseis from Achilles.

But this is not quite what happened, either in terms of the order or the complexity of events. Below I will examine the individual speeches of the dispute in detail, but here I will provide a brief summary of the actual dispute as presented by the Narrator at 1.54-303,¹⁹ with which we may compare Achilles' version:

1. Achilles calls an assembly and asks for a seer to interpret Apollo's anger (54-67)
2. Calchas replies with concern for his own safety (74-83)
3. Achilles promises to protect him (85-91)
4. Calchas reports his interpretation of the cause of the plague (93-100)
5. Agamemnon attacks Calchas, agrees to return Chryseis, demands another prize (106-120)
6. Achilles tells Agamemnon that there can be no present compensation (122-129)
7. Agamemnon declares he will take someone else's prize (131-147)
8. Achilles responds in outrage and threatens to return home (149-171)
9. Agamemnon asserts that he will take Briseis from Achilles (173-187)
10. Achilles moves to kill Agamemnon, but is stopped by Athena (188-222)
11. Achilles insults Agamemnon and predicts the Achaeans will regret this (225-244)
12. Nestor intervenes to try to cool both of their anger (246-284)

¹⁸ The scholars I discuss above all comment on the differences to a greater or lesser extent. See especially Rabel (1997: 47) and the commentary on 1.386 and 1.387 at Latacz (2000: 135).

¹⁹ Cf. Beck (2005a: 208) for another map and analysis of the speeches in the assembly and dispute, along with a demonstration of ways in which this assembly deviates from the normal procedures described elsewhere in the *Iliad*. I must take issue with her attribution of speaker and addressee in the first four speeches, however; her discussion misses some of the nuance, I think, in the tension between the person or group nominally being addressed and the person at whom certain comments are directed, as I describe below.

13. Agamemnon insults Achilles (286-291)
14. Achilles declares he will withdraw from battle (293-303)

The most obvious difference is that Achilles has greatly simplified the episode, reducing what are (by my reckoning) fourteen distinct speeches or events to three. This fact alone, however, does not necessarily mean that Achilles has made a change to the original narrative; it is fundamental to classical narratology that the focalization introduced by different narrators has the potential of presenting the same events in the fabula in a version that is longer or shorter — or even one that artfully varies the temporal order — without necessarily altering their truthfulness.²⁰

But I question whether this is the best model to describe what Achilles is doing here. The notion of various narrators each offering their own take on a single unified fabula implies a specific definition of “truthfulness,” which treats the past almost as if it had a kind of concrete and permanent external existence. As I discuss in my introduction, however, such a model of Truth is precisely what much recent scholarship on oral poetics and Homeric epic has cautioned us not to assume. If the past can still be said to exist in the present, there are only a few forms this existence can be said to take: monuments, memory, and speech. The truthfulness of a speech is contained in the verisimilitude of the performance, in the ability of the speaker (particularly the professional bard) to create an engrossing world for the

²⁰ Indeed, in a sense every act of storytelling involves a selective narrowing (i.e. focalization) of the theoretically infinite detail of the set of events (i.e. the fabula) that purportedly lie behind it. Achilles’ re-telling of Homer’s story is quite similar to Plato’s experiment (*Republic* 392d-394b), much commented on by narrative theorists, in which Socrates re-writes a section of the *Iliad* as “simple narrative without mimesis” (394a7-b1: ἀνευ μιμήσεως ἀπλὴ διήγησις). Genette (1980: 165) describes this shortening of the text as eliminating “redundant information” as well as “circumstantial and ‘picturesque’ indicators”; the story is presumably not less “true” for the loss. And yet, he argues, it is (somewhat paradoxically) through the inclusion of this extraneous “mimetic” material that the narrator gives up control, and “abdicating his function of choosing and directing the narrative, allows himself to be governed by ‘reality.’” Genette goes on (p. 170) to postulate that “we could push further the reduction of speech to event ... there we would have the pure form of narratized speech.” As this is precisely what Achilles does in his representation of the dispute with Agamemnon, it is here where he asserts the greatest amount of narrative control.

audience.²¹ The classical narratological model sees expansion and contraction through focalization as a kind of window through which the fabula can be observed — a window which, depending on the focalizer, might be made larger or smaller, with glass of varying degrees of opacity, introducing various tints and distortions to the same underlying reality. But perhaps the better model for Homer is that of a simple core narrative which can be expanded through the various poetic techniques in the bard's toolbox; David Elmer (2010) points to an analogy between elaboration of a narrative and ornamentation of a set of armor with decorations. Therefore it may be more useful for us to see Achilles' account not as a re-telling of the "reality" of the fabula — which in his case is represented by the Narrator's version of events — but as a fresh expansion of the same simple core narrative (Achilles and Agamemnon fight over women in a public assembly; in the end Agamemnon takes Achilles' prize) that the Narrator had treated earlier.

But even if we can establish that this model of narrative creation is the best to account for the differing content of Achilles' speech, it is still not a literary analysis of that speech. Perhaps we should not expect Achilles' version to reproduce the facts of the Narrator's version, but the juxtaposition of them in such proximity — along with Achilles' verbatim repetition of some of the Narrator's lines — does invite us to compare them. In the following sections I will examine each of the three elements of Achilles' story that I identify above, and compare them with the corresponding parts of the original narrative. In our exploration of the events as the Narrator presented them, we shall see how Achilles' speech serves to continue his dispute with Agamemnon — a dispute which, as I argue above, was always about their differing attempts to control the conversion of reality into a narrative.

²¹ See e.g. Andersen (1987), Bakker (2005: 92-113), Grethlein (2006).

A. “A knowledgeable seer reported far-shooting Apollo’s message to us.” (1.384-385)

Achilles’ reference to the speech Calchas gave interpreting Apollo’s wishes (1.93-100; #4 on my list) does not immediately lead us to suspect him of misrepresentation. True, the mention is brief and nonspecific, alluding to Apollo’s message without summarizing its contents, but a summary here would be redundant. The information Calchas relayed is identical to what Achilles has just told Thetis: Apollo is angry because Agamemnon has dishonored Chryses. But Achilles’ storytelling does manipulate reality here, perhaps so subtly that we scarcely notice him doing it. The manipulation is to be found in his framing; observe the narrative context into which Achilles inserts this statement:

τὰ δ’ ἐπώχετο κῆλα θεοῖο
πάντη ἀνὰ στρατὸν εὐρὺν Ἀχαιῶν· ἄμμι δὲ μάντις
εὖ εἰδὼς ἀγόρευε θεοπροπίας Ἑκάτοιο.

The god’s arrows flew everywhere, all throughout the Achaeans’ wide camp, and a knowledgeable seer reported a message from far-shooting Apollo to us. (1.383-385)

The transition from Apollo causing the plague to Calchas interpreting Apollo is so smooth it happens in the middle of a line of hexameter. By offering these events in rapid sequence, Achilles is able to elide a fact that was apparent in the original narrative: he was the one who prompted Calchas to deliver this oracle in the assembly, even coaxing him when he was reluctant to speak. In fact, it was Achilles himself who had called the assembly in the first place, as the Narrator’s version of the transition from Apollo’s rage to the Achaeans’ response underlines:

ἐννῆμαρ μὲν ἀνὰ στρατὸν ὥχετο κῆλα θεοῖο,
τῇ δεκάτῃ δ’ ἀγορήνδε καλέσσατο λαὸν Ἀχιλλεύς·
τῷ γὰρ ἐπὶ φρεσὶ θῆκε θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη·
κῆδετο γὰρ Δαναῶν, ὅτι ῥα θνήσκοντας ὀρᾶτο.

For nine days the gods’ arrows flew through the camp, but on the tenth Achilles called the people to an assembly. The pale-armed goddess Hera put this idea in his mind, since she was worried for the Danaans as she saw them die. (1.53-56)

As both versions describe Apollo's attack with the same phrases (ἀνὰ στρατὸν and -ῶχετο κῆλα θεοῖο), Achilles' omission of himself as instigator is all the more marked. The Narrator is slippery about Achilles' thought process, shifting the focus to Hera as divine protector and then giving her motivation rather than his. The principle of "double motivation"²² suggests that this prompting by Hera ought not to prevent us from allowing Achilles his own reasons for his actions, but about these the Narrator is silent. We may suspect that he was not so moved by concern for the death of his fellow Greeks as Hera, however, given that a few hundred lines later he is re-telling this story as part of a request to have Zeus kill them. The narrator's silence leaves room for a charge that will be implicit throughout Agamemnon's speech: that Achilles has choreographed this entire scene from the start with the intention of undermining Agamemnon's authority by putting him in an impossible position. Oliver Taplin argues for a similar interpretation, suggesting that for every question Achilles asks he is perfectly aware of the answer he will receive.²³

Achilles' framing of this event in his story to Thetis, then, allows him to present his action in this conflict as reaction rather than instigation. Moreover, if we examine the path through which the Greek dispute progressed in the Narrator's version, speech by speech, we will see that Achilles was working to shape the narrative from the beginning. He initiates the assembly with a brief summary and interpretation of the situation:

Ἀτρεΐδη, νῦν ἄμμε πάλιν πλαγχθέντας δῖω
 ἄψ' ἀπονοστήσειν, εἴ κεν θάνατόν γε φύγοιμεν,
 εἰ δὴ ὁμοῦ πόλεμός τε δαμᾷ καὶ λοιμὸς Ἀχαιοῦς

²² First articulated by Lesky (1961).

²³ Taplin 1992: 54.

Son of Atreus, I think that since we have been thwarted, we will go back home to see if we can escape death, since both war and plague are now overwhelming the Achaeans at the same time. (*Iliad* 1.59-61)

By opening with these words, Achilles begins the process of converting their reality into a narrative, and an ongoing one: here is what happened in the past, and the situation in which we find ourselves at present; now we must make a decision about the future. Agamemnon and Achilles are immediately set up as participants in this narrative, both internally as the “we” who will return in defeat and externally as the narrator and narratee of this speech. Achilles’ language spells this relationship out from the start, as the pair straddle the first line: Agamemnon is addressed by the vocative Ἀτρεΐδῃ at the beginning, establishing him as (passive) audience, and the first-person “I think” (οἶω) at the end, introducing indirect speech, marks Achilles as storyteller and controller of the narrative. With his next line, “but come, let us ask some prophet or priest” (1.62: ἀλλ’ ἄγε δὴ τινα μάντιν ἐρείομεν ἢ ἱερῆα), he transitions from an attempt to control the narrative of the past to an effort to shape the narrative of the future. While presumably Agamemnon is part of the “us” in the first person plural “let us ask” (ἐρείομεν), the fact that it is Achilles saying this firmly establishes his own authority to lead the group in determining their future course of action.

There is a link implied here between narrating and commanding, to which we will be paying careful attention throughout this analysis. There is an inherent analogy between the types of power exercised in both acts. As a narrator constructs a story, he commands the audience to shape a continually unfolding reality in their minds. Within the world of the story, the narrator has total power to control events and create action at his whim, although this is a power that the narrator (qua narrator) can only exert externally, on the separate reality of his narrative world. It is precisely this same power that military or political leaders exercise internally, within their own world, using commands to affect people’s actions. Both storytelling and commanding exercise this power through speech — both involve types of

public performance. In fact, in his seminal work on performative speech in the *Iliad*, Richard Martin identifies remembering and commanding as two of the three types of speech categorized as *muthos* — the “genres” that the *Iliad* treats as significant as part of the hero’s role as performer.²⁴ In this speech there is a continuity between these two roles Achilles plays, claiming the narrative authority to dictate the Achaeans’ situation and the political authority to dictate what decisions the Achaeans will make.

After Achilles initiates the assembly and calls for a seer to shed light on Apollo’s reasons for causing the plague, we are given a speech by Calchas, whose actions also imply a kind of narrative authority. It is easy for the boundaries between prophet and poet to blur: both claim to be the mouthpiece of some divine voice, revealing truths about the world to humanity. The line that introduces Calchas — characterizing him as knowing the present, future, and past (1.70: ὃς εἶδῃ τά τ’ ἐόντα τά τ’ ἐσσόμενα πρό τ’ ἐόντα) — uses phrasing identical to Hesiod’s language describing his own narrator’s divine poetic inspiration by the Muses.²⁵ And Calchas’s prophecy itself is an act of storytelling, forming a narrative out of the plague the Achaeans face, imposing a specific interpretation upon their situation — and one that picks up and continues the narrative Achilles had begun.²⁶ Apollo is not angry about some improper religious observance, he says, “but it is because of the priest whom Agamemnon dishonored,

²⁴ See fn. 17 above. For the delineation of these genres, see Martin (1989: 47 ff.).

²⁵ Hesiod *Theogony* 38 (εἰρεῦσαι τά τ’ ἐόντα τά τ’ ἐσσόμενα πρό τ’ ἐόντα) uses the same phrase in the narrator’s description of the Muses; it follows shortly after his statement that the Muses “inspired me with a divine voice, so that I could tell the future and the past” (31-32: ἐνέπνευσαν δέ μοι αὐδὴν || θέσπιν, ἵνα κλείοιμι τά τ’ ἐσσόμενα πρό τ’ ἐόντα). Martin West (1966: 166), after listing similar passages in early Greek poetry, comments how “the phrase expresses the close connexion between poetry and prophecy which is widespread in early literature.” See also West 2011: 85, where he calls the phrase “an Indo-European expression of totality, esp. in relation to divine or vatic knowledge.”

²⁶ The first line of Calchas’s speech, “He does not find fault with a prayer or hecatomb...” (1.93: οὐτ’ ἄρ’ ὃ γ’ εὐχολῆς ἐπιμέμφεται οὐδ’ ἐκατόμβης) is nearly an exact quotation of one of the last lines of Achilles’ request: “If he finds fault with a prayer or hecatomb...” (1.65: εἴ ταρ ὃ γ’ εὐχολῆς ἐπιμέμφεται ἢ δ’ ἐκατόμβης). It is also worth mentioning that certain details that Achilles had taken for granted — that it is Apollo causing the plague, and that he is doing it because of a specific grievance — are also taken for granted in Calchas’s speech. This is perhaps more remarkable than it may seem at first: do the Achaeans have any concrete way of knowing these facts? Would they have been taken for granted? See fn. 10 above.

whose daughter he would not return, whose ransom he would not accept: this is why Apollo has brought us this pain and will continue to do so” (1.94-96). In fact, this statement by Calchas that the plague has come “because of the priest whom Agamemnon dishonored” (94: ἔνεκ’ ἀρητῆρος, ὃν ἠτίμησ’ Ἀγαμέμνων) is quite reminiscent of one of the narrator’s first lines from the proem, that men died “because the son of Atreus dishonored the priest Chryses” (11-12: οὐνεκα τὸν Χρύσην ἠτίμασεν ἀρητῆρα | Ἀτρεΐδης). Calchas’s narrative aligns with that of the Homeric Narrator himself. Calchas ends his speech by looking ahead: Apollo’s wrath will not end “until we give the dark-eyed girl back to her dear father for no payment, no ransom, and bring a sacred hecatomb to Chryse” (1.98-100).

Together, Achilles and Calchas forge a narrative that claims to define their present (the current plague is being caused by Apollo), their past (it was prompted by Agamemnon’s disrespect), and their future (we must return Chryseis and make an offering). This is a provocative move, and one that threatens Agamemnon — it threatens him because of the narrative and political authority it implies for Achilles and Calchas, and it is provocative because of its content, because it amounts essentially to a command, aimed indirectly but unmistakably at Agamemnon. As we saw above, the word with which the entire assembly begins is the address to Agamemnon at 1.59, Ἀτρεΐδη. As this establishes him as the audience, it also relegates him to background; after this single vocative Agamemnon neither speaks nor is specifically addressed for the next four speeches (1.59-100; #1-4 in my chart above). This is hardly a trivial point — although Achilles and Calchas address their speeches to each other, Agamemnon is the subject of this conversation that they are carrying on in his presence. Before replying to Achilles’ initial request, Calchas specifically points to the provocativeness of their construction of this narrative:

ὦ Ἀχιλεῦ, κέλεαί με, δίφιλε, μυθήσασθαι
 μῆνιν Ἀπόλλωνος ἐκατηβέλεταο ἄνακτος.
 τοὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ἐρέω, σὺ δὲ σύνθεο καὶ μοι ὁμοσσον
 ἢ μὲν μοι πρόφρων ἔπεις καὶ χερσὶν ἀρήξειν·
 ἢ γὰρ ὁῖομαι ἄνδρα χολωσέμεν, ὃς μέγα πάντων

Ἀργείων κρατέει καὶ οἱ πείθονται Ἀχαιοί.
κρέσσων γὰρ βασιλεύς ὅτε χώσεται ἀνδρὶ χέρηϊ.

“Achilles, dear to Zeus, you are ordering me to tell the anger of Lord Apollo, archer who shoots from afar. Well, I will tell you. But you must promise and swear to me that you will be zealous in protecting me with your words and your hands. For I believe I will anger a man who has great power over all the Argives, and the Achaeans obey him. A king is greater when he is angry with a lesser man. (1.74-80).

Here the repeated and varied vocabulary of commanding and narrating highlights speaking itself as the act which will, Calchas says, be taken as hostile, and connects the power of words with the power of action. Achilles’ speech was a command (κέλεαί) for Calchas to speak (μυθήσασθαι), to provide an authoritative *muthos* narrating and prescribing their future course of action. But Calchas recognizes the provocativeness of the speech he will give, as it will challenge Agamemnon, whose name the prophet does not yet dare to mention, although his statement that “I believe I will anger a man who has great power” is itself a miniature piece of narration of how this assembly is going to unfold. What is needed for Calchas to perform his authoritative act of prophetic speech (ἐρέω) is another speech act by Achilles, a promise (σύνθεο καὶ μοι ὅμοσσον) that his power is substantial enough that it will combine words with action (ἔπεσιν καὶ χερσὶν). For there is no question that all these speeches, performed before the assembled Achaeans, call Agamemnon’s power into question. Calchas’s request for assurance from Achilles is in essence a question: does Agamemnon have legitimate authority over us (or more specifically, you) or not?

This is not so straightforward an question as it may seem. Oliver Taplin offers an extensive critique of the assumption that Agamemnon is the unambiguous ruler of the rest of the Achaeans; he suggests that this authority is not implied by the text, but imposed by later readers (beginning with the

Classical Greeks) under the influence of the models of leadership with which they are familiar.²⁷ I would not go to Taplin's extreme in denying that the *Iliad* recognizes any ultimate leadership position for Agamemnon,²⁸ but clearly the dispute itself demonstrates that this is an issue on which there are differing opinions — different interpretations of the parameters of the narrative they are in. That Calchas stops to make this objection suggests that there is one version in which Agamemnon's power and authority are indeed the highest. That Achilles is not deterred by this objection suggests that there is another version in which they are not.

Calchas may speak freely, Achilles responds, without fearing harm from any Greek, “not even if you mean Agamemnon, who now claims to be the best in the army by far” (1.90-91: οὐδ' ἢν Ἀγαμέμνονα εἴπῃς, | ὅς νῦν πολλὸν ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν εὐχεται εἶναι).²⁹ Even before Calchas levels his accusation (in the form of divination), Achilles has anticipated the direction in which their argument will go by naming Agamemnon explicitly. Clearly the ad hoc hierarchy of this society formed of local Achaean chiefs and their followers is based upon claims the various men can make to be “better” than each other in some sense; Gregory Nagy famously analyzes the centrality of this competition for the title “best of the

²⁷ Taplin 1990.

²⁸ Taplin's claim (1990: 67) is that “in so far as Agamemnon's centrality is explained in the poem, it is because he is Menelaus' elder brother.” But certainly the text recognizes not just centrality, but hierarchical superiority for the character; this is implied by e.g. Nestor's statement to Achilles at 1.277-279 that he should not “quarrel violently with a king, since the share of honor is never equal for a scepter-bearing king to whom Zeus gives glory” (I will return to this passage — which Taplin quotes but dismisses with little discussion — below). On this question, see Latacz (2000: 82-83) on 1.173-187, with bibliography.

²⁹ Achilles' phrase οὐδ' ἢν Ἀγαμέμνονα εἴπῃς could also mean “not even if you say Agamemnon (is responsible for the plague),” and has occasionally been taken this way, although most understand it as I have translated it: “not even if you mean (when you say you fear you will anger a king that you will anger) Agamemnon.” See Latacz (2000: 61), who dismisses the first reading but also suggests that this is the sort of speech where we may find “intentional ambiguity” (gewollter Zweideutigkeit), contributes to the suppressed alternate reading of the dispute I discuss elsewhere, in which Achilles' entire purpose in this assembly is to use this crisis to take down Agamemnon. In either case I think we are justified in reading combativeness against Agamemnon on Achilles' part; Griffin (1980: 52) identifies a “special bite” in this particular use of the phrase; Kirk (1985: 62) calls this couplet “the cumulative addition in which insult lies”).

Achaeans” to the Greek heroes, particularly Achilles.³⁰ Calchas’s cryptic remark about the danger of challenging some unnamed king who is better/greater/mightier (κρέσσων) activates this competition, and Achilles, characteristically loath to mince words, makes his claim explicit: suppose by “the better king” you mean Agamemnon, who claims to be best — I assert that it is within my power to keep even this king from harming you.³¹ And this is what their dispute, for all its quibbling about losing Chryseis or losing Briseis, really boils down to: whether Achilles has the authority, or ability, or right to keep Agamemnon from doing what he is inclined to do, and vice versa.

B. “Immediately, I was the first to order that we appease the god.” (1.386)

Let us move on to the next part in Achilles’ narrative to Thetis. As we saw in the previous section, the first point of Achilles’ speech involved, if not a lie, an omission of many important details from the story he is narrating: Calchas’s proclamation of Apollo’s will did not occur in a vacuum. But with this next statement, Achilles’ version moves from rhetorically effective framing of the truth to outright misrepresentation. The Narrator did not show Achilles *immediately* (αὐτίκ’) becoming the *first* (πρῶτος) to suggest appeasing Apollo. True, Achilles does urge Agamemnon to return Chryseis at 1.127 (#6 on my list above). Strictly speaking, he is the first *other* person to do this: after Calchas’s report on

³⁰ Nagy (1979: 26-41). For the purposes of my discussion here, I will leave aside completely the question of what precisely this title means — whether “best” is meant in a moral sense, in terms of martial ability, social status, etc., as indeed this is a question on which the characters themselves cannot seem to agree, and for which Nagy at least reads the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as offering competing answers. My analysis rests only on the fact that “best” is a title for which they are in competition. Likewise, I operate under the assumption that various terms for “good/better/best” (e.g. ἀγαθός, ἄριστος, φέρτερος, φέρτατος, φέριστος, κρέσσων), despite their ordinary differences in nuance, can be treated as, if not synonymous, equally able to refer to this competition (see e.g. Nagy 1979: 27 n. §2.1).

³¹ Achilles’ use of εὔχεται — “Agamemnon *claims* that he is best” — is often read as an implicit challenge to Agamemnon’s status (i.e. “the notion that he is the best is nothing more than a claim”), though many temper this with the claim that the verb superficially indicates “only the statement of a recognized and objective fact” (Latacz 2000: 61, with bibliography). Nagy (1979: 45) suggests that εὔχομαι is specifically connected to claims about being “the best”, and ultimately this is how I read this passage: Achilles draws attention to the fact that he and Agamemnon are making competing claims, telling competing stories.

Apollo (#4), no one else speaks to Agamemnon before Achilles. But that Achilles gave this advice “immediately” is simply not true: the first to respond to Calchas was Agamemnon himself, with a speech (#5) in which, angry and reluctant though he may be, he agrees to Calchas’s proposal. I will quote this speech in full, as I believe it requires a careful and detailed reading:

μάντι κακῶν, οὐ πώ ποτέ μοι τὸ κρήγυνον εἶπας·
αἰεὶ τοι τὰ κάκ’ ἐστὶ φίλα φρεσὶ μαντεύεσθαι,
ἐσθλὸν δ’ οὔτέ τί πω εἶπες ἔπος οὔτ’ ἐτέλεσσας·
καὶ νῦν ἐν Δαναοῖσι θεοπροπέων ἀγορεύεις,
ὥς δὴ τοῦδ’ ἔνεκά σφιν Ἑκηβόλος ἄλγεα τεύχει,
οὔνεκ’ ἐγὼ κούρης Χρυσηΐδος ἀγλά’ ἄποινα
οὐκ ἔθελον δέξασθαι, ἐπεὶ πολὺ βούλομαι αὐτήν
οἴκοι ἔχειν· καὶ γάρ ῥα Κλυταιμῆστρης προβέβουλα
κουριδῆς ἀλόχου, ἐπεὶ οὐ ἐθὲν ἐστὶ χερείων,
οὐ δέμας οὐδὲ φυήν, οὔτ’ ἄρ φρένας οὔτε τι ἔργα.
ἀλλὰ καὶ ὥς ἐθέλω δόμεναι πάλιν, εἰ τό γ’ ἄμεινον·
βούλομ’ ἐγὼ λαὸν σὸον ἔμμεναι ἢ ἀπολέσθαι.
αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ γέρας αὐτίχ’ ἐτοιμάσατ’, ὄφρα μὴ οἶος
Ἀργείων ἀγέραςτος ἔω, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ ἔοικεν·
λεύσσετε γὰρ τό γε πάντες, ὃ μοι γέρας ἔρχεται ἄλλη.

Prophet of evils! You have never yet said anything beneficial to me. These evils are always pleasing for you to prophesy, but you have never yet said or accomplished a good word. And now, as you deliver your oracles among the Danaans, you are saying that the reason why Apollo is making trouble for them is because I refused to accept ransom for the girl Chryseis, since I would much rather have her at home. And in fact, I do prefer her to Clytemnestra, my proper wife, since she is not inferior to her in body or physique, not in her wits or her handiwork. But even so, I am willing to give her back, if this is better. I for one would rather the people be safe than be destroyed. But prepare a prize for me immediately, so that I will not be the only one of the Argives with no prize, since this would not be appropriate. For all of you can see that my prize is going away. (*Iliad* 106-120)

This speech comes immediately after the efforts by Achilles and Calchas to create and control a narrative, as I discuss above. In their version of the story, in which the plague has been sent “because of the priest whom Agamemnon dishonored” (1.94), Agamemnon is an obstacle, the cause of the Achaeans’ suffering, and they (particularly Achilles) are the saviors. In concert with their defining of the narrative, the two have laid down a challenge to Agamemnon’s political authority. With this speech,

Agamemnon attempts to counter these moves, to regain political control by offering his own competing narrative of the situation.

He begins with a specific challenge to Calchas's narrative authority. His first several lines are not simply unfocused personal slander; Agamemnon mounts a sustained attack against the seer's ability with words, using a series of nouns and verbs (εἶπας, μαντεύεσθαι, εἶπες ἔπος, ἀγορεύεις) which both underline the fact that the prophet's arena is that of speech, and question the validity of the types of speech he performs. Calchas has said nothing μοι τὸ κρήγυον — nothing good, or beneficial, or useful³² to Agamemnon. This phrase is somewhat ambiguous: it could mean his prophesy does not benefit the war effort, but it could also mean that it does not paint Agamemnon in a good light. Either way, the rejection of Calchas's words is based not on their lack of truth, but on their unpleasantness, and the odious character that one who revels in saying them is assumed to possess.³³ The implication that a seer's role should be both to "say a word" (εἶπες ἔπος — which in other contexts can be translated "tell a story") and "make it happen" (ἐτέλεσσας) acknowledges the same continuity between storytelling and commanding, between narrative and political authority, since a prophet's predictions are not spoken idly, but influence future action.

Once he is done lambasting Calchas as a speaker, Agamemnon moves on to reiterate what precisely it is the prophet had said, referencing Calchas's version of events in order to then contrast it

³² The precise meaning of κρήγυος is not entirely clear; it is a Homeric hapax and rare in pre-Hellenistic Greek, where it takes on the additional meaning "false", presumably based on a misreading of this passage. Here the context indicates that it means "good" in some sense, but the nuance is lost to us (see Lfgre s.v. κρήγυος). Many have read in Agamemnon's anger here an oblique reference to the tradition in which it was Calchas who delivered the prophesy requiring the Achaeans to sacrifice Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia at the start of the expedition; see e.g. Taplin (1992: 86-87). Can we perhaps read a parallel between Homer's allusion to a storyline that he suppresses and Agamemnon's attempts to suppress this story which does not suit him?

³³ This is not unlike Penelope's rejection of the "woeful song" (ἄοιδῆς λυγρῆς) about the returns of the Achaean heroes sung by the bard Phemius in the first book of the *Odyssey* (1.340-341).

with his own: “you are saying (ἀγορεύεις) that the reason why Apollo is making trouble for the Greeks is because I refused to accept ransom for the girl Chryseis.” It has been noted that Agamemnon’s summary already contains a significant omission: he neglects to repeat the crucial verb “dishonor” (ἀτιμάω) which both Chryses (1.94) and the Narrator (1.11) had used for Agamemnon’s rejection of the priest; the effect is a softening of his own guilt.³⁴ Agamemnon then lingers on his fondness for his slave, suggesting that he likes her even more than his wife, a move which is generally read as indicating Agamemnon’s grotesque tactlessness.³⁵ But the detail does have an internal rhetorical purpose: the more he praises Chryseis, the greater his own sacrifice becomes when he chooses to let her go. Agamemnon replaces the story in which he is the villain and Achilles the hero with one in which he is the hero, selflessly giving up the girl for the greater good. By asserting his willingness to be reasonable and his ultimate concern for the welfare of the army, Agamemnon continues the process of downplaying his original culpability and attempts to reclaim the title of savior from Achilles. This is followed directly by a command: “prepare a prize for me immediately.” Here Agamemnon shifts from asserting his narrative authority to the realm of the political: whereas Achilles and Calchas’s speeches only commanded Agamemnon to relinquish his girl indirectly (creating an imperative through their description of the situation), Agamemnon is directly and bluntly demonstrating his ability to give orders. It is also worth noting how he has expanded the audience of his speech in a way similar to how Achilles had initially: beginning with an address to a single person, Calchas (106: μάντι ... εἶπας), Agamemnon is now addressing the army as a whole with this second person plural imperative, “prepare” (ἐτοιμάσατ(ε)). Significantly, he neglects to mention Achilles

³⁴ De Jong (1987: 176). Her reading of the passage is instructive; she finds that the language indicates “Agamemnon finds it hard to believe that the misery of all Greeks is caused by his individual behaviour.” Latacz (2000: 67) suggests that by the elision of his own act of impiety, Agamemnon “reduces the facts to their ‘commercial’ aspect.”

³⁵ See e.g. Beck (2005a: 210). The over-the-top praise of his concubine is an example of what Richard Martin (1989: 113 ff.) dubs Agamemnon’s characteristic “poetics of excess.” On Agamemnon’s character, cf. also Taplin (1990).

at all, tacitly rejecting the position of leadership the man he considers a subordinate had tried to claim. So in the end, Agamemnon presents the assembly with a narrative that is quite opposed to that of Achilles and Calchas, highlighting his own personal sacrifice for the good of the many, and insisting that the interpretation of this situation should be that he is losing something. His final line, “all of you can see that my prize is going away,” calls on the assembled Achaeans as witnesses of the veracity of his version.

In the end, these details about how the narrative is framed seem to matter far more to Agamemnon than whether he gets to enjoy the company of a concubine at night. An upshot of living in this Homeric world of heroes performing speeches at each other is that they are constantly aware of how moments in their own lives provide potential material for future stories that will be told and retold through the generations.³⁶ This is a constant concern for Agamemnon and Achilles during their dispute; as they offer their competing readings of the situation, they are really providing templates for future stories, starting with the one that Achilles tells Thetis. And in that story, the move directly from “a prophet delivered an oracle” to “then I immediately ordered that we appease Apollo,” is exactly what Agamemnon is afraid of: a version that elides both Agamemnon’s willingness to cooperate and the loss that he suffers. Just as, during the dispute, Agamemnon’s rephrasing of Calchas’s speech eliminates the word “dishonored”, the narrative Achilles tells Thetis performs the reverse move. Achilles does not mention Chryseis by name after she is awarded to Agamemnon after the sack of Thebe (1.369), and makes practically no reference to her existence at all after Chryses first comes “to ransom his daughter” (1.372: λυσόμενός τε θύγατρα). For the remaining 22 lines of his 28-line narrative, Achilles frames the

³⁶ Another noteworthy example of this principle at work comes with the duel between Hector and Ajax in Book 7. After the fight is stopped with no resolution, Hector exchanges gifts with Ajax and makes a speech (7.301-302) imagining how “someone” (τις) will remember this battle in the future; Scodel (2008: 35) suggests that “Hector sees this exchange as a way of influencing how both sides describe the entire encounter; it defines how the duel is to be narrated ... Since Hector was losing when the heralds intervened, his proposal appears to be a ploy to fix the memory of the event in his favor.” Cf. Nagy (1979:29-30) for a related observation.

dispute as a debate over whether the gods should be obeyed, as in the line under discussion, “Immediately I was the first to order that we appease the god” (1.386). There is no specific reference to the fact that Agamemnon is being forced to give up his prize and status symbol — the very same indignity that so enrages Achilles.

The next speech in the Narrator’s version of this episode is the one in which Achilles replies to Agamemnon (1.122-129, #6 on my list), and it is here where the dispute between the two really begins. Previously these men have avoided direct interaction, each addressing the assembly over the other’s shoulder even when making statements that specifically involve the other. Now Achilles engages Agamemnon directly, with a speech that continues and intensifies the subtly combative tone that has been simmering beneath the surface of their previous statements:

Ἀτρείδῃ κύδιστε, φιλοκτεανώτατε πάντων,
πῶς τάρ τοι δώσουσι γέρας μεγάθυμοι Ἀχαιοί;
οὐδέ τί που ἴδμεν ξυνήϊα κείμενα πολλά·
ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν πολίων ἐξεπράθομεν, τὰ δέδασται,
λαοὺς δ’ οὐκ ἐπέοικε παλίλλογα ταῦτ’ ἐπαγείρειν.
ἀλλὰ σὺ μὲν νῦν τήνδε θεῶ πρόες· αὐτὰρ Ἀχαιοί
τριπλῇ τετραπλῇ τ’ ἀποτείσομεν, αἶ κέ ποθι Ζεὺς
δῶσι πόλιν Τροίην εὐτείχεον ἐξαλαπάξαι.

Most glorious son of Atreus, fondest of all men of possessions: how are the great-hearted Achaeans going to give you a prize? There’s no big stock pile lying around anywhere that we’re aware of. No, what we pillaged from cities has been distributed, and it would not be appropriate to gather these things back up again. But you just give this girl to the god, and the Achaeans will pay you back three or four times, if ever Zeus allows us to sack the well-walled town of Troy. (*Iliad* 1.122-129)

I find it rather strange that this speech — which seems to me to drip with sarcasm and contempt — is read by many commenters as, to quote Kirk, “calmly stated and not overtly provocative.”³⁷ We are asked

³⁷ Kirk (1985: 66). Cf. Whitman (1958: 184): “...Achilles mildly points out that he will have to wait till Troy falls,” and Beck (2005a: 210): “Even now Achilles is not angry, or at least not entirely or uncontrollably angry.”

to ignore our instincts about how to read the unique adjective “fondest of possessions” (φιλοκτεανώτατε) — seemingly a quite conspicuous insult — as it only seems this way to us because Homeric society values acquisition differently from ours. Joachim Latacz, for example, uses this reasoning to conclude that the phrase is “thus not ‘greediest of all’: Christian values are far in the future.”³⁸ Others do read the term as ironic — Rainer Friedrich says it “makes a mockery of the regular honorific form of the address, thereby subverting the respectful Ἀτρεΐδῃ κύδιστε by a heavy dose of sarcasm.”³⁹

But regardless of how one evaluates the introductory epithet, I read the whole speech as quite combative and provocative indeed, in the way it systematically rejects and replaces the narrative Agamemnon was working to create. The request for compensation is met with the snide observation that “there’s no big stockpile lying around anywhere that we’re aware of,” and Agamemnon’s stately justification that “it would not be appropriate” (119: οὐδὲ ξοικεν) for him to be the only Achaean without a prize is thrown back in his face with essentially the same phrase: “it would not be appropriate” (126: οὐκ ἐπέοικε) to repossess anyone else’s prize either. Achilles denies Agamemnon’s tacit assumption that he has some special status; what is unfair for him is equally unfair for everyone else. But perhaps the most direct challenge to Agamemnon’s authority is the imperative command with which Achilles follows this statement: “but you just return her to the god now.” What is offensive about this from Agamemnon’s point of view is that Achilles is ordering him to do something that he has already publicly agreed to do. In the two men’s struggle to define how this narrative will later be told, this point

³⁸ Latacz (2000: 71). Similar assessments of the phrase are to be found by Kirk and Beck in the above citations.

³⁹ Friedrich 2002: 3. Translators of Homer into English have also regularly seen fit to render the term with overtly negative language. A sampling: Alexander Pope: “insatiate king”; Samuel Butler: “covetous beyond all mankind”; Richmond Lattimore: “greediest for gain”; Robert Fagles: “most grasping man alive”; Stanley Lombardo: “greedy glory-hound”; Stephen Mitchell: “most greedy.”

is far more significant than whether Agamemnon has his prize or gives it up, or whether he receives recompense now or in the future. Achilles wants to be able to say what he says to Thetis — “I was the first to *order* (κελόμην) that we appease the god” — and so here during the dispute he ignores Agamemnon’s offer to return Chryseis, just as he ignores it in his later retelling of the dispute. In this detail we see once again the connection between narrative and political authority: Achilles is simultaneously taking control of the story and issuing commands to Agamemnon.

C. “But then anger seized Agamemnon, and at once he stood up and issued a threat, which has now been carried out.” (1.387-388)

One of the most notable features of Achilles’ entire retelling of the dispute is the suggestion of a simple and linear chain of action. Achilles would have us (or at least Thetis) think that Agamemnon’s anger was simply the result of his having to give up Chryseis — or rather, since Agamemnon’s actual loss of Chryseis is so de-emphasized in Achilles’ version, that the anger is an irrational response to the mere suggestion that Apollo be propitiated. With this final statement, Achilles implies that Agamemnon responded directly to Achilles’ bid that things be set right with an angry threat to take away Briseis. But as we will see, Agamemnon’s threat is neither so immediate nor so specific, and it is not a response of anger so much as necessity. All of Agamemnon’s moves in this assembly are essentially reactive: backed into a corner by Achilles, he is forced either to accept a public shaming and loss of status, or to react by demonstrating the power Achilles is suggesting he does not have. As Agamemnon’s response to Calchas began with a personal attack on the prophet as a speaker, his immediate response to Achilles (1.131-147; #7 on my list) starts with a recognition of Achilles’ attempts to establish a narrative which Agamemnon considers false:

μή δ’ οὕτως ἀγαθός περ ἐὼν θεοείκελ’ Ἀχιλλεῦ

κλέπτε νόω, ἐπεὶ οὐ παρελεύσεαι οὐδέ με πείσεις.

Godlike Achilles, although you may be valiant do not conceal things in your mind like this; you will not slip past me or persuade me” (*Iliad* 1.131-132).

These two lines initiate a response to Achilles on several fronts. First, as Achilles began his previous speech with a bit of sarcastic praise, calling him “most glorious” and “fondest of possessions” (κύδιστε, φιλοκτεανώτατε), Agamemnon responds with a little insincere flattery of his own.⁴⁰ But I think the point is more substantial than retaliatory sarcasm; with the term *agathos*, Agamemnon contributes to the undercurrent flowing beneath this entire debate: the question of which of them can claim to be the “best” (*aristos*, superlative of *agathos*). As Achilles had raised the issue in his statement to Calchas (Agamemnon may claim to be the best, but I can stop him), here Agamemnon’s terminology opposes Achilles’ previous statement (you may be good, but don’t challenge me, <because I am the best>). Next, Agamemnon begins his specific characterization of Achilles as deceptive, with the two phrases κλέπτε νόω and παρελεύσεαι. The collocation of *kleptein* and *noos* here is unique, but implies some trickery or deception of some sort.⁴¹ Some commentators have located Achilles’ supposed deception in the specific act of “cheating” Agamemnon out of Chryseis.⁴² But I prefer to read this accusation as a more wide-ranging condemnation of his entire method of argumentation; Achilles is attempting to establish a narrative that does not, Agamemnon believes, accord with the truth. I find Thomas Jahn’s comments on this phrase in his study of Homeric language particularly perceptive:

⁴⁰ The insincerity of this praise is an interpretation dating back at least to ancient times, as the bT scholia say that ἀγαθός replies ironically (ἀντειρωνεύεται) to Achilles’ (perhaps also ironic) κύδιστε at 122. Kirk (1985: 67) calls the epithet “not necessarily flattery”; Latacz (2000: 73) reads Agamemnon as using this term to highlight the discontinuity between Achilles’ noble status and ignoble act of deception.

⁴¹ *Lfgre* offers the meaning “beguile, trick” (*umgarnen, austricksen*).

⁴² e.g. Latacz (2000: 73): “in Achilles’ promise of rich compensation when Troy falls, Agamemnon sees only a duplicitous attempt to ‘put him off’ and thus to take what is rightfully his.”

...by κλέπτειν, Agamemnon means nothing other than the (alleged) attempt by Achilles to ignore the central point of his speech and to deprive him of the basis of his argument to a certain extent through this cover-up ... Agamemnon accuses Achilles of ‘suppressing’ his central request — the preservation of his honor; of ‘secretly stealing’ his main argument from him.⁴³

Agamemnon’s language also resonates with the Phaeacian king Alcinous’s praise of Odysseus’s storytelling, contrasting him with a typical dishonest storyteller:

ὦ Ὀδυσσεῦ, τὸ μὲν οὐ τί σ’ εἴσκομεν εἰσορόωντες
ἡπεροπῆά τ’ ἔμεν καὶ ἐπίκλοπον...
μῦθον δ’ ὥς ὅτ’ ἀοιδὸς ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας

Odysseus, we do not at all judge you to be a swindler or a deceiver ... but you have told your story knowledgeably, like a bard.” (11.363-4, 368)

We may infer from the shared *klep/klop* root in Agamemnon and Alcinous’s statements (*klepte noûi, epiklopon*) that Achilles’ deception works similarly to that of the false storyteller.⁴⁴ The picture of the quarreling Agamemnon and Achilles as dueling narrators, competing before the audience of the Achaeans to have their story judged best, fits naturally into a world in which poetry and storytelling regularly occur in a competitive context;⁴⁵ Agamemnon’s verb *paraleuseai* “you will not slip past me” is also used of competitors in athletic competition.⁴⁶

⁴³ Jahn 1987: 97-98

⁴⁴ Later in the *Iliad* Hector will use the same epithet of Achilles during their final battle, after Achilles makes his first spear throw: “You missed! As it turns out, godlike Achilles, you did not learn my fate from Zeus at all, although you said you did. But you were just some smooth-talker (ἀρτιεπής) deceiving me with stories (ἐπίκλοπος μύθων) in order to make me forget my strength and courage out of fear for you.” (22.278-282).

⁴⁵ See e.g. Martin (1989: 95): “Not only are heroic performers their own ‘authors,’ then, but they fill the role of ‘critic’ as well, since all speech in Homer takes place in an agonistic context.” Cf. also Griffith’s demonstration (1990:188) that “most Greek poetry, from the time of Homer and Hesiod to that of Euripides, was composed for performance in an explicitly or implicitly agonistic context.”

⁴⁶ Cf. *Iliad* 23.345 (used of chariot racing), *Odyssey* 8.345 (of foot racing); it is also used by Athena (in conjunction with the *klop*- root) of Odysseus’s craftiness at *Odyssey* 13.291-292: “It would be a cunning deceiver (κερδαλέος ... καὶ ἐπίκλοπος) who could slip past (παρέλθοι) you | in all your tricks.” Agamemnon’s comment is of course ironic addressed to swift-footed Achilles, unsurpassed in his literal ability to “overtake” his enemies; for the thematics of catching up and overtaking in Homer see Purves (2011).

Agamemnon then moves to address his specific grievances with Achilles, calling attention to the impropriety of his speech act by underlining the (perceived) outrageousness of Achilles giving him a command: “You’re ordering (κέλεια) me to give her back?” (1.134). Again, it is dangerous to Agamemnon’s authority for him to let himself be commanded to do something he has already agreed to do. Now Agamemnon must re-assert his authority by demonstrating his own ability to issue commands, which he does by making what is, presumably, the threat that Achilles’ story for Thetis refers to. He will give Chryseis back, he says, if the Achaeans give him a replacement prize:

εἰ δέ κε μὴ δώσωσιν, ἐγὼ δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἔλωμαι
ἢ τεδὸν ἢ Αἴαντος ἰὼν γέρας, ἢ Ὀδυσῆος
ἄξω ἑλών· ὃ δέ κεν κεχολώσεται ὃν κεν ἵκωμαι.
ἀλλ’ ἦτοι μὲν ταῦτα μεταφρασόμεσθα καὶ αὖτις,
νῦν δ’ ἄγε νῆα μέλαιναν ἐρύσσομεν εἰς ἄλα δῖαν,
ἐν δ’ ἐρέτας ἐπιτηδὲς ἀγείρομεν...

But if they don’t, then I will come choose one myself, either your prize or Ajax’s or Odysseus’s, take her and lead her away. Whichever man I visit will be angry. But, really, we can figure all of this out later — for now, come, let us drag a black ship to the shining sea, let us assemble rowers onboard as needed... (*Iliad* 1.137-142)

Here again we see Agamemnon creating a narrative, this time a narrative of the future, which he shapes both with his words and with his authority. But this is not yet the severe and definite threat Achilles later makes it out to be. First, it is indefinite, referring to no one target specifically but several potential ones (Achilles, Ajax, Odysseus). Second, the statement that comes immediately after the threat — we can worry about these details later — suggests his real purpose. Agamemnon’s real intention here is not so much to secure himself a prize as to maintain his reputation, to leave behind a narrative in which he does not come out looking weak. What is most important is not actually taking Achilles’, Odysseus’s, or Ajax’s prizes, but publicly asserting his authority to do so, and his superiority over each of these men. In addition, the request to worry for the moment about propitiating Apollo rather than quibbling about

prizes continues his self-presentation as a hero more concerned about his men's safety than his favorite concubine.

This plea to let the matter drop is followed directly by an elaborate and definitive exhortation to the army to return Chryseis to her father: let us prepare to launch a ship. By formulating this command⁴⁷ as a detailed list of steps for his men to follow, Agamemnon attempts once again to assert control over the process of the girl's return. This point is underlined by the final lines of his instructions:

εἷς δέ τις ἀρχὸς ἀνὴρ βουλευφόρος ἔστω,
ἢ Αἴας ἢ Ἰδομενεὺς ἢ δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
ἢ ἐσὺ Πηλεΐδῃ πάντων ἐκπαγλότατ' ἀνδρῶν,
ὄφρ' ἡμῖν ἐκάεργον ἰλάσσαι ἱερὰ ῥέξας.

Let some advice-giving man be leader, either Ajax or Idomeneus or noble Odysseus — or you, son of Peleus, most intense of all men, so that you can perform the sacrifice and propitiate Apollo for us. (1.144-147).

Many commentators read a scarcely concealed insult in the way Achilles is marginalized by being appended to the end of the list as “an apparent afterthought.”⁴⁸ It has been noted how closely this list of possible leaders matches the preceding list (at 1.138) of heroes whose prize Agamemnon might take; I would add that the salient point here is that, in both cases, Agamemnon is demonstrating his dominance over the men named. Somewhat paradoxically, by inviting Achilles to lead this mission, Agamemnon is ensuring the subservience of his position: he may be in charge of this minor mission, but it is from Agamemnon that he takes his orders. The uncertain epithet with which Agamemnon addresses Achilles

⁴⁷ Technically a series of hortatory subjunctives — he has adopted from Achilles' opening speech the technique of guiding the army in the first person plural. Kirk (1985: 67-68) calls this a reversion to “his better kind of royal demeanour” but hears “an unctuous note” in “the frequent use of the first person plural (‘let's all do this together...’)” I would call this more panicked desperation, as Agamemnon performs before an audience he is watching be usurped from him. Latacz (2000: 75) emphasizes his efforts to distract from the embarrassment of the previous dispute.

⁴⁸ Kirk (2009: 68). Here he also calls this “the final sting.” Latacz (2000: 76) suggests that this is essentially Agamemnon inviting Achilles, who has taken it upon himself to become spokesman for the people in their time of crisis, to “put his money where his mouth is” and act to protect the army — the implication being that Achilles' objections have been more out of self interest than concern for the common good.

at the end (again moving from the general address of the army to the specific), ἐκπαγλότατ(ε), which I have translated “most intense” is likely insulting in and of itself, an ironic counterpart to Achilles’ φιλοκτεανώτατε (“fondest of possessions”) at 1.122.⁴⁹ But what is most provocative about it is that it is a superlative, but not the one Achilles wants to claim: “best of the Achaeans.”

Agamemnon’s reaction thus rebuffs and attacks Achilles with calculated precision, but he is neither as stubborn nor as threatening as he is later made out to be. At this moment all Achilles must do is keep quiet and Apollo will be appeased and the issue of prizes settled at a later time when passions have cooled. It is only because of his incessant need to agitate — and his refusal to let Agamemnon’s version of the narrative go unchallenged — that Achilles will lose Briseis. In another speech which plays no part in the narration to Thetis (1.149-171, #8 on my chart), Achilles moves from irony to open insult, calling Agamemnon “cloaked in shamelessness” (ἀνιδείην ἐπιειμένε) and “profit-minded” (κερδαλέοφρον) at 1.149. From his earlier indirect challenges to Agamemnon’s authority Achilles now proceeds to undermine it directly, asking, “How could any of the Achaeans willingly obey your orders, to take a certain path or fight a violent battle with men?” (1.150-151: πῶς τίς τοι πρόφρων ἔπεσιν πείθεται Ἀχαιῶν | ἢ ὁδὸν ἐλθέμεναι ἢ ἀνδράσιν ἴφι μάχεσθαι;) He proceeds to offer an instantaneous “reading” of the speech Agamemnon has just made: “And you are actually threatening to take away my prize yourself.” (1.161: καὶ δὴ μοι γέρας αὐτὸς ἀφαιρήσεσθαι ἀπειλεῖς) This is of course somewhat different from what Agamemnon has just said (if I don’t receive compensation, I will take someone’s prize, but

⁴⁹ ἐκπαγλος is generally defined as “violent, terrible” (LSJ) or “vor dem man am meisten erschrecken muß” — “the one people should fear the most” (Latacz 2000: 76), but Kirk denies this meaning, suggesting a range “from ‘amazing’ to ‘vehement’ to ‘excessive’” and suggest that its other uses in Homer suggest “no particular insult”, but that it is the context here (i.e. a situation that calls for “a man of counsel”) that makes Agamemnon’s use of it “certainly malicious”. Latacz also suggests the connection with *philokteanotate*.

let's worry about it later.)⁵⁰ And yet as tempers continue to rise and the dispute escalates, Achilles' interpretation is instantaneously converted into fact by Agamemnon, as in the next speech (#9 on my chart) he restates Achilles' *allegation* about his previous statement as the fact it has now become, borrowing Achilles' vocabulary:

ἀπειλήσω δέ τοι ὦδε.
ὥς ἔμ' ἀφαιρεῖται Χρυσηίδα Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων,
τὴν μὲν ἐγὼ σὺν νηϊ τ' ἐμῇ καὶ ἐμοῖς ἐτάροισιν
πέμψω· ἐγὼ δέ δ' ἄγω Βρισηίδα καλλιπάρηον
αὐτὸς ἰὼν κλισίηνδε, τεὸν γέρας, ὄφρ' εὖ εἶδης
ὅσσον φέρτερός εἰμι σέθεν, στυγέη δὲ καὶ ἄλλος
ἴσον ἐμοὶ φάσθαι καὶ ὁμοιωθήμεναι ἄντην.

I make the following threat against you: Since Phoebus Apollo is taking Chryseis away from me, I will send her off with my ship and my men. But I will go to your tent myself and take away the fair-cheeked Briseis, your prize, so that you will understand fully how much better I am than you, and so that another man will hesitate to say that he is equal to me or compare himself with me. (*Iliad* 1.181-187)

The repetition of the same words Achilles had used for “threaten” (ἀπειλήσω) and “take away” (ἀφαιρεῖται) in such close proximity suggests that Agamemnon's threat is, in a sense, a “quotation” of Achilles' speech — of Achilles' reading of Agamemnon's previous statement. And in the lines I have labeled part C of Achilles' speech to Thetis, he Achilles continues this “quotation” — now totally stripped of the original context of reciprocal instigation: “anger seized Agamemnon, and at once he stood up and issued a threat (ἠπείησεν).” His version has satisfied most critics over the years as a faithful as a faithful summary of the Narrator's account of events, and yet it recasts them radically so that Agamemnon's position becomes utterly untenable. In Achilles' simplified narrative, Agamemnon acts

⁵⁰ Again, what is at stake is not so much the actual possession of the prizes, but the public declaration of one's ability to do so. For Agamemnon to be allowed to publicly claim the authority to take Achilles', Ajax's, or Odysseus's prize is essentially the same as him actually taking the prizes, in terms of what it says about the relative status of these men.

out of retaliatory anger for having to appease Apollo; Achilles suppresses his own instigations entirely by representing his role in the dispute as much more passive.⁵¹

Here we must move away from our close analysis of the Narrator's version of the dispute and return to our original query. What narratological model best describes the relationship between the "real" version we heard initially and Achilles' "mirror story" in which he retells it? We have seen how the argument function of Achilles' speech — its purpose within the narrative — is both to heighten Agamemnon's culpability and reduce his own. Of the nine speeches we analyzed from the Narrator's version of the dispute, four were performed by Achilles (1, 3, 6, 8), and yet his narration of the incident only mentions one: "immediately I was the first to order that we appease the god." When Achilles mentions Agamemnon's threat, he neglects to refer to Agamemnon's stated reason for making it: not because he is angry that he has to lose Chryseis, but so that it will be clear that neither Achilles nor anyone else has the right to claim that they are better than Agamemnon. Achilles has taken what could well be read as a dispute about leadership and authority, and reported it as a dispute in which an irrational and arbitrary king refuses to do right by his army until commanded, and takes his best fighter's prize without provocation. But while this new narrative strips away his self-justification, there is reason to believe that Agamemnon's words are still ringing in Achilles' ears. The speech by Agamemnon we have just discussed was the last thing he said to Achilles directly during the dispute (after this the argument is performed through the intermediary of Nestor). Amazingly, it is virtually the last thing he says to Achilles in the entire *Iliad*.⁵² So we should not be surprised if Agamemnon's final statement at

⁵¹ Rabel (1997: 51) reads this passage in much the same way.

⁵² See n. 80 below.

1.185-187 (I am taking Briseis so you will know that I'm better than you, and so that no man will challenge me in the future) have special resonance for Achilles, as his speech to Thetis seems to indicate.

He ends the entire speech by asking his mother to have Zeus bring defeat and death to the Achaeans,

γνῶ δὲ καὶ Ἀτρεΐδης εὐρὸν κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
ἦν ἄτην ὃ τ' ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισεν.

...so that Agamemnon, the wide-ruling son of Atreus, will also recognize his own insanity (*atê*), that he failed to honor the best of the Achaeans. (*Iliad* 1.411-412)

This reads like a response to Agamemnon's threat. And its inclusion of a new term, *atê* — delusion, madness, insanity — as we shall see, introduces a theme which will prove significant for the rest of the poem.

This is the argument function Achilles' speech, but what about the key function — the role that it plays in the narrative as a whole?⁵³ The traditional narratological model that has usually been applied calls this secondary focalization of the fabula — a new perspective on the same set of events we heard earlier in the Narrator's authoritative version. But I have suggested that we see Achilles not as a secondary focalizer of the Narrator's fabula, but as an independent creator of narrative in his own right, like a bard, can expand or contract a theme⁵⁴ such as "great warriors quarrel." As an expert performer of speeches, he is able to spin this theme into a story that serves his purposes, one that characterizes Agamemnon and himself exactly as he wants. Achilles' ties to what "really happened" in his world — the fabula of the *Iliad*, represented by the Narrator's version — are like a bard's ties to tradition. He cannot get away with deviating so wildly from the audience's previous experience with the story that they question whether it is the same story at all, but he is expected to put his own stamp on the narrative. In

⁵³ For the concepts of key and argument function, see the references at n. 7

⁵⁴ Lord (1960: 68-98) is the classical text on oral-poetic composition by theme; Jensen (2011: 63-69) discusses controversy on the subject since then. See also my discussion in Chapter Three.

fact, it has long been argued that stories characters within the *Iliad* tell about the past are never neutral, but rather serve as what Norman Austin calls “rhetorical devices whose intention is always persuasive; they are either hortatory (or dissuasive) or apologetic.”⁵⁵ In other words, stories set in the past are never about the past, but about the present; fidelity to what really happened — what we would consider historical accuracy — is not necessarily a primary concern. And like a Homeric bard, if Achilles can tell a compelling enough version of the story, it has a chance of becoming the authoritative version that influences how the present remembers the past.

And this is precisely what happens in the rest of the *Iliad*, as we shall devote the remainder of this chapter to discussing. While Achilles’ act of narration at the end of Book 1 serves, internally, as a private moment between mother and child, I argue that its key function is to symbolize the establishment of the dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon as a story characters within the poem tell each other, and the establishment of Achilles’ version of this story as the authoritative one. It is as though Achilles’ act of re-telling the story to his mother (and Homer’s act of using narrative space in the *Iliad* to do so) is a kind of ritual re-focalization of the poem through Achilles — a type of focalization that functions not just on the level of individual scenes and lines of hexameter, but aligns the overarching perspective and interest of the whole poem with the viewpoint of Achilles, even as Achilles temporarily withdraws from the poem. Without him there, the struggles of the other warriors play out like drama on a stage for the hero sulking and watching from his tent⁵⁶ — and the next time Achilles appears in the *Iliad* he is, famously, strumming his *phorminx* and singing the famous deeds of men (9.189: αἶδε δ’ ἄρα κλέα ἀνδρῶν). Has Achilles symbolically taken up Homer’s lyre for a few books by replacing the Narrator’s version of the

⁵⁵ Austin 1966: 300. See also Willcock (1964, 1977), Andersen (1987), Alden (2000) and my discussion in the introduction.

⁵⁶ As, for example, we see him do at 11.598-600.

opening with his own, only to set the lyre back down again when he re-joins the poem? However literally we want to take the notion of a high-level focalization of the poem through its central character, it is clear that the version of the dispute the characters tell each other for the rest of the poem bears a strong resemblance to the story Achilles has just told Thetis.

To illustrate this, let us reexamine the final two lines of Achilles' speech to Thetis (1.411-412, quoted above). These lines contain three pieces of information that are fundamental to Achilles' interpretation of the dispute: (1) Agamemnon has dishonored (οὐδὲν ἔτισεν) Achilles; (2) Achilles is the best of the Achaeans (ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν); (3) Agamemnon's behavior was *âtê*. The first two of these elements were already part of the Narrator's version of the dispute — in fact, the end of the final line of Achilles' speech to Thetis (1.412) is identical to a line-end from one of his speeches to Agamemnon (1.244, #11 in my list). But the characterization of Agamemnon's actions as *âtê* is new; the word is not used in the *Iliad* before Achilles' speech to Thetis. I have translated *âtê* as "insanity" above, but the term implies a very specific interpretation of Agamemnon's behavior: it suggests damage to the mental facilities caused by the gods, which leads one to make irrational choices.⁵⁷ There has been much scholarly discussion of *âtê* in Homer, with Agamemnon's behavior towards Achilles often used as a key example, in part because (as we shall see) the characters themselves comment so extensively on its significance.⁵⁸ There are differences of opinion on the moral dimension of Agamemnon's mistake: is he wrong simply because the path he has followed has proved not to be efficacious to the war effort, or is his misjudgment evidence of a failure of the "quieter virtues"?⁵⁹ If *âtê* implies externally caused madness, is

⁵⁷ LfgrE s.v. ἀάτη traces the evolution of the word *âtê*, beginning with a posited pre-Homeric meaning of "harm" (*Schade*) in a broad sense, and moving to the more specific "harm to the mind" (*Schädigung der φρένες*) or "blindness" (*Verblendung*), usually thought to be caused by the gods, which we find in Homer.

⁵⁸ See for example Dodds (1951: 2-8), Padel (1995: 167-187), Finkelberg (1995), Hershkowitz (1998: 125-133.)

⁵⁹ See Adkins (1960: 50-52), Lloyd-Jones (1971:10-27).

this simply another example of “double motivation” of behavior by both gods and humans,⁶⁰ or does it serve as a defense to deny Agamemnon’s responsibility for his actions? Bryan Hainsworth tells us that “Akhilleus avoids <the word *atê*> for the same reason as Agamemnon uses it, because it is exculpatory in a way that ἐκ φρένας εἶλετο Ζεύς (*Iliad* 9.377) is not.”⁶¹

I disagree with this statement, and not only because I do not understand the distinction it implies between *atê* and Zeus taking one’s wits. As we have seen, it is Achilles in his speech to Thetis who introduces the concept of *atê* into the poem in the first place; as we will examine shortly, it is only after this speech that Agamemnon’s *atê* in the dispute becomes a trope to which many characters return. The explanation of divinely caused blindness is only exculpatory as a kind of insanity defense if there is general agreement that Agamemnon’s behavior during the dispute was unjustifiable on its own terms. Agamemnon’s own confession of his culpability (motivated by *atê*) is so prominent for the rest of the poem that it is often taken by granted; with reference to the end of Achilles’ speech to Thetis, Debra Hershkowitz comments:

The fact that this explanation of Agamemnon’s behaviour comes much sooner than Agamemnon’s own suggests a lack of awareness on Agamemnon’s part of something about himself or his actions which is patently clear to others, although some are more ready than others to make this something explicit. Why is it clear to Achilles but not, initially, to Agamemnon?⁶²

Because by the end of the poem it is “patently clear” both to Achilles and Agamemnon that Agamemnon’s behavior was delusional, there is little incentive for anyone to question the point. But the fact that the characters themselves have all come to agree on a single interpretation is not necessarily evidence that this interpretation is “correct” in some external sense; as Hershkowitz goes on to say, *atê* is

⁶⁰ A possibility raised by Hershkowitz 1998: 131 (with bibliography).

⁶¹ Hainsworth 1993: 73.

⁶² Hershkowitz 1998: 129-130.

determined based on the results, not the action. “Had the action been successful, the attribution of ἄτη to it would not have occurred, suggesting that neither the state of mind of the actor nor some inherent quality of the action is at issue, but rather the subsequent reception of the action.”⁶³ Perhaps, then it is better to take this as evidence that Achilles’ version of the story is the one that ends up being more useful for the characters to believe. For if we examine the Narrator’s version of the dispute rather than Achilles’, we will find reason to conclude that *atê* is in fact a poor description of Agamemnon’s behavior. First, on a rather literal level, the Narrator’s version shows no sign of the gods interfering with Agamemnon’s reasoning, despite explicit mentions of other divine intervention in the same passage.⁶⁴ Second, as I have demonstrated above, Agamemnon’s actions during the dispute are never merely the result of irrational anger; each can be interpreted as a reasonable reaction forced by the move Achilles has just made, necessary to preserve Agamemnon’s public standing. It is fair to describe Agamemnon’s reaction to *Chryses* (1.26-32) as rash and ill-advised, but this is a separate incident. During the actual dispute, as we have seen, even at times when he is angry (such as his response to Calchas’s speech at 1.106-120) he behaves rationally, looking out both for his own interests and those of the army.

A final piece of evidence that Agamemnon’s behavior during the dispute was not immediately read as *atê* comes with the intervention of Nestor. At the end of a rather long speech that starts with an

⁶³ Hershkowitz 1998: 132.

⁶⁴ During the dispute scene, we see Hera inspire Achilles to call the assembly (1.55) and Athena intervene to prevent Achilles from killing Agamemnon (1.194 ff.); at the beginning of Book 2 we see Zeus affecting Agamemnon’s judgment by sending a false dream. This is common enough elsewhere in the poem — e.g. during Glaucus and Diomedes’ famous exchange of armor, when “Zeus son of Cronus took away Glaucus’s wits” (6.234: Γλαύκῳ Κρονίδης φρένας ἐξέλετο Ζεύς). One might reasonably object that divine motivation is so essential to the *Iliad*’s conception of human psychology (famously argued in Lesky 1961; cf. Dodds 1951: 4-5) that it can be assumed to be operative even when not specifically mentioned. Still, I believe it is worth considering that, whereas the (extremely brief) mentions of the dispute throughout the poem almost invariably describe Agamemnon as a victim of *atê*, the (extremely thorough) description of the dispute at the beginning of the poem does not.

allusion to his own past adventures,⁶⁵ Nestor attempts to reconcile the quarreling heroes by placing the narratives that they each are attempting to construct side by side, creating a sort of fusion of both accounts into a single interpretation:

μήτε σὺ τόνδ' ἀγαθὸς περ ἐὼν ἀποαίρεο κούρην,
ἀλλ' ἔα, ὥς οἱ πρῶτα δόσαν γέρας υἷες Ἀχαιῶν·
μήτε σὺ, Πηλεΐδῃ, ἔθελ' ἐριζέμεναι βασιλῇ
ἀντιβίην, ἐπεὶ οὐ ποθ' ὁμοίης ἔμμορε τιμῆς
σκηπτουῆχος βασιλεύς, ᾧ τε Ζεὺς κῦδος ἔδωκεν.
εἰ δὲ σὺ καρτερός ἐσσι, θεὰ δέ σε γείνατο μήτηρ,
ἀλλ' ὅδε φέρτερός ἐστίν, ἐπεὶ πλεόνεσσιν ἀνάσσει.
Ἄτρεΐδῃ, σὺ δὲ παῦε τεδὸν μένος· αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ γε
λίσσομ' Ἀχιλλῆϊ μεθέμεν χόλον, ὃς μέγα πᾶσιν
ἔρκος Ἀχαιοῖσιν πέλεται πολέμοιο κακοῖο.

Although you (Agamemnon) are noble, do not rob him of the girl, but leave her, since the sons of the Achaeans first gave her to him as a prize. But you, son of Peleus, do not engage in a violent dispute with a king, since the share of honor is never equal for a scepter-bearing king to whom Zeus gives glory. Even if you are strong, and the mother who gave birth to you is a goddess, still he is better, since he rules more people. But you, son of Atreus, must cool your passion. I beg you to let go of your anger against Achilles, since he is a great wall of defense against wicked war for the Achaeans. (*Iliad* 1.275-284)

The subtlety of Nestor's rhetoric here illustrates his diplomatic finesse. Devoting equal time to both parties (five lines each), he manages to acknowledge the validity of the competing arguments simultaneously. But although he admonishes Agamemnon that it is a bad move (tactically, if for no other reason) to take Achilles' prize, the version of the story he endorses is ultimately that of Agamemnon. His only argument in favor of Achilles' position hinges on a technicality; picking up Achilles' point from 1.172, he reiterates that the girl was given by the army, not by Agamemnon himself. But Nestor does not mention what is at the heart of Achilles' complaint: he does not describe Agamemnon's behavior as dishonor, and, most crucially, does not call Achilles the best of the Achaeans. The antithesis with which

⁶⁵ As with the previous speeches of Achilles and Agamemnon, Nestor's speech here simultaneously establishes multiple types of authority for himself: the message of the speech itself is that the superior men of the past respected his advice, while the fact that he is able to refer to this past episode demonstrates his narrative authority as speaker and performer. cf. Martin (1989: 80).

he compares the two, using a similar sounding (and metrically equivalent) pair of words (*karteros*/*pherteros*), is deceptive. As both words end in the *-teros* suffix, which is usually comparative, there is a temptation to see each man as superior to the other in a specific category: Achilles is stronger, Agamemnon is greater. But although its superficial similarity to a comparative has fooled many introductory Greek students (and perhaps a few translators⁶⁶), *karteros* is merely the positive adjective “strong,” while only Agamemnon’s comparative *pherteros* implies superiority over his opponent. Nestor’s choice of this pair of terms implicitly endorses Agamemnon’s side of the argument by echoing one of his speeches (#9 on my chart), in which he had conceded to Achilles “if indeed you are very strong...” (178: εἰ μάλα καρτερός ἐσσι) but went on to assert his intention to take Briseis so that Achilles would know “how much better I am than you” (186: ὅσσον φέρτερός εἰμι σέθεν). Latacz (2009: 109-110) summarizes Nestor’s overall position: “In this case he admits that Achilles is right; on the ideological question of whether political power or military ability deserves higher social status, he aligns himself with the viewpoint of Agamemnon.” That is to say, while he acknowledges that the best choice pragmatically is to appease Achilles, at the end of the day he recognizes the legitimacy of the social system as Agamemnon sees it; Agamemnon is the one who deserves the greater share of respect, and Achilles is in the wrong for challenging his authority.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Richmond Lattimore: “Even though you are the stronger man ... yet is this man greater.” Stanley Lombardo: “You are stronger... But he is more powerful.” Stephen Mitchell: “You may be the stronger man... Yet Agamemnon is your superior.”

⁶⁷ Taplin (1990:64) comes to the opposite conclusion: “...the points (Nestor) makes are hardly equally balanced. The objection to Agamemnon — that he is taking away the γέρας, the special prize, already bestowed by the Achaeans — is more ‘respectable’ than that against Achilles — that Agamemnon rules over more men.” But can we really make such an inference about Nestor’s belief in the greater “respectability” of Achilles’ claim? This seems to fly in the face of what Nestor actually says — that a man such as Achilles is not “allotted equal honor” (ὁμοίης ἔμμορε τιμῆς) to that of Agamemnon, who is given glory (κῦδος) by Zeus. Taplin ignores these appeals to divine endorsement and established social hierarchy, reducing Nestor’s argument to “if it came to a punch-up Agamemnon’s men would overwhelm Achilles” (p. 65). Perhaps this is what the *Iliad*’s ideology of kingship boils down to from our perspective — but is it this transparently hollow from Nestor’s point of view?

Now let us compare this to Nestor's characterization of the dispute later in the poem. By Book 9 the Achaeans have begun to feel the pressure of the Trojan success in battle, and Nestor and Agamemnon revisit the argument with Achilles.⁶⁸ Nestor refers to his previous speech specifically:

οὐ γάρ τις νόον ἄλλος ἀμείνονα τοῦδε νοήσει
οἶον ἐγὼ νοέω, ἡμὲν πάλαι ἢ δ' ἔτι καὶ νῦν,
ἐξ ἔτι τοῦ ὅτε, διογενὲς, Βρισηΐδα κόουρην
χωομένου Ἀχιλῆος ἔβης κλισίηθεν ἀπούρας,
οὗ τι καθ' ἡμέτερόν γε νόον· μάλα γάρ τοι ἐγὼ γε
πόλλ' ἀπεμυθεόμην· σὺ δὲ σῶ μεγαλήτορι θυμῷ
εἴξας ἄνδρα φέριστον, ὃν ἀθάνατοί περ ἔτισαν,
ἠτίμησας· ἐλὼν γὰρ ἔχεις γέρας

No one else will think (*noêsei*) of better advice (*noon*) than this, which I had in my mind in the past and still think (*noeô*) now, from the moment when you, divine king, walked out of an angered Achilles' tent after stealing the girl Briseis — not at all following my advice (*noon*). I myself made many arguments against it, but you yielded to your own proud heart, and dishonored the best man, one even the immortals honor, since took his prize and are still keeping it... (*Iliad* 1.104-111)

Nestor's point — highlighted by the insistent repetition of the *no-* root — is that he has been consistent in his advice and analysis of the situation: he has been of the same mind in the past (πάλαι) and the

⁶⁸ It is worth noting that these comments by Nestor and Agamemnon take place in a private meeting of the “elders” (γέροντας — perhaps the sense is closer to “senior officers”) in Agamemnon's shelter (9.89-90), while the assembly in Book 1 included the whole army (1.54). (See Beck 2005a: 195-199 for a discussion of the formal differences between these types of meetings.) This private meeting in Book 9 follows directly upon a public assembly at which Diomedes had harshly criticized Agamemnon's leadership and bravery (9.32-49) and Nestor had responded with the subtle strategy of praising Diomedes' speech (53-59) while requesting deference to his own age and experience (57-58, 60-62), and finally himself deferring to Agamemnon's “most kingly” authority (69-70, 73). Clearly Nestor has learned from the dispute in Book 1, and is able to successfully defuse this potential conflict before it begins (note that Agamemnon is not given a chance to say a word, though Nestor gives orders on his behalf). Nestor's change in strategy here is perhaps indicative of his change in opinion — whereas he had told Achilles that he had to respect Agamemnon's superior position as king (1.277ff.), he responds to Diomedes' explicit disrespect of Agamemnon's kingship by saying “you address the Argive kings prudently” (9.58-59), and calls Diomedes both “strong” (53: καρτερός) and “best” (54: ἀριστος). Hainsworth (1993: 66-67) reads this somewhat differently, comparing Nestor's intervention in Book 9 with his attempt at mediation between Achilles and Agamemnon at 1.254-284 as equally “a masterpiece in the tactful management of impetuous firebrands,” ignoring the fact that the former speech had failed completely in its persuasive goal. He goes on to suggest (p. 67) that there is a difference between the respectful tone of Diomedes' speech and the “insolent and provocative manner favoured by Akhilleus in book 1,” but this is a difference I do not see.

present (νοέω... ἔτι καὶ νῦν), and his story will continue to stand up in the future (νοήσω).⁶⁹ In other words, he claims that what he is saying now is the same thing he said in Book 1, a claim critics have generally accepted.⁷⁰ But the fact that Nestor said “don’t take Briseis” in Book 1 does not mean that his analysis of the situation — the narrative by which he justifies this advice — has been consistent. Now Agamemnon has “dishonored” (*êtimêsas*) Achilles; and now, most significantly, Achilles is the “best” man (110: *pheriston*).⁷¹ This is an incredible contrast to the speech with which Nestor is claiming consistency, where he used a form of the same adjective to say that Agamemnon was “better” (1.281: *pherteros*). In short, Nestor’s memory of the dispute and his role in it seems to have the same relationship with the Narrator’s original version as Achilles’ story to Thetis, more interested in the relevance of the dispute to the present than in the facts that happened in the past. Incredibly, the same seems to have happened to Agamemnon, who responds to Nestor saying:

ὦ γέρον, οὐ τι ψεῦδος ἐμὰς ἄτας κατέλεξας.
 ἀασάμην, οὐδ’ αὐτὸς ἀναίνομαι.

Wise old man, your narration of my insanity (*atê* plural) is in no way incorrect. I was insane (*aasamên*); I do not deny it myself. (*Iliad* 1.115-116)

⁶⁹ This is in keeping with his role as the Achaeans’ preeminent wielder of words and keeper of memories — his complete knowledge of the past, present, and future is thus similar to the *ὅς εἶδη τά τ’ ἐόντα τά τ’ ἐσσόμενα πρό τ’ ἐόντα* formula I discuss above with respect to the perfect prophetic/narrative knowledge of Calchas. This insight was offered to me by Brent Vine in private correspondence.

⁷⁰ For instance, Hainsworth (1993: 72) argues that “Nestor, who cannot refrain from saying ‘I told you so’ now condemns Agamemnon’s actions in even plainer terms than he had used in his even-handed intervention in the quarrel in 1.254-84.” See also e.g. Lloyd-Jones (1971: 14), Taplin (1990: 65-66).

⁷¹ *φέριστος* is a comparatively rare word (occurring 7x in Homer), obviously related to the more common *φέρτερος*/*φέρτατος*, but more specific in that it is almost exclusively used in direct address of superlative gods and heroes, a usage that, as comparative linguistics demonstrates, is likely pre-Greek: see García Ramón 2010: 82-84 on Avestan [s]bairišta-. Nestor’s formulation here is all the more marked for being the only use of this word in all of Homer (and one of the only in all of Greek) in a case other than the vocative; in practically every other instance, it is used in connection with questions about the identity of people suspected of being gods (see LfgrE s. v. *φέρτερος*; the other atypical case is Antilochus using the term to address his horses at *Iliad* 23.409).

Agamemnon’s characterization of his own past actions as *atê* (reinforced by his immediate use of the verb formed from the same root, *aaô*) is precisely that of Achilles. In the space of a few lines, Nestor and Agamemnon have affirmed the three details I listed from Achilles’ version of the story that they refused to acknowledge before (Agamemnon’s behavior as *âte*; the dishonor of Achilles; Achilles as best of the Achaeans). Agamemnon’s use of the verb *katalegô* (“enumerate, narrate in detail and from the beginning”)⁷² to describe Nestor’s statement underlines the fact that the dispute they are discussing now exists not as a set of events, but as a narrative of a set of events, which has begun to circulate through the Achaean world. The version of this story that is being told seems to resemble that of Achilles — a version Agamemnon now says is “in no way incorrect.”

The Dispute as Story within the *Iliad*

After Achilles narrates the dispute to Thetis in Book 1, the *Iliad* offers no other extended telling of this story. Nevertheless, we can be fairly sure that the story is repeated and interpreted by characters “off-stage,” based on oblique references that are made throughout the poem. Probably the most extended re-visiting of the dispute occurs during Book 19, when Achilles and Agamemnon make amends in an assembly that, as Deborah Beck argues, serves as a mirror for the assembly in Book 1 at which the dispute occurred.⁷³ When given a chance to speak at this later assembly, Agamemnon refers to the original argument in terms that emphasize its status as a story — and, indeed, underlines the narrative and performative nature of his current speech:

ὦ φίλοι, ἥρωες Δαναοί, θεράποντες Ἄρης,
ἔσταότος μὲν καλὸν ἀκούειν, οὐδὲ ἔοικεν

⁷² “Auf-, erzählen (ausführlich und der Reihe nach)” in LfgRE s. v. λέγω II 4: καταλέγω.

⁷³ Beck 2005a: 204ff. At 19.35 Thetis tells Achilles to call an assembly “renouncing his wrath” (μῆνιν ἀποείπων), using the same noun *mênis* which was famously used (as the first word of the *Iliad*) to describe the anger that arises in the first assembly.

ὕββάλλειν· χαλεπὸν γὰρ ἐπισταμένῳ περ ἔόντι.
ἀνδρῶν δ' ἐν πολλῷ ὀμάδῳ πῶς κέν τις ἀκούσαι
ἢ εἴποι; βλάβεται δὲ λιγύς περ ἑὼν ἀγορητής.
Πηλεΐδῃ μὲν ἐγὼν ἐνδείξομαι· αὐτὰρ οἱ ἄλλοι
σύνθεσθ' Ἀργεῖοι, μῦθόν τ' εὖ γνῶτε ἕκαστος.
πολλάκι δὴ μοι τοῦτον Ἀχαιοὶ μῦθον ἔειπον,
καί τέ με νεικεῖσκον·

Friends, Danaan warriors, servants of Ares: it is good to listen to a man when he stands; it is not proper to interrupt him. This makes things difficult even for a knowledgeable man. How could anyone hear or speak in the loud din of men? Even a clear-voiced speaker will be drowned out. Now, I will explain myself to the son of Peleus, and all of the rest of you Argives pay attention; understand my story, each of you. It is a story the Achaeans have told me and attacked me with quite often... (*Iliad* 19.78-86)

As we will see in a moment, when Agamemnon finally addresses the dispute itself, he does so in terms that fully accept Achilles' version of it; while this assembly may serve as a mirror of the first, Agamemnon does not rehash his earlier arguments against Achilles. Still, it is impossible to ignore how insistently he hammers home the possibility of a voice — such as his — being drowned out. No one listened to the narrative he was trying to create in Book 1, no matter how lucid (*ligys*) his presentation of it was. But this is now a lost cause; it is, as he admits, a story that the Achaeans have been telling often, and the version that gets told, “attacking him” (*neikeieskon*) is one in which he is the bad guy.

Let us pause for a moment to consider what these other tellings of the story circulating among the men and attacking Agamemnon might sound like. In fact, the *Iliad* offers a rather explicit example: the Thersites episode in Book 2. This brief interlude in which the decidedly un-heroic representative of the masses challenges Agamemnon has been the subject of much analysis; many have noted the similarities between Thersites' and Achilles' challenges to the king.⁷⁴ To my knowledge Thersites has not

⁷⁴ e.g. (all with extensive bibliography) Lohmann (1970:174-178) notes the similarities in their challenges and remarks on the parallel structures of the two confrontations (Achilles: Agamemnon:: Thersites: Odysseus); Thalmann (1988:19-21) reads the parallel disputes through the lens of class conflict and social hierarchy; Postlethwaite (1988) interprets the purpose of the entire episode as indicating support for Achilles' complaints. The latter two scholars offer summaries of the dominant

been read as a specific example of the “Achaean often telling me the story (*mython*) and attacking (*neikeieskon*) me” that Agamemnon refers to in his speech in Book 19,⁷⁵ but this is precisely what he is doing; the text marks this fact with both the beginning (2.224: “He attacked (*neikee*) Agamemnon with his account (*mythôi*)”) and ending (2.243: “So he spoke, attacking (*neikeiôn*) Agamemnon...”) of Thersites’ speech, using the same verb *neikeô* that Agamemnon uses for the verbal assaults at 19.86.⁷⁶ And while this assault on Agamemnon’s leadership is hardly limited to the argument with Achilles, Thersites does mention the dispute prominently, referring to it in terms that clearly match Achilles’ version of the story; at 2.239-240 he says that Agamemnon “has just now dishonored (*êtimêsen*) Achilles, a far better (*ameinona*) man than he is.”

Thersites’ speech, following so soon after the actual argument,⁷⁷ outlines the kind of chatter going on behind the scenes as Achilles’ presentation of the dispute narrative begins to inform the stories the troops are telling each other about it. Perhaps at this early stage of transmission — before the Achaeans have begun to suffer the heavy losses that drive them to demand Achilles’ return to battle — this version of the story has not yet met with universal acceptance: Thersites is specifically characterized

view of their predecessors, who have read Thersites as a symbol of Homer’s contempt for the lower classes and endorsement of aristocratic ideology.

⁷⁵ It has been noted (e.g. by Edwards 1991: 245) that Agamemnon’s “even a clear-voiced speaker” (19.81: λιγύς περ ἐὼν ἀγορητής) repeats a phrase that Odysseus used sarcastically in his rebuttal of Thersites at 2.246.

⁷⁶ On Thersites as a representative of the genre of blame (*neikos*) poetry, see Nagy (1979: 259-264).

⁷⁷ Thersites’ “just now” (*vûv*) at 2.239 emphasizes the closeness in time. There is a tension here between the time that has elapsed in the telling of the narrative and time that has elapsed within the world of the story: although the Thersites episode follows only a few hundred lines after the dispute, Thetis is not able to approach Zeus until “the twelfth day” (1.493) after the dispute, and the assembly with Thersites occurs the day after this (2.48) — nearly two weeks the Achaeans have presumably spent in their camp, with plenty of time to develop this story. Zielinski, however, famously argues (1899-1901:437-439) that these twelve days are simply a narrative convention used to facilitate the reporting of simultaneous events, and that we are to understand the night Odysseus spends on Chryse (1.475-476) as the same night on which Agamemnon is sent the dream from Zeus (2.1-48); by this interpretation, the Thersites episode occurs the day after the dispute, and is as closely linked to it within the story world as it is in our narrative.

as a poor speaker, and Odysseus swiftly silences him (to the approval of the masses).⁷⁸ But in the wake of this charge by Thersites, Agamemnon mentions the dispute to Nestor in terms that suggest that Achilles' version of the narrative has had an influence on him as well:

ἀλλὰ μοι αἰγίοχος Κρονίδης Ζεὺς ἄλγε' ἔδωκεν,
ὅς με μετ' ἀπρήκτους ἔριδας καὶ νείκεα βάλλει.
καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν Ἀχιλεὺς τε μαχεσσάμεθ' εἵνεκα κούρης
ἀντιβίοις ἐπέεσσιν, ἐγὼ δ' ἦρχον χαλεπαίνων.
εἰ δέ ποτ' ἔς γε μίαν βουλεύσομεν, οὐκέτ' ἔπειτα
Τρωσὶν ἀνάβλησις κακοῦ ἔσσεται, οὐδ' ἠβαιόν.

But Zeus, son of Cronus, bearer of the aegis, has given me pains and is driving me into pointless fights and arguments. For example, Achilles and I fought over a girl with violent words, and I was the first to get angry. But if our thinking is ever unified, then the Trojans will no longer have any rest from trouble, not even a small one. (*Iliad* 2.375-380)

This speech is generally read as the beginning of a process by which a now cooler-headed Agamemnon “realizes his mistake” of dishonoring Achilles in the assembly. But perhaps we should see it rather as Agamemnon reevaluating what position is most useful for him to take. Thersites' speech is the culmination of an episode in which the army came close to abandoning the mission against Troy and returning home. Agamemnon has to realize that, whether each of his actions during the dispute were logically motivated or not, as Thersites has just demonstrated, the incident is now being read just as Achilles wanted. Like Achilles, Agamemnon as a narrator takes the initiative to recreate the story anew, and he will do so in a way that serves his interests in the present, not whatever the facts happened to be in the past. If the people are going to say he lost his temper first and behaved irrationally, that is what he will have to work with — but like Achilles, he adopts a strategy of presenting his own role as passive,

⁷⁸ Thersites is described as a bad speaker by Homer at 2.212-214 (“he bawled with no measure in his words [ἀμετροεπής]; | he had many jumbled [ἄκοσμα] words in his mind, | haphazard and with no arrangement [οὐ κατὰ κόσμον]”) and is called “lacking judgment in speech” (ἄκριτόμυθε) by Odysseus at 2.246. For an analysis of his style, see Martin 1989:109-113. But Postlethwaite (1988) argues that, even at this point, Thersites does represent the dominant opinion of the masses.

accepting the *atê* interpretation but with framing that *does* now make it exculpatory: Zeus gave us these pains; Zeus drove me into the argument. And the final point in this speech is perhaps a subtle acknowledgment that this is Agamemnon's strategy: the only way to defeat the Trojans is if "our thinking is unified" — literally if "we think towards one <thought>" (ἔς γε μίαν βουλευόμεν). In this phrase is a neat encapsulation of a duality of interpretation needing to be brought together into a single version. To achieve this vision, Agamemnon will be willing to do what Achilles is not: compromise his original narrative to accommodate that of Achilles.

This new strategy is in full effect during the reconciliation scene in Book 19, as Agamemnon appeases Achilles by embracing and even expanding the characterization of his own behavior as *âtê*:

ἐγὼ δ' οὐκ αἰτιός εἰμι,
 ἀλλὰ Ζεὺς καὶ Μοῖρα καὶ ἡεροφοῖτις Ἑρινύς,
 οἳ τέ μοι εἰν ἀγορῇ φρεσὶν ἔμβalon ἄγριον ἄτην
 ἤματι τῷ, ὅτ' Ἀχιλλῆος γέρας αὐτὸς ἀπηύρων.
 ἀλλὰ τί κεν ῥέξαιμι; θεὸς διὰ πάντα τελευτᾷ,
 πρέσβα Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἄτη...

It is not I who am responsible, but Zeus, and Fate, and a Fury that stalks in the dark; they afflicted my mind with fierce *âtê* in the assembly on that day when I robbed Achilles of his prize. But what could I do? It is a god who causes everything to happen: *Atê*, the eldest daughter of Zeus... (*Iliad* 19.86-91)

Desperate to save face, Agamemnon simultaneously accepts that Achilles' version of the story is the one that has prevailed, but denies any personal responsibility by expanding upon the self-characterization as a helpless victim in the hands of the gods. He goes on to tell a long story (another example of the "poetics of excess" identified by Richard Martin as characteristic of Agamemnon)⁷⁹ about how Zeus too was once the victim of *Atê* before ending, in good ring composition, with a reiteration that hammers

⁷⁹ Cf. n. 35 above. Edwards (1991: 245) puts it nicely: Agamemnon speaks at such length here "partly no doubt because of the importance of the occasion, partly perhaps ... because in an awkward situation it is best to keep talking." The point I wish to emphasize is that Agamemnon's expansion of the *Atê* story underlines the degree to which he has accepted this element of Achilles' story.

home the point by repeating forms of the *âtê* stem (19.134-137): “So I too ... could not forget Atê, by whom I was first made insane (*aasthên*). But since I was insane (*âasamên*) and Zeus took away my wits...” All of which is to say that he has fulfilled the wish Achilles makes at the end of his speech to Thetis “that Agamemnon will recognize his *âtê*” (1.411-412). And while Agamemnon remains much the same person he has been throughout the poem — self-aggrandizing, jealous, indecisive — he is able to come to terms with Achilles because he has abandoned any hope of his version of the dispute being the one that will prevail, choosing instead to salvage his reputation with arguments that work within the framework of Achilles’ version of the story.⁸⁰

There is a certain irony in the total suppression of Agamemnon’s account of the dispute at this setting, since the circumstances that have led to this reconciliation — the death of Patroclus and damage to the Achaean army — are the direct result of the stubborn anger, the deceptiveness, and the lack of concern for his fellow soldiers that Agamemnon faulted Achilles for during the Narrator’s version of their argument. Achilles is often praised for his magnanimity towards Agamemnon in the Book 19

⁸⁰ Taplin (1992: 206) suggests that Agamemnon “is more interested in the picture he presents to the *laos* as a whole than to Achilles.” Most interpreters have found little or no meaningful personal reconciliation between the two in this assembly — Edwards (1991: 243-245) discusses the possibility that Agamemnon speaks from a seated position, thus showing disrespect, and calls Agamemnon’s tone “ungracious and jealous”; Rabel (1991) finds elements within the speech that show Agamemnon’s attempt to proclaim *his* own point of view of the *Iliad* (a concept to which I return below); Beck (2005a: 221) suggests that this is merely “a reconciliation between Agamemnon and Achilles in their public personas,” noting that Agamemnon never directly addresses Achilles in the Book 19 assembly (the one exception is a few second person singulars at 19.139-144, tucked at the end of a long speech addressed to the army as a whole).

This point can be pressed further. Agamemnon never directly addresses Achilles in the *Iliad* after his speech at 1.173-187; for the rest of the Book 1 argument, Agamemnon talks at Achilles through Nestor, although Achilles does address him. Their final encounter in the poem is at the end of Book 23; Agamemnon is about to compete against Meriones in a spear-throwing competition, but Achilles awards him the prize without a contest, since (23.890-891) “we know how much you surpass everyone and how much you are the best (*ἄριστος*) at strength and throwing.” This would seem to be a tidy reversal of the original dispute: Achilles willingly gives Agamemnon a prize out of respect for his superior status. But Achilles concludes with another request (23.894): give Meriones the spear, “because I order it” (*κέλομαι γὰρ ἔγωγε*). Wordlessly, Agamemnon “did not disobey” (23.89: *οὐδ’ ἀφίθησεν*), and this is the last we see of him in the poem. (For more on the way the *Iliad* ignominiously disposes of Agamemnon, cf. Taplin 1990: 75-78).

assembly,⁸¹ and yet, whereas Agamemnon's speech goes to great pains to accommodate Achilles' point of view, the corresponding speech by Achilles does not offer Agamemnon a similar courtesy:

Ἀτρεΐδῃ, ἧ ἄρ τι τόδ' ἀμφοτέροισιν ἄρειον
ἔπλετο, σοὶ καὶ ἐμοί, ὃ τε νῶϊ περ ἀχνυμένω κῆρ
θυμοβόρῳ ἔριδι μενεήναμεν εἵνεκα κούρης;
τὴν ὄφελ' ἐν νήεσσι κατακτάμεν Ἄρτεμις ἰώ
ἥματι τῷ, ὅτ' ἐγὼν ἐλόμην Λυρνησσὸν ὀλέσσας·
τῷ κ' οὐ τόσοι Ἀχαιοὶ ὁδᾶξ ἔλον ἄσπετον οὐδας
δυσμενέων ὑπὸ χερσίν, ἐμεῖ' ἀπομνησίαντος.
Ἕκτορι μὲν καὶ Τρωσὶ τὸ κέρδιον· αὐτὰρ Ἀχαιοὺς
δηρὸν ἐμῆς καὶ σῆς ἔριδος μνήσεσθαι ὀΐω.
ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν προτετύχθαι ἐάσομεν ἀχνύμενοί περ,
θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλον δαμάσαντες ἀνάγκῃ.
νῦν δ' ἦτοι μὲν ἐγὼ παύω χόλον· οὐδέ τί με χρῆ
ἄσκελέως αἰεὶ μενεαινέμεν.

Was this better for the two of us, son of Atreus, you and me? Was it better for the two of us to rage, both of our hearts full of grief, our souls devoured by discord, because of a girl? Artemis should have shot and killed her by the ships on that day when I chose her after sacking Lyrnessus. Then there would not have been so many Achaeans biting the dust at the hands of our enemies while I continued my wrath — though this was better for Hector and the Trojans. I think the Achaeans will remember this argument of yours and mine for a long time. But even though we are in grief, let's leave this in the past; out of necessity we must overpower the hearts in our chests. I now end my anger; I must not rage forever without ending. (*Iliad* 19.56-68)

Here we come full circle with Achilles and his first person plurals — interspersed in this case both with duals and with the clarification “you and me” in apposition, both of which make clear that the reference is to him and Agamemnon as a pair. As we saw in the discussion of the Book 1 assembly, Achilles' use of “we” served to blur the lines between commanders and followers, to simultaneously suggest the possibilities that Achilles shared the leadership with Agamemnon, or that Agamemnon was excluded

⁸¹ For example, Edwards (1991: 244) says, “Akhilleus has just shown himself magnanimous enough to admit his mistake directly to the man who injured him. Agamemnon, characteristically, is not big enough to accept this without mean-spirited jibes at the man he hates.” Beck (2005a: 224): “Agamemnon belittles or ignores Achilles on various levels, although Achilles' courteous address to him would seem to call for a more direct and self-deprecating response ... Unlike Achilles, he does not repudiate his earlier behavior.”

from the unified group of Achilles and the rest of the army. Here, Achilles' linking of himself with Agamemnon suggests that the wrath that caused so much death and destruction was both of their fault: "...for the two of us (*nôî*) to rage, both of our hearts full of grief (*achnymenô*)... though we are in grief (*achnymenoi*) let us leave this (*eâsomen*)..." This is as close as Achilles comes to admitting his own culpability: implicating Agamemnon in his own violent emotional response, he allows blame to fall on both of them. So insistent is Achilles to deflect blame that he actually suggests Briseis might somehow be at fault for the simple act of existing, as if she were an irresistible enticement that he and Agamemnon could not help fighting over. The casting of the conflict in this light — that they fought "because of a girl" (*εἵνεκα κόρης*) continues the strategy he has engaged in since his original re-telling of the story, suppressing the fact that Agamemnon lost his prize too; it has been totally forgotten that Agamemnon was forced to endure the same indignity (of being deprived of a *geras*).⁸² Achilles' statement that "the Achaeans will remember this argument of yours and mine for a long time" is a very pointed acknowledgment of the current status of this episode as a story to be transmitted in a certain form — a form which, of course, Achilles himself has dictated. Of course it goes without saying that he sees this version of the dispute contains no reference to the fact that all this death was specifically requested from Zeus by Achilles. This is well illustrated in a remarkable speech with which Achilles ends the assembly:

Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἥ μεγάλας ἄτας ἄνδρεσσι διδοῖσθα.
οὐκ ἂν δὴ ποτε θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσιν ἐμοῖσιν
Ἀτρείδης ὥρινε διαμπερές, οὐδέ κε κόρην
ἦγεν ἐμεί' ἀέκοντος, ἀμήχανος. ἀλλὰ ποθὶ Ζεὺς
ἦθελ' Ἀχαιοῖσιν θάνατον πολέεσσι γενέσθαι.

Father Zeus, you do indeed give great *âtê* to men. Otherwise Atrides would not have provoked the heart in my chest so thoroughly, wouldn't have taken away the girl against

⁸² In fact, the name of Chryseis, along with the fact that Agamemnon was forced to give her up, is never mentioned after Odysseus returns her in Book 1, despite the fact that Agamemnon's response of taking Briseis is dwelt on time and again.

my will. He was helpless. But somehow Zeus wanted death to come to many of the Achaeans. (*Iliad* 19.270-274)

Here Achilles repeats the line about Agamemnon's *âtê* once again, affirming Agamemnon's claim to have been a helpless (*amêchanos*) victim of the gods.⁸³ But the sheer audacity of his indefinite "somehow" (*pothi*), suggesting that he has no idea what would have induced Zeus to cause such death and devastation, confirms the degree to which Achilles has been able to shape the narrative in whatever direction he chooses, without concerning himself with fidelity to the truth of what happened. He is a victim — of Hector, of Agamemnon, of Zeus; the effort he began in his story to Thetis to suppress his own acts of instigation in the dispute with Agamemnon has been successful. The story will be remembered as Achilles wants.

Agamemnon's story

I have undertaken this study of the development of the story of Achilles and Agamemnon's dispute throughout the *Iliad* with the goal of demonstrating how the poem itself conceives of alternate story possibilities. As we see the disconnect between the event itself and the things people say about it, it becomes obvious how much more is involved in any one telling of a story than a simple temporal displacement of events. Narratologists have identified the differences in point of view between tellings of a story as focalization — implying that the same basic set of events, the same fabula, is simply evaluated differently by different characters. I prefer a different model. As we witness the story of the dispute circulating and evolving over time, we can see that this story is no different from other bits of mythology from the heroic past that characters within the poem narrate: the goal of the telling is not so much

⁸³ The sense of ἀμήχανος here is disputed. My translation as "helpless" agrees with the ancient interpretation indicated by the scholiasts, but many modern interpreters prefer to read it as meaning "stubborn", in line with the majority of other Homeric uses. See Edwards (1991: 267).

fidelity to a fixed set of facts from the past, but to the necessities of the present.⁸⁴ What “really happened” is not the point; the point is what the characters *remember* having happened, what they can get away with claiming happened. Achilles’ story is able to become the dominant version because, by the end of the poem, the rest of the army find themselves in a position where his is the practical point of view to accept. They need him, and therefore they are willing to let his telling of this story become the Authorized Version. History is written by the victors.

And yet this is not necessarily how things had to be. From our reading of the dispute itself, we can tease out an alternate possibility for how the story could have gone — an *Iliad* as Agamemnon would have told it. Perhaps Agamemnon’s *Iliad* would have set up the dispute not by lingering on his rudeness to Chryses, but by imagining a scene of collusion between Achilles and Calchas: In a time of plague and crisis, the prophet and the warrior seize the opportunity to undermine Agamemnon’s authority by staging a pre-planned combination of oracular prediction and demand that Agamemnon give up his prize — at least one scholar has (disapprovingly) suggested this as a potential interpretation of our own *Iliad*.⁸⁵ Even when Agamemnon acquiesces, Achilles continues with his furious attack against the basic principle of royal authority, insulting the king, openly defying his orders, threatening his life, and finally refusing to fight, hoping for his fellow soldiers to be killed in order to prove his point. A selective remembering of the dispute such as this — I have, for example, suppressed Achilles’ loss of Briseis, just as Achilles suppresses Agamemnon’s loss — is not offered by characters in the *Iliad*,

⁸⁴ For this point, see the discussion in my Introduction, with bibliography.

⁸⁵ As part of his analysis of the phrase κλέπτει νόψ (cf. fn. 41 above), Jahn (1987: 98) reads Agamemnon’s speeches during the dispute as accusing Achilles of this sort of intention; Jahn even briefly entertains the possibility that this is how Homer means us to interpret the text as well: “...it seems as though Achilles was actually aiming — in Homer’s representation — to intentionally bring harm to Agamemnon with his response to his initial speech.” Jahn quickly dismisses this sort of subtle trickery as incompatible with Achilles’ “fine and noble” (*elder und lauterer*) character. I do not find Achilles’ character incompatible with this potential interpretation.

although I think it is fair to say it is the sort of account that might have been created if it had been Agamemnon rather than Achilles retelling the story at the end of Book 1. But it is, I think, possible to detect traces of it — or at least of the type of interpretation that would lead to it — throughout the poem.

Agamemnon himself, as I have demonstrated, adopts a strategy of basing his memory of the past upon Achilles' version of the dispute; by Book 9, he has agreed this his actions were *atê* and that he had no justification for taking Briseis. However, at the end of the long list of treasure he offers Achilles, he cannot help but append a slight reiteration of his side of the dispute:

ταῦτά κέ οἱ τελέσαιμι μεταλλήξαντι χόλοιο.
δμηθήτω — Αἴδης τοι ἀμείλιχος ἢδ' ἀδάμαστος.
τούνεκα καί τε βροτοῖσι θεῶν ἔχθιστος ἀπάντων —
καί μοι ὑποστήτω, ὅσσον βασιλεύτερός εἰμι
ἢδ' ὅσσον γενεῇ προγενέστερος εὔχομαι εἶναι.

This is the payment I would give him if he ended his anger. He must be tamed — only Hades is harsh and untamable; this is why he is the most hateful of all the gods to mortals — and he must subject himself as far beneath me as I rise above him in kingliness, as much as I can claim to be superior in ancestry.⁸⁶ (*Iliad* 9.157-161)

This is not, strictly speaking, a reference to the original dispute; Agamemnon's complaint is about the present, not the past, about Achilles' current unwillingness to be swayed. But, as this was precisely Agamemnon's argument during the dispute — that Achilles is acting out of turn, not respecting the proper hierarchy⁸⁷ — it is tempting to read this statement as somewhat at odds with his previous *mea culpa*.⁸⁸ Can Agamemnon's actions have been *âtê* if they were motivated by unreasonable behavior by

⁸⁶ For γενεῇ προγενέστερος as “superior in ancestry” (rather than as a simple claim of seniority in age that some read) see Hainsworth 1993: 79-80.

⁸⁷ In the above citation, Hainsworth goes on to say that here “Agamemnon is being made to insist on those claims of rank which Akhilleus had pointedly flouted during the quarrel.”

⁸⁸ Odysseus famously chooses not to repeat these lines to Achilles after the practically verbatim repetition of the rest of Agamemnon's speech (9.264-299~9.122-157).

Achilles? Recall that a few lines earlier, Agamemnon unequivocally endorsed Nestor’s account: Nestor had said “you dishonored the best man,” (110-111: ἄνδρα φέριστον ... ἡτίμησας) to which Agamemnon replied “your narration ... is in no way incorrect” (9.115: οὐ τι ψεῦδος ... κατέλεξας). Here, by introducing these comparatives “more kingly” (βασιλεύτερός), and “superior in ancestry” (γενεῇ προγενέστερος) in his own favor, Agamemnon tacitly reverses his assent to the statement that Achilles is “best” and reverts to the position he took in the dispute. Agamemnon’s insistence that Achilles “must be tamed” (*dmêthêto*), comparing him to the extreme example of the “untamable” (*adamastos*) god Hades, is even echoed by Phoenix, who says as part of his great speech:

ἀλλ’ Ἀχιλεῦ δάμασον θυμὸν μέγαν· οὐδέ τί σε χρὴ
νηλεὲς ἦτορ ἔχειν· στρεπτοὶ δέ τε καὶ θεοὶ αὐτοί,
τῶν περ καὶ μείζων ἀρετὴ τιμὴ τε βίη τε.

But, Achilles, tame (*damason*) your mighty spirit; there is no reason at all for you to have no pity in your heart. Even the gods themselves can be turned, although their valor and honor and might is greater. (**reference**)

While not exactly endorsing Agamemnon’s version of the dispute over Achilles’, Phoenix here suggests the same characterization of Achilles that Agamemnon found fault with then. There are hints throughout the poem of this same displeasure with Achilles’ imperiousness, statements from other members of the Achaean army that mirror Agamemnon’s stance during the dispute. At the end of Book 9, as a capstone to the failed embassy, Diomedes gives voice to this line of thinking:⁸⁹

Ἀτρεΐδη κύδιστε, ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγάμεμνον,
μὴ ὄφελος λίσσασθαι ἀμύμονα Πηλεΐωνα
μυρία δῶρα διδούς· ὃ δ’ ἀγῆνωρ ἐστὶ καὶ ἄλλως·
νῦν αὖ μιν πολὺ μᾶλλον ἀγνηορήμισιν ἐνῆκας.

⁸⁹ Book 9 also begins with Diomedes voicing his displeasure, in a speech (9.32-49) criticizing the disrespect Agamemnon had paid to his military service to the army — clearly reminiscent of Achilles’ complaints from the dispute. Thus, *Iliad* 9 and the embassy are bookended by a pair of speeches from Diomedes echoing the two different points of view in the dispute; this symmetry is all the more marked by the fact that both speeches are followed by nearly identical two-line formulas indicating the audience’s approval (9.50-51 ~ 9.710-711).

Most glorious son of Atreus, Agamemnon, lord of men: you should not have begged and offered faultless Achilles infinite gifts. He is arrogant (*agênôr*) even apart from this, and now you have just injected him with much greater arrogance (*agênoriê* plural) all over again. (*Iliad* 9.697-700)

Here too, Diomedes' words are, strictly speaking, only a discussion of the present situation, only a current evaluation of Achilles' behavior. But the criticism is oriented backwards, looking outside the current situation — “even apart from this” (καὶ ἄλλως); “all over again” (αὖ) — to what we can reasonably infer is meant to be the dispute. Agamemnon is addressed with a formula that both underlines his status as ruler (ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν) and contains a superlative (κύδιστε). Achilles is characterized as possessing the quality of *agênoriê*, which I have translated as “arrogance”, but which is can also be used positively of the “manly braveness” a warrior exhibits in battle;⁹⁰ Graziosi and Haubold (2003) describe how *agênoriê* is used of an excessive masculinity that overvalues individual accomplishments at the expense of the group. That Achilles is indeed an outstanding warrior but allows this quality to drive him to disrespect his superiors is, in essence, Agamemnon's point during the dispute.⁹¹ Diomedes suggests that Agamemnon's strategy of giving in to Achilles and trying to accommodate his narrative was insufficient, for the very reason that Agamemnon quarreled with him in the first place: because Achilles is no longer willing to subordinate himself to the rest of the Achaeans' narrative about kingship. By indulging in his stubbornness, Agamemnon is inviting him to further question the connected system of heroic values. For the external audience, the speculation about the ultimate futility of risking one's life in war for honor and glory in which Achilles has just engaged is what

⁹⁰ A short time later Diomedes himself will praise Odysseus for his “manly spirit” (10.244: θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ). Elsewhere it is undoubtedly negative; cf. the frequent references in the *Odyssey* to the “arrogant suitors” (μνηστήρες ἀγήνορες), which occurs 13x in various cases. On the concept, see Graziosi and Haubold (2003).

⁹¹ e.g. at 1.290-291: “...if the everliving gods have made him a spearman, does that mean they give him the right to make insulting speeches?”

makes the *Iliad* compelling literature; he imagines a world in which the heroic code does not exist. But for the internal audience, Achilles' new view of reality is becoming so unproductive that it will require a different kind of stimulus for him to return to battle, which will ultimately be provided by the death of Patroclus.

Perhaps the most surprising potential allusion to Agamemnon's point of view comes from Patroclus, when he is sent to Nestor's tent by Achilles to learn the identity of a wounded warrior. In the face of Nestor's hospitality, Patroclus responds:

οὐχ ἔδος ἐστί, γεραιὲ διοτρεφές, οὐδέ με πείσεις.
αἰδοῖος νεμεσητός, ὃ με προέηκε πυθέσθαι,
ὄν τινα τοῦτον ἄγεις βεβλημένον...
νῦν δὲ ἔπος ἐρέων πάλιν ἄγγελος εἶμ' Ἀχιλῆϊ.
εὖ δὲ σὺ οἶσθα, γεραιὲ διοτρεφές, οἷος ἐκεῖνος·
δεινὸς ἀνὴρ· τάχα κεν καὶ ἀναίτιον αἰτιόωτο.

Aged sir, bred by Zeus: there is no time to sit; you will not persuade me. I must defer to the wrathful man who sent me to find out who it is you are carrying back injured ... Now I will go back, deliver this message and tell Achilles. Aged sir, bred by Zeus: you know well what he is like. A fearsome man. He would be quick to blame even someone who was blameless. (*Iliad* 11.648-654)

In the present investigation we are immediately drawn to the last line: could Patroclus's concern that Achilles is capable of bringing accusations against an innocent man be an oblique reference to the dispute with Agamemnon? Even if this is not Patroclus's direct and intentional implication, he is still referring to an Achilles that resembles the one Agamemnon complained about in their argument; Patroclus's reference to Nestor's knowledge ("you know yourself what he is like") is a nod to past experience, of which the dispute is the most conspicuous example from within the poem. Nestor's response to this speech — "Why in the world is Achilles commiserating with the sons of the Achaeans like this? ... He may be a great warrior, but Achilles has no concern or pity for the Danaans" (11.656, 664-665: τίπτε τὰρ ὧδ' Ἀχιλλεὺς ὀλοφύρεται υἱὰς Ἀχαιῶν ... αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς | ἐσθλὸς ἐὼν Δαναῶν οὐ κήδεται

οὐδ' ἐλαίρει) — suggests that he has the same incident in mind, that he knows exactly what Patroclus is referring to. Achilles' rejection of Agamemnon's kingly authority is inextricably tied to his request to Thetis to cause the deaths of other Achaeans to prove his point. Again, while within the story Nestor cannot literally have heard this detail of Achilles' speech, he seems from the point of view of the audience to be responding to it.

We get another hint of the same theme from Achilles himself, as he arms his Myrmidons for battle in Book 16. To rouse the men, he reminds them of the kind of talk he has overheard from them:

καί μ' ἥτιάσθε ἕκαστος·
“σκέτλιε Πηλέος υἱέ, χόλῳ ἄρα σ' ἔτρεφε μήτηρ,
νηλεές, ὃς παρὰ νηυσὶν ἔχεις ἀέκοντας ἐταίρους.
οἴκαδ' ἐπερ σὺν νηυσὶ νεώμεθα ποντοπόροισιν
αὐτίς, ἐπεὶ ῥά τοι ὦδε κακὸς χόλος ἔμπεσε θυμῷ.”

And you would each make accusations against me: “Stubborn son of Peleus, your mother nursed you on bile! You have no pity; you are keeping your men at the ships against their will. We should go back home with these very seafaring ships, since as we can see wicked anger has overtaken your heart like this!” (*Iliad* 16.202-206)

Even in this reflection, filtered through Achilles, of the sorts of complaints his own men would make, we can again make out a type of characterization consistent with Agamemnon's during the debate, in which Achilles' indulgence in his own anger⁹² causes him to behave unjustly to his fellow soldiers. Achilles' remarks suggest the type of storytelling community in which stories about him — including the dispute with Agamemnon? — are told in a variety of versions, perhaps a more complex assortment than simply Achilles' story versus Agamemnon's.

In this lies part of the genius of the *Iliad*. Through its illustration of the way the story of the dispute grows and evolves over time, it provides an illustration of how limiting and exclusionary

⁹² cf. Agamemnon's accusation during the dispute at 1.177: “Strife and wars and fighting are always dear to you.”

storytelling can be, how the choices and biases of individual narrators can distort and reshape a simple set of events to create tellings that present only one of a number of possible points of view. And yet, at the same time, the *Iliad* itself, as a poem, as a piece of narration, moves beyond this model. Even as it demonstrates Agamemnon's story being forgotten, the *Iliad* simultaneously keeps it alive — because what is the *Iliad* itself but the final telling of the narrative of the dispute it envisions beginning with Achilles and his mother on the beach? That the *Iliad* has managed to present both Achilles' and Agamemnon's separate points of view so fully is demonstrated by the variety of interpretations that have been offered of their dispute in the poem throughout time;⁹³ it is far from obvious what stance the poem itself means for us to take on the question of who is right and who is wrong.⁹⁴

I will end this chapter with a brief look outside of the *Iliad*, to mention an interesting trend I have noticed in reception of the poem. I have found that later summaries or reworkings of the *Iliad* seem often to mirror the practice of characters within the poem, referring to the dispute with details that match Achilles' retelling better than the Narrator's original telling. In particular, there is a tendency to depict Agamemnon's taking of Briseis without mentioning any instigation by Achilles — as an arbitrary move to re-fill his coffers rather than a specific response to a challenge to his authority. I will close with two

⁹³ Anyone who has taught the *Iliad* to a class of undergraduates will appreciate the range of possible interpretations of the debate. Compare e.g. Bowra (1930: 194-195), "When the quarrel begins over Briseis, Achilles has some justice on his side ... but he leaves his friends to be defeated, wounded, and killed because of his refusal to help them. When he goes to his tent, he is in the wrong, and he does not admit it even to himself," with Schein (1984: 97) "In Book 1 Achilles' refusal to fight and even his request that Zeus aid the Trojans are socially validated, if extreme, responses to Agamemnon's selfish breach of decorum." Redfield (1975:91-98) offers an insightful reading of how the dispute stems from both men's flaws; the summary of the various interpretations could continue almost indefinitely.

⁹⁴ Cf. Felson-Rubin (1994: x) on the *Odyssey*: "An innovation of my study — and one that perhaps calls for further development — is the emphasis it places on Homer's playful stance vis-à-vis his audience. I raise the possibility that Homer first sets forth a rather standard or conventional way of thinking and then undermines or challenges it in subtle ways. Thus he introduces more than one 'voice' on important topics, such as female fidelity, creating a polyphony of contending voices."

examples, one quite recent, one quite old. From a *New Yorker* article by Daniel Mendelsohn,⁹⁵ which was published as I was finishing a draft of this chapter:

Agamemnon is compelled to return one of his captured slave girls to her father ... The Greek commander makes up for this loss of property — and of face — by seizing one of Achilles' slave girls. To us, the petty tit-for-tat might savor of the junior-high-school cafeteria...

And, nearer the other end of the temporal spectrum, here is the dispute as related in the (perhaps) first-century BC abridged Latin “translation” of the poem known as the *Ilias Latina*:

dixerat. exarsit subito violentia regis:
Thestoriden dictis primum compellat amaris
mendacemque vocat. tum magnum incusat Achillem
inque vicem ducis invicti convicia suffert.
confremuere omnes. tandem clamore represso
cogitur invitos aeger dimittere amores
intactamque pio reddit Chryseida patri
...
non tamen Atridae Chryseidis excidit ardor:
maeret et amissos deceptus luget amores.
mox rapta magnum Briseide privat Achillem
solaturque suos alienis ignibus ignes.

(Calchas) had spoken. Suddenly the king's temper flared. First he accosts the son of Thestor (Calchas) with bitter words and calls him a liar. Then he finds fault with great Achilles and in turn receives abuse from the unconquerable hero. The crowd roared. Finally, once their cries are suppressed, (Agamemnon) is forced against his will to send his love away, and returns Chryseis, untouched, to her pious father... [*Ulysses returns Chryseis; Apollo is placated*]. But nevertheless Atrides' passion for Chryseis does not wane: cheated, he mourns and laments his lost love. Then he seizes Briseis and takes her away from great Achilles, easing his own burning by burning another. (58-64, 70-73)

Much could be said about the ways both versions read the *Iliad* through the lens of their culture, from Mendelsohn's reference to junior high school to the Latin poem's recasting of the dispute over women in the language of the burning pangs of elegiac love and loss. But both simplify Agamemnon's

⁹⁵ “Battle Lines,” a review of Stephen Mitchell's new translation of the *Iliad* published in the issue of the *New Yorker* dated 11/7/2011.

motivations by omitting any reference to instigations by Achilles; both make Achilles a victim rather than an instigator, mirroring Achilles' own simple picture of Agamemnon as an erratic autocrat rather than the Homeric Narrator's more nuanced portrait of an insecure commander under pressure. That readers of the *Iliad* have often been left with such a picture is indicative of the degree to which Achilles' version becomes dominant within the poem; that there is another side of the story there to be teased out is indicative of the multiformity to be found in Homeric storytelling.

Chapter Two

The Suitors' *Odyssey*

It has long been felt that there is a problem with the ending¹ of the *Odyssey*. It spends too much time on unnecessary summary and repetition of the rest of the poem; it is inconsistent with the rest of the poem in its characterization and world-view; it is poorly written and, worst of all for an ending, anticlimactic. The second visit to the underworld, Odysseus teasing Laertes in his garden, then joining his family and loyal servants to fight a miniature battle with the remaining Ithacans — all this detracts from the tidy ending offered by the death of the suitors and reconciliation with Penelope. For these reasons it was, perhaps from antiquity and until relatively recently, common for Book 24 to be categorized as a later and inferior addendum to the poem by a different author; judgments of poetic quality and authenticity often go hand in hand.² Changes in our understanding of the process by which the Homeric poems were composed have led to a decline in popularity of the kind of “Analytic” interpretation that detects

¹ For the purposes of brevity, throughout this discussion I will occasionally use “final book” or “Book 24” as a shorthand for all that is traditionally challenged at the end of the *Odyssey*: Book 24 as well as the final 76 lines of Book 23 that follow 23.296.

² Challenges to the authenticity of the final part of the poem may go back as far as the Alexandrians (see below). In modern scholarship, Wolf's groundbreaking *Prolegomena* suggested that our versions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* represent the expansion by later poets of original, shorter, more “authentic” poems that lie at the core of both epics. Implicit in this “Analytic” model of Homeric poetry — which, in various versions, lay at the heart of much of mainstream scholarship for more than a century — is the assumption that this expansion of the poems was largely a dilution of the original poet's genius by his banal successors. Thus, the job of Homeric criticism became the identification of the “authentic” voice of one poet in contrast with the illegitimate voices of the others. (For a summary of Analytic criticism in general, see Dodds 1968:1-9). In an influential analysis, Kirchhoff (1879: viii-ix), for example, identifies three primary creators responsible for the *Odyssey*, in descending order of poetic inspiration: a primary *Dichter* (“poet”) who set down the core of the poem, a later *Fortsetzer* (“continuer”) who expanded it to its present length, and a *Bearbeiter* (“editor”) who made a few fussy cosmetic changes to the completed poem. With regards to the part of the poem after 23.296, Kirchhoff confidently asserts (532-533) “nothing is more certain than the fact that this ending was first composed as a continuation by the *Bearbeiter*, who was not satisfied with the original conclusion to which the old poem brought the narrative ... I feel no hesitation in declaring the contents of the entire piece the arbitrary invention of its author, without any traditional material at all.” His opinion of the final book was to be embraced by such influential figures as Wilamowitz-Mollendorf (1927) and Page (1955); for a more recent defense of the position, see also Oswald (1993).

multiple strands of authorship in the poems' inconsistencies and infelicities.³ But while the question of authenticity is no longer the active scholarly battleground it was for previous generations of scholars, the ending of the *Odyssey* still carries something of its old stigma, even among those who do not question its authenticity. There is almost a hint of glee in the derision aimed at the quality of the last book of the poem by some of its defenders. Ahl and Roisman's assessments are enlightening:

...some sections of what follows certainly seem like the product of a surrogate muse... but since the received text does not end at 23.296, even scholars who think it would never dare omit the remaining book and a third from the printed edition. It is therefore pointless to argue that the real *Odyssey* ends at 23.296, however pleasant it would be to view the epic without its extended and rather battered engrafted tail.⁴

I began the previous chapter by discussing similar objections raised against Achilles' seemingly extraneous speech to Thetis in *Iliad* 1, reading its depiction of the act of storytelling as part of the *Iliad*'s larger interest in demonstrating the transformation of an event people live into a narrative people tell. In this chapter too, I will suggest a reading of the end of the *Odyssey* that explains some of its troublesome features not as anomalies, but as part of a consistent thematic interest that infuses the entire poem, a self-

³ Scholars in the last century such as Stanford (1965b), Erbse (1972), and Wender (1978) produced detailed rebuttals to the Analysts' attacks on the language, coherence, and relevance of *Odyssey* 24. But scholarly focus on the author's compositional process as part of literary analysis has waned in recent years, accompanied by a shift to a focus on text rather than author; for example, deconstructionists (e.g. Peradotto 1990:4-13) and classical narratologists (e.g. de Jong 1987A: 42) are equally happy to treat the entire texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as unified narratives equally deserving of their methodology. What interest remains in the details of the poems' composition is focused on refining the model of oral-formulaic composition first proposed by Parry and Lord, often with a focus on continuity of tradition among authors rather than the poetic vision of an individual (for current approaches, see e.g. Nagy 1996, Foley 1999, Jensen 2011). The related field of "Neoanalysis," first proposed by Kakridis (1949), seeks predecessors and influences in a complex unwritten oral tradition. Thus, the current lack of questioning of the final book's authenticity by current scholars probably has less to do with an active *rejection* of the Analysts' arguments than with a disinterest in the kind of question they were interested in asking — recently Martin West (2011:55) accompanies an defense of the Analyst model with the lament that their writings "have long been consigned to oblivion; they are perished as though they had never been."

⁴ Ahl and Roisman (1996: 273). Compare the judgment of Stanford, who, despite defending the necessity of the final book to the structure of the poem (1965b), nevertheless argues (1965a: 406) that "...the great crisis of the poem is past and H. may have rounded off the story more out of a sense of duty than from eager interest. Or he may simply have been tired, or aging." Wender (1978: 63) ends a monograph devoted to defending the authenticity of the ending with a stylistic judgment of its final part: "The last episode of the *Odyssey*, then, is said to be lame, hasty, awkward, abrupt. I must admit I agree."

reflexive impulse that is not content simply to let a story be told, but always draws our attention to the act and means of the telling.⁵ The Alexandrian critics Aristarchus and Aristophanes considered 23.296 to be the “end” of the *Odyssey*, a formulation whose significance has been disputed — does it mean this was the original ending of the poem, that this was the climax, that this was the resolution of the main conflict? These are the terms in which the question is usually asked, but I would like to propose a different query: Why should our only two interpretive choices be either to excise the poem’s final book from our texts or grudgingly accept its authenticity as an unfortunate fact? Even if it is only the Alexandrians’ aesthetic judgment⁶ that the death of the suitors and reconciliation with Penelope is the “end” of the poem’s main plot, it is a judgment that has been aligned with that of many readers of the *Odyssey* over time, from Aristotle to Frederick Ahl.⁷ Everything that happens after this point feels like it is happening after the poem’s grand finale.

As I will argue in this chapter, this is a fact that the remaining part of the *Odyssey* seems to acknowledge. Some scholars have detected an overall fixation on and anxiety about endings in the

⁵ One could point to the inclusion of bards (Phemius on Ithaca, Demodocus on Scheria) as characters, as well as Odysseus’s extended narrative of his travels to the Phaeacians, which is praised by King Alcinous as equal to the song of a bard. But an interest in storytelling pervades the poem; Ahl and Roisman (1996: 41 ff.), for example, read Menelaus and Helen in *Odyssey* as competing narrators. See also e.g. Olson (1995) on storytelling in the *Odyssey* in general, Beck (2005b) for a comparison of the treatment of bards and other storytellers.

⁶ The scholia record this claim in two nearly identical statements, using the words *πέρας* (M. V. Vind. 133) or *τέλος* (H. M. Q.) for “end.” In the twelfth century AD Eustathius suggested the Alexandrians were “marking everything from here to the end of the book as spurious” (2.308.26: τὰ ἐφεξῆς ἕως τέλους τοῦ βιβλίου νοθεύοντες), which many once cited as evidence of familiarity with a manuscript tradition in which the *Odyssey* ended at 23.296. Less cited are his subsequent comments, which defend the ending and finally conclude “Thus one might say that the aforementioned Aristarchus and Aristophanes mean that what ended at that point was not their manuscript (*biblion*) of the *Odyssey*, but perhaps its crucial parts (*ta kairia*)” (2.308.33-34: εἶποι ἂν οὖν τις, ὅτι Ἀρίσταρχος καὶ Ἀριστοφάνης οἱ ῥηθέντες οὐ τὸ βιβλίον τῆς Ὀδυσσεύας, ἀλλὰ ἴσως τὰ καίρια ταύτης ἐνταῦθα συντετελέσθαι φασίν.) For a detailed reading of Eustathius and the Alexandrian tradition, see Erbse (1972: 166-177).

⁷ For Aristotle, see *Poetics* 1455a34-b23, in which he proves a point about a story having an essential core (*to idion*) elaborated with the parenthetical (*epeisodia*) by summarizing the essential story of the *Odyssey*. This summary ends with recognition scenes, the hero’s own safety, and the slaughter of the suitors — but none of the material from Book 24. “This is what is essential; the rest is parenthetical” (1455b23: τὸ μὲν οὖν ἴδιον τοῦτο, τὰ δ’ ἄλλα ἐπεισόδια).

Odyssey, and some have pointed to the tensions in the final book as representative of overall tension.⁸ I will read Book 24 as a specifically self-aware reconsideration of a poem that views itself as over and yet keeps going, providing a space for its characters to stand outside the work and offer analysis of what has just happened, to compete for the right to interpret the newly completed *Odyssey*. In particular, there are four characters (Penelope, Odysseus, Amphimedon, Eupheithes) who, in this final section, offer speeches of various lengths and degrees of complexity that look back on, and in various senses re-narrate, the action of the poem we have just heard. As with Achilles and the dispute in Chapter One, I argue that these multiple acts of narrative speechmaking imagine the translation of the *Odyssey* itself from event to story, and hint at the multiple potential forms this narrative could take. In particular, I will demonstrate how Homer hints at the possibility of an *Odyssey* focalized through the suitors — an interpretation of Odysseus’s actions in which the clever hero becomes the conniving villain, with a pattern of bringing death upon his fellow Ithacans. Could this widely varying picture of Odysseus have represented competing portrayals of the character in the poetic world of Homer and his audience, an actual choice the *Odyssey* poet was faced with? This can only be speculation, but it does not seem implausible.⁹

With this picture of multiple interpretations in mind, I read the final confrontation between Odysseus’s family and the families of the slaughtered suitors as a battle over the interpretation of the

⁸ For various problems with the *Odyssey*’s conception of “ending” in general, see e.g. Martin (1993), Purves (2006). For Book 24 specifically, Van Nortwick (2009:32) offers an analysis somewhat similar to the one I will propose, although he sees it less as a reflection upon and more as a product of the tensions within the poem: “the difficulties of the last book can also be understood as the result of the conflicting messages within the narrative about the shape of the story and the character of its hero.” Nagler (1990) also discusses how tensions between Odysseus and his community that have been building throughout the poem come to a head in this final book.

⁹ It is well-known how the post-Homeric character of Odysseus gradually becomes a paradigm of treachery and deception, which may well be a continuation of extra-Homeric traditions rather than an extrapolation from the characterization within the Homeric corpus. Pindar’s allusive statement is particularly suggestive: “I imagine that Homer’s sweet poetry has caused the story of Odysseus to grow beyond what really happened, since there is a certain honor in his lies and his winged resourcefulness. Intelligence misleads us, cheats us (*kleptei*) with words” (Pythian 7.18-23: ἐγὼ δὲ πλεόν’ ἔλπομαι | λόγον Ὀδυσσεός ἢ πάθαν | διὰ τὸν ἄδυεπὴ γενέσθ’ Ὀμηρον. | ἐπεὶ ψεύδεσσι οἱ ποτανᾶ <τε> μαχανᾶ | σεμνὸν ἔπεστί τι· σοφία | δὲ κλέπτει παράγοισα μύθοις). See Stanford (1963), Suksi (1999).

events that have just transpired, a conflict whose outcome will determine whose *Odyssey* gets to be told. With Odysseus's victory over the Ithacans, the poem seems to end with a statement that it is his version alone that has won the day — but this is undermined by the very existence within in our poem of this debate with the Ithacans. Our *Odyssey* is not quite Odysseus's *Odyssey* either. To be sure, it is slanted in his direction, and there are many points where the narrative and Narrator markedly favors Odysseus over his opponents.¹⁰ But just because our *Odyssey* foregrounds Odysseus's point of view does not mean it is the only point of view it acknowledges. Odysseus has long been recognized as a problematic hero; Mark Buchan has recently called into question the assumption that the “fantasy of social order” that is at the heart of Odysseus's point of view is equivalent with the world the *Odyssey* actually depicts, “for much of the force of the poem comes from the gap between Odysseus's own fantasy of Ithaca, on the one hand, and the world outside that seems to resist it, on the other.”¹¹

Moreover, our consideration of Odysseus from his victims' perspective leads us to a basic question about the nature of his character. Critics have always recognized the *Odyssey*'s protagonist as complex, highlighting the inherent instability and duality of a hero whose exploitation of the power of his own resourceful intelligence (*mêtis*) through the employment of tricks (*doloi*) blends the attributes of heroic warrior and cunning trickster.¹² For the *Odyssey*, this is neatly encapsulated in the speech with which Athena first reveals herself to Odysseus on Ithaca: seeing how readily he is able to construct lies to defend himself, Athena smiles (13.287: *μείδῃσεν*) and launches into praise of his ruthlessness, addressing him as “you long-enduring man with many-colored *mêtis*, never weary of *doloi*” (13.293: *σχέτλιε, ποικιλομήτα, δόλων ἄατ'*). Following an analysis of the traditionality of these and other epithets from the

¹⁰ For the general pro-Odysseus slant of the Narrator, see e.g. Clay (1983: 34-38), Ahl and Roisman (1996).

¹¹ Buchan 2004: 2.

¹² See e.g. Cook 2009a.

speech as characteristic of Odysseus, Pietro Pucci concludes “How this trickster can at the same time be represented as the most lamenting and troubled hero remains an intriguing and difficult problem for the *Odyssey*.”¹³ Odysseus is *polytropos* — a man of many twists and turns, of many natures. Friedrich Ahl and Hanna Roisman identify “no fewer than five Odysseuses in the *Odyssey*, corresponding to five aspects or phases of his life.”¹⁴ John Peradotto reads this indeterminacy as the central aspect of Odysseus’s character, expressed nowhere so clearly as in the famous trick the hero himself plays in his encounter with Polyphemus, in which the name he gives for himself, “Noman” (*Outis*) will eventually lead to a pun based on the similarity between another Greek word for “no man” (*mê tis*) and Odysseus’s signature quality of cunning intelligence (*mêtis*).¹⁵ For Peradotto, this is more than just a play on words; the ability to remake himself through trickery gives the *polytropos* (“of many twists and turns”) hero the primary identity of having no primary identity at all:

We have suggested that Odysseus under the name of Outis represents the fundamental potentiality of the narrative “subject” to take on any attribute, to be linked with any action. It is therefore associated with *mêtis*, that hidden power of cunning intelligence to find a way (*poros*) through the problematical, and with *polytropos*, in its active sense the attribute to assume any attribute.¹⁶

Therefore the multitude of narratives we are presented with at the end of the *Odyssey* can hardly be read as the poet setting up a straw man to knock down by pitting the suitors’ dishonest assessment against Odysseus’s more realistic version. In the end, perhaps the conflict that emerges between Odysseus and the suitors’ families over how to interpret Odysseus and his actions is the best way to encapsulate the poem’s only interpretation of its protagonist: as a man whose story can be told many ways. For, as we

¹³ Pucci 1987: 62.

¹⁴ Ahl and Roisman 1996: 282 ff.

¹⁵ Peradotto (1990: 143) explains the play on words in more detail.

¹⁶ Peradotto 1990: 161.

shall see, any attempt to specify which version of the story the *Odyssey* favors will be complicated by the poem's focus on the act of storytelling itself, the questioning of the truth value of stories people tell, and the opportunities it offers for competing interpretive voices to speak.

Beginning the *Odyssey* at the end of the *Odyssey*

Odysseus concludes his four-book-long narration of his travels at the court of the Phaeacians (*Odyssey* 9-12, the so-called *Apologoi*) by explaining why he will not end with a description of his time on Calypso's island:

τί τοι τάδε μυθολογεύω;
ἤδη γάρ τοι χθιζὸς ἐμυθεόμην ἐνὶ οἴκῳ
σοί τε καὶ ἰφθίμῃ ἀλόχῳ· ἐχθρὸν δέ μοί ἐστιν
αὐτίς ἀριζήλως εἰρημένα μυθολογεύειν.

Why should I tell you this story? I already told it yesterday in your house, to you and your strong wife — and it is unpleasant for me to retell a story which has already been told for all to hear. (*Odyssey* 12.450-453)

The apology he offers — I have already performed this part, and I am loathe to repeat myself — has meaning on multiple levels. It is, of course, possible to explain his refusal with reference only to facts within the world of the poem, the argument function: because Alcinous and the Phaeacians had already heard Odysseus tell the story of his time on and escape from Calypso's island (at 7.253-296), it would be redundant for him to include it again in his long narrative in Books 9-12. But there is of course an external reason, a “key function” of Odysseus's choice to end his story on Calypso's island as well: it is where the narrative of the *Odyssey* begins, and if Odysseus continues his tale, he risks repeating material we have heard in the voice of the Narrator. It has been noted¹⁷ that Homer is usually reluctant to use the Narrator's voice to revisit material or tell it out of order. By choosing to have the end of Odysseus's story

¹⁷ See e.g. Richardson (1990: 95-99).

dovetail with the beginning of the *Odyssey*, Homer manages to include the entire story of the Odysseus's travels, from the end of the Trojan war to the return and slaughter of the suitors, in a complex structure that defies chronological order while avoiding omission or overlap.¹⁸ Thus Odysseus's refusal to continue past the point where he is stranded on Calypso's island is a metapoetic nod to the poem Homer himself is constructing — much like Achilles' cry to Thetis at *Iliad* 1.365 (discussed in Chapter One) “You know! Why should I tell you all of this when you already know it?”

Odysseus and Penelope's stories

As we are reminded so specifically of the *Odyssey*'s awareness of what its audience does and does not already know, the end of the epic may cause us to ask the same question that the beginning of the *Iliad* does: why has Homer violated his own principle of avoidance of narrative repetition by choosing to devote so much narrative space to a summary of what has already happened? The poem signals its own shift in focus with a pair of lines that follow Odysseus and Penelope's withdrawal to the bedroom:

τῷ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν φιλόητος ἐταρπῆτην ἐρατεινῆς,
τερπέσθην μύθοισι, πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐνέποντες

And then, after the pair had taken pleasure in the delights of lovemaking, they began taking pleasure from stories, which they told to each other... (*Odyssey* 23.300-301)

The move here from the depiction of action to the depiction of narration mirrors the *Odyssey*'s increased preoccupation with the act of story-creation from this point on.¹⁹ The parallelism of the two lines suggests a kind of reciprocal equality between doing and telling; the pleasure derived from both is

¹⁸ On the complexity of the ordering of the story of the *Odyssey*, see Slatkin (1996). De Jong (2001a: 591-593) illustrates how the *Odyssey* manages to narrate (or at least mention) practically every significant event that follows the end of the *Iliad*: the death of Achilles and the death of Ajax that results from the argument over Achilles' armor, the Trojan horse and the fall of Troy, the returns of Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Nestor, as well as the travels of Odysseus. This is entirely accomplished through character narrative.

¹⁹ The interaction between Odysseus's role as doer of deeds and teller of tales in the *Odyssey* has long been noted; see e.g. Pucci (1998: 131-177).

described with the same verb *terpein* (“please”), and the metrical and sonic similarity of the lines’ beginnings (*tô d’ epei / terpesthein*) and endings (*erateinês / enepontes*) invites us to take them as a couplet.

In the introduction to this chapter, I discussed the fact that readers from antiquity to the recent past have called into question the authorship of this final section of the *Odyssey*, marking this section as a sort of boundary between the “real” and “false” parts of the poem (the “real” *Odyssey* supposedly ended four lines earlier at 23.296). Read in light of this history of suspicion of a doubling of authorship — i.e. the end of one poet’s poem and the beginning of another’s — it is interesting the degree to which the poem itself effects a narrative doubling here, as the plot of the poem is told over again with two internal characters as its double authors; their act of storytelling is described with the verb *enepein*, which introduced the *Odyssey* itself at 1.1. But whereas in the opening line of the poem the Narrator had asked the Muse to tell the story “to me” (*μοι ἔννεπε*), here Odysseus and Penelope tell the story “to each other” (*πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐνέποντες*), each playing the role of both narrator and audience in turn. The prominent use of the dual number for the husband and wife pair in these lines underlines their duality.²⁰ Penelope will tell Odysseus the story of her adventures with the suitors, and Odysseus will tell Penelope the story of his travels — the two halves of the *Odyssey*, now retold together as a whole.²¹ Penelope’s story of her life with the suitors, which has been related more recently, is summarized only a few allusive lines (23.302-305), but Odysseus’s story, while still only elliptically related, is given more space, as lines 23.306-337 revisit all the major episodes of Odysseus’s narrative to the Phaeacians in Books 9-12. His

²⁰ cf. de Jong (2001: 562): “the significant use of the dual underscores the closeness between husband and wife.”

²¹ We may infer that their storytelling is meant to suggest the *Odyssey* specifically from the fact that, as Ahl and Roisman (1996: 273) point out, there is a notable “absence of details about Odysseus’s activities during the Trojan War. His Iliadic achievements are omitted.”

act of narration is also presented elliptically, as his speech to Penelope is not quoted but given in indirect speech²² — he tells “how after first defeating the Ciconians, he then came to the fertile land of the Lotus Eaters” (23.310-311) and so forth.

That this retelling is so indirect and allusive is itself significant. After all, the episodes the *Odyssey* revisits here were never given the stamp of authenticity that comes from being told in the Narrator’s voice; they have only ever been included as a story told by Odysseus to the Phaeacians. This mirror narrative²³ in Book 23 thus refers us not to the original events, but to the poem’s earlier *retelling* of them — even more shadowy, this copy of a copy is a step further removed from the original events it is reporting. As with the story Achilles tells Thetis of his dispute with Agamemnon in *Iliad* 1, we could list certain significant differences between the travel narratives in Books 9-12 and Book 23 — although here the difference in focalization is not caused so much by the difference in focalizers (Achilles vs. the Narrator tells the story), but two different focalizees (Odysseus tells the story to the Phaeacians vs. Penelope). De Jong observes²⁴ that Odysseus’s story to Penelope is related in the singular — as in the above quote, “he came” (23.311: ἦλθεν) to the land of the Lotus-Eaters — ignoring the rest of his men and shifting the emphasis from the group effort to his own personal accomplishments. This move allows Odysseus, now home in Ithaca, to de-emphasize the unhappy truth that twelve ships full of Ithacans died

²² For the use of indirect speech in narrative see de Jong (1987a: 114-118), Beck (2009). An extended passage of storytelling in indirect speech such as this is unusual; in her commentary, de Jong (2001: 562-563) identifies it as the longest example of indirect speech in Homer.

²³ On the mirror narrative in Homer, see Létoublon (1983), de Jong (1985b), and my discussion in Chapter One.

²⁴ de Jong 2001: 562-563.

under his watch. Heubeck points out²⁵ the bias in Odysseus's omission of the fact that, in his earlier telling, the encounter with the Ciconians ultimately ends in defeat (*Odyssey* 9.39-66).

Not all interpreters, however, have agreed that this retelling is targeted to its audience. Ahl and Roisman suggest the opposite:

Defenders of the authenticity of the passage note, with satisfaction, that Odysseus is honest and 'up-front' about his relationships with Circe and Calypso. But an Odysseus who tells the truth ceases to be Odysseus. Perhaps that is the Muse's point: Odysseus's apparent candor and failure to reshape his narrative are not so much a measure of his newfound sincerity as of his indifference to Penelope's reaction...²⁶

But is this a fair assessment of what the text actually says? Here is how the *Odyssey* summarizes Odysseus's narration of his time with the two goddesses:

καὶ Κίρκης κατέλεξε δόλον πολυμηχανίην τε
...
ὥς θ' ἴκετ' Ὠγυγίην νῆσον νύμφην τε Καλυψώ,
ἣ δὴ μιν κατέρυκε, λιλαιομένη πόσιν εἶναι,
ἐν σπέεσι γλαφυροῖσι καὶ ἔτρεφεν ἥδ' ἔφασκεν
θήσειν ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀγήραον ἥματα πάντα·
ἀλλὰ τοῦ οὐ ποτε θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ἔπειθεν.

And he narrated Circe's trickery and total deviousness ... and how he came to the island of Ogygia and the nymph Calypso, who wanted him to be her husband. And in her hollow caves she fed him and promised to make him immortal and ageless for his days. But she could never persuade the heart in his chest. (*Odyssey* 23.321, 333-336)

As with the entirety of this compressed summary, it is difficult to say definitively what details Odysseus's actual narrative includes or leaves out, but I see no specific signs of him being "honest and up front" about the sexual aspects of their relationships; I would be more inclined to say that he has rather craftily constructed his account of their interactions both to omit any mention of sex and to make himself a

²⁵ Heubeck (1992: 347). Pucci (1998: 150-154) describes how Odysseus's *original* narration in 9-12 was also careful to deflect blame from himself and onto his men; see n. 28 below.

²⁶ Ahl and Roisman 1996: 273.

victim (accusing Circe of the kind of “trickery” — *dolos* — that, as we shall see, the suitors themselves criticize Odysseus and Penelope for), overpowered but not unfaithful.²⁷ This seems to me another example of a narrator taking the narrative initiative to expand or contract a basic set of events into the story that best the speaker’s present purposes.

Our test case from the *Odyssey* goes beyond Achilles’ story to Thetis in the *Iliad* in this respect. In the previous chapter, we examined how problematic it is to try to account for Achilles’ retelling of the Narrator’s account of the dispute with reference to differing focalization of a single fabula; I suggested instead a model by which both Achilles and the Homer are on equal ground as narrators expanding freely upon a basic theme in a way that fits the present rather than crystallizing the past. An implication of this observation that remains to be explored is the way in which it calls into question the authority of the Narrator’s own account — the *Iliad* itself. In our example from the *Odyssey*, the problematization of narrative authority is made even more complex. As we explore how the story of Odysseus’s travels has been altered to suit the narrative occasion (a performance to Penelope), we inevitably return to the fact that the only status this “original” that has been altered has ever had in our narrative was as a story, one told by Odysseus to an audience of Phaeacians for a specific purpose. The lack of an “authentic” original in the voice of the Homeric Narrator does not change the principle of Homeric storytelling discussed in the Introduction: in relating his adventures to the Phaeacians, Odysseus’s concern would have been not what “really happened” in the past, but rather what is most beneficial in his present. For Odysseus’s *Apologoi*, this means furthering his ultimate goal of getting into the Phaeacians’ good graces, achieving

²⁷ For more on this point, see also de Jong (2001: 563).

glory, and persuading them to carry him home.²⁸ Although the tales of the Lotus Eaters, the Cyclops, the Sirens, and so on are surely much older than Homer,²⁹ the *Odyssey* is, for us, the authoritative version of these exploits of Odysseus. Yet the authoritativeness of the version in the *Odyssey* is undermined by the fact that the adventures are included only as a re-telling by a character, bringing with them the inherent problems of bias, invention, and lack of reliability that the poem itself is elsewhere concerned with.³⁰

As we read the *Apologoi* in this light, we can imagine what details Odysseus may be altering or fabricating or omitting, and speculate about the infinity of other stories with other narrative purposes this basic narrative thread could have been elaborated into. In so doing, we will recognize obvious parallels with Homer's own situation as a poetic performer: the *Odyssey* itself is only one of any number of versions of the return of Odysseus that could be (and surely were) told; any fresh narration of traditional material invites itself to be compared with every previous version any audience member may be familiar with, in a neverending competition. Richard Martin has suggested that the original audience of an orally performed and composed *Odyssey* would have

the mental equivalent of a CD-Rom player full of phrases and scenes ... Modern hearers of a traditional epic in cultures where the song making survives are observed to comment appreciatively on the smallest verbal changes, not in the way a three-year-old

²⁸ For readings of the practical function of Odysseus's story, see Ahl and Roisman (1996: 92 ff.), Pucci (1998:145-147), and Van Nortwick (2008: 25-26), all with bibliography. Van Nortwick denies that Homer is interested in using the *Apologoi* to discuss issues of narrative uncertainty.

²⁹ The Cyclops story is a well-studied example; its traditional folktale elements were first catalogued by Wilhelm Grimm in the nineteenth century. Denys Page (1955:1-18) offers an accessible reading of these folktale elements in general; Snodgrass (1998:89-100) demonstrates how early artistic depictions of this as a tale involving Odysseus are probably not Homeric. See also Reece (1994). It has been argued that the *Iliad*, in contrast, takes pains not to include any of the major earlier episodes of the Trojan war cycle, and inserts itself around the traditional material rather than being a presentation of it. See Dowden (1996:53-55).

³⁰ For example, at 14.122-132, the swineherd Eumaeus suggests to the disguised Odysseus that "wandering men lie and refuse to tell the truth" (124-125: ἄνδρες ἀλήται | ψεύδοντ' οὐδ' ἐθέλουσιν ἀληθέα μυθήσασθαι), since every vagrant that passes through Ithaca "comes to my mistress and says deceptive things" (127: ἐλθὼν ἐς δέσποιναν ἐμὴν ἀπατήλια βάζει) to which Penelope is all too receptive. For more on the issue of truth in storytelling, see Pratt (1993), Olson (1995: 13).

demands the exact words of a bedtime text, but with a full knowledge of the dozens of ways the teller could have spun out a line at a given point in the narrative.³¹

The *Odyssey*, then, is paradoxically able to attain authority by dispensing with the definiteness implied by a straightforward telling. From the perspective of the short time period the Narrator relates to us (the narrative of the *Odyssey* begins ten years after the end of the Trojan war and encompasses only forty-one days³²) Odysseus's travels are part of the past, and now exist only in the realm of oral tradition, as stories to be brought out and told on particular occasions. Homer thus creates a situation in which the internal characters have (broadly) the same relationship to Odysseus's most famous adventures as he does: he has inherited these stories as part of oral tradition, and wields and moulds and alters them for his own narrative purposes. What better way to present the "truth" of these stories, than to record and monumentalize them in the *Odyssey* as what they really are: stories?

Let us return to our consideration of the night Odysseus and Penelope devote to storytelling. Before Odysseus re-narrates the tales of his *Apologoi*, Penelope begins by telling the story of the suitors' assault on Ithaca (*Odyssey* 23.302-305). Penelope's overall role as a narrator and plot creator within the *Odyssey* is rich and complex, and I will return to it below. In the present context in Book 23, however, Homer's summary report of Penelope's story is too brief for us to make much of an analysis of how it is focalized through her, as we did with Odysseus. Let us instead consider the subject matter of her story: the conflict with the suitors is a story-thread that has circulated through the world of the *Odyssey* over the course of the poem, a story Telemachus (2.40-79)³³ Now that this tale has found its ending with the killing of the suitors, it can begin to circulate as a completed story — one that, as Homer and his listeners

³¹ Martin (1993: 227). For a challenge to this point of view, see Scodel (2002: 1-41).

³² See de Jong (2001: 588).

³³ As I discuss below, this is a story whose telling both Telemachus and the suitors attempt to control in the assembly in Book 2; Nestor (3.212) seems to have heard it already.

are obviously aware, will eventually become part of the epic canon in the form of the poem they have just heard. Odysseus himself alludes to the beginning of this process at the end of his night with Penelope:

αὐτίκα γὰρ φάτις εἴσιν ἅμ' ἡελίῳ ἀνιόντι
ἀνδρῶν μνηστήρων, οὓς ἔκτανον ἐν μεγάροισιν

For as soon as the sun rises, talk of the suitors I killed in my halls will spread at once...
(*Odyssey* 23.362-363)

Up to this point, the *Odyssey* has shown a special fascination with the way gossip spreads in parallel with — or as the seed of? — epic storytelling; S. Douglas Olson examines this alongside his study of the tendency of the word *kleos* in the *Odyssey* to refer to “news” about the recent past.³⁴ With Odysseus’s comment we see the inception of this process, and, indeed, the beginning of the transmission of an *Odyssey* complete with its ending: Odysseus returns, slaughters the suitors, regains his estate and reasserts his leadership. But is this incipient *Odyssey* our *Odyssey*? With Odysseus and Penelope’s act of telling their stories to one another, the poem suggests one reading of their actions, in which the well-being of their family and property is uniquely important, and their actions to protect themselves and their wealth over the past ten years are deserving of honor and glory. But as the final book of the *Odyssey* unfolds, we can see the possibility of another interpretation emerging, one in which the suitors are the victims and Odysseus the aggressor, in which his actions are a horrible outrage against his community, murdering an entire generation of its nobility after losing even more men in his adventures at war and travels home, enriching himself at the expense of the rest of Ithaca, deserving of scorn rather than glory.

But surely I cannot mean to imply that the *Odyssey* has any sympathy for the suitors; are they not the perfect archetype of the loathsome villain, flouting society’s customs and standards of *xenia* by

³⁴ Olson 1995: 1-23.

consuming Odysseus's wealth unashamedly and irreligiously?³⁵ Athena herself, in the guise of Mentès, suggests the proper response upon seeing their behavior:

ὥς τέ μοι ὑβρίζοντες ὑπερφιάλως δοκέουσι
δαίνυσθαι κατὰ δῶμα. νεμεσσήσaiτό κεν ἀνὴρ
αἴσχεα πόλλ' ὀρώων, ὅς τις πινυτός γε μετέλθοι.

How outrageous they seem to me, dining so arrogantly throughout your house! Any decent man who came along would be offended to see all these disgraces. (*Odyssey* 1.227-229)

Here Athena's creation of an imaginary spectator is part of the Homeric technique de Jong has called the "anonymous focalizer," which she suggests is a device used by the narrator to suggest the proper reaction by the audience — she links this technique closely with the one by which Homer attributes an interpretation to his own listeners, telling them "you would have said" such and such about a situation he is describing.³⁶ It will be relatively uncontroversial, I think, to suggest that in this matter there is a certain alignment in point of view between the narrator and Athena (which Athena suggests should also be that of any respectable listener), a point of view which sees the suitors as, in the words of de Jong, the "clear 'baddies'" of the poem. In her commentary she catalogs the ways in which Homer influences his audience to have as negative an opinion of the suitors as possible — as they must, in order to condone the gruesome revenge Odysseus will exact upon them.³⁷

But my goal here is not quite to rehabilitate the suitors. It can hardly be argued that they are analogous to, say, the Trojans in the *Iliad*, playing the role of antagonist but still deserving of the

³⁵ For the religious element in the suitors' misbehavior (and their killing as a ritual sacrifice), see Nagler (1990).

³⁶ De Jong (1987a: 33-60). This technique is similar to the common Homeric trope of the "potential τις speech" in which a character imagines a typical person's reaction to the hypothetical outcome of a situation (not to events actually happening in the poem as here) by imagining a speech this typical person might give. See also de Jong (1987b), where she suggests that these potential τις speeches are used to show the opinion or psychology of the (actual) speaker through their creation of an (imaginary) character to evaluate a situation; this assessment is certainly applicable to our situation here, where Athena voices her own opinion by positing an imaginary observer.

³⁷ De Jong 2001: 28.

audience's full sympathy. Rather, I am interested in exploring the degree to which the *Odyssey* depicts the suitors as having a consistent and fully fleshed-out point of view; *an* epic poem could have painted their slaughter as a tragedy, even if *this* epic poem largely does not.³⁸ And even this point is debatable; many recent critics have argued against reading the *Odyssey* itself as taking an absolute position on the moral standing of Odysseus and the suitors.³⁹ Uvo Hölscher suggests that the moral uncertainty arising from the killing of the suitors comes from the “epicization” (*Episierung*) of what was originally a fairy-tale plot, in which the roles of hero and villain are uncomplicated; the slaughter of a hall full of enemies begging for mercy is unproblematic in the world of fairy tales, but becomes more troubling in the more realistic world demanded by (Homeric) epic.⁴⁰

Odysseus himself is portrayed as quite aware of the potential for this alternate interpretation of his actions, as he acknowledges during his instructions to Telemachus just before his climactic reunion with Penelope:

ἡμεῖς δὲ φραζώμεθ', ὅπως ὅχ' ἄριστα γένηται.
καὶ γάρ τις θ' ἕνα φῶτα κατακτείνας ἐνὶ δῆμῳ,
ὧ μὴ πολλοὶ ἔωσιν ἀοσσητῆρες ὀπίσσω,
φεύγει πηούς τε προλιπὼν καὶ πατρίδα γαῖαν·
ἡμεῖς δ' ἔρμα πόλῃος ἀπέκταμεν, οἳ μὲγ' ἄριστοι
κούρων εἰν Ἰθάκῃ· τὰ δέ σε φράζεσθαι ἄνωγα.

And let us think about how things can turn out the very best. For even when someone has killed a single man in his community — a victim without many supporters to defend

³⁸ Intriguingly, there seems to have been an alternate ending to Odysseus's travels in which Odysseus was tried by Neoptolemus for the murder of the suitors, found guilty, and exiled from Ithaca. This version is only mentioned in extremely late sources (e.g. “Apollodorus” *Epitome* 7.40), but must derive from earlier sources that have been lost.

³⁹ In addition to the discussion in the introduction to this chapter, see e.g. Buchan (2004: 10): “The suitors’ relationship to any moral code of the world of the *Odyssey* is thus more complex than has been generally recognized.” Cf. the precept voiced by Nagler (1990: 339): “To understand this action in its proper terms, on the level of myth, it is necessary to suspend questions with which much of the ancient and modern criticism has been concerned but that are anachronistic or irrelevant to archaic logic, such as whether the respective groups deserve their punishment, whether we are meant to feel sympathy for them, and so forth.”

⁴⁰ Hölscher 1989: 259- 271.

him afterwards — even he goes into exile, leaving behind his family and his homeland. But we have killed the pillars of the town, the very best of the boys in Ithaca. I urge you to think about this. (*Odyssey* 23.117-122)

Here Odysseus's hints of a possible negative reaction to his massacre are buried beneath multiple levels of obfuscation. First, he creates a hypothetical situation replacing his own crime with a lesser offense by an anonymous "someone" (τις) — a move that repeats both Athena's narrative technique of anonymous focalization (discussed above) and the general thematic pattern of disguising Odysseus as a nameless "No Man."⁴¹ He then describes the consequences of murdering one's countryman — being forced into exile — without being explicit about the reasons for these consequences. But although Odysseus does not say so, clearly in his hypothetical situation this "someone" must go into exile *because of the condemnation of other members of the community*, because his actions are judged as wrong by them. Odysseus's reference to these people who would condemn this "someone" is quite oblique as well: if there are "not many" who would defend the murdered man, presumably there are still a few. When in the end he shifts from the hypothetical scenario to his own case, Odysseus requires Telemachus (and Homer requires his audience) to fill in the second half of his comparison by implication rather than explicitly: we have killed the best young men of this town (and so the entire community outside of our own family are likely to judge us to be in the wrong and force us into exile).

When Telemachus then asks Odysseus to devise a specific strategy for dealing with the situation, his response explicitly demonstrates how Odysseus's interest is now to shape the narrative of the events that have just occurred, particularly in the face of the potential competing narrative of the suitors' supporters. Odysseus instructs Telemachus and the others to wash up, put on clean clothing, and have the household slaves project outward signs of cheer and merriment,

⁴¹ For the various ways in which the poem suppresses the name of Odysseus, see e.g. Peradotto (1990: 101).

ὥς κέν τις φαίη γάμον ἔμμεναι ἐκτὸς ἀκούων,
ἢ ἂν' ὁδὸν στείχων ἢ οἱ περὶ ναιετάουσι·
μὴ πρόσθε κλέος εὐρὺ φόνου κατὰ ἄστρ' ἔσται
ἀνδρῶν μνηστήρων, πρὶν γ' ἡμέας ἐλθέμεν ἔξω
ἀγρὸν ἐς ἡμέτερον πολυδένδρεον. ἔνθα δ' ἔπειτα
φρασσόμεθ', ὅττι κε κέρδος Ὀλύμπιος ἐγγυαλίξῃ.

... so that someone listening from outside — either someone walking down the road or the people who live around us — would say it was a wedding. Let no word of the slaughter of the suitors circulate around the town until we go out to our farm filled with trees. Then we shall think of whatever clever plan Olympian Zeus presents to us. (*Odyssey* 23.135-138)

Here even more strongly than in the previous passage, the anonymous passer-by Odysseus conjures up “walking down the road” hearkens back to Athena’s “any decent man who came along” from Book 1, the one I referred to as an anonymous focalizer — in fact, I read the poem as creating a meaningful and perhaps purposeful contrast with these two anonymous focalizers who bookend the *Odyssey*. Both represent the voice of the Ithacan community, passing judgment on the house of Odysseus based on an inspection of its situation from the outside — but whereas the negative judgment of Athena’s hypothetical onlooker stems from an observation of the true state of things, Odysseus’s observer’s lack of negative judgment is the result of his *inability* to see things as they are. Again, we are left to fill in the unstated implications of his plan: the rest of Ithaca must not learn what has really gone on (because, if they did, they would condemn us). Since the time of Athena’s statement in Book 1, there has been a shift in the assumed response of the Ithacans to the conflict with the suitors: previously, they would have sympathized with Odysseus, but now, in Book 23, they might side with the victims. Odysseus recognizes that a story relating what has just happened will soon form and spread across the world, and he is keenly interested in controlling the tenor of this account, fearing the possibility that the version that enters the canon may be that of the suitors — the one represented by the anonymous Ithacan’s feared reaction — and not his own.

I am also tempted to read, in Odysseus's use of the word *kleos* to describe the "report" of the killing of the suitors he fears will spread through the town, a nod to his awareness that what has just happened will not only become well-known, but will one day be the subject of poetry such as the *Odyssey*, given the influential (but contested) argument by Gregory Nagy that the word had special and ancient associations with the deeds of heroes as memorialized in poetry.⁴² But whether or not we are justified in reading this nuance in every use of the word *kleos*, I think it is fair to say that, as I argue with reference to the *Iliad* in Chapter One, there is at least some metapoetic reflexivity in Odysseus's speculation about a future in which people will tell the story of the slaughter of the suitors, presented as part of a future poem (the *Odyssey*) which has just told this very story.⁴³ Surely there is some symbolic weight in the fact that it is the bard Phemius whom Odysseus chooses as an instrument to manipulate the public understanding of what has happened in his house by making it sound as though a wedding, not a slaughter, has taken place (23.133-134: "Have the divine bard lead a playful dance for you with his clear-toned lyre"). As Odysseus is interested in literally controlling the community's reception of his killing of the suitors with a singer's performance, so his ultimate goal is to shape the kinds of songs that bards of the future will sing of the same event.

Amphimedon's Story

But a point of view sympathetic to the suitors is included in the poem as more than just an alternative implied by Odysseus's attempts to shape public opinion. As with Achilles and Agamemnon's dispute in the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* includes a retelling of the massacre of the suitors in the voice of one of the

⁴² Nagy (1979:15-25). Since that time there has been rather vigorous debate over Nagy's contention that *kleos apthiton* is an Indo-European formula also preserved in the Vedic *śrávas áksitam*, and that the primary sense of *kleos* has anything to do with poetic glory. For the state of the question today, see Finkelberg (2007), with bibliography. On *kleos* in the *Odyssey*, see also Segal (1983), Katz (1991).

⁴³ For the constant orientation of Homeric poetry as looking ahead to a future when its events will be part of the epic past, see Bakker (2005: 92-113).

participants, the suitor Amphimedon, who is killed by Telemachus at 22.284. By giving a voice to one of the antagonists at the end of the poem, after the main action is completed, the *Odyssey* hints at a possible line of interpretation contrary to the one it has championed throughout, an interpretation from the point of view of the slaughtered suitors, in which Odysseus's actions are deceitful and outrageous. Although this is in many ways an inversion of the way Achilles' re-telling of the quarrel functioned in *Iliad* 1 — coming at the end rather than the beginning, offering an interpretation that will ultimately be rejected rather than endorsed — the effect is similar: to undermine the authority of any one narrative by suggesting the multiplicity of ways in which the story we have just heard could have been told.

Amphimedon's ghost is herded into Hades at the beginning of Book 24 along with those of the rest of the suitors.⁴⁴ There they come upon Achilles and Agamemnon, who happen conveniently to be discussing death and glory and how they will each be remembered. Though the internal motivation for this discussion is somewhat dubious,⁴⁵ from an external point of view, the narrative purpose is clear, providing an ideal setting for a telling of the *nostos* ("return") of Odysseus. After talk of the death of Achilles at Troy, which famously earned him *kleos* at the expense of *nostos* (24.37, 94),⁴⁶ and of the murder of Agamemnon upon returning home, spoiling his *nostos* (24.96), the stage is set to highlight the fact that Odysseus's *nostos* comes not in spite of, but as the source of his glory. Nagy has argued that this

⁴⁴ Hermes' function as *psychopompos* for the suitors — unique in Homer, although it surely predates him (see Page 1955: 116-117, Erbse 1972: 234) — perhaps deserves comment. In her defense of the authenticity of this passage, Wender (1978:21-32) points out, among other things, how the trickster god represents Odysseus's cleverness and deviousness (19.396-398). It is appropriate for this aspect of Odysseus's personality to be highlighted in an episode which, as I will show, will center around Amphimedon's negative reading of him as trickster.

⁴⁵ Despite both having been dead for roughly a decade and both having encountered Odysseus in the underworld seven years earlier in Book 11, Achilles speaks as if he is surprised Agamemnon is dead. The Analysts (e.g. Scheliha 1943: 19) took this as evidence of multiple authorship of the poem, on the grounds that the composer of Book 24 had not read Book 11. But as often, internal logic is put aside to serve a narrative purpose; de Jong (2001: 568) rightly compares Priam and Helen's *Teichoskopia* in *Iliad* 3. See also Kakridis (1949: 3-4).

⁴⁶ The choice is famously laid out at *Iliad* 9.411-416.

contrast between different ways of attaining *kleos* and being the “best of the Achaeans” is one of the central themes of the *Odyssey*,⁴⁷ and it is surely true that part of the function of this strange detour to the underworld — a narrative digression which in its form is practically unparalleled in Homer⁴⁸ — is to allow the poem to engage intertextually with the *Iliad*, as the main characters of the other epic are brought on stage one last time. But beyond this question of the poem’s intertextual stance regarding previous epic which has interested previous critics,⁴⁹ I want to focus on the omnipresent feeling of posthumousness, both literal and symbolic, that infuses this scene, and what it says about the poem’s stance regarding itself. As I argue above, Book 24 views the *Odyssey* as a story that is in a sense over, even as the poet continues singing; now that the main action is finished, the poem is able to consider its own afterlife, how its story will be told. And what better setting in which for this process to take place than the literal afterlife, as other epic characters look back at their own stories and speculate about how they will be interpreted? After telling Achilles the story of his own funeral, Agamemnon ends with a declaration about Achilles’ place in the future tradition: “Not even in death did you lose your name, but you will always have good *kleos* among all people” (24.93-94). Thus, as the *Odyssey* indulges in the paradox of allowing an epic hero to achieve an impossible goal he has spent his life obsessed with — learning the finished version of his own story, including the details of his death and how he will be remembered — it uses this environment of posthumousness to consider how the poem we have arrived at the end of will be remembered and interpreted.

⁴⁷ Nagy (1979:35-41); see also Pucci (1987).

⁴⁸ The normal practice in Homer is for changes of scene to be motivated by the movement of a character from the previous scene. Richardson, at the beginning of his analysis of scene changes in Homer (1990: 110-119), puts it nicely: “Even when the distance is as great as from Olympus to an earthly setting, [the Homeric narrator’s] habit is not to switch one camera on and the other off simultaneously, but to attach himself to a god who is making the journey.”

⁴⁹ The *Odyssey*’s engagement with the *Iliad* has been conceptualized in various ways over the years; in addition to the previously mentioned Nagy (1979), see e.g. Bassett (1938: 175ff.), Wender (1978: 38 ff.), Segal (1983), Pucci (1987), Burkert (1997), Tsagalis (2007).

Perhaps the most straightforward interpretation of the poem's choice to juxtapose Odysseus's story with those of Achilles and Agamemnon is the type of contrast Nagy suggests: now that their stories are all complete and eligible to enter the canon, we can compare the different types of *kleos* and *nostos* achieved by these different types of epic heroes. But what the *Odyssey* attempts here is more complex than just a simple assertion of the superiority of its own model of heroism. By putting the account of Odysseus's return in the mouth of one of the poem's antagonists, the suitor Amphimedon, Homer simultaneously celebrates Odysseus's glory while also suggesting a reading of events counter to the Odysseus-centric interpretation that our poem generally favors, an alternate *Odyssey* in which Odysseus's killing of the suitors is seen as not a restoration of the proper order, but a massacre of Ithaca's nobility. Agamemnon's initial comment upon seeing the throng of suitors speaks to this point:

Ἀμφίμεδον, τί παθόντες ἐρεμνὴν γαῖαν ἔδυτε
πάντες κεκριμένοι καὶ ὁμήλικες; οὐδέ κεν ἄλλως
κρινάμενος λέξαιτο κατὰ πτόλιν ἄνδρας ἀρίστους.

Amphimedon, what was done to you to bring all of you — choice men, and all the same age — beneath the gloomy earth? One could hardly have chosen any differently to pick the best men from throughout the city. (*Odyssey* 24.106-108)

Agamemnon's statement is an observation of objective fact: here, dead before their time, slaughtered by Odysseus, are the best men of their generation. As we shall see, Amphimedon's reply to this query (24.125-190) re-narrates the entire Ithacan part of the *Odyssey*. By and large his version is fairly faithful in replicating the overall plot of the poem as we have just heard it; Simon Goldhill demonstrates how the differences that do exist in this re-telling of the plot can be reasonably explained as the result of the focalization through Amphimedon.⁵⁰ But let us consider exactly what this differing focalization consists

⁵⁰ Goldhill (1988: 6-9); see de Jong (2001a: 570-573) for a summary of these differences. Ahl and Roisman (1996: 18) make a similar argument with reference to characters' use of material from outside the bounds of the poems: "It is, then, unwise to

of. The overall impression this suitor's version gives is of the reasonableness of his own actions — the suitors were simply courting the wife of a man all reasonable people considered dead — and of the pattern of treachery that underlies the actions of Odysseus and his family. His introduction highlights both of these facts:

μνώμεθ' Ὀδυσσῆος δὴν οἰχομένοιο δάμαρτα·
ἢ δ' οὔτ' ἡρνεῖτο στυγερόν γάμον οὔτε τελεύτα,
ἡμῖν φραζομένη θάνατον καὶ κῆρα μέλαιναν,
ἀλλὰ δόλον τόνδ' ἄλλον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μερμήριξε·

We were courting the wife of Odysseus, who was long gone — but she would neither say no to a marriage she found hateful nor carry one out, as she was planning the black fate of death for us. Instead, she devised the following trick in her mind. (*Odyssey* 24.125-128)

The justification for the suitors' behavior is implied in the first line: Odysseus is “long gone.” Here I translate *oichesthai* with its literal meaning, but the verb often has the sense of “be dead and gone,” and indeed, a few lines later Amphimedon has Penelope begin her speech to the suitors by saying, “since divine Odysseus has died...” (24.131: ἐπεὶ θάνε δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς). Courting the wife of a dead man is not a crime, but a normal part of how society functions; Marilyn Katz has argued in detail how the presentation of the suitors' courtship as a crime is part of an “ideology of exclusivity” constructed by Odysseus and Penelope themselves.⁵¹ From the suitors' point of view, theirs is the attempt to keep society operating within its normal parameters, and it is the family of Odysseus whose abnormal behavior is preventing this regular operation. Amphimedon's version inverts the way we have been encouraged to read the suitors by showing them in much the same unhappy position as we are used to thinking of Penelope herself in, frozen in an interminable loop of uncertainty — so beautifully

assume that a myth found in Homer is necessarily represented in its hypothetically ‘original’ form, since the internal narrators often have reason to inflect tradition to suit their own rhetorical goals.”

⁵¹ See Katz (1991: 171 ff.)

symbolized by the woven and unwoven shroud — as the woman they are wooing refuses to tell them either yes or no. He even goes so far as to suggest that Penelope was intentionally leading the suitors on from the start, for the sole purpose of ensnaring and killing them, “planning the black fate of death.”

Amphimedon then goes on to relate Penelope’s famous weaving trick. The significance of this story itself — as a demonstration of Penelope’s *mêtis*, as a symbolic representation of her ability to “weave” plots and affect the action of the poem — has been well discussed, and I will not treat it directly in the present chapter.⁵² Here I am interested in the context in which Amphimedon introduces the story, concluding a set of repeated narrations that have run throughout the epic. This is the third time the weaving trick has been narrated, and in almost precisely the same words, each time by a different internal character narrator and to a different audience: first by Antinous to Telemachus at 2.89-110, then by Penelope to the disguised Odysseus at 19.137-156. This is a rather unique case of identical repetition of an extended passage in Homer: while there are plenty of examples of speeches repeated two or three times, these usually form a chain of repetitions from one character to the next.⁵³ Here, however, three characters seem to arrive at nearly the same words independently. Thus several recent critics have read these three versions of the weaving story alongside each other in an attempt to fit all three into a unified interpretive framework that accounts for their overall similarity and minor differences.⁵⁴ Here I will digress briefly from my analysis of Amphimedon’s speech overall to suggest my own framework within which to read his version of this story alongside the other two.

⁵² For interpretations of the weaving story, see e.g. Amory (1963: 101), Katz (1991), Felson-Rubin (1994: 26-28), Clayton (2004: 23 ff.), Bergren (2008: 221-227), Mueller (2010).

⁵³ For example, in Book 2 of the *Iliad*, Zeus makes a speech to the anthropomorphized Dream which he sends to Agamemnon, the Dream repeats the speech to Agamemnon, and Agamemnon repeats it to the Achaeans (2.11-15 ~ 28-32 = 65-69).

⁵⁴ E.g. Heubeck (1985), Goldhill (1988), Katz (1991: 25-26), Krischer (1993), Lowenstam (2000).

I begin with the first instance, in Book 2, at the Ithacan assembly called by Telemachus. The narrative function of this assembly is somewhat similar to that of the assembly from *Iliad* 1, with characters offering their own opposing interpretations of the same set of events. Telemachus begins by making his case with an impassioned plea to the people of Ithaca (2.40-79), describing how (from his point of view) the suitors are devouring his wealth while he stands by powerless to stop them. The opposition set up in this assembly — Odysseus's family against the suitors, with the people of Ithaca in between them — is parallel to the conflict at the end of the poem once the suitors have died and Odysseus battles their families. So too Antinous's response to Telemachus's interpretation of the situation mirrors the charges Amphimedon will raise against Penelope in Book 24. While Amphimedon and Antinous tell the story of the weaving trick itself in essentially the same words, the ways in which they introduce the tale differ. Antinous begins:

Τηλέμαχ' ὕψαγόρη, μένος ἄσχετε, ποῖον ξείπες
 ἡμέας αἰχύνων, ἐθέλοις δέ κε μῶμον ἀνάψαι.
 σοὶ δ' οὐ τι μνηστῆρες Ἀχαιῶν αἴτιοί εἰσιν,
 ἀλλὰ φίλη μήτηρ, ἣ τοι περὶ κέρδεα οἶδεν.
 ἤδη γὰρ τρίτον ἐστὶν ἔτος, τάχα δ' εἴσι τέταρτον,
 ἐξ οὗ ἀτέμβει θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν Ἀχαιῶν.
 πάντας μὲν ῥ' ἔλπει, καὶ ὑπίσχεται ἀνδρὶ ἐκάστω,
 ἀγγελίας προοίῃσα· νόος δέ οἱ ἄλλα μενοινᾷ.
 ἣ δὲ δόλον τόνδ' ἄλλον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μερμήριξε·

Telemachus, lofty in speech, irrepressible in passion — what a thing you have said, attempting to shame us! You would like pin the blame on us, but among the Achaeans it is not the suitors who are guilty of some charge against you, but your own dear mother, who knows too many tricks. For this is now the third year (and the fourth is soon to come) that she has been cheating the hearts within the Achaeans' breasts. She leads us all to hope, and makes promises to each man, sending him messages. But she has other intentions, and devised the following trick in her mind... (*Odyssey* 2.85-93)

This is a much expanded version of the complaints against Penelope with which Amphimedon introduces his version of the story (24.125-128, quoted above), but the characterization of her actions in both suitors' accounts is quite consistent. Antinous begins with an explicit acknowledgement of the

differences between the suitors' interpretation and Telemachus's. That the situation is a travesty in which there is blame to be assigned is essentially the only point of agreement between the two interpretations, but it is debatable, says Antinous, *who* is at fault. By painting Telemachus's complaints as an attempt to "pin the blame" (μῶμον ἀνάψαι)⁵⁵ on them, he implies that the boy is just as crafty as his mother, and that it is Telemachus's argument for the suitors' guilt that is a reversal of the obvious position the rest of the Ithacans should take. Like Amphimedon, Antinous lays heavy stress on the deceitfulness and treachery of Penelope, calling her "excessively knowledgeable of trickery" (περὶ κέρδεα οἶδεν), saying that she "cheats" (ἀτέμβει) the suitors' hearts and leads them on by implanting false hopes in them each individually. At the end of this speech, Antinous will be far more explicit than Amphimedon in articulating the behavior expected of a woman in Penelope's situation: she should return to her father who will make arrangements for a new marriage (2.113 ff.). It is her incongruous behavior — and Telemachus's willingness to enable it — that are creating strife for Odysseus's household. "She is creating great *kleos* for herself," Antinous tells Telemachus, "but for you, loss of much of your material wealth" (2.125-126: μέγα μὲν κλέος αὐτῇ | ποιεῖτ', αὐτὰρ σοί γε ποθὴν πολέος βίότοιο). Thus, both at the beginning and at the end of the poem, the suitors present a consistent interpretation of the situation on Ithaca in which they are the victims of Penelope's deceitfulness; with the perspective of hindsight, Amphimedon at the end of the poem is able to add the detail that her motivation all along was actually to "*plan* the dark fate of death for us" (24.127: ἡμῖν φραζομένη θάνατον καὶ κῆρα μέλαιναν).

Between these two episodes at either end of the *Odyssey* comes the third telling of this story, by Penelope to the disguised Odysseus in Book 19. Again, Penelope's version of the weaving story itself is

⁵⁵ I choose this colloquial translation in an attempt to replicate the dismissive tone of the original Greek; in her commentary on this line, Stephanie West (1988: 136) notes that *mōmos* "normally refers to comparatively trivial fault-finding, niggling criticism, malicious gossip; Antinous thus minimizes the gravity of Telemachus' charge."

worded more or less identically to Antinous's version at the beginning of the poem and Amphimedon's at the end — but the similarity of this tale stands in stark contrast with the differences in context and focalization. Coming out of Penelope's mouth, these same words reverse their meaning; in her eyes, acts of deceptive manipulation speak not to her cunning but to her desperation. "They court me against my will," she says in her introduction to the weaving story. "But I waste away, my heart melting as I pine for Odysseus. They urge marriage; I wind up tricks." (19.133-137: οἳ μ' ἀεκαζομένην μνῶνται ... ἀλλ' Ὀδυσῆ ποθέουσα φίλον κατατήκομαι ἦτορ. | οἱ δὲ γάμον σπεύδουσιν· ἐγὼ δὲ δόλους τολυπεύω). Her use of the noun *dolos* ("trick") in line 137 — which leads directly to the weaving story — echoes the use of the same noun in the line used by both suitors to introduce the tale (2.93 ~ 24.128), but the difference in focalization inverts the significance of this trickery: the same action that the suitors read as faithless treachery, Penelope sees as an act of faithfulness to her husband. And the same feeling of helpless victimization claimed by the suitors — recall Amphimedon's "she would neither say no to a marriage she found hateful or make one happen" at 24.126 — is on display in Penelope's speech as well, as she feels she too is a victim of circumstances: "Now I am neither able to escape marriage nor have I yet discovered any other bit of cunning (*mêtis*)" (19.157-158: νῦν δ' οὔτ' ἐκφυγέειν δύναμαι γάμον οὔτε τιν' ἄλλην | μῆτιν ἔθ' εὐρίσκω). From her point of view, it is not she who is trapping the suitors, but the suitors who are trapping her.

It is this point of view, I suspect, that most readers of the *Odyssey* will consider the "right" one. Given the role of the suitors as the villains of the *Odyssey*, it is easy to see the point of view espoused by Antinous in Book 2 as a disingenuous pretext for a group of parasitic nobles to drain another man's resources; towards the end of the assembly (2.246-251), another suitor, Leiocritus, describes the situation more bluntly: even if Odysseus were to return home now, he would be overwhelmed by the suitors' numbers, unable to fight them off and defend his property. And of course Antinous's

protestation “she’s leading us on” is likely to leave a sour taste in the mouth of many a modern reader wary of the male aggressor’s tactic of blaming his female victim for her own victimization. But my interest here is not in determining which point of view is “right.” The *Odyssey* treats the confrontation between Odysseus’s family and the suitors as a complex situation allowing multiple points of view, and the reading offered by Antinous and Amphimedon can surely not be dismissed out of hand.⁵⁶ Indeed, Penelope’s own point of view is hardly unambiguous; there has been much disagreement among interpreters on her knowledge and intentions during this meting between her and the disguised Odysseus in Book 19, with some suggesting that she recognizes her husband and tells the story as a coded message.⁵⁷ But whether we accept this interpretation or not — I for one consider the irresolvable ambiguity of this question to be a central, perhaps intentional, feature of the episode⁵⁸ — it is difficult to deny that Penelope’s overall role in the poem is one that admits competing interpretations. In a subtle and sophisticated reading of Penelope’s character in the poem, Nancy Felson-Rubin offers a complex picture of a woman playing multiple potential roles simultaneously: the faithful wife and the adulteress and the tease. In this reading, Penelope’s repeated overtures to the suitors and unwillingness to say no to

⁵⁶ Buchan (2004: 9) affirms that the suitors are basically insincere in their courtship, but that “they are curiously obsessed with justifying their presence in Penelope’s house ... As with Achilles, their world is also one of indecision.” Ultimately, he argues, we are justified in having a more complex interpretation of their moral standing than the interpretation championed by Odysseus.

⁵⁷ First proposed by Harsh (1950). Bibliography of similar lines of interpretation — including the proposition that Penelope’s recognition of her husband is subconscious — is summarized by Murnaghan (1987: 137-140), who rejects it as at odds with the text itself and the poem’s interest in depicting her as a victim of impossible circumstances. Winkler (1990) argues that Penelope suspects Odysseus’s identity, and acts in a way that is compatible with that possibility, even as she treats it as uncertain. See also Katz (1991), Clayton (2004).

⁵⁸ Winkler (1990: 158) argues that because “the entire telling has been one-sided, slanted in favor of Odysseus and his enterprises,” we are simply “not given equal access” to Penelope’s point of view, and thus cannot know for sure what the text implies: that she has been “asking and testing” the identity of the beggar since Book 19. Katz (1991: 10) agrees that this question is not answerable from the text, arguing that “the interpretive issue in the poem is constituted by the disjunction between the two conflicting directions of narrative action, and that this discordance itself should be regarded as meaningful.” Lowenstam (2000: 345) suggests that because “Homeric style seems too plain, too literal-minded, to contain anything as intricately embedded in the text” some critics are reluctant to endorse the kind of reading required to accept the legitimate ambiguity that lies behind episodes such as Odysseus and Penelope’s meeting in Book 19.

marriage even as she refuses to say yes — mentioned not only by the suitors themselves but by Telemachus (1.245-251, 16.122-128) and Athena (13.379-381) — indicate a character who is able to remain loyal to her husband and hate the suitors while simultaneously enjoying the attention of this house full of nobles and preparing herself for the possibility that she may end up marrying one of them.⁵⁹ Despite our — and, in general, the *Odyssey's* — distaste for the suitors and sympathy for Penelope, their version of her story is more than just a baseless lie. In the language of classical narratology, it is a legitimate way to focalize the fabula that lies behind this story; by the interpretative structure I am suggesting, it is a legitimate way for the suitors as narrators to spin the basic theme of their time on Ithaca into a narrative.

Consider the scene (18.158ff.) in which, spurred by Athena, Penelope presents herself to the suitors to arouse their lust and seduce them into giving her gifts. Felson-Rubin finds contradictory impulses acting upon Penelope here, as her genuine disdain for the suitors mingles with the pleasure she feels at being courted and desired; Odysseus is pleased at the economic gain to his house, and, as part of the crowd, becomes a suitor himself, a hunter on the prowl for symbolic re-marriage to his wife.⁶⁰ In addition to this, I would suggest that in this scene, Penelope gives what can be symbolically read as a poetic performance, one with two competing audiences each simultaneously engaging in their own interpretation. This reading is suggested by parallels created by the text, as in several ways this passage mirrors the scene from the beginning of the epic (*Odyssey* 1.325-364) in which Phemius gave a literal poetic performance for the suitors to evaluate. In both cases, Penelope exits her bedroom and descends the staircase to address the suitors assembled in the courtyard — in fact, several of the lines describing

⁵⁹ Felson-Rubin (1996). Cf. Murnaghan (1987: 118-147), Katz (1991: 10), Clayton (2004).

⁶⁰ Felson-Rubin (1996: 173-175.)

her descent are identical.⁶¹ At the heart of the earlier passage is a variance in reaction to the bard's performance, as different parts of the audience interpret it differently. Phemius is singing the "homecoming of the Achaeans" (1.326: Ἀχαιῶν νόστον), but Penelope asks him to "stop this sad song, which always distresses the dear heart in my breast" (1.340-342: ταύτης δ' ἀποπαύε' ἀοιδῆς | λυγρῆς, ἥ τέ μοι αἰὲν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλον κῆρ | τείρει). Telemachus admonishes his mother to let the bard "entertain in whatever way his mind is driven" (1.347: τέρπειν ὅππῃ οἱ νόος ὄρνυται) since "people always have the most praise for whatever song is the most recent to come to their ears" (1.351-352: τὴν γὰρ ἀοιδὴν μᾶλλον ἐπιλείουσ' ἄνθρωποι, | ἥ τις αἰὼν τεσσιν νεωτάτῃ ἀμφιπέληται.) When he says "people" (ἄνθρωποι), Telemachus is presumably alluding to the audience of suitors as a whole, leaving unspoken the real point of contrast that separates the competing interpretations of the song: the adversity the Achaeans have suffered in their attempts to come home is a source of pleasure for the suitors, as it has given them this opportunity to have the run of an absent chief's home. Here the personal stake each side has in the bard's story informs their varying interpretations of it; what is painful for Penelope is joyful for the suitors.⁶² So too in Book 18, when the same parties (with the addition of Odysseus, who in the original was presumably present as a character in the songs) occupy the same space in the same configuration and Penelope descends the staircase once again, the suitors have one reading of her actions, believing this to be a flirtatious move in an extended courtship that will eventually end in favor of one of them (as Antinous says at 18.289), and Odysseus another, as he interprets his wife's actions as trickery and believes that she remains loyal to him (18.283: νόος δέ οἱ ἄλλα μενοίνα). It is this same trickery which

⁶¹ 1.331-335 = 18.207-211.

⁶² On this scene, see e.g. Pucci (1987: 195 ff.). This dynamic is similar to Demodocus's performance of Trojan War poetry in Book 8, which brings pleasure to the Phaeacians and pain to Odysseus; see Biles (2003). At the end of this chapter we will continue our examination of the same dynamic played out in reverse in the final book of the *Odyssey*, as Odysseus and the suitors' families have different interpretations of the completed story of Odysseus's homecoming.

Odysseus watches so approvingly — noting how “she bewitched their minds with her sweet words,” (18.282-283: θέλγε δὲ θυμὸν | μελιχίῳ ἐπέεσσιν) — that Amphimedon complains of in his account of the story to Agamemnon as her “plotting the black fate of death for us.”

Let us return to Amphimedon’s story, the final reference to and repetition of Penelope’s weaving trick. Although for the most part his wording of the tale is identical to Antinous and Penelope’s tellings,⁶³ only in his version is there a description of the viewing of the finished product: “After weaving and washing the great fabric, she showed us the shroud; it was like the sun or the moon” (24.147: ἡ φᾶρος ἔδειξεν, ὑφήνασα μέγαν ιστόν, | πλύνασ’, ἠελίῳ ἐναλίγκιον ἢ σελήνῃ). It is fitting that only in this final book of the *Odyssey*, in which multiple characters look back at the now-completed action as a full story to be told, are we finally offered a picture of the fully woven shroud as an object that one can step back and contemplate.⁶⁴ Building upon this picture of Penelope as treacherous and manipulative, Amphimedon gives an account of Odysseus’s return and actions that emphasizes this same quality throughout, maintaining an interpretation of the *Odyssey* in which the suitors are the victims of it. Frequent repetition of *kakos* (“bad, wicked, evil”) highlights this focalization: Odysseus was brought home by a “bad divinity” (24.149: *kakos daimôn*); once there, he and Telemachus came to town preparing “bad death” (24.153: *thanaton kakon artunante*) for the suitors. Their actions are all deception and concealment: Odysseus hides his body with “bad clothing” (24.156: *kaka ... heimat’*) so that “none of us were able to recognize it was him” (24.159) and then locks away the weaponry (24.165-166). He instructs Penelope to set up the bow contest “with great wiliness” (24.168: πολυκερδείησιν), at which

⁶³ Again, 2.94-107 ~ 19.139-152 ~ 24.129-142.

⁶⁴ Lowenstam (2000) sees a shift in the metaphorical meaning of the death-shroud, which has gone from symbolizing Odysseus’s death to that of the suitors (quickly followed by the renewed vitality of Laertes, for whom the shroud was intended). For other interpretations of the finished shroud, see Clayton (2004: 47ff.), who reads in the comparison to the sun and the moon resonances with the harmonious houses of Alcinous and Menelaus.

point the pace of Amphimedon's story slows to linger on the slaughter, beginning with the death of Antinous and then moving on to end the entire story with an illustration of the horror of Odysseus's crime:

αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' ἄλλοισ' ἐφίει στονόεντα βέλεμνα
ἅντα τιτυσκόμενος· τοὶ δ' ἀγχιστῖνοι ἐπιπτον.
γνωτὸν δ' ἦν, ὃ ρά τις σφί θεῶν ἐπιτάρροθος ἦεν·
αὐτίκα γὰρ κατὰ δώματ' ἐπισπόμενοι μένεϊ σφῶ
κτεῖνον ἐπιστροφάδην, τῶν δὲ στόνος ὥρνυτ' ἀεικῆς
κράτων τυπτομένων, δάπεδον δ' ἅπαν αἵματι θῦεν.
ὥς ἡμεῖς, Ἀγάμεμνον, ἀπώλόμεθ', ὧν ἔτι καὶ νῦν
σώματ' ἀκηδέα κεῖται ἐνὶ μεγάροισ' Ὀδυσῆος·
οὐ γάρ πω ἴσασι φίλοι κατὰ δώμαθ' ἐκάστου,
οἳ κ' ἀπονίψαντες μέλανα βρότον ἐξ ὠτειλέων
κατθέμενοι γοάοιεν· ὃ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ θανόντων.

And then he aimed and shot mournful arrows at the other men, and they fell on top of one another. It was obvious that one of the gods was helping them, as they immediately began killing in all directions throughout the house, following their bloodlust. A wretched groan arose from the heads of the slain men, and the whole floor was awash with blood. This is how we were killed, Agamemnon, and even now our bodies still lie untended in Odysseus's hall, since the friends we each have at home do not know yet; they would wash the black blood from our wounds and lay us out and bewail us. For this is the honor due the dead. (*Odyssey* 24.180-190)

This is the ending of Amphimedon's *Odyssey*: not the reconciliation of Odysseus and Penelope, but the desecration of the suitors' corpses. The same theme of deception and concealment that has run throughout Amphimedon's story characterizes this final action as well, as Odysseus conceals the suitors' own bodies from the world. The impropriety which the suitors complained of at the beginning — Penelope refusing to respond properly to courtship — is mirrored by Odysseus's refusal to allow the suitors' families the proper funeral rites. Amphimedon's account is obviously designed to elicit pathos for the suitors, emphasizing their suffering and selectively omitting details. For example, he plays up their helplessness by leaving out the fact that the suitors armed themselves and fought back; in fact, Amphimedon's assertion that Odysseus and Telemachus locked away the armor and “shut the bolts”

(24.166: ἐκλήϊσεν ὀχῆας) specifically conflicts with the detail that the suitors were able to arm themselves because Telemachus left the door of the armory open (22.155-156).

Such details were once seized upon by the Analysts as evidence of the disunity of the text — in particular, Amphimedon’s charge that Odysseus colluded with Penelope to set up the bow contest (24.167-169) was taken as referring to an alternate version of the story in which Odysseus reveals himself to Penelope earlier, clumsily inserted by a later redactor not familiar with the details of our *Odyssey*.⁶⁵ And indeed this *is* a different version of the story: one authored by Amphimedon in the moment, for the purpose of illustrating a unified picture of a malicious and deceptive Odysseus. Here, Amphimedon, eager to persuade Agamemnon that the act against the suitors was outrageous, continues to demonstrate the present-centric focus that informs all Homeric storytelling, presenting a version of events that is less concerned with “what happened” than with elaborating a basic story framework into a version that suits his rhetorical purposes. Even if it could be proved that his alteration of details matched some competing external version of the story, I would be more inclined to interpret this as an intertextual nod to the multiformity of tradition than clumsy storytelling — but internally to the world of the *Odyssey* it is a reasonable storytelling move by Amphimedon, serving his overall goal of illustrating the duplicity of Odysseus. The significant divergence of his *Odyssey* from ours is not in the incidental details but in the basic interpretation of the meaning of Odysseus’s acts and character; Amphimedon’s *Odyssey* is different from ours.

This multiplicity of interpretative possibilities is underlined by Agamemnon’s reaction to Amphimedon’s story. After all the pains Amphimedon takes to paint Penelope and Odysseus as treacherous and impious, Agamemnon — although he had begun by showing sympathy to the crowd of

⁶⁵ See e.g. Page (1955: 122-130).

slaughtered nobles — responds by addressing not Amphimedon, but the absent Odysseus. Christos Tsagalos reads this as a metapoetic moment where Agamemnon and Amphimedon are forgotten, and the (personified) Odyssean tradition addresses the character.⁶⁶ While my reading is more specifically interested in the specifics of the situation — the clash of point of view between the suitors and Odysseus — I share the intuition that what is at stake here is the future epic tradition, here imagined as in its infancy. Agamemnon responds as if the story he had heard was a different *Odyssey* from the one Amphimedon told:

ὄλβιε Λαέρταο πάϊ, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ,
 ἧ ἄρα σὺν μεγάλῃ ἀρετῇ ἐκτήσω ἄκοιτιν·
 ὥς ἀγαθαὶ φρένες ἦσαν ἀμύμονι Πηνελοπείῃ,
 κούρη Ἰκαρίου, ὥς εὖ μέμνητ' Ὀδυσῆος,
 ἀνδρὸς κουριδίου. τῷ οἱ κλέος οὐ ποτ' ὀλεῖται
 ἧς ἀρετῆς, τεύξουσιν δ' ἐπιχθονίοισιν ἀοιδὴν
 ἀθάνατοι χαρίεσσαν ἐχέφρονι Πηνελοπείῃ

Blessed son of Laertes, much-resourceful Odysseus: it seems you have got a wife with great virtue indeed. What fine wits faultless Penelope had, the daughter of Icarus; how well she remembered Odysseus, her proper husband. Thus the *kleos* of her virtue will never die; the immortal gods will make for the people on earth a charming song for Penelope with all her intelligence. (*Odyssey* 24.192-198)

This shift in focalization is indicated from the full-line address in the beginning, indicating that the evaluation of the situation is to be from an Odyssean perspective. As Amphimedon had begun with a detailed critique of Penelope, so Agamemnon focuses on her, but reverses the suitor's criticism into praise: in place of the complaints of her treacherous trick (*dolos*) is a celebration of the loyalty and “fine wits” of “Penelope with all her intelligence.” Building upon her own act of “remembering” Odysseus

⁶⁶ Tsagalos (2007: 35): “it is not so much the soul of Agamemnon who speaks, but *the tradition of the Odyssey* addressing its main hero, Odysseus ... By addressing Odysseus, the Odyssean tradition ‘erases’ the personae of Agamemnon and Amphimedon, who are physically present, and summons on stage not the narrative Odysseus, but the Odysseus of all time, the one who has surpassed the limits of the action and has become the trademark of the collective consciousness of the tradition.”

(which we might interpret as “adhering to the interpretation of their marriage and the status of his house that Odysseus wants remembered during his absence”) Agamemnon proclaims that memory of Penelope — her fame, the *kleos* of her *aretê* — will last forever.⁶⁷ This builds upon a dominant theme of the underworld passage in Book 24, as I discuss above: Agamemnon has made a similar statement to Achilles about the secure future of his *kleos* at 24.93-94. But here Agamemnon is even more explicit in specifically connecting the memorialization of deeds with bardic performance, calling the activity of future humans commemorating Penelope a “song” (*aoidê*), the same noun that has been used for the performances of the bards Phemius (1.351) and Demodocus (8.44). The future tense verb τεύξουσι — the gods “will make” a song — continues the Homeric orientation in which the past looks ahead to bardic performances such as the *Odyssey* itself; it also serves as a strong contrast to the story we have just heard from Amphimedon. If the song commemorating this situation will not be created until the future, then Amphimedon’s version sympathetic to the suitors must not be that song.

But it is too tidy to make a simple equation of our *Odyssey* with this future song that offers Penelope unadulterated praise. Strictly speaking, our *Odyssey* does not include the story of Penelope’s most renowned trick: as Homer begins the epic after the trick has been uncovered, our poem includes characters who tell that story, presenting a world, much like ours, in which Penelope’s weaving is a tale people tell. The *Odyssey* thus seems to be this poem of praise for Penelope while simultaneously maintaining a distance, encompassing an alternate point of view about her and Odysseus’s *aretê* by

⁶⁷ Because the Greek οἱ can be masculine or feminine, it is possible to translate the phrase as “the *kleos* of his *aretê*,” referring to the glory Odysseus derives from his association with Penelope, a translation proposed by Nagy (1979: 37-38). For a summary of the debate, see Katz (1991: 21). Although I am inclined to believe that referent is Penelope, given the focus of the entire passage and the contrast with the “hateful song” that Clytemnestra will *be*, for my present purposes the indeterminacy is actually somewhat useful; Odysseus and Penelope’s stories are linked and difficult to separate, as is the praise for their similar attributes. On the connection between female remembering and epic memorialization with Penelope’s *kleos*, see Mueller 2007.

including it in the voice of the suitors. There is a hint of this in the second half of Agamemnon's response to Amphimedon, in which he provides a point of contrast for the positive song that will be written for Penelope:

οὐχ ὡς Τυνδαρέου κόρη κακὰ μήσατο ἔργα,
κουρίδιον κτείνασα πόσιν, στυγερὴ δέ τ' αἰοιδὴ
ἔσσετ' ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους, χαλεπὴν δέ τε φῆμιν ὀπάσσει
θηλותרῆσι γυναιξί, καὶ ἥ κ' εὐεργὸς ἔησιν.

Not so the daughter of Tyndareus (Clytemnestra), who plotted evil deeds and killed her proper husband. She will be a hateful song among humanity, and she will give a bad reputation to the female sex of women, even one who is a doer of good deeds. (*Odyssey* 24.199-202)

This is the final of a series of references to the "Oresteia" that occur throughout the *Odyssey*,⁶⁸ the dysfunctional House of Atreus offering a foil to the ultimately stable family of Odysseus. Many critics have examined the parallels the *Odyssey* establishes between the two heroes' homecomings; Marilyn Katz suggests that the Oresteia functions as an authoritative and established exemplar of a *nostos* towards which the plot of the *Odyssey* is pulled, and Douglas Olson suggests that each reference to this other exemplar manipulates the audience's expectations about the present poem's unfolding plot.⁶⁹ Agamemnon had made a similar remark about Clytemnestra before, during Odysseus's first visit to the underworld in Book 11, when the issue of Penelope's fidelity was much more uncertain.⁷⁰ Now that the plot has come to an end, Agamemnon can compare the two women's actions with Penelope meriting a positive assessment; she, it turns out, was faithful to her husband when Clytemnestra was not. But there is something a bit odd about the placement of this comparison by Agamemnon, coming as a response to

⁶⁸ These references are collected by de Jong (2001: 591).

⁶⁹ Katz (1991: 20-53); Olson (1995: 24-42).

⁷⁰ Some of the lines about Clytemnestra are even repeated nearly verbatim (11.433-434 ~ 24.201-202). Olson (1995: 38-39) reads the statement from Book 11 as part of the *Odyssey*'s sustained effort to create uncertainty about Penelope's fidelity.

Amphimedon's story that had the opposite message: women like Penelope cannot be trusted. For if Agamemnon were to respond to the story Amphimedon had actually told it, the more obvious lines of similarity might have been between himself and the suitors, and between the treacherous Clytemnestra and Penelope: both women joined with their concealed lover to cause a surprise slaughter. Amphimedon's phrase to describe the slaughter of the suitors — "the whole floor was awash with blood" (δάπεδον δ' ἅπαν αἵματι θῦεν) — is used only one other time in the poem, by Agamemnon at 11.420 to describe the slaughter he and his men suffered at the hands of Aegisthus. In that same passage he calls his wife *Klytaimêstrê dolomêtis*, "Clytemnestra clever with tricks" (11.422). This epithet is devoted exclusively to Clytemnestra and Aegisthus in the *Odyssey*,⁷¹ but it conspicuously combines two terms *dolos* and *mêtis* that are used throughout the poem as characteristic of Odysseus and Penelope's craftiness. The juxtaposition of Clytemnestra and Penelope here highlights the degree to which, as Katz argues, "the ambiguity of <the qualities of *dolos* and *mêtis*> opens the pathway through which the *kleos* of Odysseus and Penelope might become their *akleia* ("lack of fame") or *dyskleia* ("bad fame")."⁷² The end of Agamemnon's speech returns to the notion of reputation sealed with song: Clytemnestra will be sung of too, but she will be a "hateful song" (*stygerê aoidê*) which will give all women a bad reputation, even the good ones. In this suggestion of the power of rumor and reputation to override alternate points of view — even correct ones — Agamemnon encapsulates the move that will happen at the end of the *Odyssey*. The massacred suitors and their survivors have a case to be made, and perhaps it is a legitimate one. But it seems unlikely that it will be the one that ends up in song.

The Ithacans' Story

⁷¹ In addition to the line cited, the only other uses of *dolomêtis* in Homer are to describe Aegisthus at 1.300, 3.198, 250, 308, 4.525.

⁷² Katz (1991: 24).

This vacillation between the points of view of the suitors and Odysseus, so clearly on display with Amphimedon's story and Agamemnon's response, continues throughout Book 24, until finally these alternative readings of events come into direct confrontation with each other, with the struggle for interpretive authority — the ability to promote one's own version of a narrative into the canon — literalized as a battle between the suitors' families and Odysseus and his followers. Although Odysseus is in the end victorious, the sinister aspect of his deception and trickery is apparent throughout this final book; even if in the end Odysseus's side of the argument seems to have won, the epic ends on a note of uncertainty that leaves the audience unsure quite what to think of its hero. Throughout this final portion of the epic there is a continued interest in what memory of these events will be left behind. After having considered the suitors' point of view in the underworld, the narrative returns to Ithaca and Odysseus's reunification with his family, which culminates in his final revelation of himself to his father Laertes at 24.205-411. This scene serves to reorient our sympathies to Odysseus's side by demonstrating the pathetic squalor the old man has fallen into under the suitors and the tenderness of their reunion, but it also underlines Odysseus's bottomless capacity for creating narrative, as well as the more sinister, "trickster" aspect of his character, as his initial strategy of deceiving his destitute father with a false identity has struck many commentators as malicious and unnecessary.⁷³

After revisiting the Odyssean point of view, the Narrator returns his focus to the families of the suitors, as we see the very spread of rumors Odysseus had previously (23.362) voiced his interest in

⁷³ Now that athetizing inconvenient passages has fallen out of fashion, critics either read this passage as evidence of Odysseus's concern with showing his own cleverness at the expense of his loved ones' feelings (as I do), or suggest some framework whereby Odysseus's actions are not malicious, but serve some useful purpose, such as testing his father's resolve or helping him gradually recover from grief and reintegrate himself into society. For bibliography and a summary of opinions, see Clayton (2004: 78-81), whose own opinion is that this is actually *Homer* giving a show of his own *mêtis*, bringing Odysseus's lying tales to a close with an episode that offers a chance for metapoetic reflection on false identities, naming, and the poetic construction of type scenes.

controlling:

Ὅσσα δ' ἄρ' ἄγγελος ὥκα κατὰ πτόλιν ῥέχετο πάντη
μνηστήρων στυγερὸν θάνατον καὶ κῆρ' ἐνέπουσα.
οἱ δ' ἄρ' ὁμῶς αἶοντες ἐφοίτων ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος
μυχμῶ τε στοναχῇ τε δόμων προπάροιθ' Ὀδυσῆος...

Then swiftly the messenger Rumor moved fast through the town, telling of the suitors' death and doom. Those who heard all flocked together, each from a different place, moaning and wailing in front of the house of Odysseus. (*Odyssey* 24.413-416)

Again, the repetition of the verb *ennepein* for this gossip about the death of the suitors circulating among the Ithacans suggests a parallel to the stories Odysseus and Penelope told each other in bed (23.301: πρὸς ἀλλήλους *ἐνέποντες*), and to the bard's divinely inspired act of narrating the *Odyssey* itself (1.1: ἄνδρα μοι *ἔννεπε* Μοῦσα). The personification of the narrator of these vaguely defined accounts of the slaughter of the suitors as "Rumor" (*Ossa*), hints at the multiformity of the tradition at this early state, which is not yet reducible to a single point of view. With the gathering of mourners in front of Odysseus's home, there is a literalization of the trope discussed above, the hypothetical "if one of the Ithacans were to witness this..." employed by Athena at the beginning of the epic (1.277-229) with regard to the suitors' bad behavior, and revisited by Odysseus at the end after the slaughter of the suitors (23.135-138). After this speculation about audience response that has run through our entire poem, the hypothetical audience becomes real and the Ithacans' reaction of grief and indignation at the deaths of the youth of Ithaca runs counter to the interpretation of events the *Odyssey* itself has often highlighted, in which Odysseus's actions are deemed deserving of glory and praise.

After seeing to the burial of the dead, this group of Ithacans convenes for a final assembly, one which serves in many ways as a mirror of the assembly Telemachus called (2.6 ff.) to discuss the problem

with the suitors.⁷⁴ At this final assembly the tension between the competing interpretations of events is given voice by the character Eupheithes, father of Antinous:

ὦ φίλοι, ἦ μέγα ἔργον ἀνὴρ ὅδε μήσατ' Ἀχαιοὺς·
τοὺς μὲν σὺν νήεσσιν ἄγων πολέας τε καὶ ἐσθλοὺς
ᾤλεσε μὲν νῆας γλαφυράς, ἀπὸ δ' ᾤλεσε λαούς,
τοὺς δ' ἐλθὼν ἔκτεινε Κεφαλλήνων ὄχ' ἀρίστους.
ἀλλ' ἄγετε, πρὶν τοῦτον ἢ ἐς Πύλον ᾧκα ἰκέσθαι
ἢ καὶ ἐς Ἥλιδα διὰν, ὅθι κρατέουσιν Ἐπειοί,
ἴομεν· ἢ καὶ ἔπειτα κατηφές ἐσσόμεθ' αἰεὶ.
λῶβη γὰρ τάδε γ' ἐστὶ καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι,
εἰ δὴ μὴ παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φονῆας
τεισόμεθ'.

My friends, it is truly an egregious act this man has plotted against the Achaeans! One group he led out in ships, many good men; first he lost the hollow ships, then he lost the men. Another group he killed upon his return, the best of the Cephallenians by far. But come: before he rushes to Pylos or to divine Elis, where the Epeians rule, we must go. Otherwise, after he does this, we will be burdened with shame forever. For it will be a disgrace for future generations to hear this as well, if we do not get our revenge on the murderers of our sons and brothers. (*Odyssey* 24.426-435)

Here again we see a sharp delineation of the two interpretations of the story, as the version sympathetic to the suitors — previously offered by the now-dead Antinous and Amphimedon — continues to be circulated in the world of the living by Antinous's father. The charge that Odysseus "plotted" to kill the suitors is reminiscent of Amphimedon's claim that during their courtship Penelope was "planning the black fate of death for us" (24.127: ἡμῖν φραζομένη θάνατον καὶ κῆρα μέλαιναν), the implication being that the suitors were not the recipients of just punishment, but victims lured into Odysseus's trap. In fact, Eupheithes' phrase "plotted ... an egregious act" (μέγα ἔργον ... μήσατ') recalls Agamemnon's statement a few hundred lines before, that Clytemnestra "plotted evil acts" (24.199: κακὰ μήσατο ἔργα) against him; as I argue above, Agamemnon's response to Amphimedon's speech had implied an equation of the *dolos*

⁷⁴ On the relationship between the two assembly scenes, see Heubeck (1954: 39-40).

and *mêtis* of Aegisthus/Clytemnestra and Odysseus/Penelope.⁷⁵ Eupeithes continues the final book's trend of looking ahead to a time when the events of the *Odyssey* have become a story; if Odysseus's version is allowed to become the dominant one, future audiences will join him in viewing the suitors and their families as the villains, "a disgrace for future generations." The call to action — "let's go" — suggests that one of Eupeithes' disagreements with Odysseus concerns how and when the story of the *Odyssey* should end — recall Amphimedon's account to Agamemnon, which concluded with the suitors' slaughtered bodies in a heap, unseen and unmourned. Now, faced with the threat of Odysseus rallying support by spreading his version around the Greek world, Eupeithes aims to combat this trend by not allowing the narrative to be finished.⁷⁶ Like Achilles and Agamemnon during their quarrel in the *Iliad*, Eupeithes is aware that his words and actions are shaping the future epic tradition. By continuing to act, he hopes to shape that tradition according to his interpretation. The battle he stages with Odysseus is thus a battle of competing versions of the story on multiple levels: if Eupeithes' side is victorious he will have forged a new ending to the story in which the deceitful Odysseus is punished for his crimes against Ithaca, and he will have secured for himself a position of authority from which to ensure that it is that version of the story which is told.

But even within the text of the *Odyssey*, we are warned almost immediately that Eupeithes' opinion is in the minority. He has scarcely finished voicing it when the assembly is overrun with partisans of Odysseus's point of view: the herald Medon, the seer Halitherses, and the bard Phemius.

⁷⁵ In fact, of the ten other uses of this conjugated form (ἐ)μήσατ(ο) in the *Odyssey*, seven refer to Aegisthus and Clytemnestra's plotting against Agamemnon (3.194, 249, 261, 303, 11.429, 24.96, 199). In one of these cases (3.261) the verb is used with the same object μέγα ἔργον ("egregious act") that Eupeithes uses here in the case of Odysseus.

⁷⁶ In this sense, the situation Eupeithes faces in Book 24 is a microcosm of Odysseus's situation for most of the *Odyssey* itself. As Van Nortwick (2008: 9) argues, the *Odyssey* presents a world in which many characters (e.g. Nestor, Menelaus, Helen, as well as Agamemnon and Achilles in the underworld) consider their active participation in the world of epic to have ended with the Trojan war; their engagement with the world of epic now consists of sitting back and remembering. "Odysseus, by contrast, fights on. For him, the war is not yet over."

Each of them have specifically demonstrated their allegiance to Odysseus in the poem: Halitherses (like his fellow seer Calchas in *Iliad* 1) warns the suitors of the impiety of their actions at 2.157 ff., and is twice numbered among the “longtime friends of <Telemachus’s> father” (2.254 = 17.69: οἳ τε οἱ ἐξ ἀρχῆς πατρώιοι ... ἑταῖροι), and Medon and Phemius are specifically spared by Odysseus and his followers at 22.330-380. It has been argued that Phemius is spared because Homeric society accepts his “plea of *force majeure*” at 22.350-353 — the suitors used their superior strength to compel him to sing and associate with them — is an reasonable justification for performing “an action which one would not, of one’s own accord, choose to do.”⁷⁷ But then what are we to do with the suitor/priest Leodes, whose claim (22.312-317) that he is not only innocent, but in fact attempted to curb the other suitors’ bad behavior is actually corroborated by the Narrator?⁷⁸ Leodes is slaughtered without mercy; Odysseus explains that if he is a priest, he must at some point have made prayers against him, and kills him before the discussion can go any further (22.321-329). The difference between Leodes, on the one hand, and Phemius and Medon, on the other, has to do with their relationships to narrative. It is no coincidence that that Odysseus cuts off his head as the priest is attempting to talk (22.329: φθεγγομένου δ’ ἄρα τοῦ γε κάρη κονίησιν ἐμίχθη), for Leodes’ explanation of his past behavior undermines Odysseus’s black and white picture of uniformly evil suitors, and replaces it with a more nuanced sketch of human beings doing their best given their circumstances. The priest’s final words are telling: “there is no thanks for past good deeds” (22.319: οὐκ ἔστι χάρις μετόπισθ’ εὐεργέων). What matters is not what actually happened in the past, but the story that

⁷⁷ Teffeteller 2003: 19.

⁷⁸ When Leodes has his turn at the bow contest, the Narrator introduces him with the detail that “only to him were the suitors’ outrages hateful, and he was angry with all of them” (21.146-147: ἀτασθαλῖαι δέ οἱ οἴω | ἔχθραι ἔσαν, πᾶσιν δὲ νεμέσσα μνηστήρεσσιν). On Leodes’ innocence, see Allan (2006: 24).

gets told in the future, and this is quite explicitly the reason Phemius and Medon are spared, as Odysseus himself tells Medon:

θάρσει, ἐπεὶ δὴ σ' οὔτος ἐρύσατο καὶ ἐσάωσεν,
ὄφρα γνῶς κατὰ θυμὸν, ἀτὰρ εἴπησθα καὶ ἄλλω,
ὥς κακοεργίης εὐεργεσίη μέγ' ἀμείνων.

Cheer up, for <Telemachus> here has indeed defended and saved you; this is so that you will know in your heart — and tell others as well — how much better doing good is than doing bad. (*Odyssey* 22.372-374)

There is an echo of Leodes' "there is no thanks for past good deeds (*euergea*)" in this claim that "doing good (*euergesiè*) is better than doing bad," as Odysseus reverses the moral that the priest had wanted to attach to the narrative of the slaughter of the suitors. Leodes had to be killed because both his life and his words had stood in opposition to the story Odysseus wants to tell "the suitors were all evil, and so I was justified in killing them."

So too Phemius's request for leniency opens not with a "plea of *force majeure*" concerning what happened in the past, but with a nod to the bard's future utility:

αὐτῷ τοι μετόπισθ' ἄχος ἐσσεταί, εἴ κεν ἀοιδὸν
πέφνης, ὅς τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισιν ἀείδω.
αὐτοδίδακτος δ' εἰμὶ, θεὸς δέ μοι ἐν φρεσὶν οἶμας
παντοίας ἐνέφυσεν· ἔοικα δέ τοι παραεῖδεν
ὥς τε θεῶ· τῷ μὴ με λιλαιέο δειροτομήσαι.

You will have grief in the future yourself if you kill a bard like me, who sings to gods and men. I am self-taught; a god has implanted all kinds of songs in my mind. When I sing at your side it seems as though it is to a god. So don't be so eager to cut my throat. (*Odyssey* 22.345-349)

These lines have received no end of commentary, particularly on the rare word *autodidaktos*, and what it might mean to be both self-taught and taught by the gods.⁷⁹ The metapoetic implications of this meeting of poet and protagonist are irresistible; Pietro Pucci highlights the contrast between the sad songs of painful *nostoi* that Phemius sang at the beginning of the *Odyssey* and the happy song of victory — i.e. an *Odyssey* — which he promises here; Zachary Biles evokes “the traditional idea that without a singer the final transformation of Odysseus’ experiences into poetic glory cannot be achieved.”⁸⁰ But this is not only a celebration of a bard like Homer’s unique ability to award undying fame;⁸¹ Phemius also has a slightly more immediate future in mind. Having a bard with a wide audience “sing at your side” is a good way to promote one’s own ideology during one’s own life, to make one “seem like a god.” With the provocative comment that he can produce “all kinds of songs,” Phemius perhaps suggests his ability to tell Odysseus’s story however he wants it told. And indeed, as we have already seen, Odysseus utilizes his ability to construct a narrative immediately. It is Phemius who plays the wedding song for the anonymous audience of Ithacans to hear coming out of the palace, rewriting reality so that, for the moment, this slaughter is “read” as a celebration. This is certainly how Odysseus reads it.

If we return to the meeting of the suitors’ relatives in Book 24, we will see that the only men from his house Odysseus has allowed to remain alive to join this assembly — the singer, the herald, the prophet — are those whose function is to communicate messages to the public. Thus, we are justified in viewing these three characters’ appearance to counter Eupheithes’ call to arms at the Ithacan assembly at 24.439 ff. as a continuation of the struggle between Odysseus (now represented by his emissaries) and

⁷⁹ While the passage was once read as delineating the separate roles of divine inspiration and individual talent in a poet’s ability to compose and perform, many would now see the two as inseparable in Homeric thought. For summaries of opinions (with bibliography), see e.g. Thalmann (1984: 126-129). Ford (1992: 33), Hummel (1999).

⁸⁰ Pucci (1987: 228-235); Biles (2003: 206).

⁸¹ Cf. Stanford (1965a: 296), “H. misses no good opportunity of glorifying his own profession.”

the suitors (now represented by their families) to control what narrative — what *Odyssey* — will be made out of what has happened. After the intervention by these partisans of Odysseus, Eupheithes' viewpoint remains in the minority. “More than half” (24.464: ἡμίσεων πλείους) applaud the advice of Medon and Halitherses to forget the killing of their sons and brothers — or in fact, to consider *themselves* responsible for the deaths of their loved ones⁸² because they were not quicker to subscribe to the Odyssean viewpoint and oppose the suitors' courtship of Penelope even when it seemed likely her husband was dead. As Odysseus has now demonstrated through his show of force, the narrative authority of the version of the story that he and his representatives are propagating is aligned with his military authority. His ability to control action in his storytelling and in his world are interconnected. The fact that the Ithacans' acquiescence is more the product of coercion by force than persuasion by reason is hinted in the Ithacans' response to Medon's speech: “all were caught in the grip of yellow fear” (450: τοὺς δ' ἄρα πάντα ὑπὸ χλωρὸν δέος ἦρει). In contrast, the only tool left for the suitors' families to employ is persuasion, a point highlighted by the “Significant Name” of their spokesman, Eupheithes (“Well-Persuasive”).⁸³ Thus, even though “more than half” of the Ithacans are content to allow Odysseus's interpretation of events to go unchallenged, there are still “crowds” (464: ἄθροοι) remaining who, Homer as tells us, “were not pleased with this story (*mythos*) in their hearts” (465: οὐ γὰρ σφιν ἄδε μῦθος ἐνὶ φρεσίν) and are willing to fight to keep their version from disappearing. This sets the stage for the

⁸² Halitherses tells them, “It was through your own evil that this deed was done, my friends” (24.455: ὑμετέρῃ κακότητι, φίλοι, τάδε ἔργα γέγοντο). For more on the assignment of responsibility of the suitors' deaths, as well as the significance of forgetting, see my discussion at the conclusion of the present chapter.

⁸³ The phrase “Significant Name” for the *Odyssey*'s multitude of names which are transparently constructed of parts that in some way define their characters was coined by Stanford (1959). The text even makes a pun on the significance of the name by affirming that those who did go on to fight for the suitors' point of view were “persuaded by Persuasive” (465-466: Εὐπείθει | πείθοντ'). De Jong's interpretation (2001a: 584) that this wordplay “is inserted by the narrator to explain implicitly why so many listened to Eupheithes, who was wrong, rather than Halitherses, who was right” is not satisfying to me; in what objective sense is Eupheithes' account of events “wrong”? For names in the *Odyssey* in general, see e.g. Austin (1972), Peradotto (1990: 94-119).

final conflict of the poem, a confrontation that does not so much pit Odysseus against the Ithacans as it does his version of the *Odyssey* against theirs.

To catch another glimpse of this Ithacan perspective, let us briefly revisit the Ithacan assembly that occupies much of Book 2, in which Telemachus and Alcinous (the sons of the two competing parties in the final book, Odysseus and Eupheithes) delineate their competing interpretations of the situation on Ithaca. Here I will consider a small detail from the beginning of the poem whose significance is only fully realized, I argue, when read against the poem's conclusion. Towards the end of his speech, Telemachus had made a direct plea to the Ithacan people (a group presumably similar in composition to that which Eupheithes addresses in Book 24⁸⁴) in an attempt to shame them for their inaction in the face of the suitors' attack on his house:

σχέσθε, φίλοι, καί μ' οἶον ἔασατε πένθει λυγρῷ
τείρεσθ', εἰ μή πού τι πατήρ ἐμὸς ἐσθλὸς Ὀδυσσεὺς
δυσμενέων κάκ' ἔρεξεν ἐϋκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοῦς,
τῶν μ' ἀποτεινύμενοι κακὰ ῥέζετε δυσμενέοντες,
τούτους ὀτρυνοντες.

Stop, friends, and leave me alone to be ground down by painful grief — unless perhaps my father, good Odysseus, had some ill will toward the Achaeans in their fine greaves and did them some harm, and as revenge for this you have ill will toward me and are doing me harm by encouraging these men (the suitors). (*Odyssey* 2.70-74)

Presumably Telemachus offers this suggestion sarcastically, considering the notion that the Ithacans have some actual motivation for allowing this assault against his home to be absurd — and yet it exactly foreshadows Eupheithes' complaint (24.426) that Odysseus “plotted an egregious act against the Achaeans.” But even within the setting of Book 2, the exact context of Telemachus's speech is significant. Although Telemachus is the one who called this assembly, its opening speech had been made by an

⁸⁴ As Telemachus says in his first statement to the assembly, the suitors are “the dear sons of the best men who are here” (2.51: τῶν ἀνδρῶν φίλοι υἱες οἱ ἐνθάδε γ' εἰσιν ἄριστοι).

Ithacan named Aegyptius, to which Telemachus's speech is a response. After introducing Aegyptius (who here makes his only appearance in Homer) and characterizing him as a wise old man, the Narrator offers the following information about him:

καὶ γὰρ τοῦ φίλος υἱὸς ἄμ' ἀντιθέω Ὀδυσῆϊ
Ἰλιον εἰς εὐπωλον ἔβη κοίλῃσ' ἐνὶ νηυσίν,
Ἄντιφος αἰχμητῆς· τὸν δ' ἄγριος ἔκτανε Κύκλωψ
ἐν σπηΐ γλαφυρῷ, πύματον δ' ὀπλίσσατο δόρπον.
τρεῖς δέ οἱ ἄλλοι ἔσαν, καὶ ὁ μὲν μνηστήρσιν ὀμίλει,
Εὐρύνομος...

And in fact (Aegyptius's) dear son had joined godlike Odysseus in his hollow ships to travel to Troy, rich in horses. This was the spearman Antiphus, and the savage Cyclops had killed him in his vaulted cave, the last man he made into a meal. But he (Aegyptius) had three other sons, one of whom hung around with the suitors: Eurynomus... (*Odyssey* 2.17-22)

Why are these details included? De Jong names as the “primary function” the pathos in the juxtaposition of the old man's hopes for the return of Odysseus's army and the reality that they have all been destroyed.⁸⁵ To this I would add the observation that this father at home worrying over a son who has died in combat is an interesting (and typically Odyssean⁸⁶) reversal of perspective on the familiar Iliadic trope in which the Narrator eulogizes a dying warrior on the battlefield by offering a brief biographical sketch of his family and home life; here family and home life is the main focus, and it is the death of the absent warrior to which the Narrator makes a brief allusion. Such is the *Odyssey*. But the larger significance of the figure of Aegyptius is his function as a symbol of the connection between Odysseus's companions and the suitors as part of the same group, the prominent youth of Ithaca, whose familial ties to men like Aegyptius make their loss just as much a source of personal grief as the presumed loss of

⁸⁵ De Jong 2001a: 47.

⁸⁶ I find this similar to the feature of the *Odyssey* Helene Foley (1978: 8) has labeled the “reverse simile,” in which imagery that reassigns the expected relationships — e.g. when Odysseus, weeping in response to Demodocus's Trojan war song (8.523-31) is said to cry like a woman whose husband has been killed in war — seems “to suggest both a sense of identity between people in different social and sexual roles and a loss of stability, an inversion of the normal.”

Odysseus had been to Telemachus.⁸⁷

Homer has chosen the identity of Aegyptius's sons carefully. This Antiphus is mentioned by name nowhere else in the *Odyssey*, but if he was the final man eaten by Polyphemus, he is presumably one of the companions who, as Odysseus tells us, begged him to steal provisions from the Cyclops's cave and sail away before he returned, "but," Odysseus narrates, "I did not listen — how much better it would have been if I had!" (9.228: ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὐ πιθόμην – ἦ τ' ἂν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν).⁸⁸ And of Aegyptius's son Eurynomus who "hung around with the suitors" we have only one other piece of information: he is mentioned at 22.242 as part of a group of suitors who are about to be killed by Odysseus. Interestingly, in this passage from Book 22 he is named alongside Amphimedon, the suitor who will narrate Odysseus's return in Book 24. Like Amphimedon, Eurynomus's only contribution to the poem's Ithacan narrative is to fight and die as part of the mass of suitors; we are not given any specific information about their behavior toward Odysseus or his household. Therefore they are presented to us entirely in their capacity as victims, as are Odysseus's men in the cave of the Cyclops, a focalization which amplifies and legitimizes the grief of a representative of the Ithacan elders like Aegyptius. Telemachus's sarcastic challenge to Aegyptius at 2.71-72 — "unless perhaps my father, good Odysseus, did the well-armored Achaeans some harm with ill intentions" — is more significant than he realizes.

⁸⁷ See also Nagler (1990: 343) for the suggestion that "Aegyptius's grief implicitly blames Odysseus, a mere hint of the resentment against war leaders felt but often suppressed by relatives of the slain ... This sentiment thus prepares for the reaction of the *suitors'* kin."

⁸⁸ This is a formulaic line which also occurs twice in the *Iliad* (5.201, 22.103). The latter occasion is extremely memorable: Hector chastizes himself for not following the advice of Polydamas and bringing the Trojans into the city, and then follows the "I didn't listen, but that would have been much better" line directly with the statement, "but now, since I have destroyed my people by my own wickedness (*atasthalîisin*)..." (22.104: νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ ὤλεσα λαὸν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ἐμήσιν). Could this collocation of lines be a traditional pairing, which Odysseus's words would suggest to the audience? The speech of Odysseus's companion Eurylochus at 10.435 ff. suggests that there is some feeling among the men themselves that those eaten by the Cyclops died "by this man's (Odysseus's) wickedness (*atasthalîisin*)" (10.437: τούτου ... ἀτασθαλίῃσιν). See Buchan (2004: 163 ff.) and my discussion below.

Before moving on to the end of the epic and this chapter, I wish to return to Eupheithes' speech in order to consider one further aspect of his accusation against Odysseus. I repeat his opening lines:

ὦ φίλοι, ἦ μέγα ἔργον ἀνὴρ ὅδε μήσατ' Ἀχαιοὺς·
τοὺς μὲν σὺν νήεσσιν ἄγων πολέας τε καὶ ἐσθλοὺς
ᾤλεσε μὲν νῆας γλαφυράς, ἀπὸ δ' ᾤλεσε λαούς,
τοὺς δ' ἐλθὼν ἔκτεινε Κεφαλλήνων ὄχ' ἀρίστους.

My friends, it is truly an egregious act this man has plotted against the Achaeans! One group he led out in ships, many good men; he lost the hollow ships and he lost the men. Another group he killed upon his return, the best of the Cephallenians by far. (*Odyssey* 24.426-429)

From the beginning, Eupheithes takes pains to emphasize that the targets of Odysseus's crimes have been *his own fellow countrymen*. By establishing this connection between the companions Odysseus lost during his travels with the suitors he slaughtered upon his return home (τοὺς μὲν ... τοὺς δ'), Eupheithes suggests a certain continuity in Odysseus's behavior, a pattern which transcends whatever defense he might raise about the improper courtship of his wife and consumption of his property in this particular case. Odysseus is a source of death for his entire community. He has destroyed the best men of a generation, a fact underlined both in the case of his companions ("many good men") and the suitors ("the best of the Cephallenians by far").⁸⁹ In contrast to the Odyssean perspective dominant for so much of the epic, Eupheithes, like Aegyptius, offers the perspective of the Ithacan people, for whom the companions and suitors are valued members of the community, linked by virtue of the grief their losses have caused to their loved ones. Their Odysseus quite resembles Mark Buchan's assessment of the character as, "a kind

⁸⁹ Recall Agamemnon's initial impression of the suitors, upon seeing them enter Hades, as "choice men, and all the same age" (24.107: πάντες κεκριμένοι καὶ ὁμήλικες), whom anyone would classify as the "best men from throughout the city" (108: κατὰ πτόλιν ἀνδρας ἀρίστους)

of monster of *metis*, a quasi-human figure whose cunning can seem to evade the boundaries that constitute mortal human life.”⁹⁰

The relationship between Odysseus and his fellow Ithacans has been made an issue from the very beginning of the *Odyssey*. In the proem to the epic, their dynamic is introduced as part of the initial sketch of the hero’s struggles to return home:

πολλὰ δ’ ὃ γ’ ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν,
ἀρνύμενος ἥν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἐταίρων.
ἄλλ’ οὐδ’ ὥς ἐτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἰέμενός περ·
αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο,
νήπιοι

And he suffered many pains in his heart at sea, trying to win his own life and a homecoming (*nostos*) for his companions. But even so, he could not save his companions, although he wanted to. They died by their own wickedness (*atasthaliai*), the poor fools... (*Odyssey* 1.4-8)

Here we more or less are explicitly told what to think about Odysseus and his men: he suffered, he tried his hardest, they died, it was their fault. This perspective is certainly aligned with Odysseus’s implicit defense of himself in Books 9-12, and here receives an endorsement by the authoritative voice of the Narrator. But, as recent commentators have increasingly realized, the *Odyssey* and its proem do not construct this relationship to be unproblematic. Ahl and Roisman have even suggested that the poem’s narrative voice should literally be read as containing a tension between multiple perspectives. We begin with “a voice, usually identified with that of the poet” who gives the Muse instructions on how to begin the poem and has in mind an Odysseus who is “a much less culpable figure than the one who emerges in the Muse’s account” — specifically, he has more to do with the deaths of his men, the majority of whom

⁹⁰ Buchan (2004: 100).

were dead long before they came upon the cattle of Helios.⁹¹ As Michael Nagler has suggested,⁹² at a certain point this continual condemnation of the companions begins to feel like a rationalization, a defense which by its very existence suggests the opposing position it is employed to confront: Odysseus left for Troy with twelve ships of men under his command, and he has now returned with all of them dead. This is a fact suspicious in and of itself, and one that naturally demands an explanation. Mark Buchan's analysis deserves to be quoted at length:

Eupeithes' speech may very well be an example of a narrator encouraging us to cast a skeptical eye on what seems, with hindsight, to be the narrator's own unreliability in the poem ... But even this is not enough. It too easily separates ideology from reality, and it fails to see the way that the poem lays before us the success of a certain kind of fantasy of Odysseus. If the poem ends in a perturbing manner, it does so because the power of Odysseus's ideological vision for his homeland brooks no human resistance at all. Any opponents who do not play the proper role in restoring his vision of paternal power on Ithaca ... are on the point of being obliterated. So if there is something shocking at the poem's end, it is not so much that O nearly fails but that he comes all too close to succeeding. The gap between the "world of Odysseus" and the world as such is nearly closed by the almost total destruction of that world.⁹³

As Eupeithes brings his charges against Odysseus, perhaps we should be less surprised that he would think to link the deaths of the suitors with those of the companions, and more that the loss of the companions has gone totally unmentioned from the moment of Odysseus's return to Ithaca. Surely this loss itself would have been at least as devastating to the Ithacan community (represented in Book 2 by the character Aegyptius) as the loss of the suitors, and yet the *Odyssey's* foregrounding of the heroism of Odysseus focalizes events in such a way that this loss can be ignored. As we examined in the first chapter

⁹¹ Ahl and Roisman (1996: 23-24). Rabel (1997) suggests a similar dichotomy between authorial voice and narrating Muse for the *Iliad*.

⁹² Nagler 1990: 338-339.

⁹³ Buchan (2004: 4). See also his reading (pp. 155 ff.) of all the companions as Odysseus's victims, as their destruction occurs within the overall context of his absolute position of dominance over them. Because of the capacity of the cunning Odysseus to assert his will in every situation, Buchan argues that we may interpret even the men's seeming acts of disobedience — such as their devouring of the Cattle of the Sun — as under his control.

with Achilles in the *Iliad*, the poem's macro-focalization through the interests and perspective of a single hero is accompanied by the quiet but persistent voice of the antagonists, who have been given coherent points of view which could have been (even if here they are not) expanded into quite different versions of "the same" story.

Coming to an Ending

As the final spokesman for this Ithacan version of events, Eupheithes rallies troops and prepares to face Odysseus and his supporters in the final battle of the poem. As he makes his preparations, the Narrator juxtaposes the character's hopes for the future with an assurance that this final holdout in championing the anti-Odyssean ideology is dooming himself to the fate of Odysseus's other opponents at the same time as he takes up their narrative:

τοῖσιν δ' Εὐπείθης ἡγήσατο νηπιέησι·
φῆ δ' ὃ γε τεῖσεσθαι παιδὸς φόνον, οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔμελλεν
ἄψ' ἀπονοστήσειν, ἀλλ' αὐτοῦ πότμον ἐφύσειν.

Eupheithes commanded these men in his foolishness (*nêpieai*). He thought that he would avenge the murder of his son; as it turned out, he was never to return home (*aponostêsein*) again, but would meet his fate there. (*Odyssey* 24.469-471)

Clearly the use of the verb *aponostêein* ("to return home") here evokes the central Odyssean theme of *nostos*,⁹⁴ but in so doing it highlights Odysseus's complicated relationship with this theme: we saw above how the hero's own successful homecoming is contrasted with the failed "*nostos* of his companions" as early as the fifth line of the poem. So too the narrator's reference to the *nêpieai* ("foolishness") of Eupheithes' quest reminds us of the epithet *nêpios* ("poor fool"), which the Narrator also uses with reference to the companions in the proem (1.8), and the suitors in their final moments before they are killed by Odysseus (22.32), locked in his home and prevented from returning to their own. Like them,

⁹⁴ On *nostos* as a genre and a concept, see e.g. Bonifazi (2009).

Eupeithes is robbed of his homecoming when he dies in the battle at 24.520-525, and if the battle had been allowed to continue, the Narrator tells us, Odysseus and his followers “would surely have killed them all and made them all homecomingless (*anostoi*)” (24.528: κε δὴ πάντας ὄλεσαν καὶ θῆκαν ἀνόστους). This adjective *a-nostos* (“without homecoming”) is noteworthy, extremely rare in Greek literature overall and used by Homer only here. It serves — as does this counterfactual statement as a whole — to align these Ithacans with the rest of Odysseus’s victims, to suggest the extent of the loss of life our hero is obligated (and willing) to create in order for his version of his own story to prevail.

In addition to its resonance within the *Odyssey*, this proleptic revelation that Eupeithes “was never to return home again” engages with a common Iliadic formulation as well, which I wish to discuss briefly. The verb *aponosteein* is used in only one other passage in the *Odyssey*, with reference to Odysseus’s own homecoming,⁹⁵ but it is used several times in the *Iliad*, always in this same line-initial formula (ἄψ ἀπονοστήσειν).⁹⁶ In fact, as we shall see, in Homeric poetry *aponosteein* is *always* used in conjunction with a prediction of how the narrative of the poem will move forward, whether in the uncertain voice of a character or the omniscient voice of the Narrator; the concrete act of traveling home represents a possible trajectory along which the plot might, or will, or could never proceed.⁹⁷ Our characters’ ability to imagine endings for their own stories is contrasted with the Narrator’s (and thus the poet’s) absolute mastery of this material. Several of the uses of *aponosteein* involve the unhappy death of

⁹⁵ In a speech by Alcinous to Odysseus at 13.5-6: “I think you will return home again without being driven back at all” (σ’ οὐ τι πάλιν πλᾶγχθέντα γ’ ὀϊῶ | ἄψ ἀπονοστήσειν).

⁹⁶ In addition to the passages I will discuss here, the Iliadic uses of the verb are 1.60 (Achilles predicts the Achaeans will be forced to return home, a passage I discuss in Chapter One) and 8.499 (Hector suggests that after their success in battle the Trojans should camp out on the plain rather than returning home).

⁹⁷ Alex Purves (2010: 65 ff.) demonstrates how the *Odyssey* follows other early Greek poetry in conceptualizing poetic plots spatially as journeys; this is highlighted by the use of the word *oimai* (“paths”) to indicate the different songs a bard has mastery over — cf. my discussion above about Phemius’s ability to sing “all kinds of songs” (*pantaiai oimai*). See also Clay (2011).

a warrior at the hands of his enemies, and are similar enough to our Eupheithes passage to warrant comparison. In one passage, the narrator comments on Achilles' inability to predict the death of Patroclus:

τό μιν οὐ ποτε ἔλπετο θυμῷ
τεθνάμεν, ἀλλὰ ζῶν ἐνιχρίμφθέντα πύλῃσιν
ἄψ ἀπονοστήσειν,

(Achilles) never imagined that he (Patroclus) was dead, but thought that he would come back home (*aponostêsein*) again alive after reaching the gates. (17.404-406)

Here Achilles' loss of Patroclus — surely one of Homeric epic's fullest explorations of the grief that comes from a loved one robbed of his homecoming by an enemy combatant — suggests the scope of the pathos resulting from the Ithacans' loss of their friends and family members, a pathos that is increased by the juxtaposition of the *expected* outcomes (Patroclus will return victorious; Eupheithes will avenge his son) with the actual ones (both men will soon die). In another Iliadic passage, the narrator comments on the Trojan Asius's choice not to dismount and fight on foot with the rest of his companions:

νήπιος, οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔμελλε κακὰς ὑπὸ κῆρας ἀλύξας
ἵπποισιν καὶ ὄχεσφιν ἀγαλλόμενος παρὰ νηῶν
ἄψ ἀπονοστήσειν προτὶ Ἴλιον ἠνεμόεσσαν.

The poor fool (*nēpios*), strutting around with his horses and chariot by the ships. As it turns out, he would not escape his wicked fate; he was never to return home (*aponostêsein*) to windy Ilium again. (*Odyssey* 12.113-115)

Here there are several striking similarities with the Narrator's comment about Eupheithes at *Odyssey* 24.469-471. In addition to the repetition of ἄψ ἀπονοστήσειν, we find in both passages the *nēpi-* root discussed above (Eupheithes led his followers with *nēpieai*, “foolishness”), as well as the “inferential particle” *ara* (“as it turns out”) and the “probability verb” *mellein* (“be likely to, be going to, be destined to”) in the phrase οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔμελλε (Il. 12.113, Od. 24.470). Egbert Bakker discusses all three of these features as part of the way in which epic poets construct the relationship between their own present and

the epic past in which their poems are set. Characters within the poems commonly use *ara* and *mellein* to present the past from a present-centric point of view, to show what “as it turns out” from present evidence, “was going to happen” in the past. This paradigm, Bakker argues, replicates the Narrator’s relationship to the material he narrates from the epic past, and offers a different perspective from which to view the problematic question of “fate” or “destiny” in Homer: “The destiny of a hero is his tradition: if the memory of the tradition says that so and so happened, then it had to be that way.”⁹⁸ When Homer calls characters *nēpios*, Bakker tells us, he does not mean that they could be thought “foolish” from their own perspective, but that their knowledge of the future — i.e. of the plot of the poem they are in — is deficient compared to that of the poet; the characters’ future is the poet’s present, and the characters’ present is the poet’s past.⁹⁹

This is all particularly poignant in the case of Eupheithes. As we have seen, his ultimate goal is not only to win a battle but also to control a narrative, working towards a future in which Odysseus’s killing of his fellow Ithacans is described as a despicable act that was punished in the end. Homer knows, as do we, that Eupheithes must fail, at least inasmuch as the ending he has in mind is not part of the epic tradition we are familiar with. But as the Narrator interrupts Eupheithes’ attempts to promote this alternate story with his blunt juxtaposition of the “real” ending — i.e. the ending of the version of this story, the *Odyssey*, that we are currently listening to — he brings the spotlight onto not only the futility of Eupheithes’ mission, but also the metapoetic concerns I have centered this chapter around. I have read Book 24 as a struggle between different characters to narrate and interpret the *Odyssey* as they each understand it, to continue past the point at which the poem and its action “ended” in Book 23 (with the

⁹⁸ Bakker 2005: 109.

⁹⁹ Bakker 2005: 112-113.

death of the suitors and the reconciliation of Penelope and Odysseus) so that they can examine, discuss, and perhaps correct this ending. So how does this extended meditation on the ending end? With the sudden insertion of Zeus and Athena, apparently as perturbed as Aristarchus and the Analysts, who quickly decide to what conclusion they will bring this encounter (and the *Odyssey*). Zeus listens bemusedly to Athena's concerns about the continuation of the action, and then quickly composes an ending:

ἔρέω δέ τοι ὡς ἐπέοικεν.
ἐπεὶ δὴ μνηστῆρας ἐτείσατο δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,
ὄρκια πιστὰ ταμόντες ὁ μὲν βασιλευέτω αἰεὶ,
ἡμεῖς δ' αὖ παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φόνοιο
ἐκλήσιν θέωμεν· τοὶ δ' ἀλλήλους φιλεόντων
ὡς τὸ πάρος, πλοῦτος δὲ καὶ εἰρήνη ἄλις ἔστω.

Let me tell you what would be best. Now that noble Odysseus has gotten his revenge on the suitors, let them strike a faithful treaty: let him be king forever, and let us create a forgetting (*eklêsis*) of the murder of their sons and brothers. And let them be friends with each other as they were before, and let there be plenty of wealth and peace. (24.481-486)

Zeus's *deus ex machina* conclusion — which Athena faithfully carries out by appearing on the battlefield just after Eupheithes is struck down by Laertes' spear — insists on its own ability to tie off every loose end, to leave no animosity among the Ithacans for their murdered relatives, no question about the legitimacy of Odysseus's rule. And it has always seemed, as we discussed in the opening of this chapter, a profoundly unsatisfying ending. Even Dorothea Wender's monograph defending the final book ends with a lamentation about this section, about what seems like an inappropriate "tone of exhaustion, of getting the whole thing over with," about which she can muster no better defense than that "the ancient audience, not expecting a grand finale, may not have minded in the least," and confesses her private

fantasy of this being a scene which she would like to imagine “the dying poet entrusting to his dutiful but prosaic son, with instructions about necessary contents, but none, alas, about style.”¹⁰⁰

But what if this is the point? What if we have been given an ending so shallow that our only choice is to reject it? Let us consider this *eklêsis* that Zeus promises. Based upon our reading of two competing narratives, we might expect this “forgetting” to signal the death of the Ithacans’ version of this story, the opposite fate of the “remembering” that characterizes memorialization in epic poetry, which Agamemnon spent the beginning of Book 24 speaking about at great length. But such a suggestion ignores the fact that this poem we are listening to (or reading), which contains this consistent counterproposal to Odysseus’s own ideology, *is* the memorialization. Returning to the formulation of Hölscher which we discussed above, the *Odyssey* may present itself as having a simple, fairy tale, “happily ever after” ending, but the naturalistic tone that the events leading up to it have taken makes this an impossibility. The truth is suggested in the way events play out for the two parties. Athena appears to the battling Ithacans, issues her proclamation from heaven, and:

τοὺς δὲ χλωρὸν δέος εἶλε·
τῶν δ’ ἄρα δεισάντων ἐκ χειρῶν ἔπτατο τεύχεα,
πάντα δ’ ἐπὶ χθονὶ πίπτε, θεᾶς ὅπα φωνησάσης·
πρὸς δὲ πόλιν τρωπῶντο λιλαιόμενοι βιότοιο.

They were seized by yellow fear. In their terror the weapons all fluttered out of their hands and fell to the ground, when the goddess spoke aloud. They turned toward the city, eager to get away with their lives. (*Odyssey* 24.533-536)

This is the last we see of the Ithacans, a reaction that clearly recalls the ending of the final assembly, in which the suitors families “all were caught in the grip of yellow fear” (24.450: τοὺς δ’ ἄρα πάντας ὑπὸ χλωρὸν δέος ἦρει) by the threats from Odysseus that his emissaries deliver. It is only from a show of force

¹⁰⁰ Wender 1978: 64.

and their own fear for their lives that the Ithacans abandon their position; this does not mean they have forgotten it. By contrast, Odysseus's final act in the poem is to disobey an order from the gods and incur the potential wrath of Zeus; unlike the rest of the Ithacans, he has to be warned twice to avoid angering the gods:

σμερδαλέον δ' ἐβόησε πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,
οἴμησεν δὲ ἄλεις ὥς τ' αἰετὸς ὑψιπετής.
καὶ τότε δὴ Κρονίδης ἀφίει ψολόεντα κεραυνόν,
καδ δ' ἔπεσε πρόσθε γλαυκώπιδος ὀβριμοπάτρης.

Divine, long-suffering Odysseus let out a terrible roar, reared back and pounced like a soaring eagle. And then Zeus, son of Cronus sent down a smoking thunderbolt, which landed in front of the mighty father's grey-eyed daughter. (*Odyssey* 24.537-540)

It is only after this thunderbolt — and another admonition from Athena — that Odysseus yields. And so, despite the fact that we are *told* by the Narrator that the two sides came together to form a truce accepting the legitimacy of Odysseus's rule, the *Odyssey's* final image is of the Ithacans running in terror and Odysseus behaving like a wild animal, getting away with a final act of defiance against the gods. Is this Odysseus as he would portray himself, or as the suitors would portray him? Perhaps the same Odysseus who would risk invoking the wrath of Zeus is the one the Ithacans rose up against for presuming to claim the power of life and death over their families. But how can there be a “forgetting” of their version of the story if we have just finished hearing it as the conclusion of the *Odyssey*?

Chapter Three

The Gods' Interruptions

In the next two chapters our focus will shift from the modification of stories by characters within the poems to the same action by their poet himself. Thus I will consider a different aspect of the poems from the stories by the human characters, one which is almost exclusively present in the voice of the Homeric Narrator: expansion of the plot through divine intervention. The machinery through which Zeus and the Olympians are brought into both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* — the so-called *Götterapparat*¹ — is regular and formulaic, integrated into both poems from beginning to end, and it operates in a very peculiar and idiosyncratic way that has received much commentary. Divine intervention is so frequent that the *lack* of interference by gods in Odysseus's *apologoi* at *Odyssey* 9-12 was once taken as evidence of their separate authorship, until Jörgensen's demonstration that character speech consistently and formulaically obscures divine intervention by stating it in generic terms ("some god").² Lesky's seminal work describes the constant "double motivation" found in Homer, a principle whereby both a divine cause and a human cause are given for many major and minor events. He argued that this does not relieve humans of their responsibility, but rather amplifies the significance of their actions.³

In his well-known treatment of Homer's gods, Jasper Griffin takes issue with James Redfield's assertion that Homer's epics contain "literary gods" who should be taken as conceptually different from the divinities the poet and audience worshipped in their everyday life.⁴ These gods are majestic and

¹ The term used by e.g. Kullman in his book-length study (1956) of the "divine machinery" in the *Iliad* from a neo-Analytic perspective. He suggests that the thoroughgoing intermingling of gods in human affairs is a Homeric innovation; as I argue in the following two chapters, it seems rather more likely that Homer is following traditional storytelling patterns.

² Jörgensen 1904: 363 ff.

³ Lesky (1961). See also Willcock (1970)

⁴ Griffin (1980: 146 ff.) on Redfield (1975).

terrifying to the human characters, Griffin argues; their constant juxtaposition of their power and easy living with the grim reality of human life and death is a defining thematic feature of the Homeric worldview. This is surely true, and I would imagine that if we had fuller knowledge of the poems' original contexts, we would see more parallels between myth and religious practice. For example, in this chapter I will discuss the role of Apollo as a supporter of the Trojans and an enemy of the Greeks purely in terms of its effects on the plot of the *Iliad*. But as Gregory Nagy has argued, Apollo's association with Achilles can be plausibly connected to their ritual opposition as rivals in hero cult; it is hard to imagine that Homer would have imposed a meticulous separation between such external facts and his poetry.⁵ At the same time, his poetry is surely informed by the traditional rules and customs for narrative treatment of the gods that would have developed over centuries of practice as a familiar trait of oral epic. One well-known example is the long-standing difficulty in assigning a coherent or defensible notion of justice or morality to the actions of the gods in Homer, despite assumptions of such a notion by the poems' human characters, as I discuss further in the following chapter.⁶ My interest here is in reading the narrative handling of the gods from the perspective of a poet who performs (or dictates) a poem while simultaneously composing it. This allows regular interventions by the gods to be considered in terms of their function as storytelling tools. The gods are specifically employed by the poet to control the speed and direction of the narrative, to restate or predict story details from the past or future, and, I believe, to introduce innovation. At times the use of the gods for these purposes is so blatant that in them we can essentially see the composing poet showing us his work, as he keeps the plot of his ongoing story organized.

⁵ Nagy (1979: 121 ff.)

⁶ Van Erp Taalman Kip (2000) persuasively illustrates the inconsistency between Homeric characters' beliefs and divine action; this is a problem which (as she notes) has been commented upon since antiquity.

This chapter's study of narrative expansion centers around a reading of one extremely specific and crucial storytelling moment: *Iliad* 7.16. At the beginning of Book 7, Hector and Paris re-enter the war after each spending all or part of Books 3-6 inside Troy, and the opening lines make it clear that the addition of these two men to the Trojan side could make enough difference to tip the tide of battle. The pair returns to the troops like a wind sent by the gods to answer the prayers of sore-armed oarsmen (7.4-7), and immediately the Trojans start making kills: Paris slays Menesthius (7.8-10), and Hector slays Eioneus (7.11-12), which seems to set off a chain reaction: next the Trojan ally Glaucus kills Iphinous (7.13-16), which brings us to the crucial moment. If this trend continues, it seems inevitable that Achilles' wish to Zeus will be granted: the Trojans will kill enough Greeks to send the rest running to Achilles with their tails between their legs. What prevents this from happening immediately after 7.16 is the intervention of the gods. Athena and Apollo suddenly and rather arbitrarily decide to stop the war and stage a duel between Ajax and Hector, which will last until sundown (7.282), meaning the first day of fighting is almost entirely a day of Achaean victory, beginning and ending with duels that, while indecisive, clearly project Greek winners in both cases, and punctuated by Diomedes' *aristeia*. The three kills by Hector, Paris, and Glaucus narrated at 7.1-16 seem to have no significance to the overall story at all.

Now we will consider this moment of Trojan victory at the beginning of *Iliad* 7 and read its storytelling from the perspective of the oralist. If we consider our poems the products of composition in performance, then we can see this moment at 7.16 (along with many like it) as an open-ended hub offering the singer has a binary storytelling choice.⁷ Suppose he feels that a meandering series of battles

⁷ Scodel (1999: 33 and *passim*) discusses the phenomenon of "local motivation," calling its prevalence "perhaps the most characteristic features of Homeric narrative." See further in Chapter 4.

and duels is tedious for this audience; they seem hungry for resolution on Zeus's promise to Achilles. All he would have to do is skip directly to (what we have as) Book 11.84, in which the main Greek warriors are all wounded and Patroclus visits Nestor and learns of the direness of the situation, and from there to our Book 16, which begins with Achilles sending Patroclus (now sympathetic to the Achaeans) into battle, and thus leads to the poem's conclusion. The coherence of the *Iliad* from Book 16 to the end would, in fact, be virtually unaffected by the removal of these eight books of the *Iliad* (7-10, 12-15) — a basic point which has been at the heart of more than a century of Homeric scholarship.⁸ Therefore the poet's decision at this moment *not* to short-circuit the *Iliad*'s potentially long plot must be viewed as a purposeful choice, an expansion, one that has been made for the benefit of an audience that is *not* tired of endless battles. One imagines a paying patron who has asked a singer to dictate "the full version" of the Wrath of Achilles song to a scribe might be an example of such an audience.⁹ In the final part of the present chapter I will suggest a more specific motivation for stopping the battle, but it seems likely that Homer's "expansion aesthetic"¹⁰ made lengthening the performance of the poem its own reward, provided that there is time to be filled and the expansion is satisfying to the audience.

In any event, for a true composer-in-performance, the factor I invoke in both scenarios — that is, the desires, expectations, and understanding of the audience — will almost always inform the decision to make one narrative choice over the other. As we will see, when the poet introduces the gods at this moment in the poem to retard the Trojan progress, they are described in terms that strongly suggest the

⁸ The detachability of so much of the *Iliad* with little affect on the rest of the poem is one of the main reasons the Analysts argued for multiple authorship, a phenomenon I discuss below.

⁹ For the affect of transcription on the shape of an epic performance in living traditions, see e.g. Scodel (2002: 48) on the phenomenon of "notional epic" and "induced epic," and Jensen (2011, esp. pp. 256-257).

¹⁰ Martin (1989) *passim*.

relationship between an audience and a performance. As the three aforementioned warriors on the Trojan sides make their kills, they are noticed by Athena:

τοὺς δ' ὥς οὖν ἐνόησε θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη
Ἀργείους ὀλέκοντας ἐνὶ κρατερῇ ὑσμίνῃ,
βῆ ῥα κατ' Οὐλύμποιο καρήνων αἶξασα
Ἴλιον εἰς ἱερὴν· τῇ δ' ἀντίος ὄρνυτ' Ἀπόλλων
Περγάμου ἐκκατιδών, Τρώεσσι δὲ βούλετο νίκην·
ἀλλήλοισι δὲ τῷ γε συναντέσθην παρὰ φηγῷ.

Then, when the grey-eyed goddess Athena noticed these men killing the Argives in the violent fight, she went leaping down from the peaks of Olympus to holy Ilium. Apollo rushed up to meet her as he was looking down and watching from Pergamum — he wanted victory for the Trojans. The two met with each other beside an oak tree. (*Iliad* 7.17-22)

Despite their difference in location, both gods are doing what gods do, which is the same thing audiences do: watch human life as a show. Athena “notices” the thrust of the plot; Apollo “looks down and watches” from the periphery of the action. The poems’ metaphorical equation of god with audience has been famously demonstrated by Jasper Griffin, who highlights the symbolic power of the *Iliad*’s reduction of human tragedy to the status of divine entertainment.¹¹ In her book on the narrative management of space in Greek literature, Alex Purves collects similar passages of divine spectatorship, finding the ultimate extension of the gods-as-audience metaphor in the image of Zeus

... εἰσορόων Τρώων τε πόλιν καὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν
— χαλκοῦ τε στεροπὴν, ὀλλύντάς τ' ὀλλυμένους τε.

...watching the town of the Trojans and the ships of the Achaeans — the flash of bronze, the killed and the killers. (11.82-83)

Purves finds in the limitlessness of Zeus’s perspective a metaphor for his relationship to the potentially “eusynoptic” plot of the poem — he can comprehend it all at once, and he can exert his influence upon

¹¹ Griffin 1980: 167-171, 179 ff.

it.¹² The role of Zeus in this metaphor is a question that we will consider in more detail in the following chapter; in the context of *Iliad* 7, Jenny Strauss Clay finds the same gods-as-audience metaphor at play in immediate sequel to this scene. After plans for the duel have been set into motion, Athena and Apollo assume the form of vultures and sit in the branches of an oak tree of Zeus, “taking pleasure in the men” (7.62: ἀνδράσι τερπόμενοι). The language recalls the passage we examined in the previous chapter, when Penelope and Odysseus “took pleasure in stories” (23.301: τερπέσθην μύθοισι) while re-narrating the *Odyssey* to one another.

Clay comments on the separation between man and divinity which is inherent in the two gods “impassively enjoying the spectacle” as “from their respective grandstands, the gods ... cheer on their favorites or fear for their safety.”¹³ However, just as with audiences in real-world oral performances, the gods play a significant role in shaping their own entertainment: the scene that Athena and Apollo impassively watch is one they have personally set into motion. As we shall see, it is, in fact, the result of a careful negotiation of the same partisanship that causes them to cheer or feel fear for their favorites. The familiar partisan alignment of the gods naturally extends to their roles as audience members: Athena is concerned about Greek deaths, Apollo hopes for Trojan victory. In the absence of any consensus about the original intended performance context of the *Iliad*, one cannot say whether the balance of pro-Greek and pro-Trojan sympathies represented dynamics at play in the real-world audience, but the idea is not impossible. The special mention made of the descendents of Aeneas as future rulers of Troy (20.307-308) has often been taken as a nod to some contemporary ruling family in Asia Minor, for example.¹⁴

¹² Purves (2010: 33). Clay (2011: 4) makes a similar point independently.

¹³ Clay (2011: 3-4).

¹⁴ For a survey of opinions on this topic see Faulkner (2008), who affirms the hypothesis that the poem (along with the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*) honored contemporary Aeneidae.

More broadly, early audiences surely included individuals who, just like the gods, considered certain heroes their own personal relatives, and were thus just as personally invested in the outcome of this or that battle. More broadly still, the audience is clearly supposed to feel some measure of sympathy for the Trojans; this is why Hector has just had a tender moment with his wife and child.¹⁵ There is a broad spectrum of ways in which the individual gods' consistent identity as pro-Greek or pro-Trojan allows them to be assigned to and voice the conflicting pressures influencing the poet's narrative at any given moment.

Apollo begins the divine conversation by explicitly naming Athena's likely motivation for interrupting the conflict:

τίπτε σὺ δ' αὖ μεμανῖα Διὸς θύγατερ μεγάλοιο
ἦλθες ἀπ' Οὐλύμπιοιο, μέγας δέ σε θυμὸς ἀνῆκεν;
ἦ ἵνα δὴ Δαναοῖσι μάχης ἑτεραλκέα νίκην
δῶς; ἐπεὶ οὐ τι Τρῶας ἀπολλυμένους ἐλεαίρεις.

Daughter of great Zeus, why in the world is it this time that you have come from Olympus so eagerly, with your great heart compelling you? Was it so that you could give the Danaans the other side's victory in battle? Because you never feel a bit of pity for the Trojans! (*Iliad* 7.24-27)

The memorable epithet-noun combination *heteralkea nikên* ("the other side's victory") recurs several times in the *Iliad*; ancient commentators pointed out that "it appears when the side that was formerly winning suffers a loss due to the introduction of some change of power."¹⁶ In fact, Athena will immediately (7.34-35) acknowledge that Apollo has her right. She has indeed come down to sway the course of the battle for her own viewing pleasure: it is not pleasant for her to watch Greeks die, but she

¹⁵ William Sale (1987) puts forward a sophisticated argument, based on the presence/absence of formulas describing movement to/from Troy, that scenes set within Troy are a Homeric innovation rather than traditional.

¹⁶ This is the formulation of the b family of scholia on 7.26 (<<ἑτεραλκέα:>> ἐπίθετον τοῦτο τῆς νίκης. γίνεται δὲ ὅταν οἱ πρότερον νικήσαντες ἐξ ἑτεροδυναμίας τινὸς παρειαυλούσης ἡττηθῶσιν.); the A and T scholia make similar comments.

does not mind seeing Trojans die. Through the language surrounding Athena's intercession, the poet voices an inherent challenge in the presentation of this particular story to pro-Greek audiences. The basic plot of the *Iliad* is set into motion by Zeus's agreement to grant Achilles' request: allow Trojans to kill the Greeks. From a eusynoptic perspective, the death of Greeks is all the *Iliad*'s plot requires until the death of Patroclus in Book 16 puts an end to Achilles' absence. But for the Athenas in the audience, this means the first half of the poem will be full of the unpleasant spectacle of Trojans killing Greeks. Kirk reads Apollo's particle combination δὴ + αὖ as emphasizing the god's frustration at the iterative nature of pro-Greek divine intervention — why are you interfering *this time* — offering an apt parallel in Sappho 1.15 ff.¹⁷ Divine intervention is often either explicitly or implicitly motivated by the gods' distress at the Greeks' predicament of the moment. We can, in fact, observe that the lines which introduced this divine intervention are a formula; the poet has already used them in Book 5:

Τοὺς δ' ὥς οὖν ἐνόησε θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη
Ἀργείους ὀλέκοντας ἐνὶ κρατερῇ ὑσμίνῃ,
αὐτίκ' Ἀθηναίην ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·

Τοὺς δ' ὥς οὖν ἐνόησε θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη
Ἀργείους ὀλέκοντας ἐνὶ κρατερῇ ὑσμίνῃ,
βῆ ῥα κατ' Οὐλύμποιο καρήνων αἶψα
Ἴλιον εἰς ἱεράν· τῇ δ' ἀντίος ὄρνυτ' Ἀπόλλων

Then, when the white-armed goddess Hera noticed these men killing the Argives in the violent fight, she quickly addressed winged words to Athena... (*Iliad* 5.711-713)

Then, when the grey-eyed goddess Athena noticed these men killing the Argives in the violent fight, she went leaping down from the peaks of Olympus to holy Ilium. Apollo rushed up to meet her... (*Iliad* 7.17-20)

This scene in Book 5 comes as part of complex chain of divine intervention — in fact, I could just as easily have chosen 5.1 rather than 7.16 as the pivotal moment on which to focus, because here too, the poet seems to choose to put off the Trojan victory for the purpose of celebrating Greek glory. There at the beginning of Book 5, towards the beginning of the first day of battle, Athena interferes with the

¹⁷ Kirk (1990: 224). While Sappho's repeated use of δηῦτε is also connected with the regularity divine intervention, it is a neat inversion to put the words in the mouth of the intervening god to comment upon the frequency of the human "typical scene" of the spurned lover.

human action to give Diomedes an *aristeia* “so that he would be conspicuous to all the Argives and win great fame” (5.2-3: ἵν’ ἔκδηλος μετὰ πᾶσιν | Ἀργείοισι γένοιτο ἰδὲ κλέος ἐσθλὸν ἄροιτο), a phrase which combines and elides the difference between him as a man in a battle and him as a character in a story. It is his and the Greeks’ glory, not the plot, that motivate this expansion. Athena then convinces Ares to leave the battle so that the humans can fight on their own. Diomedes is victorious until he confronts Aeneas, at which point Aphrodite (unsuccessfully) and Apollo (successfully) intervene to save the Trojan. Apollo appeals to Ares to re-enter the battle, which he does, taking Hector’s side and shifting the direction of the conflict to be in the Trojans’ favor. This brings us to the quoted passage, which will soon lead to Hera’s intervention to Zeus on the Achaeans’ behalf:

Ζεῦ πάτερ οὐ νεμεσίζη Ἄρη τάδε καρτερὰ ἔργα
 ὅσσάτιόν τε καὶ οἷον ἀπώλεσε λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν
 μὰΨ ἀτὰρ οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἐμοὶ δ’ ἄχος, οἳ δὲ ἔκηλοι
 τέρπονται Κύπρις τε καὶ ἀργυρότοξος Ἀπόλλων
 ἄφρονα τοῦτον ἀνέντες, ὃς οὐ τίνα οἶδε θέμιστα;

Father Zeus, are you not offended at Ares for these violent deeds of his, and the number and quality of the men of the Achaeans he has killed, with no thought, and not in the right order? It is a pain for me, but there they are worry-free, <Aphrodite> of Cyprus and Apollo with his silver bow, taking pleasure in unleashing this mindless fool who knows no law. (*Iliad* 5.575-763)

Again the objection can be read as a commentary on the admixture of elements in the plot at this point. The concern that the indiscriminate killing of Greeks might cause *nemesis* (“righteous indignation”) may more than a purely aesthetic concern for the poet, but it is the pleasure or pain of the audience that Hera invokes in her (persuasive) request to allow Ares to be removed from battle. Again we encounter the verb *terpein* to describe the enjoyment of an audience. Andrew Ford defines the pleasure represented by this verb as “the one goal of poetry that Homer mentions, a dozen times at least” about which “there is

no doubt among commentators,”¹⁸ citing the familiar statement by Hesiod at *Theogony* 96-103 about the ability of heroic epic (100: κλεῖα προτέρων ἀνθρώπων) to relieve pain and grief. The *Odyssey* contains three examples of characters feeling pain rather than pleasure during bard’s performance.¹⁹ In all three cases, it is because the audience member has a close connection to a figure within the bard’s story; in all three cases, a request is made to the bard to change his topic. Ruth Scodel surveys comparative evidence from living oral traditions, demonstrating the real potential for epic performances to fail and be abandoned by their listeners, in order to illustrate the bard’s constant need to account for his audience’s reaction.²⁰

But the strongest connection between Hera’s statement and the world of poetic composition is the phrase μὰψ ἀτὰρ οὐ κατὰ κόσμον (“with no thought, and not in order”). Ford also identifies the phrase *kata kosmon* (“in order”) as a quasi-technical term that describes the correctness of a poetic performance in terms of the vividness caused by its arrangement and ornamentation. This, for example, is what Odysseus means when he tells Demodocus that he sings the fall of Troy *kata kosmon*: the story is clearly true, because it is correctly structured and vivid.²¹ David Elmer draws a connection with a similar term from Parry and Lord’s collection of Slavic oral poetry, *kita*. Both words can have a literal meaning of “decoration” or “ornamentation,” and this is often the sense in which *kita* is used, describing the pieces of decoration on a hero’s panoply, for example. But because extra pieces of armor *are* extra lines of

¹⁸ Ford (1992: 52).

¹⁹ Penelope complains of the Ithacan bard Phemius’s song of the returns of the Greek heroes (1.328-364); Odysseus cries at the Phaeacian bard Demodocus’s performances of songs about a quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles (8.73-103) and the Trojan Horse (8.492-541), and on both occasions Alcinous interrupts the song. On the juxtaposition of pleasure and pain in song, see Nagy (1979: 97-101), Biles (2003).

²⁰ Scodel (2002: 7 ff.)

²¹ Ford (1992: 118-125).

poetry, the term shades over into a general description of poetic expansion.²² Elmer speaks of the tendency for oral epic towards “hypertrophy” — the development of a style that favors expansion because it equates truth with vividness by accumulation of detail. What I am arguing is for the same process, but on the macro-level, with the poet decorating the plot with extra episodes in the same way he decorates armor with extra lines of description.²³ For an expansion of the plot to be *kata kosmon*, then, it must add these episodes in the right proportion. Hera’s complaint is that Ares’ unmitigated killing of Greeks is not *kata kosmon* — an episode that causes the audience pain rather than pleasure. **Zeus on Ares?** Interestingly, after Diomedes then stabs Ares and sends him bleeding off the battlefield, War will soon depart from the plot as well. After only 65 more lines of fighting (6.1-65), Book 6 shifts its attention to speeches (6.66-116), a confrontation between Glaucus and Diomedes that ends in a recitation of genealogy and an affirmation of friendship (6.117-236), and a reunion between Hector and his family (6.237-529) before he returns to battle with Paris. This brings us to our pivotal moment in Book 7. Now that Diomedes’ *aristeia* is over and the Trojans are back on the field, it seems it is finally time for the Trojan victory to begin, until we get this new intervention.

As a visible part of the storytelling machinery of Homeric epic, constant divine intervention by the gods is thus an integral and familiar part of all the traditional stories, to which Apollo’s “this time” is a nod. He then goes on to suggest an alternative:

ἀλλ’ εἴ μοί τι πίθοιο τό κεν πολὺ κέρδιον εἶη·
νῦν μὲν παύσωμεν πόλεμον καὶ δηϊοτήτα
σήμερον· ὕστερον αὖτε μαχήσονται εἰς ὃ κε τέκμων
Ἰλίου εὖρωσιν, ἐπεὶ ὥς φίλον ἔπλετο θυμῷ

²² Elmer 2010.

²³ Cedric Whitman (1958) and Keith Stanley (1993) both draw parallels between the intricacy of construction of the *Iliad*’s plot and visual art. Stanley’s analogy of the plot with the shield of Achilles in *Iliad* 18 neatly illustrates how expansion of the plot by visual description and the addition of episodes can be one and the same thing.

ὕμῃν ἀθανάτησι, διαπραθέειν τόδε ἄστυ.

But why don't you listen to me about what would be the very smartest thing: first, let's now stop the war and the battle for today. Later they will fight again until they reach their goal of Ilium, since this is what pleases the hearts of you immortal goddesses, to destroy this city. (*Iliad* 7.28-31)

Irrespective of the alignment of Apollo's pro-Trojan perspective with any audience sympathies, it is unquestionably aligned with the plot requirements of Zeus's assent to Achilles' request. Athena's ultimate aim (Greek victory) is aligned with the ultimate conclusion of the Trojan war saga (Troy falls), and probably also with the sympathies of a large portion of the audience, but it is an impossible "goal" (*tekmon*) for the poem when the Achilles plot is in motion. But at this storytelling moment of 7.16, the Achilles plot itself is now put on hold as well by Athena, for this new intervention that will lead to the duel between Hector and Ajax. Apollo makes the same distinction between the present storytelling moment — the "now" (*nyn*), the "today" (*sêmeron*) — and the saga's eventual conclusion — the "later" (*hysteron*), the "again" (*aute*) — in his proposal to negotiate a compromise between their two goals, by putting them both on hold. By stopping both the war (*polemon*), which Athena's Greeks will win, and the battle (*dêiotêta*), which Apollo's Trojans will win, the poet creates a new storytelling space, a "Now" beyond the broad context of the Trojan war and the immediate context of the wrath of Achilles. In this storytelling space, duels between Ajax and Hector or Paris and Menelaus can exist as spectacles with no permanent consequences to the plot or characters, since they are conveniently ended before anyone is killed.

But before we continue with our consideration of the poet's use of the gods to introduce expansions into his plot, it will be useful to explore the implications behind my identification of this Auerbachian Now, this constantly available present in which stories independent of other ongoing plots can occur. In the following section we will consider how the poems' oral-poetic context provides a crucial component in the poet's use of the gods as storytelling devices.

The ticking clock poet

James Notopolous famously claimed that Parry's demonstration of an oral-formulaic Homer would have to mean an entirely new set of principles of literary criticism.²⁴ Whether or not this is true, it seems clear that scholarship written from an oralist perspective is interested in a different set of issues, which it talks about it in a different way. One difference that is key to my decision to adopt a more oralist perspective for the final two chapters is that, in contrast with the narratological perspective of my first two, the study of oral poetics has more room for the concept of author.²⁵ The present chapter considers ways in which oral poets expand their songs. Implicit in this project is the notion that what happens inside the poet's head is both significant and knowable — that it is possible to get some sense of what Homer was thinking after he composed *Iliad* 7.16. In living traditions, of course, this is literally possible, because the singers can be interviewed and asked about their process. Ruth Scodel quotes a dhalang — one of the “composers-in-performance on the Parry-Lord model” who perform in the Javanese *wayang kulit*, or shadow-puppet theater — who describes how he might respond if asked to perform a piece (*Sang Sang Anting Retno*) he has never heard:

“Well, *Sang Sang Anting Retno*, what could that story be? Then suddenly I get some ideas. Since these people like fancy puppet movements and clown scenes, I'll use a story that highlights those things. Therefore the result is like this. I took a Mask Play story but I changed the name of the boon. It's just a starting point. In the first scene, if I'm not mistaken, there's the visitor to the kingdom, but maybe I'll change it to another. That's how it's done in the performances. Most puppeteers who create stories take things from their own imaginations.”²⁶

²⁴ Notopoulos (1949)

²⁵ The structuralist tradition of narratology that informs the scholarship of e.g. de Jong and Richardson is more interested in describing the text and its internal concepts such as the Narrator (i.e. the primary external focalizer) than the author; see e.g. Bal (2009: 15). In response to a work that attempts to combine narratology with the notion of the “implied author,” Irene de Jong (2001b: 22) confesses that she is “personally not a great fan” of the latter concept.

²⁶ Scodel 2002: 34-35.

Here poetic “imagination” operate by analogy and imitation, riffing on old formulas and type scenes rather than creating new ones. In Homeric epic too, to be ostentatiously novel would be to violate what Ruth Scodel calls the “rhetoric of traditionality.”²⁷ We will notice too that the dhalang explicitly invokes the consideration we have been discussing — the audience — as the factor influencing this process.

It is the consistent formulaic structure underlying oral composition which makes it plausible to speculate about what thoughts or pressures led a singer to make a specific choice at a specific moment. Milman Parry’s analysis of Homeric verse sometimes reads something like a commentary on a chess match.²⁸ By this I mean that he demonstrates almost mathematically how Homer’s *Kunstsprache* constructs a significant proportion of its lines of poetry according to a set of definable and demonstrable formulaic rules. He points, for example, to a common pattern in a which sentence ends with a hero’s name filling out the end of a line. If Homer has 2.5 feet (the space after the hepthemimeral caesura: ~|~|~|~) to fill with the name ‘Odysseus’, he will always and exclusively be completed with the name-epithet combination *polymêtis Odysseus* (“Odysseus with all his cunning”) — unless the final word ends with a short vowel, in which case Odysseus’s epithet will need to begin with two consonants to lengthen the preceding syllable, and he will always and exclusively be *ptoliporthos Odysseus* (“Odysseus, sacker of cities”).²⁹ And so forth. The equivalent to this in the chess analogy would be the “rules” players can invariably be seen following — a rook moves straight; a bishop moves diagonally. But a master chess player also knows strategies for how she may employ these rules most successfully, and thus the knowledgeable commentator may comment on both the rules and the strategies constraining or

²⁷ Scodel 2002 (*passim*).

²⁸ For a somewhat different use of the chess metaphor to represent the “endgame” of Homeric epic, see Wong (2002: 14-16).

²⁹ Parry 1971: 51.

encouraging that player at each moment of the unfolding game — which moves are allowable and which are advisable.

A reasonable parallel can be drawn between this and Lord's analysis of the experiment mentioned above, in which Parry has the master singer Avdo Mededović perform another singer's song, *Bećiragić Meho*, after hearing it only once. The differences and similarities between Avdo's performance and that of the other singer (Mumin), says Lord, tell us something important about their process. Because Avdo is a master guslar, he was able to hear Mumin's song as a string of type-scenes (such as "messenger arrives at a meeting of local chiefs at a tavern with news for the hero"), which Lord calls "themes."³⁰ Each type scene a common element of their shared oral tradition, found in many songs known by both singers. Rather than attempting to reconstruct Mumin's lines, Avdo must have simply noted the significant elements in each theme — that is, the ways in which it differs from a hypothetical "normal" version of the type-scene — and recreated Mumin's song using his own versions of the themes. Implicit in Lord's argument is that a knowledgeable critic of oral epic can, like a chess commentator, comment on the singer's thought process by reconstructing the position he is in at any moment of his performance, and explaining his choices based on the rules of the overall system of oral poetics in which he is participating. Consider Lord's explanation for why Avdo's song draws particular attention to a seemingly unremarkable fact — that the hero (Meho) is *not* in disguise during a certain part of the story:

There was something also in the story of Meho's capture of Nikola Vodogazovid ... that surprised Avdo. He *tells* us that he was surprised; that is to say, he underlines the fact that Meho went to Janok, not in disguise, but in the clothes of a Turkish border warrior. (...) Avdo underlines this lack of disguise, because expeditions to Janok are generally for rescue, not for capture, and they are accomplished in disguise. ... Everything in Avdo's experience of the tradition at this point indicates that the hero should be in disguise, and

³⁰ That the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are composed largely of such type scenes was established independently of Parry by his contemporary Arend (1933); see the discussion below on Elizabeth Minchin's "scripts."

Avdo must restrain himself from disguising him. He indicates his problem and his feeling about it; yet he follows his model.³¹

The better acquainted listeners are with the various rules and strategies of the game, the more they will appreciate the nuances of what makes good performers or players good, as well as what makes them each individual and unique.³²

But the marriage of literary interpretation and mindreading can be tricky business. One aspect of Parry's attempt to see inside Homer's mind that has probably received as much attention and criticism as anything he wrote is a particular assertion about the implications of his research. He believed he had demonstrated that any time Homer employs a specific type of fixed epithet, including the aforementioned *polymêtis Odysseus*, the choice has been forced upon him by the rules of the system; frequent repetition has numbed him and the audience to these epithets' specific meaning.³³ A generation of scholarship carefully demonstrated both that the system was not as perfectly thrifty as Parry believed,³⁴ but also, and perhaps more importantly, that the system is a tool used by the singer, not the singer by the system.³⁵ Just because we can demonstrate that the poet of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* composed using an explainable system does not mean he is an automaton whose thought and artistry is equally

³¹ Lord (1960: 103)

³² For varying views on the competence of Homer's audience, see Martin (1993) and the first chapter of Scodel (2002). For speculation on the nature of the audience in general, see e.g. Dalby (1995), Murray (2008).

³³ Parry (1972: 21-23, 118-145). In the latter citation, Parry himself points out that the issue goes back to antiquity: the scholia regularly invoke the example of 8.555, a simile where stars appear "around the bright moon" (φαεινήν ἀμφὶ σελήνην), despite the fact that the brightness of the moon makes stars invisible. The A scholiast (probably quoting Aristarchus) argues that this describes the moon "not at that moment, but in general" (οὐ τὴν τότε οὖσαν, ἀλλὰ τὴν καθόλου), and the scholiasts refer to this passage in their explanations of similar *cruces* regarding inappropriately used epithets at *Iliad* 18.349, 21.218, *Odyssey* 6.58, 6.74. On the last point, see especially his discussion of audience "indifference" at 129-130.

³⁴ e.g. Shive (1987) demonstrates that the name-epithet system for Achilles does not have perfect thrift if patronymics and pronouns are taken into account.

³⁵ Norman Austin (1975: 1-81) re-examines the formulas used in speech-introduction lines to demonstrate that choice of epithet is governed by context as well as meter; Lowenstam (1981) demonstrates how, contra Parry, the poet of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* seems to strive specifically to avoid allowing formulaic epithets to contradict context.

simplistic. If a line ends with *ptoliporthos Odysseus*, is it not just as possible that Homer has chosen the structure of the whole line in order to give himself the opportunity to use that epithet, instead of composing the beginning with no thought of the end, μὰ ψ ἄτὰρ οὐ κατὰ κόσμον? How can one continue to justify scholarship through mind-reading?

In his reading of the opening lines of the *Iliad*, James Redfield disagrees strongly with Parry's conclusions about the validity of explaining away a traditional phrase's special meaning in a particular context by demonstrating its formulaicity. With a nod to Borges' "Pierre Menard, author of the Quixote," he insists on the ability of a poem as a whole to create meaning even if, as seems to be the case of the first line of the poem, the rules of the system seem to restrict the poet's choices for every single word. Even if the particular meaning of an epithet gets blunted by its regular employment in a formulaic phrase, the singer's manipulation of context always has the potential to reactivate the full force of the meaning.³⁶ And yet Redfield has no qualms about analyzing the poetry in terms that recreate the poet's mental state upon composing. With reference to Parry's observation about the regularity with which certain name-epithet combinations (such as *polymêtis Odysseus*) are invariably used to end lines in certain metrical slots, he invokes

...the familiar rule that hexameters become more formulaic towards the end. We hear the line as composed from left to right. The poet, having set himself a metrical problem in the first part of his line, solves it with an item from his formulaic repertoire.³⁷

Redfield's statement essentially shares Parry's assumption about the poet's perspective, but draws a different conclusion about how that perspective would have felt. We hear the lines "as composed, left to

³⁶ Redfield (1979: 99). Adam Parry (1966: 199-200, esp. n. 45) makes a similar argument in favor of crediting the individual poet who created our text of the *Iliad* with the nuance of meaning created by Helen's employment of the fixed formula "*kynôpidos* ("dog-faced") to describe herself at *Iliad* 3.180, even though it could be argued that the choice was determined by the system.

³⁷ Redfield 1979: 100.

right,” the implication being that the creation of our texts operated like a performance; the poet did not go back and revise.³⁸ What is common to Redfield, Parry, and anyone who believes that Homer composed orally, then, is the assumption that our texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, like the record of a chess match, may be considered from the specific perspective of a bard creating it. That is, he is forced to make each move, compose each line, from the exact perspective of having made all the previous ones and not being able to change them. Every new move is circumscribed by those that have come before, while looking ahead to those that will come next.

Thus I will evoke an image for my chess metaphor to stand for this concept: the familiar clock at the side of the table, whose incessant ticking reminds players and audience that every irreversible choice is made under the pressure of limited time. The fact that the poet who used our system was what I will call a “ticking clock poet” is just as important as the fact that he used the system at all. Underlying Redfield’s metaphor of “solving a metrical problem” is that the formulaic system was created by poets, for poets, to solve the kind of problems they would run into during the act of composing a poem in a performance. The reason why poets would develop a system favoring line-ending formulas could be restated in the following way: having expended mental energy on the task of composing a line, the familiar traditional phrase rolling effortlessly off the tongue for the final several feet gives the singer a mental break to think about the next line.³⁹ Because oral poets are always under tremendous pressure to produce an endless stream of language, without ever stopping or telling a story that is in any way inconsistent or unsatisfactory, it makes sense that the traditional system they develop would be designed

³⁸ At the beginning of the article (1979: 95) Redfield asserts his belief that the *Iliad* “is, or at the very least is like, oral poetry, poetry created in performance by the rapid and relatively unreflective mobilization of traditional means.”

³⁹ Redfield (1979: 95) argues that these line-ending epithet/noun combinations were “relatively lexicalized units” — i.e. that they would essentially be stored and accessed by the poet as a single “word.”

to offer them solutions to the kinds of problems they regularly faced. What I am arguing in these final chapters is that the gods are a storytelling device of a similar sort, operating on the level of adding or finishing an episode rather than a line.

Homer's Written and Mental Text

At this point in the discussion it will be important to raise a distinction over which there has been much contention since Parry — that between “oral” and “oral-derived” poetry. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* we have are not oral performances; they are strings of letters printed on paper. And yet they rely upon a system of formulaic language that was most likely developed for oral composition in performance. It seems improbable in the extreme that ancient technology would allow a stenographer to transcribe the poems during their normal performances conditions, which means that the text must have been created during an abnormal performance. Perhaps Milman Parry's archaic Greek counterpart convinced a bard to dictate slowly for a scribe; perhaps an oral singer learned to write and composed his own manuscript as an experiment in the possibilities offered by the new form. With either scenario, it seems hard to imagine that the conditions under which the texts were created could not have eased or eliminated any real influence from the ticking clock, as the poet could have gone back and altered the text later if he chose.⁴⁰ Is it not thus misguided to speak of the texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as if they were true spontaneous oral performances?

To this objection I would offer two responses. First, it seems that although either scenario for recording the text in writing *could* have allowed the singer an opportunity to improvise and edit himself

⁴⁰ To return to the contrast between narratology and oral poetics, Barthes's comments (1966: 252) deserve comparison: “From the point of view of narrative, what we call time does not exist, or at least it only exists functionally, as an element of a semiotic system: time does not belong to discourse proper, but to the referent. Both narrative and language can only refer to semiological time; ‘true’ time is only a referential illusion, ‘realistic,’ as Propp's commentary shows. It is in this respect only that structural description can presume to come to terms with it.” Genette's (1980) narrative theory describes the internal workings of this illusion of time in detail.

in ways impossible in live performance, there is in fact some agreement that, at least to a certain extent, the singer(s) of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* did not take this opportunity — which is consistent with the practice of the singers Parry and Lord worked with.⁴¹ The reason involves a set of idiosyncratic features of the texts that have been commented upon since antiquity, and which once played a major role in the tradition of Analyst scholarship that argued for multiple authorship. These can be broadly defined as faults with the language and problems with the story details — but one of the advantages of oral theory is that it allows us to describe these aspects of the poems not as “faults” but simply regular features of oral composition.⁴² There are, for example, a fair number of “unmetrical” lines such as *Odyssey* 13.194:

τούνεκ' ἄρ' ἄλλοειδέα φαινέσκετο πάντα ἄνακτι (---|---|---|---|---|---)⁴³

In an oral performance, meter is a matter of rhythm and sound; the kind of long and short syllable counting that has led various modern editors to propose emendations of this line is a product of freezing poetry in writing where it can be scrutinized and corrected — concepts which would have no meaning to a bard whose method of creating poetry is to perform it to the ticking clock.

More problematic still for the concept of a writing and editing poet are minor plot inconsistencies.⁴⁴ At *Iliad* 13.410-417 the minor Trojan character Hypsenor is killed in battle; a few lines later his comrades carry him off the field “groaning heavily” (13.423: βαρέα στενάχοντα). The same four line-passage that includes the formulaic phrase “groaning heavily” had already been used to describe the same two comrades Mecisteus and Alastor carrying off a man who was merely wounded (8.331-334 =

⁴¹ Lord (1960: 128) makes this point specifically.

⁴² For the looseness in meter caused by adherence to the formulaic system rather than our definition of metricality, see Parry (1972: 197-221)

⁴³ Cited by Reece (2011: 317), where he cites *Odyssey* 7.89 as another example.

⁴⁴ These examples are commonly cited; for a fuller version of the argument see e.g. Janko (1998), Reece (2011), Jensen (2011).

13.420-423); it is reasonable to suggest the poet simply mixed up the two contexts in the moment. In *Odyssey* 20, Odysseus prays for an omen and Zeus send thunder. The formulaic lines have the god rumble “from high up in the clouds” (104: ὑψόθεν ἐκ νεφέων), and then immediately a slave recognizes the omen and explains her reasons for taking it as such: she hears thunder “and there is not a cloud anywhere” (114: οὐδέ ποθι νέφος ἐστί). Examples could be multiplied, each of which can, of course, potentially be solved with a clever interpretation. There is, for instance, the familiar issue with the ambassadors who negotiate with Achilles in *Iliad* 9. Agamemnon sends three men (Odysseus, Phoenix, Ajax), but on several occasions the Narrator refers to them with verb and pronoun forms in the dual number (such as 9.182: τῷ δὲ βάτην παρὰ θῖνα...), otherwise used exclusively to refer to pairs of two. Perhaps this too is Homer nodding — the poet adds Phoenix as a third member to an embassy scene that he regularly sings with with two, and neglects to change these lines to better suit the new context. On the other hand, many since antiquity have sought solutions in the text as it stands, generally suggesting that the duels refer to Ajax and Odysseus as the only members of the embassy who count.⁴⁵ Gregory Nagy’s ingenious reading finds in the use of language to exclude one member of the group a reference to traditional tension between Achilles and Odysseus.⁴⁶ At any rate, this argument does not depend on any one problematic passage, but all of their aggregate affect on the poems’ texture.

These idiosyncratic problematic passages have been offered by scholars such as Jensen and Janko as the main piece of positive evidence that the poems are most likely unedited transcriptions of single performances by individual poets at particular times and places. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine

⁴⁵ Page (1959: 298) pithily states the problem: “...from the moment of his appointment to the leadership of the embassy onwards, Phoenix mislaid himself” and summarizes Unitarian solutions such as the one I name (found in many of the scholia) before affirming his own adherence the Analyst solution: this is a combination of two incompatible texts.

⁴⁶ Nagy (1979: 49-58).

how so many minor details of the texts that have struck readers as so problematic for millennia could have been preserved as part of any tradition in which they were ever subject to a process of oral transmission involving re-composition for each performance.⁴⁷ But it is easy to picture these types of mistakes *produced* during any one performance. Once the text is frozen as a written transcript, and once future performers and critics begin to consider that transcript an individually composed poem and not merely one iteration of a multiform oral song, what had been equivalent to “typos” in the oral performance become canonized, and rise to the level of cruxes. In addition, Janko’s sophisticated comparative analysis of the language of early Greek hexameter poetry suggests that the formulaic system recorded in our texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* was frozen at an earlier stage in its evolution than either the poetry of Hesiod or the Homeric Hymns, which is hard to imagine unless each text was fixed in writing at a different point in the Archaic period.⁴⁸ Parry himself confesses his romantic sense that he was witnessing a re-staging of the creation of the original text of the *Iliad* as the guslars dictated for his scribe, “watching the motion of Nikola’s hand across the empty page, when it will tell them it is the instant to speak the next verse.”⁴⁹

It should also be noted that several scholars have productively applied the insights of fields outside Classics to the texts of Homer based on the assumption that the texts are records of more or less authentically produced speech. Egbert Bakker has described the tendency for Homeric verse to be composed paratactically by the half-line in terms of the linguistic phenomenon of the tendency of

⁴⁷ This has been raised as an objection to Nagy’s “evolutionary model” of text fixation: see Janko (1998), Reece (2011), and response by Nagy (2003: 49 ff.).

⁴⁸ Janko (1982, 2012).

⁴⁹ Parry (1971: 451), quoted by (Janko 1998:1) in the same context.

speakers to produce language in “chunks.”⁵⁰ Elizabeth Minchin applies descriptions of the memory by cognitive psychology to refine the idea of a “type scene” as an example of the “scripts” in which we encode our memory and understanding of the ritual processes of life.⁵¹ None of this works if the singers are consciously editing and altering their language beyond what they naturally produce as part of a performance.

But there is a broader response I would offer to the objection that the composer of our texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* would not have been affected by the normal pressure to compose lines quickly during performance. It will take the form of a more general consideration of what it means to “compose” an oral poem in the first place. Ticking clock or no, composed in performance or not, the Homeric poems were certainly not “improvised” in the broadest sense. “Every performance is a rehearsal for the next,” as Janko puts it,⁵² which implies that every performance by a skilled bard has been well-rehearsed. In her comparative study of documented attempts to record oral traditions, Minna Jensen considers Lauri Honko’s extensive report on the performance, transcription, and recording of the traditional *Siri Epic* in the Tulu Nadu region of India, from whom she borrows the term “mental text.” Jensen defines this as:

a variable template existing in the singer’s mind, to be abbreviated or expanded according to circumstances and adapted to various modes of performance. Even this mental text does not retain a fixed form but is altered and developed during the career of a bard. Hanko also speaks of mental editing: if a singer performs his text frequently, he will be continually revising his mental text on the basis of his experience of audience reactions.⁵³

⁵⁰ Bakker 1993: 6.

⁵¹ Minchin (2001), esp. the first chapter.

⁵² Janko 1990: 327.

⁵³ Jensen 2011: 110.

Jensen uses this concept of the mental text to explain how Homer can achieve a level of structural complexity that has been argued impossible for the poet who does not write. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, she says, are expansions of basic mental texts that the poet normally performed in a single sitting in a much shorter version. A good singer has the ability to expand or contract a mental text to fill as much time as there is on the ticking clock: Jensen quotes the research of John Johnson, who works on living African epic and “speaks of an ‘accordion effect,’ the apparently unproblematic swelling and shrinking of mental texts,” and suggests that this accordion effect is in play with the expansion of Homer.⁵⁴ This is essentially the same concept Elmer identifies as “hypertrophy” — the poems show evidence of an aesthetic sense in which their own truth is demonstrated by accumulation of detail. Minchin uses comparative evidence from cognitive psychology to argue that the way a story is stored and accessed in memory is more like an open-ended process than “text” in the first place:

...stories are versatile. When the time comes to tell a tale he has learned from another source, there is no compulsion on the storyteller to reproduce it word for word. He may collapse or expand event sequences, omit details, or incorporate new episodes. He may make any or all of these changes, intentionally or unintentionally; but as long as he leaves undisturbed the causal chain which is at the heart of the narrative, his listeners will recognize it as the same tale.”⁵⁵

This editing process can happen both on the level of the mental text, and on the level of the ticking clock. Lord reports the recollections of a singer named Šećo Kolić about memorizing his first poem as a boy — practicing in the fields for an audience of sheep, adjusting the arrangement of plot and episodes until it suited him.⁵⁶ In this way we can imagine the master bard at home polishing the rough edges of his mental text, always fine-tuning it for the next performance. But alterations will also happen in the moment to

⁵⁴ Jensen 2011: 128-129.

⁵⁵ Minchin 2001: 42.

⁵⁶ Lord 1960: 21.

moment business of performance, as the poet intentionally or accidentally deviates from the established norm of his own mental text.

One of the simplest ways in which the gods function as a storytelling device must be seen from the perspective of a text created by a poet converting the ethereal, open-ended set of possibilities of the mental text into a concrete performance. When something new is added, this expansion must begin and end with something, and if the poet needs a moment to think, it will be handy if expansions begin with a script (to apply Minchin's terminology to the regular storytelling device of divine intervention) whose unfolding facilitates the invention and creation of detail. Because divine intervention passages occur so frequently, and use such formulaic language, they are not taxing for the poet to compose — a useful feature for a poet who needs a moment to plan his next scene. In this way, my interpretation of the passage runs in parallel to my interpretation of Redfield's comment about line ending formulas as a puzzle the poet gives himself and solves.⁵⁷ By ending a line with a formulaic noun-epithet combination such as *polymêtis Odysseus* which he has said countless times before, the poet relieves his mind from the task of versification for a moment, which is useful if he is trying to plan the next line. In the same way, repetitive divine interventions are scenes whose dialog and action are, by evidence of their frequency, familiar territory for the poet. Thus they will be useful if the poet needs a moment to plan an expansion onto his mental text.

Now we will return to the text at the crucial moment of 7.16, when Athena and Apollo interrupt the incipient Trojan victory to insert a duel between Ajax and Hector, and consider this moment from the perspective of a ticking clock poet about to expand his mental text. If I am correct about this scenario, the books that will follow offer the purest glimpse into the way Homer's imagination really

⁵⁷ Redfield 1979: 100.

works, because he will be composing new material on the spot to delay the fulfillment of the Wrath of Achilles plot. But of course, like the dhalang asked to perform *Sang Sang Anting Retno* extemporaneously, Homer's imagination is likely to work by analogy — Jensen, for example, suggests the duel between Hector and Ajax that the poet will introduce at the beginning of Book 7 is motivated as a doublet of the earlier duel between Paris and Menelaus from Book 3.⁵⁸ But in the same discussion, during a broader statement about the poet's methodology for expanding of his mental text, Jensen suggests a source for information about how that process actually operated: the Analyst tradition of scholarship.

While the details of the various Analyst schemata of multiple layers of authorship differed, there was broad agreement on principles for more than a century. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* give the appearance of having had extra material grafted onto a coherent Wrath of Achilles poem. The nineteenth century Analyst K. L. Kayser was the first to suggest that much of Books 7-8 after 7.16 was an expansion of "Homer's" poem by a later poet,⁵⁹ and the suggestion was adopted into the schema of much later scholarship with an Analytic perspective, up to and including that of Martin West. What Analysts explained as extra layers of authorship, Jensen sees as expansions upon the mental text. This is similar to the insight of Fenik, who, although he does not speak in terms of a mental text or ticking clock, reads what Analysts had interpreted as interpolations in the *Odyssey* as "interruptions" created through traditional processes of ring composition.⁶⁰ Jensen engages specifically with West, who believes the expansions the Analysts identified were made by the original poet, but in writing, as he spent a lifetime literally pasting extra sections into a manuscript (but rarely crossing any words out or removing any

⁵⁸ Jensen 2011: 257.

⁵⁹ Kayser 1881: 81-82.

⁶⁰ Fenik 1974: 61-104.

lines). As Jensen argues, this model makes as much or more sense as a description of a poet expanding his mental text.⁶¹

West believes what happened after 7.16 is that the poet cut through his manuscript for the purpose of gluing in the new lines he had written, which are now 7.17-8.1 (he would then add more expansions to this in the future.)⁶² The reason was to insert the newly contrived obstacle of the Greek wall, which is suddenly introduced at the end of Book 7 with no real motivation: as discussed earlier in the present chapter, divine intervention has ensured that the first day of battle has gone largely the Achaeans' way; why build a defensive wall now, when they have apparently sat for the last several weeks on the beach with nothing to do? To transfer the insight of West and the Analysts to the mental text model, it is easy to imagine a defensive wall as the kind of expansion a ticking clock poet might come up with to draw out the middle section of his poem and give the Greeks and Trojans something to fight over. The advantage of picturing what comes after 7.16 as an expansion can be seen from a hypothetical reconstruction. Let us imagine that most of Books 7 and 8 are an extemporaneous expansion upon the mental text for the purpose of inserting a wall — how did the pieces originally connect? To illustrate this, I have divided the two books into their constituent episodes. Scenes focusing on the gods are indented and italicized:

Book 7

- Hector and Paris return to battle and begin killing (7.1-16)
 - PROPOSED POINT OF DEPARTURE FROM ORIGINAL MENTAL TEXT —
 - *Athena and Apollo decide to stop the battle.* (7.17-43)
- Hector and Ajax duel until **nightfall**. (7.44-312)

⁶¹ Jensen 2011: 257.

⁶² West 2011: 58-61

- Temporary truce: Greeks collect their dead and **build the wall**. (7.313-442)
 - *Poseidon complains to Zeus about the wall*. (7. 443-466)
- Evening rituals; Day 1 of fighting ends (7. 466-482)

Book 8

- *Day 2 begins; Zeus warns the Olympians not to interfere*. (8.1-77)
- Trojans force Greeks back. Diomedes almost fights Hector. (8.78-197)
 - *Hera and Poseidon discuss their distress at seeing Greeks die. Zeus allows Agamemnon to rally the Greeks, endorsing this with an omen*. (8.198-252)
- Teucer has an *aristeia*; the Trojans are pushed back. (8.253-334)

— PROPOSED POINT OF RETURN TO MENTAL TEXT —

- The tide turns again; the Trojans push the Greeks behind their wall. (8.335-349)
 - *Hera and Athena try to interfere, but Zeus stops them*. (8.349-488)
- **Nightfall**; Trojans camp on the plain. Day 2 of fighting ends (8.489-565)

It was noticed in antiquity that the day of battle in *Iliad* 8 is uniquely short (it was called the *kolos machê*, or “stubby battle”⁶³), and it is difficult to find much of any significance to the greater plot other than the wall. Hector and Ajax have an indecisive duel; the wall is built; fighting is resumed, but the day’s only purpose seems to be hurrying ahead to the nightfall at the same point of immanent Trojan victory the poem had reached at 7.16. Therefore the immediately obvious change to the plot that would result from excising this section is that there is one less day of fighting: the memorable scene at the end of Book 8 with Hector and the Trojans camping on the plain, capped by a simile comparing their campfires to stars in the night sky, becomes the end of the first day of battle. If we were to remove this expansion to reconstruct a hypothetical outline of the earlier conception of the mental text, the *Iliad* would then narrate only three days of battle, each corresponding with the one of the three major movements the

⁶³ Eustathius, *Commentary on the Iliad*, 2.509.9

poem is often said to be divided into.⁶⁴ This new version's the first day will begin with Greek victory and end with defeat and the embassy to Achilles, the second day will begin with the wounding of the major warriors and end with Achilles retrieving Patroclus's corpse, and the third day will be Achilles' rampage.

Nevertheless, while our ticking clock poet cannot create an expansion that fits as neatly into the plot as the version he has spent a lifetime developing as a mental text, due to the fact that he expands using the regular principles of his system, his expansion will be well integrated into the poem. Hector's duel with Ajax that Athena and Apollo introduce can now specifically be seen as a choice to end the day quickly so the wall can be put up. But the duel also ends the day in ring composition with the Paris/Menelaus duel it began with, and the show fight between Hector and Ajax anticipates their real fight over the ships later in the poem after the wall is breached. This is why ultimately it has never made sense to write off Books 7 and 8 as interpolations, even though they have often been interpreted as clumsy and meandering. West, for example, renders his judgment on the quality of what he believes to have been a later expansion by "P" (as he designates the poet of the *Iliad*), suggesting that many elements of the scene following directly after 7.16

give a strong impression of hasty composition, and <*Iliad* 7> in particular falls below the standard of excellence that has been generally maintained up to this point. Some scenes are compressed and perfunctory, and it is often observable that P has re-used or adapted lines and passages that have already appeared in other contexts, in a manner that suggests economizing on effort rather than the ordinary operation of oral composition technique.⁶⁵

This illustrates the problem with West's pen and paper Homer — why would a poet economizing on effort bother to write a whole extra book of the *Iliad* rather than simply adding a few lines after 1.12 to say that when Chryses arrived at the Greek camp, he came "through the wall that they had built to

⁶⁴ See e.g. Taplin (1992), Loudon (2006)

⁶⁵ West 2011: 187.

protect themselves in case the Trojans should ever press them back against their ships”? But if the idea to insert a wall as a new way of delaying the fulfillment of the main plot were to occur to the poet composing as the clock ticks, the only time he can add it is in that moment, from the perspective of whatever narrative corner he has painted himself into. Because this expansion is not part of the original mental text, it exhibits more of the idiosyncricies of the ticking clock poet, who is creating the structure as he adds it. But because that ticking clock poet is still, for lack of a better word, Homer, the expansion will still be well integrated into what comes before and after, as scholarship with a Unitarian perspective has always maintained. Erwin Cook sums up criticism against Book 8 and defends it as not only well-balanced and well-fit into its context, but an integral part of the poet’s plan from the beginning of the poem.⁶⁶ This is not incompatible with my argument. I suggest that the building of the Greek wall was an expansion onto the mental text he had created through past performances, but this does not mean that the poet did not plan it from the first moment he began reciting our *Iliad*.

The combination of the ticking clock and the mental text work extremely well to explain the strange combination of features found in Homer. On the one hand, the overall plot unquestionably is “eusynoptic” — several scholars have carefully mapped the intricate unity of its overall structure.⁶⁷ On the other hand, it is full of the kinds of inconsistencies that forced Analysts to invent a sublimely stupid interpolator messing up Homer’s masterpiece. But every poet is a potentially stupid interpolator when the clock is ticking. Auerbach’s famous reading of the digression explaining Odysseus’s scar in *Odyssey* 19 suggests that Homer’s mode of narration is all surface with no background, vividly realizing the

⁶⁶ Cook 2009: 158.

⁶⁷ e.g. Whitman (1958), Taplin (1992), Stanley (1993), Louden (2006).

details of the moment with no thought of anything that has become before and after.⁶⁸ The justification for this claim runs along much the same line as that of the Analysts: this digression is strangely motivated, and interrupts a passage that would otherwise fit neatly together. Various scholars have responded to Auerbach's claim by demonstrating how the themes of the scar digression and its integration into the surrounding context are not in fact so poorly motivated: Irene de Jong argues that the passage is "free indirect speech" focalized through the maid Eurycleia;⁶⁹ Adolph Köhnken finds it compatible with the kind of story presentation necessary for oral rather than written performance.⁷⁰ I would simply point out that the Auerbach seems to be describing the permanent perspective of the ticking clock poet. While his mental text gives him an outline to follow, his attention at any given moment is constructing one line in such a way that it follows logically from the last and leads logically to the next. His attention *is*, in a way, always on the foreground, because he is always in the process of composing it. But because he has a mental text to orient him, he in fact never loses sight of the background.⁷¹

Iliad 7.16 and the ticking clock

To conclude this chapter we will re-read Athena and Apollo's intervention after 7.16 as the work of a ticking clock poet expanding by adding sections that are not in his mental text. Earlier we saw how the interaction between Athena and Apollo at the beginning of *Iliad 7* voices the various audience and storytelling pressures that will influence the form this retarding element (which ends up being the duel between Hector and Ajax) will take. Reconsidering this passage from the point of view of the ticking

⁶⁸ Auerbach 1953: 3-23.

⁶⁹ de Jong 1985a.

⁷⁰ Köhnken 2009.

⁷¹ For a somewhat different assessment of Auerbach in light of oral poetics, see Bakker (1999).

clock poet, we will notice that 21 lines pass (7.17-37) before it is decided what the delay will be: Athena rushes down from Olympus. Apollo stops her with a question: “Are you going to change the course of battle? Why don’t we stop the war instead? We can resume where we left off later.” “Yes,” she replies, “that is why I have come. How did you have in mind to stop the war?” If we imagine a divine intervention scene as a kind of “panic button” for the composing poet, a way of putting the brakes on his narrative and pausing to figure out how to proceed, we can observe that it is not necessary for the poet to have decided what form the intervention will take yet; all that has been decided in these 21 lines is that they will stop the war for the rest of the day (which is precisely what the poet needs, so he can put up his wall.)

The decision to have the expansion be a duel between Hector and Ajax is introduced into the narrative slowly. Apollo’s suggestion to Athena is simply:

Ἕκτορος ὄρωμεν κρατερὸν μένος ἵπποδάμοιο,
ἦν τινά που Δαναῶν προκαλέσσεται οἰόθεν οἶος
ἀντίβιον μαχέσασθαι ἐν αἰνῇ δηϊότητι,
οἳ δέ κ’ ἀγασσάμενοι χαλκοκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοὶ
οἷον ἐπόρσειαν πολεμίζειν Ἕκτορι δίω.

Let us rouse the strong courage of Hector, breaker of horses, to see if he might summon one of the Danaans to match force and fight in terrible combat. Then the Achaeans in their greaves of bronze will be stunned, and send someone to fight against noble Hector. (*Iliad* 7.38-42)

Now Hector has been chosen, but the Greek challenger is left unnamed. Now the divine scene is over; the gods slip their plan into the mind of the Trojan Helenus (7.44-45), Helenus suggests the idea of a duel to Hector, which he accepts, and from there the rest of the day (7.46-312) is spent on this competition, which is described in much detail.

But it is quite plausible to imagine the poet inventing all of this extemporaneously. Once the poet has used the gods to establish the basic parameters of the scene he is about to narrate (duel with

Hector as challenger), the process of describing that duel will be fairly automatic. Elizabeth Minchin includes Hector and Ajax's duel (7.54-305) among a list of examples of passages adhering to what she calls the "contest script" — she demonstrates how this duel unfolds in a highly structured sequence of events that can also be found in the duel in *Iliad* 3 and each of the various events of the funeral games in *Iliad* 23.⁷² This duel also displays many specific similarities with the earlier one between Menelaus and Paris in Book 3; much of the language in Book 7 consists of entire lines he has already used for the first duel.⁷³ The underlined portion of Apollo's proposal, for example, closely resemble the following lines in the voice of the Narrator, from the beginning of the Paris/Menelaus duel:

πάλλων Ἀργείων προκαλίζετο πάντας ἀρίστους
— ἀντίβιον μαχέσασθαι ἐν αἰνῇ δηϊοτήτι.

...shaking (his spears, Paris) summoned all the best of the Argives to match force and fight in terrible combat (3.19-20)

Eleven lines after Apollo says this to Athena, Helenus repeats a similar phrase to Hector:

αὐτὸς δὲ προκαλέσσαι Ἀχαιῶν ὅς τις ἄριστος
ἀντίβιον μαχέσασθαι ἐν αἰνῇ δηϊοτήτι.

... and you yourself summon whichever of the Achaeans is the best to match force and fight in terrible combat. (5.50-51)

There are many similar correspondences in language throughout the length of the Paris/Menelaus and Hector/Ajax duels, which is to be expected, as both are following the same contest script.

At this point Ajax has still not been chosen as the competitor; the process by which he is chosen suggests how the ticking clock poet's compositional system serves him. One of the steps in the contest

⁷² The basic sequence of events Minchin identifies (2001: 43-44) as common to these passages is: *The prizes are set up — A challenge is announced — Competitors come forward — Preparations for the competition are made by: (drawing of lots, taking one's mark, judge/witness approved) — The Contest takes place (engagement, performance, reaction of spectators, the end of the contest, identification of victor) — Collection of prizes.*

⁷³ For the well-recognized structural parallels between the two duels see also e.g. Heiden (2008: 98-99), Camerotto (2007).

script is “casting of lots,” and a comparison of this detail in the two episodes is instructive. In the Book 7 duel, this is the technique through which Ajax is chosen as Hector’s competitor, in a lengthy scene lasting more than 100 lines (7.92-199). During this Menelaus volunteers and is rejected as not on Hector’s level, and then nine candidates step forward one by one, each makes his mark on a lot, and throws it into a helmet. If the poet had need to go through and mentally weigh potential opponents for Hector, the script provides him a convenient opportunity. But if Homer is buying himself time to think here, he is doing it in a traditional way that has the simultaneous effect of creating tension and suspense for the audience. The naming of nine warriors is a way for Homer to consider his options, but it is also a way of celebrating the heroes by putting their names and epithets on display for seven lines (7.162-168). One element of the casting lots part of the script appears to be a prayer by a member of the audience that chance will choose the right person:

οἱ δὲ κλήρον ἐσημῆναντο ἕκαστος,
 ἐν δ’ ἔβαλον κυνέη Ἀγαμέμνονος Ἀτρεΐδαο.
 λαοὶ δ’ ἡρήσαντο, θεοῖσι δὲ χεῖρας ἀνέσχον.
 ὦδε δὲ τις εἶπεσκεν ἰδὼν εἰς οὐρανὸν εὐρύν.
 Ζεῦ πάτερ ἢ Αἴαντα λαχεῖν, ἢ Τυδέος υἱόν,
 ἢ αὐτὸν βασιλῆα πολυχρύσοιο Μυκῆνης.

They each made their mark on a lot and threw it into the helmet of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, and the army prayed, and raised their hands to the gods. Here is what someone would say while looking into the wide sky: “Father Zeus, have either Ajax chosen, or the son of Tydeus, or the king of golden Mycenae himself.” (*Iliad* 7.175-180)

Perhaps this is Homer’s “shortlist” of candidates, or perhaps it is simply a further way of celebrating the best of the Achaeans and building suspense by delaying the revelation of what name is picked. This is heightened by the process: because every man marks his lot with a symbol only he can recognize, the chosen one must be handed around until Ajax claims it as his; But the practical usefulness of this script and its creation of suspense are not mutually exclusive functions; I would certainly not wish to suggest that my description of Homer’s *process* of composition is the key to understanding the significance of the

poetry. Commentary on a chess match can explain why a player's moves or more or less successful at achieving her ultimate goal of winning, but this does not explain what the game or moves *mean* to her or the audience. The script provides a structure that would support a poet who is truly not sure what he is going to sing next, but just because a performer works with a safety net does not mean he regularly needs it. And if the poet *is* unsure about his next direction, this script allows him to transfer that into a moment of narrative uncertainty at which both his characters and his audience share the stress of not knowing what will happen next.

Paris and Menelaus's battle also begins with a casting of lots, although in comparison with Hector and Ajax's lengthy ordeal that went on over a hundred lines, the earlier scene lasts a rather stubby eight, in which I have underlined the similarities with the lot casting in the other duel.

κλήρους ἐν κυνέῃ χαλκήρεϊ πάλλον ἐλόντες,
ὀππότερος δὴ πρόσθεν ἀφείη χάλκεον ἔγχος.
λαοὶ δ' ἡρήσαντο, θεοῖσι δὲ χεῖρας ἀνέσχον,
ὥδε δέ τις εἶπεσκεν Ἀχαιῶν τε Τρώων τε·
Ζεῦ πάτερ Ἰδηθεν μεδέων κύδιστε μέγιστε
ὀππότερος τάδε ἔργα μετ' ἀμφοτέροισιν ἔθηκε,
τὸν δὸς ἀποφθίμενον δῦναι δόμον Ἀΐδος εἴσω,
ἡμῖν δ' αὖ φιλότητα καὶ ὄρκια πιστὰ γενέσθαι.

They took lots and shook them in a bronze helmet to see which one would throw his bronze spear first, and the army prayed, and raised their hands to the gods. Here is what one of the Achaeans or Trojans would say: "Father Zeus, greatest and most glorious ruler of Ida: whichever man set up all this labor for both sides, let that man wither away and sink down to the house of Hades, and let us have friendship and a treaty of trust again." (*Iliad* 3.316-323)

It is not a regular feature of Homeric battles for lots to be cast to decide who throws his spear first, but as Minchin points out, this element of the contest script can also be found in the funeral games.⁷⁴ Kirk suggests that the unnecessary lot casting in the Paris/Menelaus duel is the poet searching for "concrete

⁷⁴ Minchin 2001: 43.

detail” to narrate, but it seems more likely that he feels obligated to include vestigial versions of elements of the script that are not strictly necessary on this particular instance. Because casting lots is a useful ritual for a ticking clock poet to employ to choose the competitors in a contest, it has become an obligatory part of the script. The same is true for the prayer of the army, which is introduced by more or less the same formula in both passages. Both prayers have more or less the same sense, which probably highlights the significance of lot casting in the first place: it is yet another way of turning the decision over to the gods, whom they can only pray will make the right decision. It is of course the irony of this passage that the gods’ true intentions are, as we have seen, to expand the fighting in a way that creates both glory and destruction for both sides.

Albert Lord offers an intriguing parallel for this tendency of typical scenes to contain vestigial versions of details that are important in some contexts but not others. In the experiment we discussed earlier in this chapter, in which Parry had the master singer Avdo Međedović perform *Bećiragić Meho*, a song he had only heard once, Lord describes how he Avdo “tells us he was surprised” by a scene in which the hero Meho is not disguised in a context where this tradition usually has heroes in disguise.⁷⁵ He goes on to describe how the regular payoff for the disguise scene Avdo was expecting would be a recognition scene. In the South Slavic tradition, Lord tells us, recognition scenes regularly take place with a woman at a tavern; this song does contain such a scene, but without the disguise, “Meho simply tells her who he is,” since there is nothing to keep her from knowing him:

Yet one of the elements of recognition, one of those artifacts that constitute stage properties for such scenes, the musical instrument, together with a song, is present in Avdo’s tale. Oddly enough, the instrument is in the hands of the maid, not of the hero;

⁷⁵ Lord 1960: 103.

the significant fact is that both it and the song are present at this moment in the tale. There were not in Avdo's model but have been added by him to the song as he heard it.⁷⁶

I would suggest that the casting lots scene in the duel between Paris and Menelaus can be explained as a similar artifact. But that is not to say that these are phantom elements that are somehow illegitimate in our texts, as if they are "accidents" that the poet regrets. Minchin's proposed script for the contest scene would mean that the act of casting lots was simply part of the proper ritual by which such scenes unfolded, even if it is an element that is vestigial rather than functional in this particular case. In any case, even if it were an accident, being a ticking clock poet means working with the rule that every word one utters becomes a part of the story-world created in the ether between live performer and audience. Horace's words from (a slightly different context in) *Ars Poetica* have been invoked: *nescit vox missa reverti* ("a word sent out cannot be recalled").⁷⁷

Although the battle of Hector and Ajax is advertised as potentially deadly, it must end without a kill, since both heroes have famous deaths on the horizon. Ruth Scodel's reading⁷⁸ of this conclusion to the duel highlights aspects highly relevant to my argument. The Trojan herald Idaeus intervenes to stop the fight,⁷⁹ pointing out that Zeus loves both heroes. Ajax acknowledges that he is winning by forcing Hector to be the one who agrees to stop the duel. Hector's response is to propose that he and Ajax trade gifts to celebrate their encounter — another way in which this duel matches the "contest script" used for the funeral games, which end with prizes. But Scodel reads Hector's response as essentially an effort to control the narrative that will be told about this battle; his proposal initiates a ritual in which "all

⁷⁶ Lord 1960: 104

⁷⁷ Janko 1998: 7.

⁷⁸ Scodel 2008: 26-27.

⁷⁹ A neat little example of chiasmic ring composition: the earlier duel is initiated by humans and ended by gods; the later one is initiated by gods and ended by human.

speakers treat the duel as having contributed to the immediate honor of both sides, while the gift-exchange clearly seeks to transform the resultant *timê* into *kleos*.” The statement follows Scodel’s definition of *timê* as “zero-sum” honor that one character wins by taking it from another before the eyes of their peers; this is what is at stake in the quarrel if Achilles allows Agamemnon to be seen taking his prize. But while *timê* changes from one moment to the next, as one hero’s loss of honor is another’s gain, *kleos* is the immortal fame humans build throughout their lives.⁸⁰ It is the good reputation that outlasts them after they die, and is thus not zero-sum. As in this battle, two characters can both come away with their status improved if this is acknowledged with permanent signs such as gifts. Thus, Scodel hypothesizes, Hector’s suggestion may be a way of saving face, of rewriting a losing battle so it is recorded as a draw.

This is exactly as Athena and Apollo planned it. She was distressed seeing Greeks die; he was hoping for Trojan victory, and upset that her interventions never show any pity for his side. Therefore they negotiate an intervention — and the poet plans an expansion — that entertains the audience and increases the glory of Greeks and Trojans without derailing the poem’s main plot. The battle between Ajax and Hector functions perfectly as a ticking clock solution to the problem of how to end the first day so the wall can be built.

Pivotal Contrafactuals and Diomedes’ Magical Horses

Above I discuss how the two duels in the early Books of the *Iliad* feature a kind of chiasmic symmetry of motivation: the Menelaus/Paris battle in *Iliad* 3 has a human initiation and a divine ending, while the Ajax/Hector battle in *Iliad* 7 is started by gods and ended by humans. Just as with much of Homer’s divine machinery, the intervention that ends Paris and Menelaus’s duel is an example of a motif that

⁸⁰ Scodel 2008: 16-24.

recurs throughout the poem, in which an endangered hero is snatched from the jaws of death at the last moment by a god:

... καὶ ἐπαΐξας κόρυθος λάβεν ἵπποδασειης,
ἔλκε δ' ἐπιστρέψας μετ' ἐϋκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοῦς·
ἄγχε δέ μιν πολύκεστος ἰμάς ἀπαλὴν ὑπὸ δειρήν,
ὅς οἱ ὑπ' ἀνθερεῶνος ὄχευς τέτατο τρυφαλείης.
καὶ νῦ κεν εἴρυσσέν τε καὶ ἄσπετον ἦρατο κῦδος,
εἰ μὴ ἄρ' ὅξυ νόησε Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἀφροδίτη,
ἣ οἱ ῥῆξεν ἱμάντα βοὸς Ἴφι κταμένοιο·
κεινὴ δὲ τρυφάλεια ἅμ' ἔσπετο χειρὶ παχείῃ.
τὴν μὲν ἔπειθ' ἦρως μετ' ἐϋκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοῦς
ῥῖψ' ἐπιδινήσας, κόμισαν δ' ἐρήρηες ἑταῖροι·
αὐτὰρ ὃ ἅψ' ἐπόρουσε κατακτάμεναι μενεαίνων
ἔγχεϊ χαλκείῳ· τὸν δ' ἐξήρπαξ' Ἀφροδίτη
ῥεῖα μάλ' ὥς τε θεός, ἐκάλυψε δ' ἄρ' ἠέρι πολλῇ,
καδ δ' εἶσ' ἐν θαλάμῳ εὐώδεϊ κηῶντι.

...and (Menelaus) attacked and grabbed onto (Paris's) helmet with its horse-hair crest. He twisted around and dragged him toward the Achaeans in their fine greaves; under his tender throat, the much-stitched strap choked him — the helmet's fastener, pulled tight under his chin. And at this point (Menelaus) would have dragged him and won immeasurable glory, if Zeus's daughter Aphrodite had not taken sharp notice. She broke his strap, made from a bull killed by force; empty, the helmet followed (Menelaus's) heavy hand away. The hero then spun around and hurled it towards the Achaeans in their fine greaves, and his trusty companions carried it off. Then he made another attack, eager to kill with his bronze spear. But Aphrodite snatched (Paris) away — very easily, since she was a god — covered him up with a great amount of fog, and sat him down in his bedroom, which was well-perfumed with incense. (3.373-382)

Aphrodite's intervention here is similar to that of Athena and Apollo at 7.17, in that it interrupts a scene in progress specifically to replace one outcome with another, completely different one.⁸¹ Just as the Trojan surge at the beginning of *Iliad* 7 seemed likely to initiate the promised Achaean defeat before Athena notices it, the mismatched fight between Paris and Menelaus would have ended in the death of the former if it had been allowed to play out on the human level. While the scene from *Iliad* 7 does not

⁸¹ As Fenik (1968: 154) puts it, "it is a regular stylistic feature for a dangerous situation to be carried to the extreme, and the inevitable consequences then averted only by some intervention."

overtly advertise the three kills by Hector, Paris, and Glaucus as the potential beginning of Zeus's promised Trojan victory, this passage from Book 3 is unambiguous about what outcome the duel would have had without Aphrodite's meddling. As Paris's situation becomes increasingly grim, the focus of the scene shrinks to a single element, the strap on Paris's helmet: its stitching, its function, the softness of the throat it digs into. Then suddenly, with Aphrodite's unannounced appearance at 3.378, everything changes, and all the detail and tension of this careful setup collapse, negated by her divine ability to completely change the equation, as the focus broadens again to see Paris and Menelaus as chess pieces that can be taken off the board.

De Jong names this passage as an example of the "gods as audience" metaphor, based on features we have seen before.⁸² The verb (*e*)*noêse* ("noticed") appears here just as at 7.17 — in the same position in the line, and also with a god as its subject. In both cases, the sudden reminder that the gods are watching the action is the catalyst for an abrupt shift in narrative direction. The sudden insertion of Aphrodite as "the one who sees" may retroactively focalize the scene through her — perhaps it was she through whom we were perceiving the chin strap strangling Paris in such detail.⁸³ It is certainly her displeasure about the outcome towards which this duel is aimed that causes her to interrupt the episode that has been unfolding for over 350 lines (3.15-376) and rob it of its natural ending. Yet for a single line (3.377) there is a kind of ghostly afterimage of that unrealized ending, as if the momentum of the duel is enough to keep propel the story momentarily into the alternative world in which it is allowed to conclude — just as Menelaus stumbles forward under the momentum of the force he had been using on his enemy. After the raw specificity of Paris being strangled by his own helmet strap, however, the

⁸² De Jong 1987a: 70.

⁸³ Compare de Jong's comments on implicit and explicit embedded focalization (1987a: 102 ff.).

alternative ending of the story is sketched broadly (“Menelaus would have dragged him and won immeasurable glory”) as it dissipates into unreality. This is a euphemistic version of the grizzly execution that most likely would have been described if the battle had been capped with a typical Homeric description of battle death, but the elided violence is hinted at in the unique description of the leather the strap is made of — from “a bull killed by force.”⁸⁴ In any event, this story almost had an unthinkable outcome: the Trojan war is settled as a private affair between two husbands, allowing both armies to go home without having to fight a war.

The underlined phrases in the passage introduce a formulaic type of passage that Bruce Louden has dubbed the “pivotal contrafactual,” noting specifically for its use for altering the direction of the narrative.⁸⁵ This formula has been well studied⁸⁶ and is well attested in the Homeric corpus: the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* contain sixty examples of *kai ny ke(n)* or *entha ke(n)* (“and at that point ... would have...”) introducing an alternate outcome that is avoided, all of which operate in much the same way as this passage. The first line is the apodosis of a contrafactual condition: it tells what would have happened if some intervention had not taken place. This intervention is then named in the protasis, which is often, as here, introduced by a line beginning with *ei mê* (if ... not). James Morrison’s study of pivotal contrafactuals draws attention to their tendency to hypothesize story outcomes that are markedly different from tradition, which he argues is their point: they declare the poet’s narrative independence by

⁸⁴ Kirk (1990: 320) calls this epithet “conventional,” but there are no other Homeric examples of *iphi* (“by force”) modifying a form of the verb *kteinein* (“kill”). The closest parallel is probably *Odyssey* 22.363, where Odysseus’s herald Medon hides under a chair during the slaughter of the suitors, “and there was the freshly skinned hide of a bull around him” (22.362-363: ἀμφὶ δὲ δέσμα | ἔστο βοὸς νεόδαρτον).

⁸⁵ Louden (1993: 183) calls this “the pivotal contrafactual most often remembered, and that typifies the construction.”

⁸⁶ de Jong (1987a: 68-81) offers a complete list and analysis of Iliadic examples, with previous bibliography; see also Lang (1989), Morrison (1992).

demonstrating his ability to construct alternative versions of the myth.⁸⁷ I would modify this to emphasize that it is not only the *kai ny ke(n)/entha ke(n)* line that contains an alternate story, but the whole passage it comes at the end of that has aimed the epic in this trajectory.

Here this is certainly the case, as the entire scenario Aphrodite interrupts seemed destined for an untraditional outcome, whether Paris killed Menelaus or Menelaus killed Paris. Robert Rabel reads the human characters in the early books of the *Iliad* as followers of a different plotline from both the Narrator and Achilles⁸⁸ — they essentially try to hijack the plot of the poem and replace it with a more logical, human solution to the problem involving a treaty and a duel rather than a mythologically significant massacre. Read through the lens of the ticking clock poet constructing his poem line-by-line, we see that the human characters have been used to give the plot the trajectory of this untraditional outcome (peace), and the divine characters are now being used to reorient it in a more traditional, more martial direction. This is accomplished first by Aphrodite saving Paris, and then, in Book 4, by Athena provoking Pandarus to shoot Menelaus with his bow. The pivotal contrafactual functions as a kind of escape hatch that can be used at any time in order to abandon a story trajectory that cannot be allowed to continue on to its natural conclusion. Simultaneously, as Morrison and Loudon both suggest, the frequently recurring formula comes to mark the abandoned storyline as a partial foray into the untraditional — “to stress incidents that are, in fact, outside Homer’s tradition, events that could not have happened.”⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Morrison 1992.

⁸⁸ Rabel (1997: 61) describes the repeated pattern wherein “a willful cast of characters, acting out of the tedium engendered by a conflict of nine years, artfully works against the attempts of the narrator to bring its energies into accord with the dictates of a plot that is only commencing.”

⁸⁹ Loudon 1993: 186.

Morrison categorizes pivotal contrafactuals in the *Iliad* into three categories, with respect to the scope of the traditional event they threaten to undo. Examples such as Aphrodite’s rescue of Paris belong in the first category, in which it is the integrity of the entire Trojan War story that would be threatened if an event had not occurred.⁹⁰ Both contestants in the *Iliad* 3 duel have unfinished mythological business in this point in the meganarrative of the war: Paris will later kill Achilles, and Menelaus will take Helen from Troy’s ruins. Therefore for either one to be killed as an outcome of this episode would put the *Iliad* itself out of continuity with the basic facts about the Trojan War myth. The second category of pivotal contrafactual is one in which it is not the integrity of that larger myth, but simply the internal plot concerns of the poem, which are threatened. Among Morrison’s examples is this moment from the Achaeans’ struggle to protect Patroclus’s corpse before Achilles re-enters the battle:

Ἐνθά κεν αὖτε Τρῶες ἀρηϊφίλων ὑπ’ Ἀχαιῶν
 ἴλιον εἰσανέβησαν ἀναλκείησι δαμέντες,
 Ἀργεῖοι δέ κε κῦδος ἔλον καὶ ὑπὲρ Διὸς αἴσαν
 κάρτεϊ καὶ σθένει σφετέρῳ· ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς Ἀπόλλων
 Αἰνείαν ὄτρυνε δέμας Περὶφαντι ἑοικῶς...

At that point the Trojans would have been forced back into Ilium by the warloving Achaeans, overwhelmed by their own cowardice, and the Argives would have won great glory, even beyond Zeus’s allotment, for their strength and bravery. But Apollo himself roused Aeneas, looking like Periphas in form... (*Iliad* 17.319-323)

Although the story requires the Achaeans to be losing this battle in order to create the need for Achilles to return, the blow-by-blow description of the fighting had suddenly begun to favor the Greeks; Apollo intervenes to set things straight. The reference to this alternative outcome being “beyond Zeus’s allotment” touches on a set of issues I discuss in Chapter Four — Zeus often functions as a stand-in for the singer himself in his ultimate concern with protecting the poem’s own narrative integrity. The

⁹⁰ Morrison 1992: 63.

speech Apollo is about to make will rouse Aeneas by affirming (in the voice of the Trojan Periphas) that “Zeus wants victory for us much more than for the Danaans” (17.331-332: ἡμῖν δὲ Ζεὺς μὲν πολὺ βούλεται ἢ Δαναοῖσι | νίκην), essentially informing the characters that they are not living up to the expectations of the plot they are in. Viewed from the perspective of the ticking clock poet, the constantly changes of fortune in battle mean that sometimes the plot is momentarily oriented in a direction that will not lead to the correct outcome. A pivotal contrafactual, especially when coupled with divine intervention, is a specific device that can be used to reorient the plot in the proper direction.

Morrison’s third and final category is pivotal contrafactuals that avoid “less momentous events,”⁹¹ when the flow of the plot is changed, but was not in the first place aimed in a direction that seems problematic from a storytelling point of view. It is with an extended consideration of one of these examples that I will end this chapter: Diomedes in the chariot race in *Iliad* 23. Here I will argue that the shift in action that is marked by a *kai ny ken* formula is, in fact, quite significant for the plot of the *Iliad* as a whole, as it ties in to a set of story manipulations through divine intervention that have rippled throughout the poem. This passage comes in the context of Diomedes’ close contest with Eumelus for first place in the chariot race. The two are neck and neck when the divine intervention comes:

καί νύ κεν ἦ παρέλασσ’ ἢ ἀμφήριστον ἔθηκεν,
εἰ μὴ Τυδέος υἱὶ κοτέσσατο Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων,
ὃς ῥά οἱ ἐκ χειρῶν ἔβαλεν μάστιγα φαεινὴν.
τοῖο δ’ ἀπ’ ὀφθαλμῶν χύτο δάκρυα χwoμένοιο,
οὐνεκα τὰς μὲν ὄρα ἔτι καὶ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἰούσας,
οἱ δέ οἱ ἐβλάφθησαν ἄνευ κέντροιο θέοντες.
οὐδ’ ἄρ’ Ἀθηναίην ἐλεφηράμενος λάθ’ Ἀπόλλων
Τυδεΐδην, μάλα δ’ ὤκα μετέσσυτο ποιμένα λαῶν,
δῶκε δέ οἱ μάστιγα, μένος δ’ ἵπποισιν ἐνήκεν.

⁹¹ Morrison 1992: 65

And at this point (Diomedes) would have passed (Eumelus) or made it a close call, if Phoebus Apollo hadn't been angry with the son of Tydeus, and knocked the bright whip out of his hands. Tears of anger poured from his eyes when he saw (Eumelus's horses) pulling even further ahead, while his own were hindered by racing without anything to spur them. But Athena did not miss the fact that Apollo had cheated (Diomedes) the son of Tydeus; she rushed up to this shepherd of men with great speed and gave him the whip, and infused his horses with vigor. (*Iliad* 23.382-390)

Here the pivotal contrafactual and divine intervention by Apollo interfere with the outcome of the race, a move which is itself immediately undone by a competing divine intervention by Athena, replicating the sudden changes of fortune in the race: even the gods favor different heroes at different moments. Here there is so little characterization of the gods that their interventions seem more nakedly to represent direct meddling with the flow of the plot by the poet. Even this meddling seems strangely purposeless, however, as it has no effect: Diomedes does go on to win the race.

But we cannot be so certain that this is an event whose outcome is insignificant for the tradition. The chariot race in the funeral games for Patroclus is, in fact, one of the only episodes from the *Iliad* for which there is specific early evidence of alternate version, in the form of two vase paintings from the early sixth century both of which seem to feature someone other than Diomedes as the winner: the François vase has him coming third to Odysseus's first place, and a sherd from a pot by Sophilos featuring this scene seems to depict a winner whose name ends in *-os*. Many recent scholars have suggested that this may indicated alternate versions of the story; the fact that there are multiple surviving artistic depictions of this particular episode from an era when any depictions of specifically Homeric scenes are rare suggests that it was an episode that played a more central role in the tradition than is clear from the internal evidence of the *Iliad*.⁹² Moreover, as Douglas Frame notes, "Apollodorus" *Epitome* 5.5 names Eumelus the winner of the chariot race in *Achilles'* funeral games, of which Patroclus's games in

⁹² See e.g. Lowenstam (1992), Snodgrass (1998: 119-120), Burgess (2001: 81-82).

Iliad 23 are often taken as an echo.⁹³ Therefore it is plausible that this *kai ny ken* contrafactual might in fact mark a specific brush with alternate versions of the tradition.

If we consider the claim that pivotal contrafactuals are indeed frequently used to mark potential plot outcomes as untraditional, it is interesting that the ending that this passage marks this way — Diomedes passes Eumelus — is what actually ends up happening. But this scene need not only be read with reference to the external tradition. The funeral games are generally read as an occasion to revisit characters and issues from throughout the poem for a final time as it draws nearer to its conclusion.⁹⁴ Elizabeth Minchin argues that the characters' performance in the various events mirrors their performance in the poem, and that Diomedes' victory can be explained because he is "the hero who wins any contest."⁹⁵ This is true, but in this case for an even more specific reason. Diomedes' victory over Eumelus is the result of a series of events that practically run the whole course of the *Iliad*, which will demonstrate how divine intervention and pivotal contrafactuals are a constant tool used both to adjust the direction of the plot and to expand it through the addition of new episodes.

Whatever the external tradition about the winner of this race, the Narrator of the *Iliad* has prepared the audience specifically for Eumelus's victory during the official ranking of horses that occurs toward the end of the Catalog of Ships in Book 2:

τίς τὰρ τῶν ὅχ' ἄριστος ἔην σύ μοι ἔννεπε Μοῦσα
αὐτῶν ἢ δ' ἵππων, οἳ ἄμ' Ἀτρεΐδῃσιν ἔποντο.
Ἴπποι μὲν μέγ' ἄρισται ἔσαν Φηρητιάδαο,
τὰς Εὐμηλος ἔλαυνε ποδώκεας ὄρνιθας ὥς
ὄτριχας οἰέτεας σταφύλῃ ἐπὶ νῶτον εἴσας.

⁹³ Frame 2009: 171 n. 69.

⁹⁴ See e.g. Willcock (1973), Hinckley (1986).

⁹⁵ Minchin (2001: 55); compare Willcock's analysis (1973: 3-4) of the character of the "natural winner" Diomedes. Minchin goes on (56-58) to examine the race between Diomedes and Eumelus as the intersection of a "contest script" and "divine interference script."

τάς ἐν Πηρείῃ θρέψ' ἀργυρότοξος Ἀπόλλων
ἄμφω θηλείας, φόβον Ἄρηος φορεούσας.
ἀνδρῶν αὖ μέγ' ἄριστος ἔην Τελαμώνιος Αἴας
ὄφρ' Ἀχιλεὺς μήνιεν· ὃ γὰρ πολὺ φέρτατος ἦεν,
ἵπποι θ' οἱ φορέεσκον ἀμύμονα Πηλεΐωνα.

So then you tell me, Muse, which of them was the very best — which of the men and which of the horses who followed along with the sons of Atreus? As for the horses, the best by far belonged to the grandson of Pheres: driven by Eumelus, they were swift as birds, the same in their hair, the same in their age, level to the measuring line in the height of their backs. Apollo of the silver bow raised the pair in Pereia, both female; they bring around Ares' son Panic. And then by far the best of the men was Ajax, son of Telamon — for as long as Achilles was wrathful, since it was actually he who was the very best, as well as the horses that carried the faultless son of Peleus. (*Iliad* 2.761-770)

As Ruth Scodel has pointed out, Homer's nod to the fact that Eumelus's horses were raised by Apollo suggests a motivation for his intervention to help Eumelus in the chariot race, but because this connection is not made explicit in Book 23, "this is surely a case where the narrator exploits a tradition that could be important in a different narrative for local purposes."⁹⁶ Be that as it may, the narrative treats it as a simple fact that Eumelus's horses are the best — except for those of Achilles. This qualification, introduced by an *ophra* ("as long as") temporal clause expressing duration, suggests that the ranking process is dynamic and changing, and can be affected by changes to the story. The clause's imperfect verb *mênien* ("was wrathful") echoes the first word of the poem *mênin* ("wrath"), suggesting the duration of the main plot of the *Iliad* itself.

As he sets out the prizes for the chariot race, Achilles himself affirms that the outcome of the race at the funeral games will also be affected by his own non-participation:

εἰ μὲν νῦν ἐπὶ ἄλλῳ ἀεθλεύοιμεν Ἀχαιοὶ
ἢ τ' ἂν ἐγὼ τὰ πρῶτα λαβὼν κλισίην δὲ φεροίμην.
ἵστε γὰρ ὅσον ἐμοὶ ἀρετῇ περιβάλλετον ἵπποι·
ἀθάνατοί τε γάρ εἰσι, Ποσειδάων δὲ πόρ' αὐτοὺς

⁹⁶ Scodel (1999: 37). Apollo's service to Eumelus's father Admetus is a central plot element of Euripides' *Alcestis*.

πατρὶ ἐμῷ Πηληϊῆϊ, δ' αὖτ' ἐμοὶ ἐγγυάλισεν.
ἀλλ' ἦτοι μὲν ἐγὼ μενέω καὶ μώνυχες ἵπποι·
τοίου γὰρ κλέος ἐσθλὸν ἀπώλεσαν ἡνιόχοιο
ἡπίου, ὃς σφωῖν μάλα πολλάκις ὕγρον ἔλαιον
χαιτῶν κατέχευε λοέσσας ὕδατι λευκῷ.
τὸν τῷ γ' ἐσταότες πενθείετον, οὐδεὶ δέ σφι
χαῖται ἐρηρέδαται, τῷ δ' ἔστατον ἀχνυμένω κῆρ.

Now, if the Achaeans were competing at another man's funeral, then I myself would surely win first prize and take it back to my tent. Well, you all know how far superior my horses are in virtue, since they are immortal, and Poseidon gave them to my father Peleus, who then turned them over to me. But I am in fact going to stay out of it myself, along with my single-hoofed horses, since they have lost the good fame of such a great charioteer, a kind man, who would very often pour smooth olive oil down their manes after washing them with clean water. They both mourn him, standing, and their manes are resting on the ground, and they both stand, grieving in their hearts. (23.274-280)

Although not with a formulaic *kai ny ke(n)* or *entha ke(n)* construction, Achilles ponders a contrafactual situation himself — the alternate version of this race he would win would be *epi allōi*, at a funeral “for another man” at which Achilles would not serve as host and could compete. Of course, if this were another man's funeral, than perhaps Patroclus would still be alive to drive and care for the horses as he did in the past. Achilles' description of the grieving horses not only honors his friend by remembering his service in the past, but suggests an alternate picture of the present as it would be if Patroclus were alive to ready the horses for a parallel version of this competition. This is not stated explicitly, but then again, neither is Patroclus's identity as the “gentle charioteer” that the horses have lost.

Achilles' divine horses appear at several points throughout the poem, but these two places — the Catalog of Ships and the Funeral Games, which Cedric Whitman reads as a counterbalancing pair — are the only mentions of Eumelus in the *Iliad*.⁹⁷ Achilles' mention of the superiority of his own horses to

⁹⁷ As part of the “geometric” structure he identifies for the *Iliad*, Whitman (1958: 262) sees the second and second-to-last Books of the epic as opportunities for the poet to provide a “panorama” of the Greek forces at either end of the poem's grand structure.

those of the other heroes is likely meant to evoke the Narrator's comment from Book 2, especially as it is followed immediately by the re-introduction of Eumelus into the poem after a nineteen-book absence:

ῶρτο πολὺ πρῶτος μὲν ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Εὐμήλος
Ἀδμήτου φίλος υἱός, ὃς ἵπποσύνη ἐκέκαστο.

By far the first to rise was the lord of men Eumelus, Admetus's beloved son, who excelled in horsemanship. (23.288-289)

That Eumelus is "by far the first" (*poly prôtos*) to volunteer is perhaps a further hint that he should be expected to win first place in this competition, as is the reference to his superior horsemanship. The reason he will not is explained at once by the second man to enter the race:

τῷ δ' ἐπὶ Τυδεΐδης ῶρτο κρατερὸς Διομήδης,
ἵππους δὲ Τρωὺς ὑπαγε ζυγόν, οὓς ποτ' ἀπήυρα
Αἰνείαν, ἀτὰρ αὐτὸν ὑπεξέσάωσεν Ἀπόλλων.

And after him rose mighty Diomedes, son of Tydeus, and the horses he brought under his yoke were Trojan, the ones he had once stolen from Aeneas, although Apollo had saved the man himself. (*Iliad* 23.290-292)

Like Achilles' absence, the presence of Diomedes' new horses represent another change in the status of the heroes that will affect the outcome of the race — in Book 2 they still belonged to Aeneas, and thus would not have been considered in the rankings at the end of the Catalog of ships. One suspects that if these rankings had been announced at a later point in the poem, the ticking clock poet would have updated the list of best horses to reflect the change that his own storytelling has made to the state of things.⁹⁸ Perhaps the chariot race serves as a way of doing exactly this.

As we follow these horses through the *Iliad*, we will see that their every appearance is accompanied by a pivotal contrafactual and an encounter with an alternate storytelling possibility.

⁹⁸ Latacz (2003: 248) reads Eumelus's horses as a foil for those of Achilles: the praise of the former magnifies the latter still more in their absence. It seems that Homer utilizes them for the same purpose when they are pitted against Diomedes.

Diomedes steals them during his *aristeia* in Book 5, when Athena has made him powerful enough to fight the gods themselves. There he explains to his fellow Argive leader Sthenelus his reasons for wanting these particular mares:

τῆς γάρ τοι γενεῆς ἥς Τρωΐ περ εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς
δῶχ' υἱὸς ποινὴν Γανυμήδεος, οὐνεκ' ἄριστοι
ἵππων ὅσσοι ἔασιν ὑπ' ἥῳ τ' ἡελιόν τε,
τῆς γενεῆς ἔκλεψεν ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγχίσης
λάθρη Λαομέδοντος ὑποσχὼν θήλεας ἵππους·
τῶν οἱ ἕξ ἐγένοντο ἐνὶ μεγάροισι γενέθλη.
τοὺς μὲν τέσσαρας αὐτὸς ἔχων ἀτίταλλ' ἐπὶ φάτνῃ,
τῷ δὲ δὺ' Αἰνεία δῶκεν μήστωρε φόβοιο.
εἰ τοῦτω κε λάβοιμεν, ἀροίμεθά κε κλέος ἐσθλόν.

...because they are of the same breed that far-thundering Zeus gave to Tros as compensation for his son Ganymede, because they are the best of all the horses there are under the dawn and the sun, a breed from which the lord of men Anchises stole, by breeding mares with them without the knowledge of Laomedon. He had six of their offspring born to him in his home, of which he kept four to rear himself at his own trough, while to Aeneas he gave two — instigators of panic. If we were to take this pair, we would win great fame. (*Iliad* 5.265-273)

This explication of the horses' lineage is surely part of the reason that Diomedes is able to offer such stiff competition to the fastest horses and best charioteer in the Achaean army. As the pivotal contrafactual that precedes the intervention of first Apollo and then Athena in the race tells us, Diomedes would also have won (or at least tied Eumelus) if the gods had not interfered with the contest.

Diomedes' account of the horses' background also suggests that surreptitiousness and sudden reversals of fortune are part of their pedigree. The divine breed came into human hands as payment for the abduction of Ganymede — one crossing of the boundary between mortal and immortal is repaid with another. Aeneas has them because of his father Anchises' crime against the former king of Troy,

Priam's father Laomedon.⁹⁹ Now Diomedes steals them in a scenario that closely parallels the fight between Menelaus and Paris. Aeneas is sorely mismatched with Diomedes, who, supercharged by Athena, incapacitates the Trojan warrior by crushing him with an impossibly heavy boulder. Just as when Menelaus caught Paris by the helmet, Diomedes has Aeneas completely at his mercy:

... αὐτὰρ ὃ γ' ἥρως
ἔστη γυνὴ ἔριπὼν καὶ ἐρείσατο χειρὶ παχείῃ
γαίης· ἀμφὶ δὲ ὅσσε κελαινὴ νύξ ἐκάλυψε.
Καὶ νύ κεν ἔνθ' ἀπόλοιτο ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Αἰνείας,
εἰ μὴ ἄρ' ὅξυ νόησε Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἀφροδίτη
μήτηρ, ἣ μιν ὑπ' Ἀγχίση τέκε βουκολέοντι·
ἀμφὶ δ' ἔδον φίλον υἱὸν ἐχεύατο πῆχε λευκῷ,
πρόσθε δέ οἱ πέπλοιο φαεινοῦ πτύγμα κάλυπεν
ἔρκος ἔμεν βελέων, μὴ τις Δαναῶν ταχυπῶλων
χαλκὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι βαλὼν ἐκ θυμὸν ἔλοιτο.
ἣ μὲν ἔδον φίλον υἱὸν ὑπεξέφερεν πολέμοιο·
οὐδ' υἱὸς Καπανῆος ἐλήθετο συνθεσιῶν
τάων ἃς ἐπέτελλε βοῆν ἀγαθὸς Διομήδης,
ἀλλ' ὃ γε τοὺς μὲν ἐοὺς ἠρύκακε μώνυχας ἵππους
νόσφιν ἀπὸ φλοίσβου ἐξ ἄντυγος ἠνία τείνας,
Αἰνείαιο δ' ἐπαΐξας καλλίτριχας ἵππους
ἐξέλασε Τρώων μετ' εὐκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοῦς.

...and the hero (Aeneas) stood with one knee on the ground and rested his heavy hand against the earth. Dark night covered his eyes all around. And at that point the lord of men Aeneas would have died right there if Aphrodite the daughter of Zeus had not taken sharp notice; she was his mother, who was impregnated with him by Anchises when he was taking care of cattle. She slid her white arms around her beloved son, and covered him in front with the folds of her brilliant peplos, so it would be a shield against projectiles, so that none of the Danaans with their swift horses could hit him in the chest with bronze and take away his life. While she carried her beloved son out of the war, <Sthenelus> the son of Capaneus did not forget the orders given by Diomedes, great at the war cry, but he held his own single-hoofed horses back and away from the chaos, tightening the reins against the chariot rail. Rushing at Aeneas's horses with their lovely manes, he drove them away from the Trojans and towards the Achaeans. (*Iliad* 5.308-324)

⁹⁹ According to the genealogy Aeneas gives for himself at *Iliad* 20.215-241, Anchises is a generation younger than Anchises. Their two families represent two lines of descent from the founder-figure Tros: Aeneas and Anchises are descendents of Tros's son Ilus, while Priam and Laomedon are descendents of Tros's son Assaracus.

We recognize the familiar features of the pivotal contrafactual¹⁰⁰ from the closely parallel scene in which Aphrodite rescues Paris: *kai ny ken*, the one-line glimpse of the potential untraditional ending in which Aeneas dies, Aphrodite “noticing” the scene with a form of the verb *noein*, and the sudden widening of the focus from the small details such as knees and hands and throats and helmet straps to the wider divine view of the narrative that sees the characters as items to be manipulated. Like Paris, Aeneas is bluntly subtracted from the situation as a way of undoing the Gordian knot of a plotline in which two warriors with mythologically secure futures are pitted against each other in a battle to the death.

The problematic nature of these scenarios is spelled out more clearly in yet another doublet (triplet?) of this divine rescue scene in Book 20, in which Poseidon rescues Aeneas from the rampaging Achilles:

ἀλλ’ ἄγεθ’ ἡμεῖς πέρ μιν ὑπὲρ θανάτου ἀγάγωμεν,
μή πως καὶ Κρονίδης κεχολώσεται, αἶ κεν Ἀχιλλεύς
τόνδε κατακτείνει· μόριμον δέ οἱ ἐστ’ ἀλέασθαι,
ὄφρα μὴ ἄσπερμος γενεὴ καὶ ἄφαντος ὄληται
Δαρδάνου, ὃν Κρονίδης περὶ πάντων φίλατο παίδων
οἱ ἔθεν ἐξεγένοντο γυναικῶν τε θνητῶν.
ἤδη γὰρ Πριάμου γενεὴν ἔχθηρε Κρονίων·
νῦν δὲ δὴ Αἰνείας βίη Τρώεσσιν ἀνάξει
καὶ παίδων παῖδες, τοί κεν μετόπισθε γένωνται.

But come, let us take him away from death ourselves, for fear that the son of Cronus might even become angry if Achilles kills this man. It is fated for him to escape, so that his family will not die off and disappear without issue — the family of Dardanus, whom the son of Cronus loved more than all the children who were born to him by mortal women. For now the son of Cronus hates Priam’s family. Now the might of Aeneas will rule over the Trojans, and his children’s children who are born in the future. (*Iliad* 20.300-308)

¹⁰⁰ Fenik (1968: 36) compares these two divine rescue scenes as part of a general consideration of the nature of “typical scenes” and their interrelationship with each other and the shared epic tradition and language.

Poseidon's words have been read as a reference to some contemporary ruling family in the Troad who called themselves Aeneidae, although our lack of knowledge about the context for the *Iliad*'s composition makes this speculative.¹⁰¹ It certainly feels as if this is a reference that would have meant something more specific to some early audience than it does to us. In this respect, it is interesting to note that, in keeping with the metaphor of gods as the voice of the audience, Poseidon's is a dissenting voice of sympathy for the Trojans among the pro-Greek divinities. Whatever the case may be, his speech uses the language of what is "fated" (*morsimon*) to identify a fact that also defines the shape of "tradition" for poet and audience, a metaphor that I discuss further in Chapter Four, along with Zeus's role as a stand-in for the poet, occupying the top position in the narrative hierarchy. This is a metaphor that *can* be employed when it is convenient — Zeus's anger often seems to be directed at characters who are not cooperating with his storytelling goals — but it is only one aspect of his complex character. Zeus's alignment with Aeneas here seems connected to his mythological and political role as stabilizer of monarchies and their lines of succession.¹⁰²

At any rate, Poseidon's speech is a rare occasion when the motivation for a divine intervention is spelled out specifically. His words are followed by the divine rescue scene that replicates Aeneas's rescue from Diomedes in Book 5. Louden argues that the poem intentionally marks the two passages as a pair

¹⁰¹ Faulkner (2008: 2-3, with bibliography) collects opinions on both sides of the issue, which essentially comes down to a series of interpretations of a small amount of data: statements about the future of the sons of Aeneas in *Iliad* 20 and the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, along with a handful of references to real-world Aeneidae in later historians. I concur with Faulkner's response (p. 16) to critics who argue that the passages from the *Iliad* and the hymn should be read for their literary, not historical, effect: "these literary themes, no matter how one chooses to rate their prominence, should be understood as working alongside the concentrated attention given to Aeneas and his descendants in the poem rather than as competing interpretations."

¹⁰² For Zeus's constant battle against potential instability in the divine order, see e.g. Clay (1989), Slatkin (1991), Elmer (2013).

through the extensive parallels which, in his opinion, go beyond what can be explained by separate instantiations of a type scene:

Both passages occur in ἀπιστεῖαι, the two most extensive, as well as the first and the last, in the poem. Each encounter is preceded by what Fenik has termed a “consultation pattern.” Each consultant is an archer, Pandaros in Book 5, Apollo in Book 20.³² The climax of each encounter is Aineias’s rescue, divine intervention expressed in a pivotal contrafactual. Only on these two occasions is Aineias so rescued. As noted before, <a three-line repeated sequence in one warrior picks up an impossibly heavy rock> occurs only in these two passages, immediately preceding the two pivotal contrafactuals.¹⁰³

I think Louden is correct in his identification of a specific connection between the two scenes. Here, as often in the poem, the function of Diomedes seems to be as a stand-in for Achilles, a kind of blank hero upon whom many of the absent protagonist’s motifs and actions are projected during his absence, culminating in his removal from battle by being shot in the foot by Paris in Book 11.¹⁰⁴ The Diomedes who takes the reins of these magical Trojan horses seems already to stand with one foot inside and one outside the boundaries of the *Iliad* itself. Some of the episodes he recreates, such as the fight with Aeneas, are a part of the poem’s main plot, but he also recreates scenes (such as a version of the “Achilles’ heel” motif) from parts of the Trojan War megamyth that the *Iliad* itself does not cover. With reference to the chariot race in *Iliad* 23, Douglas Frame finds in the prominent role of Nestor and Antilochus a reference to a tale from Nestor’s own youth, in which he loses a chariot race to the twin Molione, and detects echoes of this episode in Diomedes’ competition with Eumelus.¹⁰⁵

Another instance where Diomedes’ actions seem to recreate an episode from outside the *Iliad* is the next appearance of the hero’s newly acquired horses, in Book 8, during the period when Zeus has forbidden the gods to interfere with the human action so that he can begin granting Achilles’ wish for

¹⁰³ Louden 1993: 191.

¹⁰⁴ See e.g. Alden (2000: 173 ff.), Burgess (2009: 63 ff.) for a summary of the correspondences and associated scholarship.

¹⁰⁵ Frame (2009: 140-149).

Achean defeat. Once the Achaeans realize that they have lost the support of the gods, their main heroes retreat one by one, leaving behind Nestor:

Ἔνθ' οὐτ' Ἰδομενεὺς τλῆ μίμνειν οὐτ' Ἀγαμέμνων,
οὐτε δὺ' Αἴαντες μενέτην θεράποντες Ἄρης.
Νέστωρ οἶος ἔμιμνε Γερένιος οὔρος Ἀχαιῶν
οὐ τι ἐκῶν, ἀλλ' ἵππος ἐτείρετο, τὸν βάλεν ἰῶ
δῖος Ἀλέξανδρος Ἑλένης πόσις ἠυκόμοιο
ἄκρην κακ κορυφήν, ὅθι τε πρῶται τρίχες ἵππων
κρανίῳ ἐμπεφύασι, μάλιστα δὲ καίριόν ἐστιν.
ἀλγήσας δ' ἀνέπαλτο, βέλος δ' εἰς ἐγκέφαλον δῦ,
σὺν δ' ἵππους ἐτάραξε κυλινδόμενος περὶ χαλκῶ.
ὄφρ' ὁ γέρων ἵπποιο παρηγορίας ἀπέταμνε
φασγάνῳ αἰσσων, τόφρ' Ἑκτορος ὠκέες ἵπποι
ἦλθον ἀν' ἰωχμὸν θρασὺν ἠνίοχον φορέοντες
Ἑκτορα· καὶ νῦν κεν ἔνθ' ὁ γέρων ἀπὸ θυμὸν ὄλεσσε
εἰ μὴ ἄρ' ὁξὺ νόησε βοὴν ἀγαθὸς Διομήδης.

Then neither Idomeneus nor Agamemnon dared to remain, and the two Ajaxes, servants of Ares, did not remain either. The only one to remain was Nestor the Gerenian, watchman of the Achaeans. This was not intentional, but his horse was disturbed; noble Alexander, husband of Helen with her fair hair, shot it with an arrow right down the top of the skull, where the first hairs grow out of of horses' heads, which is the most critical place. It convulsed in pain, and the arrow went into its brain, and it spooked the other horses as it spun around the bronze. While the old man was cutting the trace-horse straps, attacking them with his sword, the whole time Hector's quick horses came through the wild turmoil bringing their charioteer: Hector. And at that point the old man would have lost his life right there, if Diomedes, great at the war cry, had not taken sharp notice. (*Iliad* 5.78-91)

Here we see the same pattern as the divine rescue, with Diomedes replacing the other gods and goddesses who “take sharp notice” of the human predicaments. From the small but crucial details around which life-and-death situations pivot (here a wounded trace horse whose reins must be severed) the focus of the scene widens, as it shifts to the perspective of a focalizer who assesses the situation as a whole and intervenes to change it. While Diomedes is not the only human character to intervene in a pivotal contrafactual, divine intervention is by far the more frequent technique — especially when the

intervention is to avert an outcome that would violate tradition.¹⁰⁶ An example¹⁰⁷ from Morrison's third category of changes that make little difference to the plot or the tradition — the only category in which human intervention is more common than divine — will demonstrate the difference:

ἐνθ' ὃ γε Κοίρανον εἶλεν Ἀλάστορά τε Χρομίον τε
Ἄλκανδρόν θ' Ἄλιόν τε Νοήμονά τε Πρύτανίν τε.
καί νύ κ' ἔτι πλέονας Λυκίων κτάνε δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
εἰ μὴ ἄρ' ὄξυ νόησε μέγας κορυθαίολος Ἴκτωρ.

Then (Odysseus) killed Coeranus and Alastor and Chromius and Alcander and Halius and Noemon and Prytanis. And at that point divine Odysseus would have killed more of the Lycians if great Hector of the gleaming helmet had not taken sharp notice... (*Iliad* 5.677-680)

Here too a pivotal contrafactual with a human interloper is employed in a formally similar way to reverse a plot trajectory that cannot be sustained forever, but there is neither the tension nor the mythological significance found in the passages we have examined featuring the sudden rescue of characters such as Aeneas, Nestor, or Paris.

It is, of course, necessary for this intervention to be human rather than divine, because this is during the period when Zeus has forbidden the other gods to interfere. But what allows Diomedes to effect this rescue is not only his status as a stand-in for Achilles, but, as he tells Nestor himself, his magical horses:

ἀλλ' ἄγ' ἐμῶν ὀχέων ἐπιβήσαιο, ὄφρα ἴδῃαι
οἶοι Τρώϊοι ἵπποι ἐπιστάμενοι πεδίοιο
κραιπνὰ μάλ' ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα διωκέμεν ἡδὲ φέβεσθαι,
οὓς ποτ' ἀπ' Αἰνείαν ἐλόμην μήστωρε φόβοιο.
τούτω μὲν θεράποντε κομείτων, τώδε δὲ νῶϊ
Τρωσὶν ἐφ' ἵπποδάμοις ἰθύνομεν, ὄφρα καὶ Ἴκτωρ

¹⁰⁶ Morrison (1992: 66) gives the statistics for the three categories into which he divides pivotal contrafactuals: divine intervention occurs in seven out of nine passages where the Trojan War tradition is threatened, seven out of ten in passages where the plot of the *Iliad* is threatened, and four out of fourteen in cases where neither is threatened.

¹⁰⁷ Morrison 1992: 65.

εἴσεται εἰ καὶ ἐμὸν δόρυ μαίνεται ἐν παλάμῃσιν.

...but come, step into my chariot, so that you can see how these Trojan horses that know the terrain are at chasing and fleeing very quickly, this way and that — the ones I once took from Aeneas, instigators of panic. Have servants transport those away, and let's both aim this pair at the horse-taming Trojans, so that even Hector will know if my spear still rages in my hands. (*Iliad* 8.105-111)

Here, as in the Book 23 chariot race, the narrative reminds us that these are the same horses Diomedes acquired in Book 5 without repeating the detail of their supernatural genealogy. However, in both cases it is a reasonable inference that it is precisely this quality that allows Diomedes to perform feats that no one else can. Much has been made of Odysseus's cowardly retreat (8.97-98) after Diomedes asks for his help, but Nestor's stranding also comes in the wake of the desertion of Agamemnon, Idomeneus, and the two Ajaxes, after Zeus signals his allegiance to the Trojans by striking the ground in front of the Achaeans with lightning. These magical horses are like a purloined bit of the divine magic that allows gods to adjust the course of the narrative.

This is particularly true given that the situation with Hector and Nestor's wounded horses that Diomedes interrupts has been examined extensively by the Neoanalysts for its parallels with a plausible reconstruction of a scene from the Cyclic *Aethiopis* featuring the death of Antilochus.¹⁰⁸ Proclus's summary of the *Aethiopis* describes the scene in the broadest possible terms: Thetis delivers to Achilles some unspecified prophesy about Memnon, Memnon kills Antilochus, Achilles kills Memnon (καὶ Θέτις τῷ παιδὶ τὰ κατὰ τὸν Μέμνονα προλέγει. καὶ συμβολῆς γενομένης Ἀντίλοχος ὑπὸ Μέμνονο ἀναιρεῖται, ἔπειτα Ἀχιλλεὺς Μέμνονα κτείνει). The Neoanalytic argument supplements this description with a reference in Pindar's Sixth Pythian Ode to Antilochus, who is supposed to have died "standing up to the

¹⁰⁸ Willcock (1997: 179 ff.) summarizes bibliography of Neoanalyst readings; Kullmann (2005) discusses his own Neoanalyst position in light of recent scholarship.

man-slaying Memnon, commander of the Aethiopians, since Nestor’s chariot was impeded by his horse, which was shot by arrows from Paris.” (6.30-33: ἐναρίμβροτον | ἀναμείναις στράταρχον Αἰθιοπῶν | Μέμνονα. Νεστόρειον γὰρ ἵππος ἄρμ’ ἐπέδα | Πάριος ἐκ βελέων δαΐχθεις.) By facing the superior warrior Memnon, Nestor’s son Antilochus “purchased a rescue for his father with his death” (39: πρίατο μὲν θανάτοιο κομιδὰν πατρός). The close parallels between the situations have led to the Neoanalytic argument that this ultimately inconsequential Iliadic scene is a reworking of a more pivotal scene from the *Aethiopis*, in which the death of Antilochus, like that of Patroclus in the *Iliad*, is the catalyst for Achilles’ return to battle to fight the main antagonist.

More recently scholars such as Martin West Adrian Kelly have voiced uneasiness with the circularity in the logic that allows the plot of the lost poem to be simultaneously reconstructed from and compared with surviving works.¹⁰⁹ Burgess points out that it is entirely speculation that the *Aethiopis* or any other early poem depicted Achilles’ slaying of Memnon as an act of reciprocal vengeance for the killing of Antilochus — but even if it was,

the motif of vengeance for a fallen friend is a typical motif, not a specific one. It could readily arise in any poetry about battle. We find it constantly in the battle scenes of the *Iliad*, and this suggests that the motif was common in the epic tradition that the poet of the *Iliad* knew, not simply in one story that the poet knew.¹¹⁰

Burgess does not seek to overturn the Neoanalytic reading of Diomedes’ rescue of Nestor, however, but merely to qualify the specificity of the allusion to take account of the kind of multiformity one finds in an oral tradition: “I am inclined to agree, with reservations, that the *Iliad* scene may at least partially

¹⁰⁹ West (2003) argues that the *Aethiopis* was written as a response to “death of Achilles” storyline left unfinished by the *Iliad*; Kullmann (2005) responds to his objections against the Neoanalytic reading. Kelly (2006) argues that Pythian 6 displays so many linguistic echoes with the passage from *Iliad* 8 that the Iliadic passage must have exerted some direct influence on Pindar’s composition, but agrees that Homer could also have been familiar with a version of the *Aethiopis* that included some version of this scene.

¹¹⁰ Burgess 1997: 10.

correspond to an episode in the *fabula* of the death of Achilles that usually belonged there.”¹¹¹ Perhaps the situation that Diomedes’ pivotal contrafactual interrupts, with Nestor stranded in a chariot rendered inoperable because of a wounded trace horse and Hector racing in to kill him, would have felt familiar to the audience in a general way as the *kind* of sequence that preceded the return of a hero such as Achilles, rather than as a specific reference to a fixed poem such as the *Aethiopis*.

The Neoanalysts point out that the “wounded trace horse” motif is mirrored in *Iliad* 16, when Patroclus loses his own trace horse while taking the place of Achilles in battle; these are the only two mentions of “trace horses” in the entire *Iliad*.¹¹² This scene in *Iliad* 16 precedes the encounter with Sarpedon that is his final moment of glory before being slain by Hector. Could it be that, like the casting of lots in the contest script (or the presence of an unused musical instrument in Avdo’s disguiseless recognition scene), the injured trace horse was an automatic part of the oral storytelling pattern in which the death of a hero’s friend precedes his killing of the responsible enemy?¹¹³ If so, then I would argue that Nestor’s wounded trace horse in *Iliad* 8 functions not only to incorporate that external scene into the *Iliad*, but simultaneously to lead certain savvy members of the audience to expect that the sequence that will bring Achilles back to the battle has just been initiated.¹¹⁴ Perhaps they specifically expected the Antilochus scene from Pythian 6, or perhaps Antilochus and Patroclus are simply the only two examples of a much more diverse story pattern that happened to survive the transition to writing. At any rate, the

¹¹¹ Burgess 2009: 74.

¹¹² Neoanalytic arguments centering around the presence or absence of the wounded trace horse are summarized by Kelly (2006: 6-12).

¹¹³ This is not to say that the injured horses are not well-motivated in each case, causing Nestor’s predicament in Book 8, and serving a symbolic function in *Iliad* 16, where the killing of the mortal horse that is paired with Achilles’ divine team foreshadows the deaths of both the half-divine Achilles and his stand-in Patroclus.

¹¹⁴ As I discuss in Chapter Four, the *Iliad* does not overtly predict or foreshadow the death of Patroclus until Zeus explains the *Dios boulê* to Hera at the end of *Iliad* 8 — i.e. directly *after* this rescue of Nestor by Diomedes.

demand that Zeus has just made to the gods is to avoid intervening so that he can get “this work” (*tade erga*) done as quickly as possible (ὄφρα τάχιστα τελευτήσω τάδε ἔργα), a reference that, as we will discuss in the final chapter, seems to refer to his promise to Achilles to allow Trojan victory, and thus simultaneously to the main plot of the *Iliad*, with the twist that Achilles’ victory will come at the price of a death of a friend. To an audience listening to a poet composing and performing linearly, as the clock ticks, rather than reading a book where the number of pages remaining is obvious, there would be no reason *not* to expect this to be what is happening in Book 8.

Diomedes, however, is able to use the wild card of magical horses to put a stop to the sequence before anyone gets killed. He then turns the horses against Hector and attacks him (8.118 ff.), disabling Hector’s charioteer and forcing him to fall back. It would seem that Diomedes is even able to undo Zeus’s own plan for Trojan victory, as we are told by another pivotal contrafactual:

Ἐνθά κε λοιγὸς ἔην καὶ ἀμήχανα ἔργα γέγοντο,
καὶ νύ κε σήκασθεν κατὰ Ἴλιον ἡῦτε ἄρνες,
εἰ μὴ ἄρ’ ὅξ’ ὅ νόησε πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε·
βροντήσας δ’ ἄρα δεινὸν ἀφῆκ’ ἀργῆτα κεραυνόν,
καδ δὲ πρόσθ’ ἵππων Διομήδεος ἦκε χαμᾶζε·
δεινὴ δὲ φλόξ ὤρτο θεεῖου καιομένοιο,
τῷ δ’ ἵππῳ δείσαντε καταπτῆτην ὑπ’ ὄχεσφι·

At that point there would have been havoc and the work would have become unmanageable, and at that point they would have been penned up in Ilium like sheep, if the father of gods and men had not taken sharp notice. Thundering terribly he sent down a flash of lightning, and threw it down to the ground in front of Diomedes’ horses. A terrible flame arose from the burning sulfur, and the two horses got scared and fled beneath the chariot. (*Iliad* 8.130-136)

This passage is heavily marked by the presence of both versions of the pivotal contrafactual formula in a row, first *entha ke* and then *kai ny ke*, to suggest the kind of chaos that might be found in a plot where a rogue Diomedes is allowed to go unchecked. The “work” (*erga*) that threatens to become unmanageable echoes the plot *erga* that Zeus has just declared his intention to carry out quickly. Interestingly, Zeus’s

“sharp notice” seems to be directed toward the divine animals at least as much as it is toward the human hero: his lightning strikes in front of the horses and is specifically described as causing *them* fear and making *them* relent. These are magical horses, with the gods’ own power to alter plotlines in progress.

My reading of this passage is again complementary to that of Douglas Frame, who sees a different intersection between *Iliad* 8 and 22 in which both allude to Nestor’s loss in a chariot race in funeral games as a young man due to a lack of restraint that causes his chariot to be damaged.¹¹⁵ The qualities that we see in Nestor and Antilochus in both books, Frame argues, mirror those that led to the death of Patroclus. This is yet another aspect of Diomedes’ function as a point of intersection with other parts of the larger mythological tradition. The appearance of his horses in *Iliad* 5 and 8 both involve episodes that consciously rewrite scenes or motifs from elsewhere in the epic tradition, and both instances are marked by pivotal contrafactual formulas and clashes with the gods. At the same time, even as the ticking clock poet constantly introduces self-contained episodes to defer or alter the plot, he is keeping tabs on any loose plot threads that these self-contained episodes may have left behind, such as Diomedes’ acquisition of these new horses. Whatever the external resonances, the very fact that the Catalog in Book 2 concludes with the question “whose horses were fastest” suggests that this is itself a question with intrinsic interest for audiences. Therefore we ought also to notice the internal resonance of this episode from Book 8. The horses involved in this scene will all race in Book 23 (excluding, one assumes, Nestor’s horse which is shot in the brain), and the team that is here disabled comes in second to the team that is here required to save the day.

I have argued that there is a greater significance behind the pivotal contrafactual at 23.382-383 with which we began this discussion. Apollo’s intervention to try to help Eumelus win the race functions

¹¹⁵ Frame 2009: 207 ff.

not to change the results, but to mark the outcome as an alternative to tradition — and in this case, version marked as “alternative” is the one that will come true in the *Iliad*. In addition to the external evidence of alternate versions of the tradition with alternate winners in the race, the outcome is a hotly contested event within the poem, beginning with an argument between Idomeneus and Oilean Ajax over whether the runner they see in the lead is, in fact, Eumelus or Diomedes (23.450-487). Frame describes how even Idomeneus’s correct proposition (that Diomedes is in the lead) imagines a different version of Eumelus’s crash, a “virtual race” that he reads as yet another nod to Nestor’s long-ago loss against the Molion twins.¹¹⁶ Thus we may suspect the collision of not one but two alternate versions of this race: Ajax’s prediction (in which Eumelus wins) and Idomeneus’s prediction (in which Eumelus loses and recreates Nestor’s loss).

Although we will never be able to detect the entire web of resonance with other parts of the multiform oral tradition that lie behind this episode, it seems extremely likely that the chariot race was both popular and variable for early audiences. I argue that Diomedes’ victory is one of the likeliest candidates for being the particular invention of the poet dictating our *Iliad*. He has used Diomedes and his horses throughout the first half of the poem both as a tool to manage the plot and as a window into the rest of the myth and alternate storytelling possibilities. Having them win the chariot race at the end functions as a sort of signature, marking and acknowledging that this has been their role in the particular performance that led to our text. “In the Games themselves, and in the behaviour of the characters,” Willcock tells us, the technique of the poet is that “he is exercising his creative invention, but along lines laid down by his previous poetic experience (or memory).”¹¹⁷ With this detail we see that the poet’s use

¹¹⁶ Frame 2009: 142.

¹¹⁷ Willcock 1973: 3

of the divine to expand and correct the plot is at times inextricable from his use of the gods to build and maintain the main story of the poem. These issues will be the focus of the final chapter, as I examine Zeus as both a metapoetic stand-in for the author and a central hub through which epic storytelling is routed.

Chapter Four

Zeus's and Thetis's Iliad

Viewing the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as presentations of a mental text by a ticking clock poet, as I have suggested in the previous chapter, is a perspective that well explains many of the poems' long-noted idiosyncrasies. In her book examining literary strategies for creating verisimilitude, Ruth Scodel contrasts Homeric epic with the modern novel. Scodel identifies one of the "most characteristic features of Homeric narrative" as "local motivation," which she defines as "an expository element or plot device that is introduced only at the moment it is needed and is not developed as the narrative proceeds. It has little or no value for its own sake, but serves to support some other action."¹ This is surely an accurate description of how much of Homeric epic unfolds. Many entire episodes such as the duel of Ajax and Hector in *Iliad* 7 (as I discuss in Chapter Three above) are introduced more or less completely out of the blue, and have no obvious long-term consequences for the plot. Smaller details too are only mentioned at the precise moment they are needed: Hermes arrives to provide Odysseus with the protective herb *moly* only moments before he faces Circe in *Odyssey* 10, for example. While a modern novel's verisimilitude might be damaged if too many of its scenes had such a tenuous relationship with each other and the rest of the story, Scodel sees local motivation in Homer as a kind of apology to increase believability, allowing for the smooth transition from one type of traditional and typical scene to the next. One of the commonest sources of local motivation is, of course, the gods, "in a specialization of their function of filling in the gaps of the explicable."²

¹ Scodel 1999: 33, 12.

² Scodel 1999: 36.

Local motivation is exactly the sort of tool a ticking clock poet needs if he is to expand his traditional poem through the addition of traditional scenes.³ But clearly not all motivation in Homer is local. Expansions must have a base to expand upon, and the basic overall unity of the plot of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have been identified as key features of the poems since Aristotle.⁴ Even the Analysts tended to see the poems as accretions of material attached to a basic core rather than an anthology of unrelated tales. In the case of the *Iliad*, this meant an “*Achilleis*” containing the crucial events of the plot: Achilles’ withdrawal from battle (largely confined to Book 1), the Achaeans’ resulting losses (largely confined to Book 11), and the substitution and death of Patroclus (largely confined to Books 11 and 16) that motivates Achilles’ return to battle. As we saw in the previous chapter, Minna Jensen has suggested that what the Analysts identified as the core layer of composition by the earliest author was, in fact, the stable core of the poet’s mental text.⁵ While the episodes that make up this main plot are, like the expansions, mostly self-contained, the motivation is far from local. In this chapter we will examine the ticking clock poet’s technique for managing the “wrath of Achilles” plot that unites the poem from its beginning to end. Just as we saw in Chapter Three that divine intervention functions as of the poet’s main tools for *expanding* his mental text, this chapter will examine how Zeus serves as a storytelling tool that helps him keep the main points of the mental text organized as they unfold. Specifically, I will consider him as a stand-in for the poet himself, just as the minor gods can represent the audience. This “author as God”

³ It has been argued that many of these expansions are borrowed from other epics to which they are better suited — *Iliad* 3 offers good examples with both the duel of Menelaus and Paris and the “*teichoscopeia*” in which Helen identifies the major Greek heroes for Priam, both of which seem more appropriate to the first year of the war than the last; the methodology of Neoanalysis has largely been built upon such inferences (Kakridis 1949: 8). If, however, we understand such instances of “scripts” or “type scenes” that are the common property of all epic, the concept of an “original” context for any given episode becomes difficult to delineate, particularly in a world of oral rather than written presentation. Adam Parry (1966: 189-201) offers a sensitive reading of how the language of the episodes I mention is carefully crafted for its setting.

⁴ *Poetics* 1451a:22-30

⁵ Jensen 2011: 256-257.

metaphor functions not just in the characterization of Zeus himself, but as an explanation for his function as, “the most influential agent in the *Iliad*, the hub around which the whole action turns.”⁶

I begin with a consideration of one of the most controversial Homeric phrases, the “will” or “plan” of Zeus (*Dios boulê*), which first appears in the fifth line of the *Iliad* and recurs throughout both poems. Scholars have offered various specific interpretations of the phrase in particular contexts, but it seems that on at least some occasions it serves as “a traditional equivalent to ‘the plot of this epic’.”⁷ Using the *Iliad* as my main example, but offering evidence from both poems, I will demonstrate how the *Dios boulê* functions throughout each work as a kind of beacon for the performing poet to follow. As a constantly changing variable, the Will of Zeus both forecasts the major plot points (“Hector and the Trojans will achieve victory over the Greeks”; “Achilles will not return to battle until after the death of Patroclus”) and allows them to loom temporarily on the horizon as known entities which other characters and gods may attempt to change or delay. This structure simplifies the task of the ticking clock poet as he composes the poem he is performing line by line, because it allows him to consider every decision as a binary set of choices: either continue the process of enacting the Will of Zeus, or delay it with a locally motivated and self-contained expansion, which, when completed, will leave him with the same choice again. This is precisely the situation at *Iliad* 7.16, as we examined in the previous chapter.

Over the course of my consideration of the *Dios boulê* as a storytelling device, I will return to scenes and issues explored in the first half of this dissertation. Previously, the argument between Achilles and Agamemnon was considered in terms of its internal storytelling, as the two characters compete to

⁶ Heiden 2008: 29.

⁷ Fowler 2004: 230. See the discussion below for further bibliography.

control an authoritative narrative of the situation they find themselves in. Here I will consider how the episode works from a poet's-eye point of view. As we shall see, Achilles' speech re-narrating *Iliad* 1 to Thetis not only serves to establish the interpretation of Achilles' and Agamemnon's actions on the human level, but also transfers the story to the divine level. When Thetis secures Zeus's agreement to grant Achilles' prayer and kill Achaeans to bring him honor, she assigns the variable *Dios boulê* its initial value for the *Iliad*, while also linking the narrative authority Achilles claims in the human world with that of Zeus in the divine world. The "plan" that the great god enacts to create the plot of the poem is a response to the story the great hero tells to summarize the plot of the beginning. Not only does Zeus's momentous nod to Thetis lock in the course of the plot for the rest of the poem, but it lends authority to the narrative upon which Achilles predicated his request.

At the same time, Zeus's own authority is itself an issue under constant negotiation throughout the *Iliad*, and one subject to a set of concerns similar to those we examined previously in the human negotiations of Achilles and Agamemnon, or the families of the suitors and Odysseus. As is true for the heroes, so too for Zeus: the authority to act is intimately tied to the authority to narrate. Just as human authority is constantly tested and affirmed through the heroes' interactions with each other, so Zeus's authority is defined and explored through his interactions both with the other gods and with the ill-defined power of fate. As with the gods, "fate" (*moira, aisa*) in Homer has been read as a more literary than religious notion: for epic heroes, "what is going to happen" in their lives is fate; for later epic audiences, "what is going to happen" in the story is tradition.⁸ By considering the character of Zeus from the perspective of his function as an organizer and manager of the plot, I will read many of his key

⁸ The perspective is described by Bakker (2005: 109 ff.). The notion of Homeric fate as purely literary concept is given an extensive treatment in a monograph by Eberhard (1923); see also e.g. Nagy (1979: 265-268), Wong (2002), Sarischoulis (2008).

statements and actions in the poems as reflections the powers and limitations of a creative poet working with traditional material. In particular, I identify “narrative teases” — moments at which both Zeus and the poet of the *Iliad* define the extent of their power to create by advertising their ability to use it in irresponsible (or untraditional) ways.

The injustice of Zeus and the Cyclops’s *Odyssey*

I will begin my consideration of Zeus’s role in the management of the main plot of the *Iliad* with a comparative example from the *Odyssey*, one that illustrates the complexity of Homeric plot management technique in action: Polyphemus’s prayer to Poseidon at *Odyssey* 9.528-535. The set of issues that critics have raised in the interpretation of this passage will require a brief consideration of the problem of divine justice. In my opinion, reading Zeus, the gods, and fate as a system designed to facilitate storytelling is useful if only because it allows the interpreter to sidestep the many difficulties that arise in the attempt to discover a coherent (let alone just) religious worldview in the poems. Critics of Homer since at least Xenophanes have complained that the gods’ actions are petty and inconsistent. There is, for example, the matter of Zeus’s response to Odysseus’s prayer at the end of *Odyssey* 9. Throughout the ninth book, Odysseus is markedly observant of ritual toward Zeus,⁹ specifically invoking the god in his capacity as the avenging *Zeus Xeinius* in his plea that the Cyclops provide his men with hospitality (9.269-271), to which Polyphemus replies that “since Cyclopes don’t care about Zeus the Aegis-bearer,” (9.275: οὐ γὰρ Κύκλωπες Διὸς αἰγιόχου ἀλέγουσιν) he would not spare Odysseus or his crew in deference to him, and proceeds to eat six of the men over the course of the next day. As Odysseus is sailing away after blinding the Cyclops, he points to this blasphemous act as the cause of the monster’s downfall as he is crowing about his victory: “this is why Zeus and the rest of the gods have punished you” (9.479: τῷ σε Ζεὺς

⁹ For the just Zeus Odysseus believes in, see Lloyd-Jones (1983: 30).

τείσατο καὶ θεοὶ ἄλλοι), which angers Polyphemos and causes him to pray to Poseidon, as we shall see. Odysseus's final action in the Cyclops episode before his fleet sails away is to make an offering of the ram underneath which he escaped from the cave:

τὸν δ' ἐπὶ θινὶ
Ζηνὶ κελαϊνεφεΐ Κρονίδῃ, ὃς πᾶσιν ἀνάσσει,
ῥέξας μηρί' ἔκαιον· ὁ δ' οὐκ ἐμπάζετο ἱρῶν,
ἀλλ' ὃ γε μερμήριζεν, ὅπως ἀπολοῖατο πᾶσαι
νῆες ἐϋσσελμοὶ καὶ ἐμοὶ ἐρίηρες ἑταῖροι.

And he sacrificed it and burned its bones for Zeus, son of Cronus, god of dark clouds, who rules over all. He did not care for the sacrifice, but plotted how all of my well-decked ships and trusty companions could be destroyed. (*Odyssey* 9.551-555)

It might seem that a just Zeus would have sided with Odysseus rather than the Cyclops; the fact that he does not calls into question the existence of a consistent theodicy in the poems. There are essentially two lines of interpretation that have been applied to the problem. Perhaps, as has been argued influentially by Bernard Fenik,¹⁰ this is yet another example of the sort of inconsistency one finds in oral poetry, where the stacking of traditional scenes and motifs occasionally brings together two incongruent elements. But perhaps there is an explanation to be found in the text — Karl Reinhardt suggests that Odysseus's claim (cited above) to be able to punish in the name of Zeus is *hubris*, which drew the god's wrath,¹¹ and Rainier Friedrich sees this as part of a larger pattern of hubristic behavior on the part of Odysseus.¹² Christopher Brown identifies the problem as Odysseus's failure to recognize that Cyclopes

¹⁰ Fenik (1974: 218 ff.) Louden (1999: 69-103) delineates a specific narrative pattern that underlies all the scenes of divine wrath in the poem. Page's influential reading (1955: 1-20) of the depiction of Polyphemos in *Odyssey* 9 finds an amalgam of the mythological Cyclopes described in e.g. Hesiod's *Theogony* with a more generalized ogre figure appropriate to this common folktale plot, offering a more specific reason for the incongruities in particular elements: for recent takes on this, see Nieto Hernández (2000), Alwine (2009).

¹¹ Reinhardt 1960: 64 ff.

¹² Friedrich 1991.

occupy a separate category from human beings, and that the practice of human *nomoi* should not be expected of them.¹³

The narratological solution to this problem places emphasis on the fact that all of Book 9, as part of Odysseus's *apologoi*, is focalized through this human storyteller, an internal secondary narrator/focalizer. Irene de Jong comments on an earlier passage in which Odysseus blames Zeus for his losses in battle (9.52-3)

...although he had previously blamed his companions, now — like all Homeric characters — Odysseus *also* ascribes to a (malevolent) god the course of events. There are also other places in his narrative where he detects the hand of a god in the course of events, both negative (9.67, 553-5; 12.295, 313, 338, 371-3) and positive (9.142, 154, 158; 10.141, 157; 12.169, 445, 448). It is important to realize that we are dealing here not with facts, but with Odysseus' interpretations.¹⁴

In fact, the groundwork for both a narratological reading was laid over a century ago (thus predating Narratology itself) in a seminal article by Ove Jørgensen.¹⁵ Confronting a tradition of Analyst scholarship that found multiple authorship in the *Odyssey*'s inconsistent treatment of the gods, Jørgensen demonstrated that the poems are both quite consistent in their practice of limiting the ability of their internal, human narrators to describe divine action when narrating their own lives. Through a survey of Odysseus's language in the *apologoi*, he finds that, aside from a very few rule-proving exceptions, Odysseus uses just four words to name the divine agents that constantly interfere in his travels: *daimôn* ("a divinity"), *theos* ("a god"), *theoi* ("the gods"), and *Zeus*. The first two are often found with *tis* ("some divinity", "some god"), creating an indefiniteness which highlights the reality of what Jørgensen demonstrates is behind this phenomenon: "these are, however, just four expressions for the

¹³ Brown 1996.

¹⁴ de Jong 1992: 2.

¹⁵ Jørgensen 1904.

same thing in the poet's conventional language."¹⁶ Here Jörgensen neatly anticipates the next century's insights in both Narratology and Oral Poetics to describe how the careful restriction of this "thrifty" set of formulaic expressions to character speech creates a tangible difference in focalization as compared with the speech of the Homeric Narrator.

While later scholarship has added nuance and limitations to what is sometimes referred to as "Jörgensen's Law,"¹⁷ it is difficult to deny its explanatory power in many passages where characters specifically re-narrate events that had been told from the perspective of the Narrator. Take for example *Odyssey* 5, in which the Narrator describes Poseidon's realization that Odysseus has built a raft to escape the island of Calypso:

τὸν δ' ἐξ Αἰθιοπῶν ἀνιῶν κρείων ἐνοσίχθων
τηλόθεν ἐκ Σολύμων ὀρέων ἴδεν· εἶσατο γάρ οἱ
πόντον ἐπιπλείων. ὁ δ' ἐχώσατο κηρόθι μᾶλλον,
κινήσας δὲ κάρη προτὶ δὴν μυθήσατο θυμόν·
"ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δὴ μετεβούλευσαν θεοὶ ἄλλως
ἂμφ' Ὀδυσῆϊ ἐμείο μετ' Αἰθίοπεσσιν ἐόντος·
καὶ δὴ Φαιήκων γαίης σχεδόν, ἔνθα οἱ αἶσα
ἐκφυγέειν μέγα πεῖραρ οἷζός, ἥ μιν ἰκάνει.
ἀλλ' ἔτι μὲν μὴν φημι ἄδην ἐλάαν κακότητος."
ὥς εἰπὼν σύναγεν νεφέλας, ἐτάραξε δὲ πόντον
χερσὶ τρῖαιναι ἐλών·

As King <Poseidon> the earth shaker was coming back from the Ethiopians, he watched from the far-away mountains of the Solymoi and saw (Odysseus), who was visible to him as he sailed over the sea. <Poseidon> got angrier in his heart, and shook his head and said to his own mind: "Oh no, it seems the gods have in fact completely changed their minds about Odysseus while I was with the Ethiopians! He is actually quite close to the land of the Phaeacians, where it is his fate to escape the large measure of sorrow that is coming to him. But I still think I can throw him enough trouble." When he said this he brought together the clouds and shook up the sea as he picked up his trident in his hands... (*Odyssey* 5.582-592)

¹⁶ "Das sind aber in der contentionellen Sprache des Dichters nur vier Namen für dasselbe." (Jörgensen 1904: 363)

¹⁷ e.g. Friedrich (1991: 16); Brown (1996: 2).

There is much in this passage to which we will return below, as Poseidon describes his own hierarchical relationship with both “the gods” (*theoi*) and “fate” (*aisa*), which defines and limits his ability to affect human action. But for the moment I wish simply to demonstrate the contrast Jørgensen highlights between this description and Odysseus’s immediate re-narration of the beginning of this storm in a soliloquy immediately after it has threatened the vessel he is sailing on:

δεῖδω μὴ δὴ πάντα θεὰ νημερτέα εἶπεν,
ἧ μ’ ἔφατ’ ἐν πόντῳ, πρὶν πατρίδα γαῖαν ἰκέσθαι,
ἄλγε’ ἀναπλήσειν· τὰ δὲ δὴ νῦν πάντα τελεῖται.
οἷοισιν νεφέεσσι περιστέφει οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν
Ζεύς, ἐτάραξε δὲ πόντον, ἐπισπέρχουσι δ’ ἄλλαι
παντοίων ἀνέμων· νῦν μοι σῶς αἰπὺς ὄλεθρος.

I am afraid that everything the goddess (Calypso) told me was infallible — she said I would have my fill of pain on the sea before returning to the land of my fathers. And in fact this has all now been fulfilled. Zeus is twisting the wide sky around with his clouds; he has disturbed the sea, and storms are coming with all sorts of winds. Utter destruction is now certain for me. (*Odyssey* 5.300-305)

Even in a passage that repeats some of the language of the immediately preceding description of Poseidon verbatim (5.291/304: ἐτάραξε δὲ πόντον), Odysseus uses the name “Zeus” to describe the god whom the Narrator has unambiguously identified as Poseidon. According to Jørgensen’s explanation, Odysseus (perhaps in an imitation of everyday speech) uses “Zeus” as a generic label for “some divine power about which I have no further information.” This is only one of many examples offered of character speech re-labeling what had been a specific divinity in Narrator speech as “Zeus” or one of the three other generic titles.¹⁸

This illustration of “Jørgensen’s Law” in action suggests two points relevant to the present study. First, it seems to be literally encoded into the traditional language of epic that the ability to know and

¹⁸ Jørgensen 1904: 366-368.

narrate the actions of the gods is a special property of the narrator. The difference in usage that Jörgensen demonstrates creates a distinction between the language of (Muse-inspired) poetry and regular language, and also (as I suggest in Chapter One) associates it with the language of divinely inspired prophets and seers.¹⁹ If, as I argue, one of the regular functions of divine intervention in Homeric epic is as a tool for the ticking clock poet to facilitate storytelling, it is especially appropriate that this tool is encoded in a traditional type of language and description that is treated as the exclusive property of poets telling stories. The second point is that the inclusion of “Zeus” on the list of generic terms suggests there is something so transcendent about this highest god that he is an exception to this rule: human narrators feel no compunction against attaching responsibility for natural phenomena to his name. In Jörgensen’s view, this is because Homer uses the name in two senses: there is the specific king “Zeus” of Olympus, husband of Hera, father of gods and men whom the Narrator describes, and the fuzzy common noun “zeus” which in character language is merely a synonym for “some god” or “the gods.”²⁰ But as Christopher Brown argues, even if we accept this bifurcation of meaning, Jörgensen’s law applies only to the language used for divine *intervention*; if Odysseus says he made an *offering* to Zeus, this cannot mean the indefinite “zeus.”²¹ Brown’s analysis implies that, because Odysseus occasionally exhibits greater than human knowledge in his *apologoi*, it is essentially impossible to read his statement that Zeus “plotted how all of my well-decked ships and trusty companions could be destroyed” as an inference based on the later outcome rather than a straightforward description.

¹⁹ See my discussion in the first chapter. For a consideration of this distinction as a traditional strategy to create poetic authority, see e.g. Scodel (2002: 79).

²⁰ The choice to illustrate the distinction with capital and lower case Zeus/zeus is my own, not that of Jörgensen (in whose German it would, of course, be meaningless).

²¹ Brown 1996: 2, fn. 2.

I would agree with the first of Brown's points but hesitate on the second. I too cannot read *Odyssey* 9.551-553 to mean anything other than that Odysseus made an offering to Zeus specifically, but I find it reasonable to suspect that "Zeus refused the offering and started planning trouble for my crew and ships" is meant to elide a more complex divine interaction involving other gods (such as those at 12.374-388 or 13.125-158). The ultimate question that Brown, Jørgensen, and many of the other scholars I cite above are concerned with is about the justice of Zeus, as I describe above: why would a just Zeus reward Odysseus's studious piety by plotting his destruction? The answer I have alluded to is that one of the main concerns guiding Zeus's words and actions in Homeric epic is his function as a manager of the main plot. Jørgensen's "zeus" is generally used by characters for the specific purpose of being assigned responsibility for the major events in their own plots and lives. When Odysseus first tells Polyphemus about having been blown off course and forced to wander the sea, the ends with a parenthetical "I guess that's how Zeus decided to plan it" (9.262: οὕτω που Ζεὺς ἤθελε μητίσασθαι). I would argue that, rather than discovering in Jørgensen's observation a bifurcated use of the name "Zeus," we should see in the human characters' indefinite "zeus" a muted version of this prominent feature of the detailed Zeus whom the Narrator describes on Olympus. Zeus is, in fact, rather unlike the other gods in this respect. He generally does not act on personal, locally motivated whims, but invokes the lofty sounding concept of "fate" as justification for the lines of action he endorses and enacts, even if (as in the case of his son Sarpedon or Hector) he does not personally like it.

Another motivation for action by Zeus will be a main focus of the next section of this chapter: his intervention in response to prayers or requests. As we will see, a prayer or request to Zeus is the specific way in which the main plot of both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are initiated. As a model for the way in which this process works, let us now consider Polyphemus's prayer, which directly precedes Odysseus's failed sacrifice to Zeus in *Odyssey* 9:

κλῦθι, Ποσειδάων γαίηοχε κυανοχαῖτα.
εἰ ἐτεόν γε σός εἰμι, πατήρ δ' ἐμὸς εὖχεται εἶναι,
δὸς μὴ Ὀδυσσῆα πτολιπόρθιον οἶκαδ' ἰκέσθαι,
υἷὸν Λαέρτεω, Ἰθάκῃ ἐνὶ οἰκί' ἔχοντα.
ἀλλ' εἴ οἱ μοῖρ' ἐστὶ φίλους τ' ἰδέειν καὶ ἰκέσθαι
οἶκον ἐϋκτίμενον καὶ ἐὴν ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
ὅψ' ἐ κακῶς ἔλθοι, ὀλέσας ἅπο πάντας ἐταίρους,
νηὸς ἐπ' ἄλλοτρίῃς, εὖροι δ' ἐν πῆματα οἴκῳ.'

Hear me Poseidon, blue-haired holder of the earth! Do not allow Odysseus the city destroyer, [son of Laertes, who has his home on Ithaca,] to return home. But if it is his fate to see his loved ones and return to his well-crafted house and to the land of his fathers, have him come late and badly, after losing all of his companions, on someone else's ship, and have him find pain in his home. (9.528-535)

The Cyclops's speech begins with the three standard components of Homeric prayers — invocation of the god; justification for request based on past service or official ties of affection; statement of request²² — but then appends a footnote in the event that his request goes against “fate” (*moira*). In this case, he asks for the request to be transferred into a secondary category of fulfilled wish. Although it will be subordinated to fate and thus unable to supersede it, at the same time, this new request (suffering) will precede the fated event (homecoming) and thus delay it. At this point it is necessary re-introduce a notion I suggested at the beginning of this chapter — that terms for “fate” in Homer such as *moira* or *aisa* frequently have a metapoetic sense, identifying as “fate” from the point of view of the characters what is “tradition” from the point of view of the audience.²³ Edwin Wong argues that, just as “fate” is essentially a poetic device within the poems, the opposing concept of “free will” may co-exist alongside it, but equally as a literary device: fate is what is going to happen, and free will is the ability to delay it,

²² The regular structure of Homeric prayer has been well studied; see e.g. Morrison (1991).

²³ For the interchangeability of *moira* and *aisa* in the epic language, and their use in this sense, see e.g. Nagy (1979: 265-268).

providing the Hitchcockian suspense that keeps the audience in anticipation about when and how the promised outcome will occur.²⁴

This delay of the traditional fate of Odysseus's homecoming is exactly what Polyphemus's prayer requests. But from the point of view of the ticking clock poet, this hierarchical stacking of fates is a convenient way to keep a plot organized while composing line by line in performance. The overall *moira* that Polyphemus names — that Odysseus will return to his home and his loved ones — is both his fate and his tradition; it is what must happen eventually. But once this sequence actually begins, with the return of Odysseus to Ithaca in *Odyssey* 13, the poem takes on a markedly more linear narrative structure than the complex wanderings of the first half. Books 13-24 are almost entirely concerned with narrating Odysseus's straightforward movement from the shore of Ithaca to the inner sanctum of his house, killing the suitors, and reintegrating himself into home and family — what Schadewaldt calls the move from the “external homecoming” (*äußere Heimkehr*) to the “internal homecoming” (*innere Heimkehr*).²⁵ Once this internal homecoming sequence has been initiated, there are no more of the first half's exotic adventures or visits to other heroes (with the slight exception of Telemachus's departure from Sparta and a few brief interludes in divine settings). Therefore we can imagine that having the *moira* “come late and badly” (ὄψε κακῶς ἔλθοι) — that is, after many complications and setbacks — is in fact a useful organizing principle for the ticking clock poet as well. To specify future events by codifying them as “fate” or the fulfillment of a prayer is to give those plot points an identity and a name, allowing them to be easily indexed and referenced by the characters or Narrator, to be promised but delayed by Zeus. The

²⁴ Wong 2002.

²⁵ Schadewaldt 1970: 57.

Cyclops's definition of "badly" is essentially a laundry list of excuses for expanding the plot: there are crew members to be killed, ships to be destroyed, pain to be suffered.

In fact, Polyphemus's speculation about Odysseus's *moira* repeats almost verbatim the two lines with which Zeus had defined it earlier in the poem (5.41-42 ~ 9.532-533), in his speech instructing Hermes to have Calypso release Odysseus from her island:

“Ερμεία· σὺ γὰρ αὐτε τά τ’ ἄλλα περ ἄγγελός ἐσσι·
νύμφη ἐϋπλοκάμῳ εἰπεῖν νημερτέα βουλὴν,
νόστον Ὀδυσσῆος ταλασίφρονος, ὥς κε νέηται,
οὔτε θεῶν πομπῇ οὔτε θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων·
ἀλλ’ ὃ γ’ ἐπὶ σχεδῆς πολυδέσμου πῆματα πάσχων
ἥματι εἰκοστῷ Σχερίην ἐρίβωλον ἵκοιτο,
Φαιήκων ἐς γαῖαν, οἳ ἀγχίθεοι γεγάασιν·
οἳ κέν μιν περὶ κῆρι θεὸν ὥς τιμήσουσι,
πέμψουσιν δ’ ἐν νηϊ φιλήν ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
χαλκόν τε χρυσόν τε ἄλις ἐσθῆτά τε δόντες,
πόλλ’, ὅσ’ ἂν οὐδέ ποτε Τροίης ἐξήρατ’ Ὀδυσσεύς,
εἴ περ ἀπήμων ἦλθε, λαχὼν ἀπὸ ληΐδος αἶσαν.
ὥς γάρ οἱ μοῖρ’ ἐστὶ φίλους τ’ ἰδέειν καὶ ἰκέσθαι
οἶκον ἐς ὑψόροφον²⁶ καὶ ἐὴν ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν.”

Hermes — well, now you will be a messenger again, for different news: tell my infallible will (*boulê*) to the nymph with beautiful hair: a homecoming for Odysseus, who suffers in his heart — for him to come home without the escort of gods or mortal human beings; instead, after suffering pain on a boat bound with many fastenings, on the twentieth day he will come to Scheria, rich with fertile soil, to the land of the Phaeacians, who were born next to the gods. They will honor him like a god with all of their hearts, and send him on a ship to his beloved fatherland, giving him plenty of bronze and gold and clothing — so many things, Odysseus never would have won as much if he had returned from Troy without pain, taking his share (*aisa*) of the plunder. For this is his fate (*moira*): to see his loved ones and return to his high-roofed house and to his fatherland. (*Odyssey* 5.29-42)

²⁶ Polyphemus's curse in Book 9 differs from Zeus's speech in Book 5 in this adjective: while Zeus had said it is Odysseus's fate to return to his "high-roofed" house (*oikon es hypsorophon*), Polyphemus says "well-crafted house" (*oikon eyktimenon*) in an otherwise verbatim repetition; the difference cannot be explained by the necessities of the meter. Could this be a subtle example of the delicacy of Homeric focalization? The Cyclopes as a race are specifically described as living in caves (9.113-114) and ignorant of building technology (9.125-127), and thus one can imagine "roof" being considered a technical term

This speech has thus already served to define as “*moira*” the “internal homecoming” that will end the *Odyssey*; Polyphemus’s mention of it is thus (from the point of view of the ticking clock poet composing line by line, if not the internal chronology of the fabula) taking advantage of the ability I suggest above to index and define plot events once they have been defined as “fate.” But Zeus’s presentation of the future conceptualizes the effects of delay more optimistically. Where Polyphemus’s “late and badly” emphasizes the suffering that typically happens during the type of epic expansions that retard the progression of the plot, Zeus highlights the increased *timê* (“honor”) that is to be had in the end.²⁷ In the previous chapter, we saw how David Elmer has suggested that epic’s “expansion aesthetic” conceptualizes the glory that is to be had from lengthening a poem in terms of the actual extra decorations or treasures that are added to descriptions of armor.²⁸ Here Zeus employs *aïsa* in its literal meaning of “share” or “portion” of treasure alongside its formulaic synonym *moira* in the figurative sense of “fate,” suggesting a kind of rough equivalence: there is a larger share of treasure and honor for the man who suffers a longer delay before receiving his share of fate.

Zeus ends his speech with talk of fate; he began by calling the fated event in question (Odysseus’s *nostos*, “homecoming”) his *boulê* (“will” or “plan”). As I suggest at the beginning of the present chapter, *boulê* is a frequently occurring term to denote the plans of the gods and Zeus in particular, and often seems virtually synonymous with “the plot of this epic.” In his reading of fate in Homer as a purely poetic concept, Eberhard equates fate with the *Dios boulê*, and argues that this plan of Zeus — whose three-stage description is distributed symmetrically in the first main section, and in a form that increases emotionally in terms of content — is clearly the plan of the poet. It contains the basic

²⁷ The epic connection of pain and suffering with glory and honor is of course a major theme of both works, as has often been discussed; see e.g. Nagy (1979), Pucci (1987), Segal (1994: 25-30).

²⁸ Elmer 2010.

structure (*Grundlinien*) of the entire epic and is decisive and crucial for the course of the narrative action.²⁹ Such a reading is quite compatible with the model of oral poetics I argue for. Particularly in the *Iliad*, where Zeus's plan is specifically elaborated in more detail on several key occasions over the course of the poem (as we shall see in more detail below), *boulê* seems often used almost as a technical term in the epic poetic vocabulary that describes the same concept as Jensen's "mental text." It is a way for the poet to vocalize the sense in which his poem is an enactment of a careful schema he has worked out rather than a total improvisation.

This *boulê* in the *Odyssey* may be traced to its very inception, when it is instigated by Athena's request to Zeus during the divine council at the beginning of the poem (1.45-95; the term *boulê* is first found at 1.86). If, as I argue, there is a constantly available metaphor equating Zeus's control over the characters' living world with a poet's control over his story in progress, then Athena seems to have caught the father of gods and men at the end of his previous gig: performing the *Oresteia*. Apropos of nothing, Zeus "began the *mythoi* for them" (1.28: τοῖσι δὲ μύθων ἤρχε) and utters the first word of character speech in the *Odyssey*, describing Aegisthus's murder of Agamemnon upon returning home for the Trojan war, and prescribing revenge in the form of Orestes. As has often been noted, this *Oresteia* story is invoked throughout the *Odyssey* as a counterexample to the action; it is as if Zeus the narrator comes into this poem with the last one in the back of his mind, and thus introduces it as a topic appropriate for reference by the other characters.³⁰ The topic of Odysseus is only introduced when

²⁹ Eberhard (1923: 37-38): "Dieser Plan des Zeus, dessen dreimalige Erwähnung sich symmetrisch auf den ersten Hauptteil verteilt und zwar in inhaltlich wie gefühlsmäßig gesteigerter Form, ist offenbar der Plan des Dichters. Er enthält die vom Dichter konstruierten Grundlinien des ganzen Epos und ist bestimmend und ausschlaggebend für den Verlauf der Handlung." Heiden (2008: 36), in the context of a detailed analysis of the plot structure of the *Iliad* which finds Zeus at the center, calls his plan "an overarching event trajectory in which the central agency of Zeus creates or addresses all the dilemma-situations in which the other characters deliberate, plan, and act."

³⁰ On the *Oresteia* story as a backdrop and exemplary pattern for the *Odyssey*, see e.g. Olson (1995).

Athena makes an indirect request of him with a question: why are you keeping Odysseus away from home? Zeus's response specifically mentions the wrath of Poseidon and names the blinding of Polyphemos as the cause:

ἐκ τοῦ δὴ Ὀδυσῆα Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων
οὗ τι κατακτείνει, πλάζει δ' ἀπὸ πατρίδος αἴης.
ἀλλ' ἄγεθ' ἡμεῖς οἶδε περιφραζώμεθα πάντες
νόστον, ὅπως ἔλθῃσι. Ποσειδάων δὲ μεθήσει
ὄν χόλον· οὐ μὲν γάρ τι δυνήσεται ἀντία πάντων
ἀθανάτων ἀέκητι θεῶν ἐριδαινέμεν οἶος.

It is from this (sc. the blinding of Polyphemos) that Poseidon does what he does to Odysseus — not quite kill him, but keep him wandering away from the land of his fathers. But come, let's all of us here figure out his homecoming — how he will go. Poseidon will calm his anger, since he will not be able to argue against everyone, all by himself, against the wishes of the immortal gods. (*Odyssey* 1.74-79)

The Zeus of the *Odyssey* is more democratic and less hands-on than his Iliadic counterpart, describing this “homecoming” (*nostos*) as the decision of the community of gods rather than his individual plan, and generally delegating his role as monitor of the plot to Athena. This democratic view of divine control over the world is similar to what we saw above in Poseidon's speech in Book 5: “the gods have changed their minds about Odysseus” (5.586-587: μετεβούλευσαν θεοὶ ἄλλως | ἀμφ' Ὀδυσῆϊ).³¹ There too, Poseidon called it his “fate” (5.588: αἶσα) as well as the will of the gods to come home and escape his “large measure of sorrow” (589: μέγα πείραρ οἰζύος), but contrasts with this the immediate opportunity to inflict a satisfying amount of *kakotês* (590) — literally “badness,” which echoes *kakôs* (9.534) in Polyphemos's prayer that Odysseus's fate “come late and badly.” The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have different narrative structures, and employ the gods differently in the realization of these structures, but both

³¹ I think it is worth considering that in this passage Jörgensen's law might apply to Poseidon's speech — because he, returning from the land of the Aethiopians, is describing the divine machinery through inference rather than specific knowledge, it is possible his speech here is governed by the same rules as a human character's, and that “the gods” has the same indefinite sense. For the much-debated issue of whether the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* differ in their theodicy, see Allan (2006, with bibliography).

poems do so by means of a similar hierarchical stacking of plans. The *boulê* that Zeus enforces is not some whim of his, but something that is “submitted” to him externally: by a god, by a prayer, by fate. When Polyphemus prays to Poseidon to curse Odysseus, he submits a shorter term plan that delays the longer term one. The reason there is no scholarly consensus about why Zeus allows this delay is that the text specifically avoids providing one thanks to the device of focalizing the narrative through the human Odysseus. There are hints elsewhere in the *Odyssey* of what the divine negotiation between Poseidon and Zeus might have looked like — in addition to the exchange between Zeus and Athena in the first book, there is the interaction between Zeus and Helios over the slaughter of the cattle at 12.374-388, and between Zeus and Poseidon over the Phaeacians at 13.125-158. Nevertheless, by leaving the set of events that result in Zeus refusing the sacrifice unclear, *Odyssey* 9 characterizes the divine world with a Jobian sense of unknowability — the dimly imagined “zeus” of character speech is inherently more frightening than any particularized Zeus the Narrator might depict, and perhaps in a certain sense, a more satisfying account of real-world divine justice.³²

The Wills of Thetis and Zeus

William Allan’s recent survey³³ of scholarly opinion on the significance of the recurring phrase *Dios boulê* (“will/plan of Zeus”) in the *Iliad* will provide a convenient starting point for the present consideration of the phrase in the *Iliad*. Assuming that the prominently placed statement at the beginning of the poem “and the *boulê* of Zeus was being carried out” (1.5 Διὸς δ’ ἐτελείετο βουλή) is not simply a nonspecific

³² This indefinite “zeus” of character speech is similar to Achilles’ famous parable (*Iliad* 24.527-533) about Zeus handing out human “gifts” from an optional jar of good and a non-optional jar of evil, with no deeper significance offered or implied, on which Colin MacLeod (1982: 133) remarks: “Plato (Rep. 379d) objected to this passage that it makes evil come from the gods. Whatever be thought of it as theology, it contains a moral idea of some substance. Men must accept their own suffering and pity others’, as Achilles is doing, because they are all alike weaker than the gods, who send it on them.” The same could be said of Zeus’s refusal of Odysseus’s sacrifice in *Odyssey* 9.

³³ Allan 2008: 204-207.

affirmation of Zeus’s power over all things, many scholars have, as Allan notes, tried to find a kind of silver bullet interpretation that will account for every occurrence of the phrase. The “plan of Zeus” that appears most prominently in the *Iliad* is his promise to Thetis to bring glory to Achilles by allowing Trojans to kill Greeks, and as we shall see, it is undeniable that *Dios boulê* is sometimes used to refer directly to this in the poem. But as James Redfield points out, if Zeus’s plan is something that was carried out “from the very first moment this pair argued and separated: Atrides, lord of men, and noble Achilles” (1.6-7: ἐξ οὗ δὴ τὰ πρῶτα διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε | Ἀτρεΐδης τε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς), then it is difficult to take it as specifically referring to a promise that was only made after that time.³⁴ Other interpretations have sought a specific reference outside the text of the *Iliad*; from his Neoanalytic stance, Wolfgang Kullmann detects a specific allusion to the same statement from a fragment of the lost Trojan War poem from the Epic Cycle *Cypria*, involving a plan to ease the burden of the personified Earth by thinning the human population through war.³⁵

But Allan argues that, as a part of the shared pool of traditional epic diction, *Dios boulê* is a concept that will be defined sometimes broadly, sometimes narrowly, within the text of a single poem.³⁶ To be sure, the phrase is often equivalent to “the plot of this epic,” but we find it with this meaning throughout the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and potentially in a fragment of the *Cypria* that happens to survive; this suggests a ubiquity that would make it difficult for the phrase acquire any permanent specific reference. Because each particular passage mentioning the *Dios boulê* refers to (and is simultaneously a part of) its omnipresence in traditional poetry, the poet may employ it to create greater authority. At the

³⁴ Redfield (1979: 106) argues convincingly against the interpretation that ἐξ οὗ δὴ... refers back to μῆνιν ἄειδε in the first line (i.e. “sing the wrath of Achilles ... from the very first moment this pair argued...” rather than “the Will of Zeus was carried out from the very first moment...”)

³⁵ Kullmann 1955.

³⁶ Allan 2008: 212-213.

same time it emphasizes his own bardic access to Zeus and the divine, and integrates the plot of any one poem into the larger Trojan War meganarrative, or the even larger tapestry of interconnected Greek mythological tales. Finally, Allan detects a specific statement about Zeus’s relationship with the cosmos:

... the *Dios boulê* is supreme and cannot be deflected, even by other gods (though it can be delayed). Of course, the other gods’ interests are legitimate expressions of their place within the divine hierarchy, but their schemes are always subservient to Zeus’s larger plan. This emerges most clearly when one considers that phrases of the *Dios boulê* type have a wide range of reference in early Greek epic, but always come back to Zeus and his control over the world.³⁷

The Zeus of the *Dios boulê* thus sounds a bit like Jörgensen’s indefinite “zeus” found in character speech — a name to which responsibility for everything that happens in the plot can be assigned, since he is understood in a general way to be responsible for everything that happens in the universe.

Now let us apply this reading of “plan of Zeus” as an evolving variable whose value is constantly updated over the course of the poem to the model of a ticking clock poet composing his poem line by line. The *Iliad* depicts a specific moment when this variable is first assigned a value: Thetis’s request to Zeus at the end of the first book. As I demonstrate in the first chapter of the present work, *Iliad* 1 uses Achilles’ long speech to his mother to mark the transformation of the quarrel with Agamemnon from event that happens to narrative that is told within the story world. After re-narrating the beginning of the *Iliad*, Achilles signals that it is time for a further transformation of this story he has just told to a new event that will happen, asking Thetis to ask Zeus

αἴ κέν πως ἐθέλῃσιν ἐπὶ Τρώεσσιν ἀρῆξαι,
τοὺς δὲ κατὰ πρύμνας τε καὶ ἄμφ’ ἄλλα ἔλσαι Ἀχαιοὺς
κτεινομένους, ἵνα πάντες ἐπαύρωνται βασιλῆος,
γνῶ δὲ καὶ Ἀτρεΐδης εὐρὺν κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
ἦν ἄτην ὃ τ’ ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισεν.

³⁷ Allan 2008: 213.

...if he might be willing to give aid to the Trojans and close in the others, the Achaeans, at the sterns of their ships by the sea as they are slaughtered, so they can all enjoy a share of their king's dividends, and so that even far-ruling Agamemnon will recognize his madness: he did not honor the best of the Achaeans. (*Iliad* 1.408-412)

In the first two chapters we saw the close connection between political authority and narrative authority in the world of Homeric epic: the power to author an authoritative narrative of what has happened is closely linked to the power to author an authoritative command about what will happen. As we saw, Achilles' narrative seems to set the tone for the way the rest of the *Iliad*'s human characters describe the quarrel, sympathizing with his perspective over Agamemnon's; the repeated characterization of the king's behavior as *atê* ("madness"), which Achilles first introduces here, is evidence of this phenomenon. But this request is also the first voicing of what will become the *Dios boulê* — have Trojans kill Achaeans until Agamemnon honors Achilles. Achilles' storytelling is aimed in both directions: he is interested in controlling how both humans and gods interpret his situation.

When Thetis "submits" this potential plot to Zeus, she re-narrates the beginning of the *Iliad* for a third time:

Ζεῦ πάτερ εἴ ποτε δὴ σε μετ' ἀθανάτοισιν ὄνησα
ἢ ἔπει ἢ ἔργῳ, τόδε μοι κρήνην ἐέλδωρ·
τίμησόν μοι υἱὸν ὃς ὠκυμώτατος ἄλλων
ἔπλετ'· ἀτὰρ μιν νῦν γε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων
ἠτίμησεν· ἐλὼν γὰρ ἔχει γέρας αὐτὸς ἀπούρας.
ἀλλὰ σύ πέρ μιν τίσον Ὀλύμπιε μητίετα Ζεῦ·
τόφρα δ' ἐπὶ Τρώεσσι τίθει κράτος ὄφρ' ἂν Ἀχαιοὶ
υἱὸν ἐμὸν τίσωσιν ὀφέλλωσιν τέ ἐ τιμῇ.

Father Zeus, if I have ever been of any assistance to you among the immortals with my words or my actions, grant me this wish. Bring honor to my son, who has a very quick fate in comparison with the rest, and now lord of men Agamemnon has dishonored him, since he is keeping the prize that he stole himself. But now you, Olympian Counsellor Zeus, honor him greatly. Place power upon the Trojans for as long as it takes for the Achaeans to honor my son and magnify him with honor. (*Iliad* 1.503-510)

Like Russian nesting dolls, the quarrel narrative becomes smaller each time it is told: as Achilles had condensed the Narrator's full version for Thetis, now she too condenses it still further for Zeus, to less than two lines (1.506-507). Significantly, her version continues the trend of obscuring Achilles' potential culpability by eliding any mention of his own role as an instigator of the argument, or of the loss in tangible honor Agamemnon suffered in giving up Chryseis. One armed only with this description would have difficulty seeing why it should be characterized as a "quarrel," as Achilles himself is depicted as having done nothing but suffer injustice (beginning with the cosmic injustice of being fated to die young). Thetis juxtaposes this highly distilled narrative of conflict in *Iliad* 1 with her repetition of the request to bring her son honor,³⁸ making what will become the *Dios boulê* flow directly from the quarrel narrative as told by Achilles.

Robert Rabel argues that Achilles is inspired by Chryses' successful appeal to Apollo to redress the loss of his girl, and asks Thetis to appeal to Zeus in imitation. Rabel sees Achilles and the Homeric Narrator as competitors: Achilles has one idea of how the "Trojans killing Greeks" storyline will end up, based on his model Chryses, which does not involve the crucial detail of the loss of Patroclus.³⁹ But in fact, what I call Achilles' "submission" of a new plot to Zeus is also quite similar to Polyphemus's submission of the plot to Poseidon in *Odyssey* 9 in several ways. Both requests serve the function I outline in the previous section of identifying and naming plot elements and assigning them a hierarchy that allows for the introduction of sub-plots while the main plot is delayed. In the case of Poseidon and Polyphemus in the *Odyssey*, the prayer instigates a long series of self-contained episodes that makes the

³⁸ In Chapter One we saw how the charge that Agamemnon "dishonored" (*êtimêsen*) Achilles is another detail first introduced into the narrative in Achilles' speech. The theme could scarcely have been highlighted more conspicuously in Thetis's request, which employs the *ti(m)*- root five times in eight lines.

³⁹ Rabel 1997: 38 ff.

main homecoming — which is described as both *moira* and *boulê*, both fate and plot, for Odysseus — come “late and badly.” In the case of the *Iliad*, the *boulê* requested by Achilles and Thetis (“Trojans kill Greeks”) delays the ultimate traditional outcome of the war (“Greeks destroy Troy”), placing the entire *Iliad* in the position of “sub-plot.” In this sense, the entire Wrath of Achilles plot is essentially a locally motivated expansion instigated by a conflict that is resolved by the end of the poem. Thus the main plot of the *Iliad* has the same tangential relationship with the larger Trojan War meganarrative that the poem’s own subplots have with its main one⁴⁰ — or, indeed, that the plot initiated by Polyphemus’s prayer (“adventures abroad”) has with the main *boulê* of the *Odyssey* and ultimate *moira* of Odysseus (“long-gone husband returns to reclaim his wife”), which was initiated by Athena’s request to Zeus. The temporal parameters for the plot are defined by *tophra* ... *ophra* (“for this long ... as long as”), a bounded period of time during which Achilles will be honored by the plan of Zeus — and the ticking clock poet.

James Morrison demonstrates that all prayers to the gods are examples of a type scene that follow a particular “script,” (as Minchin would doubtless label it).⁴¹ Thus structural similarities between the speeches are to be expected, but there is a rather surprising level of overlap in detail as well in our two cases of Achilles/Polyphemus appealing to Thetis/Poseidon: a semidivine human complains to a divine parent about his mistreatment at the hands of an Achaean hero, and the parent responds by directing

⁴⁰ It is a very strange fact that the *Iliad*, despite its current, incredibly longstanding position as *the* canonical example of Trojan war epic (as well as Greek epic poem, epic poem, Greek poem, and poem) seems studiously to avoid narrating any of the war’s major incidents, focusing instead on a few days of battle that results only in the death of characters (Sarpedon, Patroclus, Hector) who play no major role in other episodes (Dowden 1996). The poem seems to stand outside the Trojan War tradition, while simultaneously standing for the entirety of that tradition through its constant evocation of the beginning and end of the war. Scodel’s discussion (2002: 48-49) of living oral traditions that present themselves as small chapters of a larger “notional epic” is useful; there she comments that “the *Iliad* obviously wants to be *the* Trojan epic, even though it tells a section of the Troy story that could easily disappear completely without serious consequences for the tale of Troy as a whole.”

⁴¹ Morrison (1991); see my discussion of Minchin (2001) in the previous chapter.

divine wrath against that hero.⁴² Morrison also argues that that the function of these prayers is largely narrative.⁴³ As we saw above with Wong’s analysis of the interaction of fate and free will in the poems, Morrison reads this function in terms of the audience, and the suspense that is created by their (imperfect) foreknowledge of events. I would argue that this is a complementary function to a storytelling device that facilitates the process of composition by the ticking clock poet. At the beginning of the present chapter I describe the *Dios boulê* as a “beacon” for the poet composing in performance to follow. As we shall see, Zeus’s evolving Plan is presented as a series of storytelling goals for the poet to accomplish — this is why I argue that it is a way for the ticking clock poet to lay out and the basic components of his mental text before he puts them into action.⁴⁴ Once the next step of the main plot has been named and reified as the *Dios boulê*, it too can be set aside in favor of locally motivated expansions. The poet essentially sets up for himself a potentially endless series of binary choices such as the one we examined at *Iliad* 7.16 in the previous chapter. Initiating the plot by the use of the “divine prayer” type scene is a convenient way to assign the variable *Dios boulê* its initial value, or to introduce a subordinate plot.

The (narrative) power of Zeus

As we saw in the previous chapter, Zeus’s Plan is put on hold for most of *Iliad* 2-7, both to allow for the introduction of expansions (the duels of Paris/Menelaus and Hector/Ajax, Diomedes’ aristeia, Hector’s visit to Troy) and to allow the Achaean Wall to be, in the words of Martin West, “built to be fought over”

⁴² The similarities increase if we imagine that the human narration of *Odyssey* 9 prevents the narration of the interaction between Zeus and Poseidon that would have followed

⁴³ Morrison 1991: 149.

⁴⁴ Heiden’s analysis (2008: 24) of the *Iliad*’s plot into a set of moves, “like moves on a board game,” recognizes the centrality of Zeus as a figure that initiates the action of the plot using regular type scenes, beginning in the divine assembly at Book 8 which I discuss below.

in the middle part of the poem.⁴⁵ There I argued that the partisanship and intervention of the various lower gods is a way for the poet to vocalize the expectations and pressures and tastes of the audience and allow them to inform the nature of the locally motivated expansions. It is only in Book 8, at the beginning of the “stubby battle” day, that the *Dios boulê* will stop acting as a beacon in the distance and be enacted as plot by Zeus. It has often been pointed out that the divine council scene at the beginning of the book goes out of its way to mark the initiation of the Will of Zeus.⁴⁶ Here Zeus’s enactment of his *boulê* is depicted as a conflict with the other gods that recalls the conflicts between Achilles and Agamemnon or Odysseus and the suitors’ families, as I discuss in the first chapter. Zeus’s statements about himself and his intentions function symbolically as assertions of the ticking clock poet’s ultimate allegiance to the main plot, the backbone of his mental text, which the *Dios boulê* represents. Zeus begins:

κέκλυτέ μεν πάντες τε θεοὶ πᾶσαί τε θεάιναι,
 ὄφρ’ εἴπω τά με θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι κελεύει.
 μήτέ τις οὖν θήλεια θεὸς τό γε μήτέ τις ἄρσιν
 πειράτω διακέρσαι ἐμὸν ἔπος, ἀλλ’ ἅμα πάντες
 αἰνεῖτ’, ὄφρα τάχιστα τελευτήσω τάδε ἔργα.

Listen to me, all of you gods and all of you goddesses, so that I can say what the heart in my chest commands. Now let no female god and no male attempt to cut through my talk, but all of you approve it together, so that I can complete these actions very quickly.
 (*Iliad* 8.5-9)

Zeus’s words suggest a poet under particular pressure from the ticking clock — one who wants to forestall the possibility of the parade of expansive episodes causing his main plot to become forgotten. His specific command to the rest of the gods is not to “cut through my *epos*.” Richard Martin’s study of the word *epos* in the *Iliad* argues that, while the term does not necessarily carry the specific meaning of

⁴⁵ West 2001: 60.

⁴⁶ See e.g. Taplin (1992: 137-143), Willcock (1995), Heiden (2008: 161 ff.)

an authoritative speech act that *mythos* does, *epos* can refer “to speech as an utterance, as thing heard and transmitted, as an item of exchange that is at the same time a physical object, like a weapon.”⁴⁷ Martin also ponders whether hints of the sense “hexameter poetry” which later becomes the primary meaning of *epos* might already be present in Homer; it is already found in Hesiod.⁴⁸ In any case, it is not difficult to interpret Zeus’s prohibition against cutting through his *epos* as a metapoetic statement, along with the goal of “finishing his work” (τελευτήσω τάδε ἔργα).

Continuing the metaphor of gods as audience, David Elmer suggests that the common Iliadic use of the verb (*ep*)*ainein* for the “approval” of a speech by a crowd evokes the process by which orally performed epic would be under a constant process of refinement to please local audiences.⁴⁹ It seems Zeus needs the other gods’ approval; his ability to assert (narrative) authority over the rest of the gods is clearly not as straightforward as the hostility of the next portion of his speech would imply:

ὄν δ’ ἂν ἐγὼν ἀπάνευθε θεῶν ἐθέλοντα νοήσω
 ἐλθόντ’ ἢ Τρώεσσιν ἀρηγέμεν ἢ Δαναοῖσι
 πληγείς οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἐλεύσεται Οὐλυμπονδέ·
 ἢ μιν ἐλὼν ῥίψω ἐς Τάρταρον ἡρόεντα
 τῆλε μάλ’, ἥχι βάθιστον ὑπὸ χθονός ἐστι βέρεθρον,
 ἔνθα σιδήρειαί τε πύλαι καὶ χάλκεος οὐδός,
 τόσσον ἔνερθ’ Αἴδεω ὅσον οὐρανός ἐστ’ ἀπὸ γαίης·
 γνώσετ’ ἔπειθ’ ὅσον εἰμὶ θεῶν κάρτιστος ἀπάντων.

Anyone I notice intentionally going away from the gods to assist either the Trojans or the Danaans will come back to Olympus struck down disproportionately — or I will throw him down to murky Tartarus, far away, where the deepest hole beneath the ground is, where the gates are iron and the floor is bronze, as far beneath Hades as the sky is from the earth. Then <that god> will know by how far I am the mightiest of all the gods. (*Iliad* 8.10-17)

⁴⁷ Martin 1989: 30

⁴⁸ Martin 1989: 13.

⁴⁹ Elmer 2013: 113 ff.

In the previous chapter we saw how the verb *noein* (“notice”) is often used as an instigator of divine intervention. If we apply this to the metaphor of gods as audience, it is as if these expansions are motivated by the audience “noticing” that the early part of the plot does not inherently contain pro-Greek material. Now Zeus threatens to use his own power of “noticing” to curtail the ticking clock poet’s own tendency toward expansion. This raises a question: if Zeus represents the poet, and the assembly of gods the audience, are we to take this as the performer lashing out in anger at his customers? I would say rather that the metaphorical value of the Zeus/gods relationship is more open ended. The lower gods represent the narrower perspectives and concerns that motivate individual episodes or heroes; Zeus represents the overall “eusynoptic”⁵⁰ vision of the *Iliad*’s main plot. One might say that they thus represent two aspects of the oral singer: the assembly of gods are the ticking clock poet, and Zeus is the mental text poet. He represents the many years the young shepherd spent arranging and practicing the song to create his mental text;⁵¹ they represent the constant fiddling with the plot that a singer does during any performance, especially during times when he is looking to expand.⁵²

The phrase *ou kata kosmon* (“disproportionately,” literally “not in order”) as we saw in the previous chapter, has strong metapoetic undertones. David Elmer suggests that *kosmos* in the sense of “decoration,” might serve as a metaphor for the process by which epic is magnified and beautified through proper expansion.⁵³ Here, Zeus’s *ou kata kosmon* may even be a sort of pun on this sense of the word, operating on several levels. Zeus’s urgency suggests a poet who feels he has spent enough time at

⁵⁰ The term *eusynoptic* (“good at being seen all at once”) is from Purves (2011) who borrows it from Aristotle to describe the *Iliad*’s notion of its own plot’s comprehensibility; see discussion in Chapter Three.

⁵¹ The image, as discussed in Chapter Three of the present work, is from Lord (1960), a Slavic *guslar* describing the process of learning his first song.

⁵² See discussion in Chapter Three of the present work.

⁵³ Elmer 2010.

the beginning of this poem using divine intervention to put off the fulfillment of Zeus's promise to Achilles. Now that his goal is to enact that main plot — the *Dios boulê* — further interference by the gods to introduce new episodes would not be “in order.” Then again, as we saw in the previous chapter, the “stubby battle” day in Book 8 has been felt since antiquity to be a bit incongruous in the flow of the *Iliad*'s story. Perhaps Zeus's threat to strike down interfering gods *ou kata kosmon* is rather an apology for his own disproportionateness in the hurried day of battle that is to follow (the first day of battle had occupied practically all of Books 2-7; this one, merely Book 8). To indulge the tendency to “let the gods interfere” — that is, expand the plot — would itself be out of proportion with the present need to begin carrying out the *Dios boulê*.

To return to the passage at hand, Zeus's threat to keep the other gods in line gives him an opportunity to sketch a map of the universe as he understands it, a kind of cosmology. I would suggest that this adds another layer of meaning to the aforementioned pun; his threat is to act *ou kata kosmon* by throwing a god down the cosmos. As Jasper Griffin suggests,⁵⁴ the numerous Iliadic passages that recall or threaten incidents of divine violence must have tapped into a genre of “deadly serious poems about War in Heaven” of which Hesiod's *Theogony* was only one example. Griffin has also influentially argued that Homeric epic has a tendency to acknowledge but suppress more over-the-top or supernatural elements that seem to have been more at home in other contemporary poetry.⁵⁵ I read Zeus's threatening claim as a demonstration by the poet of his own unlimited power to create and describe the universe with his words — a power that he or other poets exploit more fully in performances of different material. Much of the *Theogony* is distilled into line 8.16, for example, which sketches a universe

⁵⁴ Griffin 1980: 185.

⁵⁵ Griffin (1977). For more on Homeric interaction with divine myth, see e.g. Slatkin (1991); for a critique of Griffin's characterization of the poems of the epic cycle, see Burgess (2001: 158).

featuring Hades, Uranus, Gaia (τόσσον ἔνερθ' Ἀΐδεω ὅσον οὐρανός ἐστ' ἀπὸ γαίης.) for the offending god to be flung through. As Zeus is about to assert the supremacy of his Will, so the poet is about to redirect his plot toward the series of events, beginning with the wounding of the major Greek heroes, that are needed to resolve the Wrath of Achilles. As Zeus begins with a threat of his power, so the singer advertises the ability of his poetry to see from the top of the universe to the bottom and create and destroy its gods, as well as explore the psychology of a single human soldier. Here is how Zeus defines his own power:

εἰ δ' ἄγε πειρήσασθε θεοὶ ἵνα εἴδετε πάντες·
σειρὴν χρυσεῖην ἐξ οὐρανόθεν κρεμάσαντες
πάντες τ' ἐξάπτεσθε θεοὶ πᾶσαι τε θέαιναι·
ἀλλ' οὐκ ἂν ἐρύσαιτ' ἐξ οὐρανόθεν πεδίονδε
Ζῆν' ὑπατον μήστωρ', οὐδ' εἰ μάλα πολλὰ κάμοιτε.
ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ καὶ ἐγὼ πρόφρων ἐθέλοιμι ἐρύσσαι,
αὐτῇ κεν γαίῃ ἐρύσαιμ' αὐτῇ τε θαλάσσῃ·
σειρὴν μὲν κεν ἔπειτα περὶ ῥίον Οὐλύμποιο
δησαίμην, τὰ δέ κ' αὐτε μετήορα πάντα γένοιτο.
τόσσον ἐγὼ περὶ τ' εἰμὶ θεῶν περὶ τ' εἰμ' ἀνθρώπων.

Come on, gods, test me, so you can all know! Hang a golden rope down from the sky, and all of you gods and goddesses attach yourselves to it, and you would not be able to pull Zeus the Supreme Counselor out of the sky to the ground, not even if you all tried with all your might. But the moment I decided to set my mind to pulling, I could pull it up along with the very earth and the very sea itself. Then I could tie the rope around the peak of Olympus, and then everything would be up in the air. That is how much I surpass the gods and how much I surpass the human race. (*Iliad* 8.18-27)

As is always true with storytelling bluffs, to threaten to narrate a thing is to narrate it — the impossible image of Zeus somehow hanging the earth and the sea from the peak of Olympus has been imposed upon the audience's minds as surely as if it had been told in the voice of the Narrator. Here the poet's demonstration of the range of his poetic ability is presented in a markedly destructive form: his claim is not to be able to create universes, but to destroy them. Perhaps this is an appropriate message given the likely poetic goals of the composer of the *Iliad*, what Pietro Pucci calls “the poem of total expenditure of

life.”⁵⁶ But there is something playful about this over-the-top threat, which is highlighted by Athena’s immediate reaction. After a period of silence she asks Zeus if it is all right if they help the Achaeans just a *little* bit, by offering them advice (1.36: *boulên*), at which Zeus completely reverses his threat:

θάρσει Τριτογένεια φίλον τέκος· οὐ νύ τι θυμῷ
πρόφρονι μυθέομαι, ἐθέλω δέ τοι ἥπιος εἶναι.

Cheer up, Tritogeneia, dear child. My mind is not at all serious as I speak; I want to be kind to you. (*Iliad* 8.39-40)

As I explore further below in the present chapter, these moments where Zeus comments on his own control of the plot frequently take the form of narrative “teases” — demonstrations of power *potentially* available to the poet. Zeus is, in fact, rather tolerant of divine misbehavior; toward the end of Book 8, Hera arms her chariot and prepares to intervene in the battle, and Zeus responds again with the threat of violence rather than actual violence.

And the will of Zeus was carried out...

Athena and Hera’s thwarted intervention at *Iliad* 8.350-488 is one of the scenes from Book 8 that have been condemned as meandering and pointless. Lasting for more than one hundred lines of this already “stubby” day of battle, the scene consists of Hera noticing the Greeks struggling, planning with Athena to intervene, elaborately preparing a chariot and setting out, and being noticed by Zeus and prevented from leaving when he sends Iris down with a warning. So much of the episode is a verbatim repetition of lines from the pair’s successful intervention to aid Diomedes in his assault on Ares beginning at *Iliad* 5.711, that the Analysts saw the need to propose various theories about which passage had been copied from the other and why.⁵⁷ The necessity of Book 8 for the structure of the *Iliad*’s plot has recently been

⁵⁶ Pucci 1998: 15.

⁵⁷ West 2001: 167.

argued by several studies, including a commentary by Adrian Kelly exploring the kinds of resonance found in type scenes composed of formulaic pieces in oral poetry.⁵⁸

In fact, the repetition of these similar scenes of divine interference provide a good yardstick for the progression of the ongoing Plan of Zeus in the early part of the poem.⁵⁹ In Book 5, Zeus allows an identical divine interference scene creating an expansion that delays the *Dios boulê*; in the Book 8 he does not. At *Iliad* 7.16 Athena and Apollo had interrupted the incipient Trojan victory just before nightfall to end the first day of battle with an episode that glorified both Achaeans and Trojans.⁶⁰ Hera's thwarted attempt to bring the Greeks a bit of victory in Book 8 comes just before nightfall as well, but now instead of an inconsequential show fight, the day ends with the Trojans camping threateningly on the plain. We may compare Hera's failed attempt in Book 8 to the set of formulaic divine intervention introductions we examined in the previous chapter — again, as a response to her noticing Greek deaths:

Τοὺς δ' ὥς οὖν ἐνόησε θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη
 Ἀργείους δλέκοντας ἐνὶ κρατερῇ ὑσμίνῃ,
 αὐτίκ' Ἀθηναίην ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·

Then, when the white-armed goddess Hera
 noticed these men killing the Argives in the
 violent fight, she quickly addressed winged
 words to Athena:
 (*Iliad* 5.711-713)

Τοὺς δ' ὥς οὖν ἐνόησε θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη
 Ἀργείους δλέκοντας ἐνὶ κρατερῇ ὑσμίνῃ,
 βῆ ῥα κατ' Οὐλύμπιοι καρήνων αἶξασα
 Ἴλιον εἰς ἱερὴν· τῇ δ' ἀντίος ὄρνυτ' Ἀπόλλων

Then, when the grey-eyed goddess Athena
 noticed these men killing the Argives in the
 violent fight, she went leaping down from
 the peaks of Olympus to holy Ilium. Apollo
 rushed up to meet her ...
 (*Iliad* 7.17-20)

Τοὺς δὲ ἰδοῦσ' ἔλεησε θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη,
 αἶψα δ' Ἀθηναίην ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·

And the white-armed goddess Hera saw
 and pitied them, and quickly addressed
 winged words to Athena:
 (*Iliad* 8.350-351)

Hera's current speech declares her intention to stop Hector's onslaught, which allows Athena an opportunity to define the difference between this situation and the previous ones:

⁵⁸ Willcock (1995), Kelly (2007), Cook (2009b).

⁵⁹ Although Kirk (1990: 327) insists on the inelegance of the “many repeated v(erses) and half v(erses) and its sometimes spasmodic construction” of Book 8 in general he identifies as the “literary and dramatic point for such an inconclusive episode” as Hera's failed intervention “final confirmation of the Book's central theme, namely that Zeus's will is paramount, that the other gods cannot frustrate it, and that it points toward Trojan dominance and Achaean crisis until Akhilleus' wrath is assuaged.”

⁶⁰ For the “pivotal moment” at 7.16, see Chapter Three of the present work.

καὶ λίην οὗτός γε μένος θυμόν τ' ὀλέσειε
χερσὶν ὑπ' Ἀργείων φθίμενος ἐν πατρίδι γαίῃ·
ἀλλὰ πατὴρ οὐμὸς φρεσὶ μαίνεται οὐκ ἀγαθῇσι
σχέτλιος, αἰὲν ἀλιτρός, ἐμῶν μενέων ἀπερσεύς·

...
νῦν δ' ἐμὲ μὲν στυγέει, Θέτιδος δ' ἐξήνυσσε βουλάς,
ἢ οἱ γούνατ' ἔκυσσε καὶ ἔλλαβε χειρὶ γενείου,
λίσσομένη τιμῆσαι Ἀχιλλῆα πτολίπορθον.
ἔσται μὰν ὅτ' ἂν αὐτὲ φίλην γλαυκῶπιδα εἴπη.

Even that man (Hector) would surely lose his strength and his life, ruined at the hands of the Achaeans in his own fatherland, except that my father is raging in his unkind heart — the monster, always cruel, thwarting my intentions ... Now he hates me, and he has approved the plans of Thetis, who kissed his knees, held his chin in her hand, and prayed that he honor Achilles the destroyer of towns. But there will come a day when he calls me his beloved Grey-Eyes again. (*Iliad* 8.358-360, 370-373)

Although the minor gods are no longer allowed to intervene to delay the realization of the *Dios boulê*, their use as a storytelling device through which the poet can give voice to the likely audience response remains prominent. There is no reason that Hector should not be killed by any of the main Achaeans, except that Zeus's plan prevents it; Erwin Cook argues that “the entire narrative of Book 8 is designed to produce a sense of indignant outrage in the audience, a feeling that ‘this should not be happening! The Akhaians *should* be winning.’”⁶¹ Athena's speech acknowledges this potential complaint while specifying the reason: what I have called the “variable” of the *Dios boulê* has been defined as the *Thetidos boulai* (“plans of Thetis”), thanks to the request Achilles' mother made in Book 1. Like Polyphemus's prayer, it is a secondary element which temporarily delays the proper outcome of the war for the purpose of honoring Achilles. Oliver Taplin notes that Athena's wish for Zeus to call her *glaukôpis* (“grey-eyed”) does not actually correspond to the poem's regular practice (when he is happy with her he calls her *Tritogeneia*), and suggests that the point is to provide an ironic contrast for Zeus's upcoming implied

⁶¹ Cook 2009b: 144.

threat of force “so that *glaukôpis* will see what it means to fight with her father” (8.406: ὄφρα ἰδῇ γλαυκῶπις ὅτ’ ἂν ᾧ πατρὶ μάχηται), which is then followed by the only time Athena is ever addressed as *glaukôpis* in the vocative: when Iris delivers Zeus’s threat (8.420).⁶² Alongside this persuasive interpretation, I would read Zeus’s statement as metapoetic. While the god never actually addresses her as *glaukôpis*, the epithet is extremely common in the language of the Narrator narrating her participation in the poems.⁶³ Particularly given the metaphorical equivalence of Zeus with poet that I argue for, and the present context of his injunction against divine interference, I suggest the statement “one day Zeus will call me *glaukôpis* again” may be taken to mean “one day I will be allowed to participate in an epic poem again, which is the arena in which I am called *glaukôpis*.”

Again, we may read the hierarchy of plot outcomes as a convenient system allowing a ticking clock poet to manage his composition in performance. The highest level Plan is “Achaeans destroy Troy,” which has been delayed by the particular Plan of the whole *Iliad*, “Trojans kill Achaeans,” which has been delayed by the particular, individually motivated Plans of individual gods and humans in the first several Books of the poem. Hera’s thwarted attempt at an intervention signals the end of the first period of narrative expansion and the beginning of the realization of the “Trojans kill Achaeans” plan, as Zeus himself indicates with a speech to Hera that ends the divine interlude in Book 8:

ἦοῦς δὴ καὶ μᾶλλον ὑπερμενέα Κρονίωνα
 ὄψαι, αἶ κ’ ἐθέλησθα, βοῶπις πότνια Ἥρη
 ὀλλύντ’ Ἀργείων πουλὸν στρατὸν αἰχμητῶν·
 οὐ γὰρ πρὶν πολέμου ἀποπαύσεται ὄβριμος Ἑκτωρ
 πρὶν ὄρθαι παρὰ ναῦφι ποδώκεα Πηλεΐωνα,
 ἥματι τῷ ὅτ’ ἂν οἱ μὲν ἐπὶ πρύμνησι μάχωνται

⁶² Taplin 1992: 142.

⁶³ An electronic search of the texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in the online TLG database (www.tlg.uci.edu) reveals that the formula γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη ends 78 lines in the two poems, of which I count 76 instances occurring in the voice of the Narrator, as compared with only two in character speech. It may also be found in Hesiod (*Theogony* 573, *Works and Days* 72, *Shield of Heracles* 343, 455, 470).

στείνει ἐν αἰνοτάτῳ περὶ Πατρόκλοιο θανόντος·
ὥς γὰρ θέσφατόν ἐστι·

Right at dawn it will be an even more outrageous son of Cronus that you see (if you care to, Lady Hera, with eyes like a cow) destroying a large army of Argive spearmen. For mighty Hector will not leave the war until he rouses the quick-footed son of Peleus by the ships, on whatever day they fight by their sterns in a most horrible crush around Patroclus when he dies. For this is the way it is divinely decreed. (*Iliad* 8.470-477)

It has been widely recognized that here Zeus gives a sense of the shape of his overall plan for the first time. The effect has been generally considered from the perspective of the audience; in his classic monograph on foreshadowing and suspense in epic, George Duckworth speaks of the revelation of Zeus's will as "a long series of forebodings and foreshadowings which have held the interest of the reader up to this point through a gradual development from vague foreboding to direct prophesy. The reader's knowledge of the plan of Zeus in like manner undergoes a development."⁶⁴ But as always, the same phenomenon may be considered from the perspective of oral composition. Now that the "Trojans kill Achaeans" plot element has been enacted, the *Dios boulê* must be refined if it is to continue acting as a beacon on the horizon for him to follow. The ticking clock poet thus updates Zeus's Plan by mentioning for the first time the crucial detail that it will be Patroclus's death that brings Achilles back to the war. For the narrative space of *Iliad* 8-15, this will be the distant target at which the plot is aimed — or from which it will deviate.

Zeus significantly ends his speech with a claim that the plan he will enact is fated — but the literal etymological sense of the term he uses to make this claim (*thesphaton* = "spoken by a god") highlights the Euthyphronian interpretive problem with "fate" in Homer: are the events of the *Iliad* fated

⁶⁴ Duckworth (1966: 54). Compare the comments of Taplin (1992: 142), that Zeus's "brief revelations" in Book 8 "do not exactly correspond to the full narrative when it unfolds. Even more, they do not in any way convey the human struggle and suffering which will fulfil them." He cites the opinion of Macleod (1982: 28) that "the detail of what is to come is not dully pre-empted, and that also faithfully represents the interplay of destiny and decision in human affairs."

because they are the Will of Zeus, or is it the Will of Zeus because it is fated? Positions have been taken on both sides,⁶⁵ which leads one to suspect that it was not the poet's goal to promote a coherent system meant to be applied to anything beyond poetic plots. Eberhard reads the present passage as evidence that the *Dios boulê* and "fate" are essentially the same concept, arguing that "Homer, however, explicitly justifies this plan with "fate" by having Zeus say ὥς γὰρ θέσφατόν ἐστιν at 8.477. The poetic idea is thus encapsulated in this fate."⁶⁶ Scodel counts fate among the most frequent "apologetic" devices with which the poet justifies the swings of his plot.⁶⁷ As I argue in the final section of this chapter, the common equivalence of "fate" with "tradition" is a useful way of making sense of the at times contradictory character of Zeus as a stand-in for the poet.

The next several books are characterized by the absence of divine intervention that Zeus demands in Book 8. Whereas in Book 8 their "absence" consists of scenes in which the minor gods feature but are prevented from affecting the action, *Iliad* 9-12 contains scarcely a mention of gods other than Zeus. The Narrator himself notes this difference at the beginning of the long day of battle that begins in *Iliad* 11:

Ἔρις δ' ἄρ' ἔχαιρε πολύστονος εἰσορόωσα·
οἷή γάρ ῥα θεῶν παρετύγχανε μαρναμένοισιν,
οἳ δ' ἄλλοι οὐ σφιν πάρεσαν θεοί, ἀλλὰ ἔκηλοι
σφοῖσιν ἐνὶ μεγάροισι καθήατο, ἥχι ἐκάστω
δῶματα καλὰ τέτυκτο κατὰ πτύχας Οὐλύμποιο.
πάντες δ' ἠτιόωντο κελαινεφέα Κρονίωνα
οὔνεκ' ἄρα Τρώεσσιν ἐβούλετο κῦδος ὀρέξαι.
τῶν μὲν ἄρ' οὐκ ἀλέγισε πατήρ· ὁ δὲ νόσφι λιασθεῖς

⁶⁵ Sarischoulis (2008) summarizes scholarship on both sides of the debate; his own conclusion, after an analysis of the poems' terminology, is that "fate" is a concept the poet is aware of but does not believe in or show to have an effect on human or divine action.

⁶⁶ Eberhard (1923: 38): "Homer aber begründet diesen Plan ausdrücklich mit dem „Schicksal“, indem er Zeus Θ 477 sagen lässt ὥς γὰρ θέσφατόν ἐστιν. In diesem Schicksal konzentriert sich demnach die poetische Idee."

⁶⁷ Scodel 1999: 55.

τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάνευθε καθέζετο κύδεϊ γαίῳν
εἰσορόων Τρώων τε πόλιν καὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν
χαλκοῦ τε στεροπὴν, ὀλλύντάς τ' ὀλλυμένους τε.

Then Eris, goddess of many groans, was enjoying watching. In fact, she was the only one of the gods who appeared alongside the men in battle; the rest of the gods were not nearby, but sat far away in their homes, where they each had beautiful houses built down the folds of Olympus. They all complained about the son of Cronus, god of dark clouds, because he planned to extend glory to the Trojans. But they did not concern their father; he went away and sat apart from the rest of them, reveling in glory as he watched the town of the Trojans and the ships of the Achaeans — the flash of bronze, the killers and the killed. (*Iliad* 11.73-83)

I consider the final lines of this passage in the third chapter of the present work as well, as a passage frequently cited to illustrate the Homeric equation of gods with audience. But as the larger context illustrates, this is presented as a somewhat atypical moment in the poem. The absence of the other gods is a lack that must be explained. Martin West argues that, in fact, the presence or absence of divine intervention is one of the indicators of different strata of composition, as the poet's "art may be seen to evolve also in regard to his treatment of the gods and their involvement in the war."⁶⁸ But as opposed to West's picture of a poet who wrote *Iliad* 1, 11, and 16 early in his life and pasted in the intervening sections in a later revision, when his style happened to have changed to favor more divine intervention by minor gods, I would attribute this difference to the situation of the ticking clock poet. If the most central parts of his mental text are the ones described as *Dios boulê*, then it stands to reason that his actual narration of these segments employs Zeus as the sole controlling deity. Simultaneously, by disassociating Zeus from all but the central plot of the *Iliad*, the poet "saves" Zeus for its most important events, allowing mentions of the *Dios boulê* within this poem to refer specifically to the main plot rather than the divinely initiated, locally motivated, subplots. The image in this passage does place Zeus in the

⁶⁸ West (2011: 66), where as with much of his argumentation about the making of the *Iliad*, West bases his observations upon the work of the Analysts, who considered the presence or absence of divine intervention a sign of varying authorship.

symbolic role of audience of the action, but without diminishing his ability to stand for the power to create and destroy worlds through poetic performance. “Going away and sitting apart from the others reveling in glory” would seem to describe a poet at least as well as an audience. In a way, a poet sticking directly to his mental text without expanding upon it is his own audience. By refusing to address the other gods’ protests about the unpleasantness of killing Greeks, Zeus has become like Lord’s young shepherd honing the mental text of his first song in the pasture — playing for a hypothetical audience that in actuality consists only of himself. Both roles can be seen simultaneously in, for example, an aside during the battle in Book 11, where Odysseus and Diomedes are engaged in a hopeless fight that will inevitably end in their wounding:

Ἐνθά σφιν κατὰ Ἴσα μάχην ἐτάνυσσε Κρονίων
ἔξ’ Ἰδης καθορών· τοὶ δ’ ἀλλήλους ἐνάριζον.

Then the son of Cronus pulled their fight to an equal strain on both sides as he looked down from Ida, and they kept slaying one another. (*Iliad* 11.336-337)

Here Zeus is both an audience to the action and its instigator. His control over the plot is so effortless that there is no need to specify exactly how it is he is stretching the fight; it is simply a given that he can. All this is commented upon by the human characters as well — for example, several lines earlier in the same scene, when Odysseus calls to Diomedes for help against the rampaging Hector:

“Τυδεΐδη τί παθόντε λελάσμεθα θούριδος ἀλκῆς;
ἀλλ’ ἄγε δεῦρο πέπον, παρ’ ἐμ’ ἴσταο· δὴ γὰρ ἔλεγχος
ἔσσεται εἴ κεν νῆας ἔλῃ κορυθαίολος Ἑκτωρ.”
Τὸν δ’ ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη κρατερὸς Διομήδης·
“ἦτοι ἐγὼ μενέω καὶ τλήσομαι· ἀλλὰ μίνυνθα
ἡμέων ἔσσεται ἦδος, ἐπεὶ νεφεληγερέτα Ζεὺς
Τρῶσιν δὴ βόλεται δοῦναι κράτος ἢ ἐπερ ἡμῖν.”

“Son of Tydeus, what has happened to the two of us to make us forget our wild courage? Well, come here, my dear friend. Stand beside me, since it would be a disgrace if Hector with his gleaming helmet were to capture our ships.” And strong Diomedes said to him in response, “Well I for one will certainly stay and endure, but our enjoyment will be

short-lived, since Zeus the gatherer of clouds clearly wants to give strength to the Trojans rather than us.” (*Iliad* 11.313-319)

This is another case where it is difficult to distinguish between Jørgensen’s indefinite “zeus” and the particularized character. The Narrator’s Zeus is here indistinguishable from the characters’ zeus, as divine will, fate, and interference are all collectively and loosely assigned to a single name by both. The personified power blamed for all the happenings of the world is, as in Odysseus’s *apologoi*, made more frightening by his simultaneous single-mindedness, inexplicability, and invincibility. Even if Diomedes uses Zeus’s name in an indefinite sense that is equivalent to “the gods” or “some *daimôn*,” he is correct in his recognition that the winds are blowing in the Trojans’ direction, and there is nothing the Achaeans can do about it.

But neither the generality of certain descriptions of Zeus’s control over the plot, nor the absence of interventions by other gods, should be taken to mean that the action of this section is not micro-managed. Of particular interest is the way Zeus repeatedly steers Hector out of harm’s way during his own victory. Poor Hector is, in the words of James Redfield, “a hero of illusions” who is “finally trapped between a failed illusion and his own incapacity of disillusionment.”⁶⁹ He may fancy himself a great enough hero to take on Achilles, but he must in fact be kept out of the way of the lesser Achaean heroes for much of Book 11 so that he is not injured during the bursts of glory that precede their woundings, beginning with a couplet that deserves to be quoted if only for its sonic qualities:

Ἑκτορα δ’ ἐκ βελέων ὑπαγε Ζεὺς ἔκ τε κονίης
ἔκ τ’ ἀνδροκτασίης ἔκ θ’ αἵματος ἔκ τε κυδοιμοῦ.

Zeus brought Hector out from under the arrows, out from the dust, out from the man-killing, out from the blood, out from the roar. (11.163-164)

⁶⁹ Redfield 1975: 28.

The lines begin with Hector's name (*Hektora*) and then proceed to repeat its first syllable five times with five prepositional phrases beginning with *ek* ("out of"),⁷⁰ four of which (like Hector's name) fall on the metrical ictus, and four of which are followed by *te*, replicating the *-ekt-* element in his name:

Héktora d'
ék beleón ...
ék te koníes
ék t' andróktasiés
ek t' haímatos
*ék te kudoíμου*⁷¹

His name is turned into a mocking chant (*hekt, ek, ekt, ekt, ekt, ekt*, "out, out, out, out, out") on the occasion of his departure from the field. Zeus must remove him from battle for the duration of Agamemnon's *aristeia* — yet another miniature sub-plot briefly deferring the *Dios boulê*, although introduced without the aid of additional gods. But Zeus's actual intervention will take the regular form of a message delivered by Iris (11.185-215) commanding him to sit on the sidelines until Agamemnon is done winning. When Hector returns to battle he is soon hit in the head by Diomedes (11.349-356), and retreats behind the front lines as black night covers his eyes (11.356: ἀμφὶ δὲ ὅσσε κελαινὴ νύξ ἐκάλυψεν). When the Achaeans are losing, it is because Zeus has "bewitched the minds of the Achaeans, and given glory to the Trojans and Hector" (12.254-255: αὐτὰρ Ἀχαιῶν | θέλγε νόον, Τρωσὶν δὲ καὶ Ἑκτορι κῦδος ὀπαίξει). Ajax will point this out to Hector himself in the thick of the battle — it is not that the Greeks are inferior at war, "but we Achaeans have been tamed by the whip of Zeus" (13.812: ἀλλὰ Διὸς μάστιγι κακῇ ἐδάμημεν Ἀχαιοί). Ajax's point is proved correct when Zeus is seduced by Hera in Book 14 (the so-called *Dios apatê*) giving the Achaeans a chance to regroup. Just as with their duel in Book 7, in the fight

⁷⁰ Although the scholia on 11.163-164 do not note the repeated preposition or its effect following Hector's name, they do note that the expected preposition in the first two phrases would be *ektos* (A scholia) or *exô* (B scholia) rather than *ek*.

⁷¹ To better demonstrate the basic rhythm, the acute accent is used only to mark only each foot's metrical ictus in this transliteration.

between Ajax and Hector that occurs during the *Dios apatê*, Ajax is unquestionably the superior fighter, and incapacitates the Trojan leader with another rock to the head (14.402-439).

Hector is aware that he is blessed by Zeus during the enactment of the *Dios boulê*, and refuses to imagine that he need worry about anything else, including the contradictory omens interpreted by Polydamas (11.195-250). This is, in Redfield's words, "the beginning of Hector's error," causing him to become increasingly "incapable of retreat."⁷² The Trojan hero does not understand that the shifting value of the variable "Will of Zeus" is only assigned temporarily. It refers to the plot of *this* epic, not necessarily the ultimate outcome of the war. This can be seen, for instance, in the moment where the Trojans finally break through the wall:

ὥς μὲν τῶν ἐπὶ ἴσα μάχῃ τέτατο πόλεμος τε,
πρίν γ' ὅτε δὴ Ζεὺς κῦδος ὑπέρτερον Ἑκτορι δῶκε
Πριαμίδῃ, ὃς πρῶτος ἐσήλατο τεῖχος Ἀχαιῶν.

So the fight and the war had been pulled to an equal strain on both sides, until the moment Zeus gave greater glory to Hector, son of Priam, who was the first to penetrate the Achaeans' wall. (12.436-438)

Beginning with a description of the naturally evenly matched armies,⁷³ the Narrator describes Hector's glorious victory as a gift from Zeus. But this causes Hector to overestimate the specialness of his relationship with Zeus, unaware that he is being moved like a chess piece. Bruce Heiden analyzes the plot of the *Iliad* based on Thomas Pavel's model of narrative "moves," demonstrating how the "problems" Zeus places in Hector's way string him along to his own death. According to Heiden, it is because Hector consistently and predictably misinterprets the truth of his situation that Zeus is able to

⁷² Redfield 1975: 145, 150.

⁷³ Compare the similar language of the Narrator's statement above at 11.336, where Zeus also "pulled the fight to an equal strain on both sides" (κατὰ ἴσα μάχην ἐτάνυσσε). The verb *teinein* ("pull, stretch, strain") simultaneously evokes the pressure faced by the men on the ground and the sense in which even here during the execution of the *Dios boulê*, the ticking clock poet's "expansion aesthetic" causes him to lengthen the performance. In the moments where the battle is equal on both sides, there can be no progression towards either side's victory; thus the poem itself is "stretched."

manipulate him in this way.⁷⁴ Unlike the expansions introduced by other divine interventions, the episodes of the *Dios boulê* are not locally motivated, but form a chain of causality. It is not that Hector is incorrect about Zeus glorifying him; it is that he does not realize it is on an *ad hoc* basis, and that it is in fact through his attempt to achieve glory that he will die. This is a good illustration of how the phenomenon Albin Lesky observed as “double motivation”⁷⁵ allows the plot to be tightly controlled by the gods while still allowing the human players to be characterized in a consistent and realistic manner.

Zeus as poet and the narrative tease

Zeus himself is a rather strange character. On the one hand, he is passionate and emotional in the enforcement of his Will — above we examined Athena’s complaint to Hera accusing the head god of raging in his unkind heart (8.360: φρεσὶ μαίνεται οὐκ ἀγαθῇσι), of hating her (8.370: νῦν δ’ ἐμὲ μὲν στυγέει). This begins the moment Hera questions his acceptance of the *Thetidos boulê* (1.540: τίς δ’ αὖ τοι δολομήτα θεῶν συμφράσσατο βουλάς;), which leads Zeus to make the first of his frequent threats of physical violence against other gods (1.565-567). This emotion cannot be written off as annoyance at any challenge to his will — twice Athena justifies to Zeus her intent to thwart him by offering her own *boulê* to the Greeks “so that they are not all destroyed while you are angry” (8.36-37 = 8.467-468: βουλὴν δ’ Ἀργείοις ὑποθησόμεθ’ ἢ τις ὀνήσει | ὥς μὴ πάντες ὄλωνται ὀδυσσαμένοιο τεοῖο). On the other hand, Zeus seems willing to enforce the requirements of plots even when they go against his own inclinations. As I discuss in the beginning of the present chapter, Zeus’s *boulai* are not his own in either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*; they are “submitted” to him by goddesses. The *Thetidos boulê* becomes the *Dios boulê*. Zeus is at first reluctant to accept Thetis’s pro-Trojan plan in *Iliad* 1, because he believes (correctly) that it

⁷⁴ Heiden 2008: 32-33.

⁷⁵ Lesky 1961.

will cause dissension among the gods (1.518-527). After using Hector and the Trojans to wound Achaean leaders such as Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus in Book 11, and to punch through the Achaean wall in Book 12, the execution of the *Dios boulê* is once again delayed as Zeus's attention suddenly wanders:

Ζεὺς δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν Τρῳάς τε καὶ Ἑκτορα νηυσὶ πέλασσε,
τοὺς μὲν ἕα παρὰ τῇσι πόνον τ' ἐχέμεν καὶ οἴζυν
νωλεμέως, αὐτὸς δὲ πάλιν τρέπεν ὅσσε φαεινῷ
νόσφιν ἐφ' ἵπποπόλων Θρηκῶν καθορώμενος αἶαν...

Then, after Zeus had brought the Trojans and Hector close to the ships, he mercilessly left those people by those things to endure labor and pain, while (Zeus) himself turned his bright eyes back away, and looked down upon the land of the horse-riding Thracians... (*Iliad* 13.1-4)

Jasper Griffin aptly points out how here, as generally, the “god as audience” image allows the poet to demonstrate “the unperturbed superiority of the gods ‘who live at ease’, in contrast with the suffering of earth.”⁷⁶ Zeus's shift from anger to disinterest fits into a general Iliadic theme of divine fickleness and unpredictability.

But simultaneously, as Richard Janko argues, having Zeus look away is a “neat trick” by which “the poet gives the panic-stricken Greeks ample scope for valour.”⁷⁷ The opening created by Zeus's inattention leads to Poseidon rallying the Achaean troops, which is followed by the “brilliant but detachable episode” of Zeus's seduction by Hera, the *Dios apatê*, whose “ultimate function” is “retarding the relentless Trojan advance.”⁷⁸ The *Dios boulê* now recedes into the distance as a beacon again, as it can, having been re-defined in Book 8 to include the next step, the death of Patroclus. When the

⁷⁶ Griffin 1980: 131.

⁷⁷ Janko 1994: 39.

⁷⁸ Janko 1994: 149.

beguiled Zeus re-awakens in *Iliad* 15, he repeats his actions from Book 8⁷⁹: threatening physical violence against the gods, removing a rogue divinity from the battlefield, making a new prediction that redefines the *Dios boulê* (15.12-77). This new, most complete version of his Will contains the detail of the death of Hector at the hands of Achilles (15.68), after which this plan (and the plot of the *Iliad*) will be over, leaving the Achaean defeat of Troy as the only beacon on the horizon (15.69-71). “But before then I will not stop my anger,” Zeus claims (15.72: τὸ πρὶν δ’ οὔτ’ ἄρ’ ἐγὼ παύω χόλον), which suggests that from this point on, the *Iliad* will focus mainly on the *Dios boulê* (its main plot), with less room for expansion through locally motivated episodes, which is, indeed, what happens in the final third of the poem. The return of Achilles to battle and the deaths of Sarpedon, Patroclus, and Hector unfold in a string of causality that has just been forecast by this fullest presentation of the Zeus’s plan.

Here again we are faced with a schizophrenic Zeus. He is emotionally involved, yet easily distracted. This is his plan because Thetis talked him into accepting it against his will, and this is his plan because of his “anger” at the Achaeans. It is a contradictory bundle of passion and dispassion that, in fact, mirrors the position of the poet himself. The bard Demodocus, for example, is first mentioned in the *Odyssey* by the Phaeacian king Alcinous:

καλέσασθε δὲ θεῖον ἀοιδόν,
 Δημόδοκον· τῷ γάρ ῥα θεὸς περὶ δῶκεν ἀοιδὴν
 τέρπειν, ὅππῃ θυμὸς ἐποτρύνῃσιν αἰεῖδεν.

And have the divine bard Demodocus brought in, since a god has given him a great ability to entertain with song, in whichever direction his heart spurs him to sing. (*Odyssey* 8.43-45)

As Andrew Ford demonstrates, the selection of the “topics” and boundaries for a given poetic performance is commonly depicted as the singer’s personal choice. But for Demodocus’s final

⁷⁹ Heiden (2008: 162 ff.) discusses the structural similarities and similar placement within the course of the unfolding plot.

performance, he is given a specific request by Odysseus (8.492) for the story of the Trojan horse, with which the bard readily complies.⁸⁰ This submission of topic to singer by audience member is analogous to the way in which, as we have seen, the plot of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are “submitted” to Zeus as requests by goddesses at the beginning of each poem. Strictly speaking, there is no contradiction within the *Odyssey*: Demodocus personally chooses the first topic, and performs the last by request. But the broader point is that, as a poet who performs material “whose fame had already reached the broad sky in those days” (8.74: τῆς τότ’ ἄρα κλέος οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἵκανε), Demodocus neither claims nor receives credit for his creativity, because the stories he tells are treated as both traditional and true.⁸¹ The plan behind them, like the *Dios boulê*, is imposed externally, which means that the singer might well dislike some of what happens in his own songs, as Phemius is made to perform for the suitors “by force” (*Odyssey* 1.154: ἀνάγκη). But this does not mean he can afford not to invest himself emotionally in their performance, as Plato’s rhapsode Ion memorably affirms of his own experience performing Homer:

ἐγὼ γὰρ ὅταν ἐλινόν τι λέγω, δακρύων ἐμπίμπλантаί μου οἱ ὀφθαλμοί· ὅταν τε φοβερὸν ἢ δεινόν, ὀρθαὶ αἱ τρίχες ἴστανται ὑπὸ φόβου καὶ ἡ καρδία πηδᾷ.

“Well in my case, whenever I sing something sad, my eyes fill with tears; if it’s something scary or disturbing, my hair stands up straight from fear and my heart races.” (Plato *Ion* 535c5-8)⁸²

Ion goes on to hope for the same reaction in his audience, which Phemius certainly achieves with his own (compulsory) performance in *Odyssey* 1, bringing Penelope to tears by singing *nostoi*.

⁸⁰ On the poetic language used to describe selection of topics, see Ford (1992: 43).

⁸¹ For discussion of the related question of whether Demodocus’s songs already had a traditional history for the poet of the *Odyssey* himself, see e.g. Nagy (1979: 26-64), Scodel (2002: 152-154), with bibliography.

⁸² It should of course be noted that Plato’s *Ion* describes a later context, and depicts a rhapsode performing fixed (i.e. treated as a “script”) material, not a poet composing — although one of Socrates’s arguments in the *Ion* is that precisely the same sort of (divine) inspiration is involved in composing and performing. For opinions on the use of Plato’s *Ion* in conjunction, see discussion at Jensen (2011: 161-166, with bibliography).

I will end this chapter and this work by examining a several moments in the *Iliad* where Zeus's interaction with his own plan and with fate demonstrate the same types of tension faced by a poet working with traditional material. I detect in all these passages a tone that I can only describe as "teasing." We have already considered one of these narrative teases: the divine council at the beginning of *Iliad* 8, where Zeus is so annoyed with divine intervention delaying his *boulê* that he boasts of his potential to destroy the universe. At the assembly beginning *Iliad* 4, he threatens a different type of end of the world. Despite the fact that neither Menelaus nor Paris were killed in their duel, the result was clearly in Menelaus's favor, and it is now logical that the two sides should abide by the treaty they have all agreed to rather than fight the war that will cause both sides so much misery. Of course, what is more desirable for the human characters is less so for the audience who came to hear a war poem, and when Zeus starts the assembly by suggesting this peaceful solution, it is marked as a tease:

Οἱ δὲ θεοὶ παρ Ζηνὶ καθήμενοι ἡγορόωντο
 χρυσέῳ ἐν δαπέδῳ, μετὰ δέ σφισι πότνια Ἥβη
 νέκταρ ἐοινοχόει· τοὶ δὲ χρυσεὶς δεπᾶεσσι
 δειδέχατ' ἀλλήλους, Τρώων πόλιν εἰσορόωντες·
 αὐτίκ' ἐπειρᾶτο Κρονίδης ἐρεθίζεμεν Ἥρην
 κερτομίῳις ἐπέεσσι παραβλήδην ἀγορεύων·

And as they sat in Zeus's home on the golden floor, the gods held an assembly. Among them Lady Hebe acted as wine pourer with the nectar, and they toasted each other with golden cups as they watched the city of the Trojans. At once the son of Cronus tried to start an argument with Hera, speaking deviously with jeering words. (*Iliad* 4.1-6)

The symbolism of gods standing for audience is particularly marked here, as they not only watch the human action but do so while drinking wine — compare Odysseus's statement to Alcinous and the Phaeacians that there is nothing "more lovely" (*Odyssey* 9.5: χαριέστερον) than when "dinner guests listen to a bard all through the house" (9.7: δαιτυμόνες δ' ἀνὰ δώματ' ἀκουάζωνται ἀοιδοῦ) at the same

time as “a wine-pourer draws off wine from the bowl and carries it around and pours it in cups” (9.9-10: μέθυ δ' ἐκ κρητῆρος ἀφύσσων | οἰνοχόος φορέησι καὶ ἐγχεΐη δεπάεσσι).⁸³

In this environment, Zeus’s suggestion to Hera that they allow the humans to live their lives in peace is the ultimate storytelling tease. What could be more offensive to an audience *qua* audience than the threat of withholding the end of the story? (Or the beginning: blood is not drawn in the *Iliad* until Athena is sent to rouse Pandarus as a result of this assembly.) The Narrator makes this abundantly clear with the lines introducing Zeus’s speech: he is trying to start a fight, speaking with *kertomiois* (“jeering”, “challenging”, “provocative”) words. Zeus presents the storytelling choice as a binary set of options:

ἡμεῖς δὲ φραζώμεθ' ὅπως ἔσται τάδε ἔργα,
ἢ ῥ' αὖτις πόλεμόν τε κακὸν καὶ φύλοπιν αἰνῆν
ὄρσομεν, ἢ φιλότητα μετ' ἀμφοτέροισι βάλωμεν.

Let us think about how we want these events to go: whether we should start the evil war and terrible battle back up, or throw peace between them both. (*Iliad* 4.14-16)

Here the poet teases the audience even as Zeus teases the gods: will we get to see more fighting or not?

David Elmer names this as a passage in which the “less than fully evident”⁸⁴ how what he sees as the regular metapoetic function of these scenes in which the gods discuss changing fate. Surely there could never have been an alternate version in which there was no Trojan War?

But the threat here is not so much the creation of an untraditional story as the lack of a story at all, the popping of the narrative balloon before it can be allowed to inflate fully. This is perhaps a more real possibility for the singer than the god. Real-world performances fail all the time — as we have discussed previously, three of the four performances by bards described in the *Odyssey* are depicted as

⁸³ Osway Murray (2008) suggests that, for the *Odyssey* at least, the text itself indicates an early version of a sympotic performance context.

⁸⁴ Elmer 2013: 151.

being interrupted by a displeased audience member, always due to his or her personal connection with the material.⁸⁵ The response by the gods to Zeus comes in a formula that we will examine momentarily when we see it again in response to Zeus's complaint about the impending death of Sarpedon:

ὦ μοι ἐγών, ὃ τέ μοι Σαρπηδόνα φίλτατον ἀνδρῶν
μοῖρ' ὑπὸ Πατρόκλοιο Μενoitιάδαο δαμῆναι.
διχθὰ δέ μοι κραδίη μέμονε φρεσὶν ὀρμαίνοντι,
ἥ μιν ζῶν ἐόντα μάχης ἄπο δακρυόεσσης
θεῖω ἀναρπάξας Λυκίης ἐν πίοι δῆμῳ,
ἥ ἤδη ὑπὸ χερσὶ Μενoitιάδαο δαμάσσω.

Ah me, the fact that it is the fate of Sarpedon, the dearest of all men to me, to be defeated by Patroclus Menoetiades! As I consider the matter in my mind, my heart is aimed in two directions. Either I snatch him up while he's still alive and put him away from the tear-soaked battle among the rich populace of Lycia, or I now defeat him by the hands of Menoetiades. (16.433-438)

Here Zeus's own language follows that of the Narrator and characters: Zeus is ultimately responsible for everything that happens. If Patroclus kills Sarpedon, this means that Zeus (like Homer) is using Patroclus to kill Sarpedon.⁸⁶ This has been read as a key passage in the discussion of the Homeric conception of fate, because here Zeus specifically names *moira* as a separate entity whose will is separate from his own. What is problematic, then, is Zeus's stance with relation to fate: if it is above him, why can he overturn it? If it is not above him, why does he not? William Allan, seeking a coherent picture of divine justice in Homer, considers this scene (along with its doublet in *Iliad* 22 when Zeus considers saving Hector) to be a key moment in the *Iliad*'s illustration of the divine hierarchy. The potential for

⁸⁵ In addition to the aforementioned interruption of Phemius's performance by Penelope, Odysseus's tears interrupt Demodocus's first and third performance in *Odyssey* 8. Scodel (2002: 7 ff.) describes a singer's failed performance of an Indian epic poem. The failure is attributed to the performer's misunderstanding of what the audience would be interested in hearing.

⁸⁶ The phrasing is repeated in the parallel passage where Zeus weighs intervening against fate to save Hector from Achilles, inviting the rest of the gods to consider "whether we should save him (Hector) from death, or whether, even though he is good, we should defeat him using Achilles Peleides." (22.175-176: ἥέ μιν ἐκ θανάτοιο σώσομεν, ἥέ μιν ἤδη | Πηλεΐδῃ Ἀχιλῆϊ δαμάσσομεν ἐσθλὸν ἐόντα.)

Zeus to change Sarpedon's fate against both "fate" and the will of the other gods represents the potential for divine quarreling to upset the balance of the cosmos; the fact that he could but does not affirms that balance.⁸⁷

But here the equation of *moira* with tradition and Zeus with the poet allows us to consider the passage as a commentary on the experience of performing.⁸⁸ I have described the *Dios boulê* as a stand-in for the mental text, a beacon in the distance, always providing a binary decision for the poet: should I move on to the next step of the main plot, or have the gods intervene to introduce a locally motivated expansion? But there is always also the third option of saying something so perversely untraditional that it will create a truly new story in which different people live and die than are supposed to. In the cases of both Sarpedon and Hector, Hera and Athena (respectively) respond with an identical run of lines:

ἄνδρα θνητὸν ἐόντα πάλαι πεπρωμένον αἴσῃ
ἄψ' ἐθέλεις θανάτοιο δυσηχέος ἐξαναλῦσαι;
ἔρδ'· ἀτὰρ οὐ τοι πάντες ἐπαινέομεν θεοὶ ἄλλοι.

Even though this man is a mortal, and has long been fated to his destiny, you want to untie him from the awful noise of death? Do it, but not all of the rest of us gods will give you our approval. (*Iliad* 16.441-443 = 22.179-181)

The final line appears a third time in the *Iliad*: as part of Hera's outraged response to Zeus's suggestion that they let the Trojan War go unfought:

αἰνότατε Κρονίδη ποῖον τὸν μῦθον ἔειπες·
πῶς ἐθέλεις ἄλιον θεῖναι πόνον ἢδ' ἀτέλεστον,
ἰδρῶ θ' ὄν ἰδρῶσα μόγῳ, καμέτην δέ μοι ἵπποι
λαδὸν ἀγειρούση, Πριάμῳ κακὰ τοῖό τε παισίν.
ἔρδ'· ἀτὰρ οὐ τοι πάντες ἐπαινέομεν θεοὶ ἄλλοι.

⁸⁷Allan 2006.

⁸⁸Eberhard (1923) reads this as part of the *Iliad*'s general use of "fate" as a storytelling device, but sees little significance here; *moira* is merely a pretext for the poet to compel Zeus to allow a plot element he does not care for.

Most dreadful son of Cronus, what a speech this is you have made! How can you be willing to make our labor pointless and unfinished, as well as the sweat I sweated in toil while my horses worked so hard as I gathered the army — trouble for Priam and his sons. Do it, but not all of the rest of us gods will give you our approval.
Iliad (4.25-29)

All these scenes feature in David Elmer's discussion of the verb *epainein* ("praise, approve") as a metapoetic term representing local audiences "approval" of variant versions of myths.⁸⁹ With emphasis on the phrasing of this response as both a negative and a qualified statement (not *all* of the gods will approve) he suggests that Zeus's divided heart represents the partisan audience divided by their Greek/Trojan favoritism. The poem's failure to actually illustrate that division of opinion in the audience in either passage, however, suggests to me that it is in fact a generalized conception of the "approval" of the divine audience that defines what the *moira* is in the first place. It is not that the audience necessarily *want* Sarpedon or Hector to die; it is that they, like Zeus, recognize it to be their fate/tradition to die, and they would not consider a poem where this happened to sound traditional.⁹⁰ The *Dios boulê*, then, is a different thing from *moira*, but it also must in practice conform itself to *moira* if it is not going to cause problems. In the same way, the mental text that a poet develops for a particular story is his own idiosyncratic creation, but it must conform to tradition if it is to be accepted. Creativity is allowed — through expansion, through arrangement, through the ways in which the traditional events unfold — but only to a point. Of course, the poet could at any point say anything he wanted; it does not require ten tongues, ten mouths, an unbreakable voice, or a heart of bronze to say "Hector killed Achilles" instead of "Achilles killed Hector," and the Muses would not rush down from the sky and clamp their hands over the singer's mouth if he tried. But the danger is that the audience could simply

⁸⁹ Elmer 2013: 152-159.

⁹⁰ Scodel (2002: 1-41) discusses how "tradition" in general is as much a rhetorical position based on the belief of communities as it is a historical fact about the same stories or practices been passed from one generation to the next.

reject the poem as incorrect and untraditional, and stop listening — give up on the performance and the world it has created before the poet uses up the time on his ticking clock by bringing his poem to an ending.

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