

Gerson Schade



Lectures on Greek Poetry

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Lectures on Greek Poetry

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GERSON SCHADE

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The series of lectures contained in this volume were written for students at Adam Mickiewicz University. A first group of these lectures are intended to serve as an introduction to Greek poetry of the archaic, classical and pre-Hellenistic age. They treat a selection of texts, ranging from the eighth to the fourth century BC. A second group of these lectures focuses on Homer's *Iliad*: while the whole work is treated, the lectures follow the story of Achilles, which is developed mainly in five books. All texts are provided in translation, and secondary literature is discussed and used to make the texts more accessible for young students interested in poetry. The lectures introduce to some of the main issues that characterise the texts, such as their relationship to their primary audience, the impact of orality, and the influence of the eastern poetic tradition on the Greeks. Where appropriate, the lectures also treat the interrelation between various texts, their intertextuality. They try to answer the questions of how poetry did work then, and why these texts do matter for the European poetic tradition.

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to the memory of my father

Preface

This monograph, *Lectures on Greek Poetry*, contains the revised version of lectures delivered at Adam Mickiewicz-University during the Academic Year 2013/14 and 2014/15. It consists of two main parts. A first series of nine lectures gives a survey on epic, lyric, and tragic poetry from Homer to Euripides and Timotheus. Its first part, a lecture on Greek literature and cultural history, introduces into some of the main problems related to Greek poetry in antiquity. A second series of five lectures outlines the story of Achilles and may serve as an introduction to Homer's *Iliad*.

After asking a surprising range of questions during the lectures, the students expressed a strong desire to have a printed manuscript. It may help them to follow the argument better, they said, and it would enable them to read further on some points of particular interest to them. My colleagues supported the idea of making the text available in printed form, and I'm very grateful to them for their assistance. It took some time to reshape the text which still shows traces of a lecture. I'm very glad that C.J. Hopkins could find the time to have a look at the English.

Berlin, August 2015

Greek epic, lyric, and tragic poetry from Homer to Euripides and Timotheus

GREEK LITERATURE AND CULTURAL HISTORY

Greek literature in antiquity is closely related to the history of Greek culture. It cannot be properly understood without constantly referring to the cultural history of the Greeks, people who not only settled in the whole Mediterranean world from the eighth century BC onwards, but also established the first European cultural centre in the city of Athens in the course of the fifth and fourth century BC. Even a long time after any Greek political hegemony had disappeared, their language still was not only spoken by the educated Romans in particular, but also used by speakers of different languages in general as a common medium of communication.

A few words on Greek literature come first, followed by remarks on cultural history, and finally a case-study – the interpretation of Homer’s work as seen by Milman Parry – to illustrate their relationship.

1.

The term Greek literature comprises the period from the eighth century BC until the fifth century AD. The authors writing in ancient Greek come from various areas in the Mediterranean world; the works are poetic texts as well as prose, though prose is seemingly not written down from the very beginning. For a long time, Greek authors composed in their local languages, as there were Ionic, Aeolic, and Doric, or to be more precise, these early poets used literary dialects stemming from them, the most important of which was called Homeric, named after the supposed poet of the earliest Greek poetry. Attic, the language taught at western European universities since the sixteenth century of our time, only became important with the rise of Athens in the fifth century. It had a major effect on the later Greek language, which was used by the authors of a text labelled by the Christians as ‘New Testament’.

The early period, the so-called archaic literature, is dominated by figures from Ionia, i.e. the western coast of modern Turkey, or from coastal islands (e.g., Lesbos); some authors come from the Greek mainland, i.e. the Island of Pelops, the Peloponnese, but there are also some from Sicily, the main place in the West colonized by Greeks. Thus the picture shows several places of literary production, though for lack of information it is somehow incomplete: our knowledge depends largely on rather short citations and not really satisfying scholarly work in antiquity. Papyri which emerged from the sands of Egypt and were taken away to European collections from the end of the eighteenth century onwards helped to fill some gaps.

Towards the end of the sixth century and of the archaic period, Ionia saw an explosion of abstract theorizing, much of it conducted in prose: cosmologists (e.g. Anaximander and Anaximenes) turned up, as did philosophers like Heraclitus, as well as intellectual poets as Xenophanes.

The classical period, i.e. the fifth and fourth centuries, is largely dominated by the cultural hegemony of Athens, a fact that introduced the oppositions of centre and fringe, urban and provincial, mainstream and provocation, conservatism and innovation, etc., into the history of European literature. Many highly prominent writers lived there, and most of the best-known were born there – e.g., the tragedian Sophocles, the historian Thucydides, the comedian Aristophanes, or the philosopher Plato.

During the fourth century, however, Athens lost its primary role, and other centres of literary production emerged, e.g. the court of the Macedonian kings. From the third century BC onwards a new trend in literature emerged from Alexandria, one of the many towns famously ‘founded’ by Alexander the Great on his tour to India.

From then on, in Egyptian Alexandria a library became the centre of literary production. A bookish turn took place, and an archive became the source and inspiration of the so-called Hellenistic or Alexandrian literature. Though central figures of Hellenistic poetry in the third century are not connected to ‘the Library’ (as Theocritus and Aratus), one may well speak of ‘the Archive’ in capital letters, considering the huge cultural impact of this type of learned, erudite and highly self-reflective, Hellenistic literature. After the ‘centre and fringe’ opposition, a new antithesis is openly propagated, i.e. between ‘sophisticated’ and ‘backward’, ‘clever’ and ‘simple’, ‘highbrow’ and ‘dull’, ‘charming’ versus ‘boring’. The general concept of an archive, though, was by no means invented in Alexandria; the project of conserving memorable achievements for all times was preceded in Athens by the first two great historians, Herodotus and Thucydides.

At least to our knowledge, the widespread use of Greek is the first instance of a so-called *lingua franca*. There might well have been earlier ones

(even a reconstructed language called 'Indo-European' could have been one), and it goes without saying that the idea of a *lingua franca* exists in other cultures elsewhere in the world as well as in Europe. In our context, i.e. the Mediterranean world from the eighth century onwards, it meant that Greek texts could be understood if not read by a huge variety of people. Even in the earlier classical age, Greek was already spoken not only in mainland Greece and on the western coast of modern Turkey, but also in western places like Sicily (where Greek literary works were performed, lyric as well as dramatic) and southern Italy. When the Romans finally managed to conquer Egypt in 31 BC, the high and prestigious status of Greek remained unquestioned; Latin became the language of military life only, but other areas of literacy remained faithful to the Greek language, which was now developing into a new stage.

2.

Cultural history, in turn, helps much to put all that and much more into perspective. For a cultural historian, literary texts are not second-order reflections of history, literature is a collection of ways of perceiving the world. Consequently, literary texts are a challenge to those who get to know them, because they matter in the societies that receive them (Whitmarsh 2004, 6): "Whether we are thinking of the performance of a play or a poem, or the circulation, sale or reading of books, or of any other form of literary production, the text exists to provoke, to be debated over."

Cultural history emphasises this aspect of dialogue surrounding texts; it seeks to explore what Greek literary texts signified in various contexts. Early Greek literature is as much context bound as contemporary literature, though both belong to different spheres. Their authors rely heavily on a shared social memory without which their texts would not have been understandable. One may take the argument further, saying that many voices can be heard if texts are no longer primarily perceived as written by geniuses but analysed as sites for social dispute. Approaching texts this way, cultural identity, gender, sexuality and class are regarded as central issues, and the focus shifts away from the author as a planning mastermind. Surely literature is defined as forming a part of a cultural canon (Whitmarsh 2004, 9sq.): "Canons are not just collections of texts; they are narratives, invested with purpose and direction; and also (like texts themselves) sites for conflict and debate."

If one wishes to understand any culture, one has to get to know its set of canons. General rules and fundamental principles govern the treatment of

a subject, and the study of the canons of criticism, taste and art are elementary for the understanding of literature. Furthermore, how people create their identity, how they defend and maintain it by means of literary texts is one important part of the so-called self-reflection of a society. That Greek literature was always self-reflective is confirmed by debates on 'old' and 'new', as one such example from a literary text of the late fifth century may show.

In an Attic comedy, two famous tragedians oppose each other in the Underworld. Apparently their death provoked a crisis in literary history: the older one, Aeschylus, attacks the younger, Euripides, for having killed Greek tragedy. He did so by introducing 'new' things, which Aeschylus as a representative of the 'old' way despises very much. In the course of the argument Aeschylus accuses Euripides of having brought on stage unworthy subjects; moreover, Euripides did so by making his subjects talk too much, chatter away their precious time. The result of this new Euripidean style is that no youth trains his body any longer; instead they go to the bath; thus nobody is able to run a round in the stadium while holding a torch any longer. The comedian Aristophanes let the two dead tragedians confront each other, clearly illustrating the contrast between 'old' and 'new'. The passage in question comes from Aristophanes' *Frogs*, performed in 405 in Athens (lines 1013-88).

A central issue of the complex relationship between literature and culture is how literary texts are shared and communicated, in other words, whether literature circulates in written form. In this respect Greek literature is a paradoxical phenomenon because "the Greeks, who gave us the names, forms and classical models" (Knox 1985, 1) of epic and lyric poetry, tragedy and comedy, later also pastoral poetry, and in fact of almost every literary genre known to the West, did not develop a system of writing adequate for the recording of literature until late in their history. When they finally did so at the end of the eighth century, other literary texts in neighbouring literary cultures had already been around for a much longer time.

Egyptian literature had been transmitted on papyrus scrolls for over two millennia, and the literature of the Mesopotamian civilizations, inscribed on clay tablets, went back to a similarly remote antiquity. Mesopotamia, literally 'in the middle between rivers', is strictly speaking the country between the Tigris and the Euphrates, though the term is generally used to include the deserts on either side, i.e. the ancient kingdoms of Assyria and Babylonia, or modern Iraq. Mesopotamia was an important commercial link between Syria (the Mediterranean) and Babylon, the ancient capital of the kingdom of Mesopotamia, regarded to be the most wealthy city in antiquity.

Herodotus claimed to have visited it and described its wonders (somewhat inaccurately 1. 178-87).

Egyptian culture was widely known to the Greeks: Herodotus, a fifth-century author and the first historian of the western tradition, dedicated a whole book to Egyptian custom and confirmed Egypt's place in the Athenian social memory of his time (Gould 1989, 19-41). Mesopotamian culture was similarly well known: Homer's *Iliad*, the first epic poem of the western tradition, includes passages adapted from and influenced by Near-Eastern literary works (West 1997, 334-401).

The fact that the Greeks appear to adopt stylistic traits of the Near East is called 'orientalizing', i.e. the process of making something oriental in style and character. The term does not only designate or relate to a style of Greek art (that of c. 750-650), in which influences from the Near East are discernible, but also comprises a large variety of phenomena, among them, for instance, the 'Achaemenidizing' character of some of the architectural details of Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli (roughly 30 km from Rome, the ancient city of Tibur).

The airy foothills of the Apennine mountains not too far from Rome were fashionable locations for villas, among them those of the poet Catullus and the emperor Augustus. The most extraordinary was that of Hadrian, begun around 118 AD. The largest ever built, it incorporates many exotic buildings which reflect those that Hadrian had seen in the east Mediterranean. The Achaemenids (from whom the expression 'Achaemenidizing' is derived) were the tribe to which the Persian kings belonged (Herodotus 1. 125 & 7. 11), and the 'Achaemenidizing' style is probably dependent on Persian booty won by Alexander the Great.

East and west were important issues, not only to later Roman emperors – they also mattered in ancient Greece. Nowadays, the opposition is part of and plays a major role in the discourse of orientalism, i.e. the way people from the 'west' perceive people from the 'east', "by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, (...) a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 1979, 3).

Already in the first Greek text handed down to us this theme is very present: Homer distinguishes between Greeks and Trojans when describing their battle-gear or their way of attacking. Homer differentiates between east and west by making his heroes speak differently about their mental driving forces: the 'eastern' hero Hector is obsessed by shame, while the 'western' hero Achilles never mentions shame at all, being himself driven by a feeling of guilt.

The fifth-century historian Herodotus begins his *Histories* with an explicit statement on the difference between east and west. In this work, he claims, he wants to display his enquiries, his 'histories' (the Greek word for enquiry). He does so in order to preserve human achievements, that they may be spared the ravages of time, and that everything great and astounding, all the glory of those exploits, may be kept alive. Greeks and non-Greeks alike are credited with such exploits, he continues, and both are mentioned as being on a par with each other. In Herodotus' days, however, both sides went to war (and a war between 'east' and 'west' already formed the background to Homer's *Iliad*); Herodotus also wants to suggest the reason they did so, implying assignation of blame. A distinct sense of identity is expressed by Herodotus, who wants to identify the Greekness of the Greeks: the quality or state of being Greek in the classical world, of embodying Greek characteristics.

The Greek literary achievement began in the late eighth century, when the Greeks learned to write by adapting a script designed for a foreign language: a Phoenician (North Semitic) system in use in Syria. It is a paradoxical feature of this Greek literary achievement that by the time they devised a system of writing suited to their language, they already possessed a literature.

Literacy then, however, was of a very restricted nature and only known to be used in the great centres of Mycenaean civilization. Inscribed clay tablets, dating from the last half of the second millennium, have been found at Pylos, Thebes and Mycenae on the mainland and at Cnossus in Crete. The script is known as Linear B and seems to have been a rough and ready adaptation for Mycenaean Greek of the Cretan Linear A script, which is still undeciphered "but almost certainly non-Greek" (Knox 1985, 1). This writing system - a syllabary, neither an alphabet (this is still to come) nor a system of ideograms (most Egyptian hieroglyphics), of eighty-seven signs - was used, as far as we know, for long lists of names, records of livestock, grain and other produce. The texts seem to come from account books of anonymous clerks, and nothing of an even faintly literary quality survives.

The ancient Greek city of Mycenae lies in the Argolis, itself located in the north-east corner of the Peloponnese, some miles from the city of Argos and some more miles from the sea. The term Mycenaean refers to the city's position as a centre of civilization in the late Bronze Age, a civilization which reached its height in the thirteenth century BC. After Heinrich Schliemann's (1822-1890) rich archaeological finds at the site, beginning in 1876, the term came to be used to designate Bronze Age culture in Greece and the Aegean generally. From 1955 onwards Mycenaean also became the name of the

(then) newly deciphered, Greek dialect, represented by the Linear B tablets found at Mycenae.

The script seems to have been deciphered in June 1952, though many in those days doubted whether the edition of these tablets would last; however, it did. From Homer's text we can gather no reliable information; we are forced to accept, as it was in ancient times accepted without question, "that the Homeric heroes had been Greek in language, religion and every other distinguishing feature (...). Homer possessed no term which could be used without anachronism to refer to this linguistic unity (...); but for Herodotus the Trojan war was a clear-cut struggle between Hellenes and Asiatics, and a direct antecedent of the rivalry which was to culminate in the Persian invasions (...)." And this we can assume "although Agamemnon, Odysseus and Nestor might have been illiterate, and although their ancient palaces and cities had long since crumbled into dust" (Ventris & Chadwick 1956, 4).

Towards the end of the second millennium BC the Mycenaean palaces were destroyed by fire, and the clay tablets with their strange markings were buried in the ruins; baked to brick-like hardness by the fire, they were only discovered by twentieth-century excavators. The script itself is not suitable for literary purposes, for it lacks both economy and clarity. It does not distinguish, for instance, between r and l, and initial s is omitted as well as m, n, r and s at the end of a syllable; the result is that, e.g., pa-te may be either pater ('father') or pantes ('all'). In other words, the sign-system is so deficient that you may as well try to use it to transliterate a text written in other non-Greek languages: the difference would not necessarily be noticeable. Obviously, it is almost impossible to interpret the script correctly unless the meaning is indicated by the context.

Many centuries later, however, the Greeks learned to write again, once more adapting a script designed for a foreign language. This time the adaptation proved to be a success: not only did it produce a sign system fully adequate for Greek sounds, it also improved on the original (Knox 1985, 2). Now the alphabet that we still use was developed.

The Semitic script does not indicate vowels (neither Hebrew nor Arabic have letters for vowels, which are indicated by dots only). To represent their Greek vowels, however, some of the Semitic consonantal symbols - which for the Greeks were redundant (due to the absence of guttural sounds that are so typical of Arabo-Semitic languages) - were used as signs for the vowels. Thus, the first genuine alphabet was created, a system of writing which could become a popular medium of communication; literacy was no longer the exclusive province of trained specialists.

The earliest extant examples of Greek writing in the new alphabets - since there were significant local variations (Jeffery 1990, 43-65) - are all in-

cised or painted on pottery; some of them run from right to left, and some change direction in each consecutive line (Powell 1991, 119-86). They all combine to suggest a date in the last half of the eighth century BC. They come from all over the Greek world: from Attica, Boeotia, Corinth on the mainland, from Rhodes in the east and from Ischia, off the coast of south Italy, in the west.

As already mentioned, it is a paradoxical feature of this Greek literary achievement that when the Greeks devised a system of writing suited to their language they already possessed a literature (Powell 2002, 188-96). This paradox needs some explanation; it has been discussed for a long time, and of course no firm ground can be reached as to when exactly the first literary texts were written. The earliest and latest conceivable dates for Homer's works are 1200 and 650 BC; nevertheless, the introduction of the alphabet at the end of the eighth century may suggest a date closer to the end than to the beginning or even the middle of this long period (Kirk 1985, 47).

How do we arrive at these dates? The early date of 1200 is a guess from the archaeological excavation of the ancient city of Troy (now Hissarlik), which stood 4 miles from the east side of the Aegean entrance to the Dardanelles. The stratum known as Troy VIIA may be identified with the Troy of the king Priam, the father of Hector, the opponent of Achilles, for its destruction by fire falls around the traditional date for the Trojan War (a slightly circular argument). The late date of 650 is reached by another observation: the first Greek poet of whom we can speak with certainty is Archilochus of Paros who was active in the first half of the seventh century. In his case writing seems assured: "the variety of his metres, the intensely personal tone of many of his poems, the wide range of subject matter and above all the freedom from formula make it unlikely that his work could have survived the centuries by any other means than through written copies" (Knox 1985, 3sq.).

Moreover, Archilochus uses the Homeric text for intertextual interplay (Seidensticker 1978). In other words, he seemingly refers to Homer by creating a second layer, which would have escaped his audience's notice if the Homeric text had not been available, i.e. circulating in written form. Similar intertextuality, probably even more pronounced, can be observed in the poems of Sappho and Alcaeus, who began composing poetry on the island of Lesbos at the end of the seventh century. Again, writing must have played a role in the transmission of their poems, too.

The man in question is the figure called Homer, and the works he is credited with, *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

The *Iliad* broadly narrates one incident that happened in the last year of the Trojan War, and its consequences: the Greeks are fighting desperately,

but they are losing; their main fighters quarrel, as a result of which one hero, Achilles, refuses to continue fighting. He withdraws, and the Greeks suffer heavily. A tragedy, or rather a succession of tragic events, begins, in the course of which Achilles' companion Patroclus dies and Achilles returns, slaughtering maniacally until he kills Hector, Patroclus' murderer. Eventually, Achilles softens and returns Hector's corpse to his father Priam. Both suffer tremendously (Griffin 1980, 100). The whole work centres on the anger of Achilles, how it began and how it ended. The story is told in a straightforward way, though large portions of text (some of which might not be genuine) are interspersed between the sections of the proper Achilles-story, i.e. *Iliad* 1, 9, 16, 19 & 22.

The *Odyssey* is told in a more complex way (again, parts of the work may come from another poetic source): the work begins by a brief survey of the adventures of Telemachus, Odysseus' son, who wants to find out what has become of his father since he departed for Troy. This prelude (of four books) is followed by an introduction of Odysseus himself, who cannot reach his home (books 5-12): a god opposes his homecoming, and during a long stay with friendly folk he tells the story of his wanderings. The second half of the work, however, is a straightforward narrative of how Odysseus manages to once again become the ruler at home and the husband of his wife Penelope. The story has a happy-ending. The fact that heroes from the *Iliad* appear (in a famous Underworld-scene) and the observation that the *Odyssey's* language is less archaic than that of the *Iliad* make it likely that the *Iliad* is the earlier work.

Both poems contain together some 28,000 lines (a bit less than 16,000 for the *Iliad*, slightly more than 12,000 for the *Odyssey*) and both are divided into 24 parts or books. Both display, in significant proportion, many of the characteristics of oral, pre-literate composition:

(a) Very many verbal repetitions occur. They not only link together a noun and an adjective, as is the case in 'swift-footed Achilles' or 'splendid Hector' or 'gentle Patroclus', but also form metrical units, which can be easily used by the poet at always the same place in the line, e.g. when he wants to introduce direct speech or when he wants to resume or sum up what had been said or done (Hainsworth 1980, 31-3).

(b) This observation leads to an investigation of what are generally called 'typical scenes' (Arend 1933 reviewed by Parry in 1936, now Parry 1971, 404-7): in both epic poems typical scenes occur, for instance, when soldiers prepare a sacrifice or when they arrive at or leave a certain place, but also when Achilles' mother speaks to her son, a goddess meeting a human being, or when a commander addresses his men. These scenes follow a certain pattern, a scheme, as if there had been a matrix followed by the poets.

There seem to be no available statistics to help us to determine how much of the epic is structured in that way, though many a scene is quite repetitive indeed, not only 'taking to arms' but also 'making a decision', not only 'eating and drinking' but also 'going to rest and sleep' (Arend 1933, 1-27). A large number of lines are repeated, around one third of the text of both epics consists of repetitions (Schmidt 1885, VIII).

The fact that a considerable proportion of the basic material is traditional can hardly be explained otherwise than by assuming the Homeric epics to be the refined product of experimentation by many generations of oral composers. Another paradox lurks behind this statement: what is to us the beginning of literature is highly likely to be rather the end of a long tradition.

In fact, Homer is considered as supreme in all respects by Aristotle, who admired him greatly. The reason why Homer is singled out by Aristotle is that in writing the *Odyssey* he did not include all that ever happened to Odysseus, but instead constructed the *Odyssey* round a single action, and the *Iliad* likewise (*Poetics* 8). In fact, the architecture of both poems is almost certainly the creation of a single poet, whether oral or literary. What is true for Homer's epics is also true for other types of poetry; the so-called *Homeric hymns* and the didactic poems of Hesiod show the same signs of oral origin.

In the work of Hesiod, however, who is probably later than Homer but not by much, a new phenomenon makes it likely that his poems were written down during the lifetime of their author: he identifies himself, gives biographical details and expresses personal opinions on moral and social problems – which distanced, formulaic Homer never does. Hesiod, however, is solidly present in his works – the *Theogony* begins with an account of his meeting with the Muses on Mount Helicon and his *Works and Days* is addressed to his lazy, greedy brother Perses.

Homer's and Hesiod's formulaic poetry, their archaic epic language, helped them to memorize their works. A performance of such a text filled with repetitions of half-lines and whole scenes is possible for a skilled expert, a trained craftsman, as is also the case with, for instance, Kirghiz Manas-epic (Hatto 1980), and one such Homeric professional is portrayed in the *Odyssey*. A certain Demodokos performs songs, among them one about the love-affair of Ares and Aphrodite (*Odyssey* 8. 256-369: Garvie 1994, 27-9). In the classical age, Plato portrays such an artist who becomes the protagonist in his dialogue *Ion*.

But how can it be proved – or is there any testimony available that may help us to believe in all that? What parallels, if any, cultural history has to offer? And does such a parallel, a kind of Homer today, really help our understanding of Homer in antiquity?

3.

In the years between the two wars of the last century, a young American, writing in French, travelling through the Balkans, tried to find out. The Harvard assistant professor Milman Parry, who died at the age of 33 in 1935, was fascinated by the Homeric (formulaic) style of poetry, which he thought unique. The most obvious examples are noun-epithet expressions (as 'swift-footed Achilles' or 'splendid Hector'), but the Homeric text also contains "whole systems of, e.g., conjunction-verb phrases used over and over again in the same way in the same part of the line to express a like idea, systems which in their length and in their thrift have no counterpart in any literary verse" (A. Parry, *Introduction*, in: Parry 1971, xxxi).

Indeed, Parry was interested in the economical management as well as the huge scope of Homeric diction and was looking for a parallel. In his view, Homer should not be placed within the conventional context of 'Greek literature', but rather alongside singers from other lands who were telling stories of the heroic way of life. He found a similar cultural context in Yugoslav poetry, and he felt he was listening to Homer whenever he heard the Southern Slavs sing their tales. These singers accompany themselves with a gusle, a bowed stringed musical instrument (usually having only a single string). Hence one who plays the gusle is called a guslar (in pl. guslari).

Parry's romantic concept of a *Homerus redivivus* (a Homer who came back to life), however, is accompanied by specific illustrations: Parry managed to show that large numbers of the most common whole-line formulae in Homer, those introducing speeches, marking the movements of the characters, or indicating the passage of time, have remarkably close parallels in Yugoslav verse; they seem also to have a like function in the narrative.

Parry spent the summer of 1933 in Yugoslavia. He returned in the early summer of 1934 with his assistant Albert Lord, and stayed until the end of the summer of the following year, at the end of which he was to die. Parry was convinced that Homer belonged to the same category of poetry he listened to in Yugoslavia. He was fascinated by an oral poetry that offered a closeness between life and art and, in his view, "a satisfactoriness of self-expression" (Parry 1971, xxxv). Thus, 'formulaic' and 'traditional' belong to the same area and define the same texts as 'primitive', 'popular', 'natural', and 'heroic'. And as Homer chanted the Trojan War, so these southern Slavs chanted the battle of Kosovo and made it their subject, at least according to Parry. The battle took place on 28 June 1389. The Turks defeated the Serbs. On 28 June in 1989, a few months before the Yugoslav

war broke out, more than one million Serbs gathered on the battle-ground to commemorate the event, which marked the loss of the Great Serbian empire (Foucart 2014).

Parry's stay in Yugoslavia was picturesque (*Introduction* 1971, xxxvisq., written by Parry's son Adam):

"Dubrovnik, where Parry took a house and where his family stayed while he and his assistants travelled into the more remote lands where singing still flourished, was then, as it is again now, a popular seaside resort. But the country itself was wild in comparison with most of America and Europe. The language was difficult and little known. Costumes and manners were strange. Roads were poor. Milk had to be boiled to be safe for drinking, a source of distress to Parry's children (aged 6 and 10 in 1934). There were no rules laid down for Parry's investigation. He had to learn the language, which meant getting to know a good deal of dialect; to choose his assistants; and to evolve the best methods of approaching singers and prevailing on them to sing. The recording equipment, involving aluminium discs, he had built by a firm in Waterbury, Conn., and for power he depended on the battery of his Ford V-8 (1934), which he brought over to Yugoslavia with him. Banditry was not uncommon in the inland valleys, and an air of risk and adventure always accompanied Parry's several trips into the interior. (...)

"From his children's point of view, the sojourn in Yugoslavia (even if the milk did have to be boiled in a great blue pot, and thus rendered unpalatable, and ginger ale was hard to come by) was a great adventure. This picture was not wholly due to childish imagination. Parry himself loved to dramatize what he was doing. The photograph of him in native costume (which he may have worn only on the occasion when the picture was taken) reveals a romantic and even histrionic side of himself which reminds one of T.E. Lawrence. Part of this was pure game; but part also derived from his convictions about poetry. Poetry, at least this kind of poetry, was valuable because it embodied life. To know it, to apply the true historical method in this modern but exotic setting, meant the ability to enter into the life of which the Yugoslav song was the expression. Parry was in a way romantic, but in another way, logical. If he had not been able to learn the language as well as he did, and to drink with the singers and their audiences in coffee-house and tavern, if he had not been able to take part in this society and win the respect of its members, he could not have carried on the work itself. (...)

"Parry used to improvise stories to his children, and did it rather well. I recall one episode in a favourite series in which the setting was Paris (...) and Mickey Mouse was always the hero and Winnie the Pooh the villain. (...) Can one say that he was mistaken in seeing this kind of parallel? He sought and attained, in his own life, something of the connection between art and living which made heroic song itself so valuable to him."

Parry's work on the diction of Homer shows us the whole Homeric Problem in a new light, has significantly changed the way we read the lines of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and has certainly forced unitarian and analytical Homeric scholars "to take fresh stock of their positions" (Green 1960, 31). Not only did he prove that mnemonic techniques do work while performing a text of considerable length and complexity (Bakker 2005, Strauss Clay 2011), but Parry managed also to provide a vivid cultural parallel. However, this point does not really lend much credit to his ingenious idea. Homer's text is certainly constructed by the aid of traditional formulae and may well be labelled formulaic. But Homer is by no means traditional, as Aristotle had already remarked, and even less primitive, popular, natural, or heroic, in the sense Parry wished him to be.

Parry's investigation into cultural history demonstrates the limits of a culture-based explanation of a literary work. Literature is art and as such not identical with, but rather opposed to, 'life'. Literature cannot in any way be considered to merely reflect a historical culture. This view would not only be denigrating, but would also completely miss the point of works of art. Nevertheless, Parry started as a man on a search, and as his son put it, Parry eventually "attained, in his own life, something of the connection between art and living" - but whether Homer wanted to attain something similar to such a connection between art and living remains a question.

One serious objection to Parry's concept is the well documented artificiality of the Homeric language, which can by no means be called 'natural', quite the opposite: the language is not only highly formulaic but also extremely stylized, containing older layers of another Greek dialect (i.e. Aeolic), and, moreover, promiscuously using older and newer forms, which makes the appearance of the Homeric dialect sometimes weird; moreover, some forms are apparently created for a metrical purpose only. The effect of this heterogeneous and amalgamating poetry situates the whole narrative in a remote, unspecified and unspecifiable area and era. The development of language points in the same direction (Knox 1985, 48): "for example the w-sound represented by the old letter digamma had disappeared from spoken Ionic Greek by the seventh century but was still observed more often than not by the Homeric singers." The effect must have been remarkably artificial.

Parry's romantic idea leads gravely astray: for Homer never wanted to chant the Trojan War. He did not even include every feature of the hero's life; structuring the *Iliad* round a unitary action, 'Homer made Achilles good, though at the same time the epitome of harshness', as Aristotle put it in his *Poetics* (ch. 16): and all the *Iliad's* component events are structured in such

a way that if any one of them were to be displaced or removed, the sense of the whole would be disturbed and dislocated (ch. 8). A historical background for the events of the poem did not preclude the exercise of poetic imagination in shaping them, and Homer's achievement is quite extraordinary. While the *Epic Cycle* as a whole has passed into oblivion, Homer has survived the centuries.

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EPIC POETRY: HOMER

The two epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which the ancient Greeks ascribed to a man named Homer, are the earliest examples of Greek poetry and thought that survive, and no older literary work is known to have existed. These two texts have shaped and influenced the whole development of Greek cultural life in all its varied aspects to an extent almost impossible to grasp today. The Greeks themselves are aware of this, having adopted and honoured Homer as their instructor in various spheres of life. Homer is probably the most cited author in the history of Greek literature, the most referred to, and this is true despite the fact that his existence cannot be verified, and might never be proved at all, an intrinsically unreasonable phenomenon.

Given that paradox, however, it is small wonder that in the course of well over two thousand years opinions on him and his work have differed to a frightening extent. As with any attempt to understand a literary phenomenon, any interpretation of Homer is influenced by the point of view of the interpreter, which is in turn conditioned by and dependent upon his own cultural environment. In addition, any attempt to understand a literary phenomenon of the distant past, that is, to discern the individuality of the author behind the façade of the written word, has unavoidable limitations. Grasping any author's intentions and attempting to identify his place in his own world is subject to the interpreter's own position in space and time, his own personality. Accordingly, some widely different views will have to be mentioned.

In all the efforts of modern scholars to reach a proper understanding of the Homeric epics, the *Odyssey* has consistently been overshadowed by the *Iliad*. The vast amount of material published by scholars, however, makes it obviously impossible to discuss everything that has been said. Diversified in character, full of constant alternation, the history of Homeric research is somewhat "chequered" (Heubeck 1988, 5). Be that as it may, let us start a brief survey, not by providing a systematic collection and analysis of data relating to the text, but rather by aiming for a comprehensive overview of it.

A new understanding of Homeric poems – to which many scholars subscribe – regards them as oral-derived texts; this view, in turn, has far-reaching consequences. Comparative evidence shows that oral traditions in general tend to update the past in accordance with a contemporary agenda. Thus Homer's portrait of the heroic age is unlikely to be a reflection of the distant Bronze Age: "the more we know about the organization of the Mycenaean society from the Linear B documents, the more problematic its

relation appears to Homer's world, and the few fossilized memories of the Mycenaean age may be explained either by an unbroken tradition dating back to this period or by a new awareness of ancient artefacts discovered in graves" (Saïd 2012, 696). According to this view, the poems are not an accurate portrait of the social institutions of the so-called Dark Ages, neither can they be a kind of mixture of various historic societies; instead they reflect the great surge of interest in constructing a believable, albeit probably fictitious past.

Those who share this view may cite as an example Walter Scott's historical novel *Ivanhoe*, published in 1820 and set in 12th-century England. The book is credited for increasing interest in romanticism and medievalism, and Scott may have first turned men's minds in the direction of the middle ages, as well as Homer might have done in his time. If that were true, Homer would be no longer be a prisoner of tradition, as he is seen by the pioneers of orality; rather he would turn out to be a Homer against the tradition. Those who adhere to this view point to the wide range in scale and elaboration of the type-scenes and to the exceptionality of Achilles' language (Saïd 2012, 696) as evidence. To them Homer is no longer a kind of war-correspondent, a chronicler or historian, interested in antiquarian things, giving them a new twist; instead he is regarded as an artist, inventing an artificial world, producing a new work that would give him a unique place in the history of poetry. To those who share this idea he is comparable to Richard Wagner, who gave a new direction to opera, not only by introducing a leitmotif-technique but also by creating an artificial historic past, similar to Scott and largely indebted to medievalism, or, to be more precise, medievalizing by favouring and reviving medieval ideas or usages.

In Homer, the past is made visible to the poet by his Muse, invoked at the beginning of both poems, a privileged eye-witness of all things. But the past, being an imaginary construct, an idealized image more attractive and more noble than present day reality, needs an interpreter. There is no access to this past, other than that offered by the poet: it is he who transports the listener into another time. The poet explicitly prevents us from looking for its remains, stressing in the *Iliad* that the great wall 'once' built by the Achaeans was 'later' totally destroyed by Poseidon and Apollo after the sack of Troy. In order to be credible, however, the heroic past is modelled on what the poet and his audience took for granted about the world: maritime trade, colonization, dominance of the aristocracy, and a familiarity with Pan-Hellenic sanctuaries, all characterizing the poet's own age, i.e. the eighth century BC.

Let us start our survey with the older work, the *Iliad*. Divided into 24 books by the Alexandrian grammarians, the *Iliad* is the more ancient of

the two poems, as demonstrated by the greater frequency of older forms. There is now broad agreement that we have the poem virtually as it was composed, with the exception of book 10, already suspected in antiquity of having been inserted later: 'virtually' means that as far as essential qualities or facts are concerned most scholars nowadays safely assume that the *Iliad* was then nearly or almost as it is now. This may not be so, however, and the fact that many people agree on something does not guarantee anything. For example, a widely held view of the preceding century saw the *Iliad* as a small poem on a single theme, later largely enhanced by whole books of scenes not at all relating to the story at the core of the poem (West 2011, 48-68). Indeed, the making of the *Iliad* is not at all clear, though as a literary work it impressed its listeners and readers in antiquity in the same way it does today. And that is what counts.

The *Iliad* does not deal with the whole of the Trojan War, but selects one major episode: 'the wrath of Achilles', the anger of Achilles and its devastating consequences, which inflicted many pains upon the Greeks, as the opening of the *Iliad* announces (1. 1-2). The composition is circular: it begins in book 1 with the negative intervention of Apollo and ends in book 24 with the positive intervention of Apollo. In the beginning, there is Agamemnon, who refuses to release Chryseis to her father, and the two visits of Thetis, the first to earth when called by her son Achilles, the second to Zeus; at the end of the *Iliad* there is the return of Hector's corpse to his father, and again two visits by Thetis, first to Olympus when called by Zeus, and the second to her son on Earth. The negative intervention of Apollo takes place after Agamemnon insults Chryseis' father Chryses, who acts as a priest to Apollo: the god sends a plague to the Greeks and punishes them for the blasphemous deed of their leader. The positive intervention of Apollo at the end of the *Iliad* takes place when he berates the gods to make Achilles return Hector's corpse.

The *Iliad* is divided into three parts: the first part, books 1 to 9, covers the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles: Achilles withdraws from the fighting in book 1, taking with him Patroclus and their soldiers, the Myrmidons. Zeus plans to avenge him by supporting the Trojans (1). In a dream, he sends Agamemnon a false omen, telling him that he will take Troy (2). The episode ends with a huge catalogue of the Greek and Trojan forces. Agamemnon tests the dream by suggesting to his army that they abandon the siege and return home. The plan backfires when the soldiers agree wholeheartedly. The Greek and Trojan armies negotiate a truce (3), while Paris and Menelaus agree to fight for Helen. The duel has no clear outcome because Aphrodite saves Paris from being killed. In the course of this book, high on the ramparts of Troy, Helen points out the Greek warriors to Priam,

and again, as in book 2, a catalogue-style survey of fighters is conducted for the audience. The gods intervene again, and Hera demands that the truce be broken (4). Athena persuades Pandarus to shoot at Menelaus, who is wounded. General fighting resumes (5) and Diomedes is distinguished as a great warrior on a glorious rampage, the Greek word for which is *aristeia*. Hector returns to Troy to sacrifice to Athena; he speaks to Helen and to his wife Andromache (6), rebuking his brother Paris for not being out on the field. Another duel follows (7), this time between Hector and Ajax; the Trojans are about to win and gain ground (8) such that Agamemnon feels himself impelled to send emissaries to appease Achilles (9). The diplomatic mission fails completely, and disaster is imminent.

The second section of the *Iliad*, books 10-18, illustrates the dramatic consequences of this failure: Nestor now suggests that Diomedes and Odysseus go during the night to spy on the Trojans; they capture an enemy scout (Dolon) and succeed in killing several Trojans. Nevertheless, even the *aristeia* of Agamemnon does not help, and the Achaean leaders suffer more and more casualties (11); Nestor appeals to Patroclus – the kindest, one may even say the softest, of the Greeks – to join the battle himself and to borrow Achilles' armour in order to frighten the enemy. Before Patroclus can return, Hector breaches the Greek camp wall (12), though his advance is checked by Ajax (13). Hera seduces Zeus so that Poseidon can continue to rouse the Greek army (14), but the Trojans once again drive the Greeks back to their ships (15). The book ends with Hector gripping one of the ships and calling for fire, opposed only by Ajax. Patroclus, having borrowed his friend's armour, is portrayed in his *aristeia* (16), though he is eventually killed by Hector, who removes Patroclus' armour while the Greeks manage to carry his body back to camp (17). Achilles hears that Patroclus has been killed (18): consumed with rage and grief, he decides to avenge his friend in battle. His mother provides him with new armour but warns him that his own death must follow Hector's. Patroclus' body is brought into the Greek camp; Achilles receives a splendid new shield, the decoration of which depicts the wider world beyond the battle of Troy.

The third and last part, books 19 to 24, begins with the reconciliation between Achilles and Agamemnon (19). Then Achilles attacks (20); the battle of the gods follows (21). Eventually, Achilles kills Hector (22), and Patroclus is buried: sumptuous games in his honour are held (23). Hector is sold to his father Priamos and buried on the Trojan side (24): both Achilles and Priamos suffer tremendously, an enemy's father and a son's murderer strangely united to form a caring couple.

Throughout the *Iliad*, its protagonist Achilles, while being the most blatant embodiment of Homer's heroic value system, is portrayed in his basic

apartness: again and again one cannot fail to notice “his enormous physical gifts, his tendency to go to extremes, his emotional contact with the world beyond the battlefield, his detachment from the heroic value system that governs the warrior’s life” (Nortwick 1992, 44). The tension between these two poles, however, creates a dangerous ambivalence in Achilles (l.c.), for “the brute fact that what makes him great is also what isolates him.” From this perspective, Achilles’ desertion of the Greek camp, his famous anger, i.e. the *Iliad’s* theme, is not only motivated by the immediate circumstances as the *Iliad’s* opening relates them, but may also be described as “a response to the frustration created by the being who he is.” The *Odyssey’s* protagonist, however, is much different: using guile and deception to defeat stronger opponents, not only resorting to trickery by necessity but sometimes reveling in it (*Odyssey* 9. 473-525), his lying tales elaborated with relish (*Odyssey* 13. 291-5), he is the ideal king, whose return is necessary to establish order at his home in Ithaca. Other early poetry seems to have presented him less favourably, and the tragedians tended to be similarly unfavourable.

The *Iliad* is characterized by an extraordinary concentration both in space and time. In this it distinguishes itself from other epic poems belonging to the so-called *Epic Cycle*, a fact that tends to support the view of Homer as a non-traditionalist author. The *Odyssey*, also believed to have been written by Homer, likewise covers only a short time-span, and though its narrative covers large areas of the Mediterranean world, its plot is restricted to a handful of places only.

The *Iliad’s* action is set in four places: the city of Troy, the Achaean camp, the plain in between the two, and Mount Olympus, the dwelling place of the gods. The *Iliad’s* action covers a period of 53 days, but the bulk of the poem (books 2 to 22) covers only five days, and the narrative of the central day takes up 8 books (11 to 18).

As condensed as it seems, Homer nevertheless manages to work the story of the entire war into the *Iliad*. In books 2 and 4, the beginning of the war is recalled. The catalogue of ships in book 2 shows the traditional catalogue of the army assembling at Aulis, where they had to rest during the voyage to Troy, a small city near Tanagra in Boeotia, a region in central Greece. In book 3, the view from the wall and the single combat between Helen’s two husbands recounts events from the first year of the war. Aside from looking back there are also many foreshadowings of the two major events that occur after the end of the poem: Achilles’ coming death is constantly lamented by Thetis, expressed even by his immortal horse, by the hero himself, and by Hector. The Nereids are to attend Achilles’ funeral later (in the *Aethiopis*), an event prefigured in the *Iliad* by their participation in the mourning of Patroclus in book 18. The sack of Troy is repeatedly

evoked from book 4 to 18 by characters, omens, and comparisons. Moreover, for an audience well acquainted with the tradition, the wrestling match between Odysseus and Ajax foreshadows their fatal conflict over the arms of Achilles.

The *Odyssey* displays some similarities with the *Iliad*, though the organization of its narrative is more complex. In view of the differences in subject and sensibility, however, it is more likely to be the product of separate authorship than a work of Homer in his old age. However, the anonymous author of the small monograph *On the Sublime* (9. 12sq.) defined the *Odyssey* as the *Iliad's* epilogue and also considered it to be a work of Homer's old age.

The *Odyssey* is divided into 24 books, and again three parts can be distinguished. The opening invocation to the Muses presents the *Odyssey* as the portrait of a man through the history of his wanderings, beginning 'at some point': "start the story where you will, goddess, daughter of Zeus, and share it now with us" (Hammond's translation, 2000, 1). The *Odyssey*, like the *Iliad*, begins in the midst of action – but this time not on a battlefield where heroes consider who can take whose booty; instead the *Odyssey* offers us a look into a divine assembly, where gods consider the fate of Odysseus.

When Odysseus finally enters the stage at the opening of the fifth book, we join him not at the beginning of his voyage from Troy homewards but at the end of a long seven year pause in his wanderings; he is to recount his earlier adventures later, everything that happened before the point where we meet him in the text.

The first four books of the *Odyssey* centre on Odysseus' son, Telemachus: the first two focus on the situation on Ithaca, a small narrow island off the Acarnanian coast, the south-western end of the Greek mainland (slightly north-west above the Peloponnese in the Ionian Sea); the books show how badly Odysseus is needed at home, whereas books 3 and 4 follow Telemachus in his travels to Pylos and Sparta to get news of his father: a playful manoeuvre by the poet, who manages to put Odysseus at the centre of the narrative despite his being away. Moreover, Telemachus' journeys are short and painless, a stark contrast to Odysseus' seemingly endless and extremely troublesome voyage homewards.

Pylos and Sparta are both located on the Peloponnese peninsula: Messenian Pylos on its south-western coast, Sparta forming a kind of centre in the southern Peloponnese. In Pylos, Telemachus asks Nestor about his father's fate, and in Sparta he interrogates Menelaus and Helen – all figures familiar from the older epic, the *Iliad*. Both Nestor and Menelaus travelled around Greece to assemble the heroes for the expedition against Troy.

Even though he was very old at the time, Nestor joined the expedition. Homer portrays him as a wise man, always ready with advice. It is he who

later suggests that Agamemnon send emissaries to Achilles to try to make peace. He is much given to long, rambling stories of the distant past, rich in reminiscences of his own achievements. He is always listened to by his comrades with patience and respect. Menelaus, in turn, is presented in *Odyssey* 4 as a wealthy and hospitable king, recounting his adventures on his way home. These include his visit to Egypt and his encounter with Proteus, a minor sea-god, who takes on various shapes in an effort to escape (his shape-changing became proverbial), though Menelaus holds him fast and forces him to answer. Proteus turns up again in Herodotus' long second book on Egypt; however, in Herodotus (2. 112-20), Proteus is not a god; he is a virtuous Egyptian king, who keeps Helen with him for the duration of the Trojan War (a version of the events made popular by Euripides in his tragedy). In Homer, Proteus prophesies that instead of dying he will be transported to Elysium (4. 561-9), a paradise inhabited by the distinguished, reserved to the privileged few.

The Elysian plain at the edge of the world much resembles the mythical winterless home of the happy dead, far west on ocean shores or islands, known as the Islands of the Blest, and later identified with Madeira or the Canaries. Hesiod (*Works* 171) and Pindar (*Olympian Ode* 2. 68-80) speak of them (Willcock 1995, 169-74); again, entry is exclusive. Surprisingly though, this first mention of an afterlife comes from an unpredictable character, adopting various shapes, constantly changing and thereby confusing – a fact that makes his statement appear much more coloured and variegated than it would if it were put forward by, for instance, Nestor or a figure resembling him in wisdom.

At the beginning of book 5 in Homer's *Odyssey*, after four books dedicated to Telemachus, the action starts afresh with the second assembly of the gods and the departure of Hermes. When Odysseus is finally introduced (5. 151-9), a complex character and a figure of folk-tale as well as heroic saga, he is at a low ebb in his fortunes: a virtual prisoner, impotent and despondent. He is told by Hermes to leave Kalypso, and Odysseus travels on to the Phaeacians at the end of book 5. There he remains until the moment when he is put ashore on Ithaca (13. 123). Then, he "who before now had suffered many troubles in his heart" (13. 90, Hammond 2000, 131sq.) is transported home, sleeping at peace on a ship cutting her way lightly over the sea, he who has been introduced right at the *Odyssey's* beginning by the line "many too the miseries at sea which he suffered in his heart" (1. 4, Hammond 2000, 1). These two quite similar expressions echo each other in the work's circular composition, lending a feeling of unity to this first half of the *Odyssey*, which consists of the Telemachus-overture or -prelude and the long part during which Odysseus tells about his past voyages.

These stories fill books 9 to 12. Books 6 to 8 depict some events that take place among the Phaeacians, who are said to live on the island of Scheria. The Phaeacians are really special: enterprising and very skilful seafarers, great gossips, boastful, and rather impudent, they are not very warlike or athletic, and instead are fond of pleasure, kind, and willing to escort strangers in their wonderful ships.

The place most likely to have been identified as the island of Scheria in antiquity is Corfu, though the identification cannot really be verified, and it is not even certain that for Homer Scheria was an island (Garvie 1994, 20). The place where Odysseus spent seven years with Calypso, Ortygia, is already difficult to identify, for some half-dozen places were called Ortygia in antiquity, among them the island of Delos (a small island regarded as the centre of the Cyclades, half-way between Greece and Turkey in the southern Aegean Sea) and the old part of the town of Syracuse on Sicily, places far apart from each other.

The Phaeacians represent a transitional position for Odysseus. From one point of view they belong to the fantasy-world in which his adventures took place, and which he is about to leave: the Phaeacians live in a permanent state of luxury and blessedness, they are exempt from the danger of war and invasion, their ships sail miraculously, without any need for helmsmen; their society is an ideal Utopia, the final temptation for Odysseus to abandon his quest for home and to settle down in perpetual bliss. From another point of view, however, the Phaeacians are a quite normal people, in contrast to the monsters and supernatural beings whom Odysseus encountered on his previous adventures. Their society may be idealised, but it is based in many respects on that of an ordinary community; and the organisation of society, with Alcinous as king, its assembly and council, is similar to that of Odysseus' kingdom in Ithaca. Alcinous' palace, for instance, though fantastic in some respects, is just a grander version of those of Nestor in Pylos, Menelaus in Sparta, and Odysseus on Ithaca.

The Phaeacians thus provide a twofold contrast – first with the often barbarous characters whom Odysseus has encountered in his previous adventures, second, with the conditions which Odysseus will encounter in Ithaca. Having left a well-ordered, civilised society that knows how to treat strangers and is much concerned with propriety, he will return to the riotous disorder of his palace at home: from the hospitable Phaeacians to the inhospitable and boorish suitors. Another contrast lurks behind – that between nature and culture, between the urban, sophisticated and educated on one side, and the rustic, clownish, uncultured, rude, coarse and ill-mannered on the other.

The function of the Phaeacian intermezzo is to make Odysseus, who begins the restoration of kingdom and family from the lowest possible point, ready for his return to the real world; for the Phaeacians live in such a fantastic way that it is impossible not to anticipate what Odysseus is expecting. His arrival in Ithaca will in some respects be parallel to his arrival at Scheria: shipwrecked, naked, helpless again, though in Ithaca the rags that clothe him will be merely a disguise. Between these two arrivals Odysseus is accepted by the Phaeacians and restored to his status as a hero.

The process of acceptance at the Phaeacians is long drawn out itself – from his acceptance by a young girl, Nausicaa, before whom he appears naked (6. 127-47) to the moment when he finally reveals his true identity, i.e. when the bard Demodocus has sung his third song (8. 499-520), about the Wooden Horse, and Odysseus is moved to tears. Remembering his previous status as a hero of the Trojan War, Odysseus reveals by his tears that he is indeed the famous hero of the Trojan War.

It is likely that Homer invented the Phaeacians, for “it would be impossible to disprove the view that the Phaeacians are the invention of Homer himself” (Garvie 1994, 22). Perhaps there are some elements in the story which can be explained by assuming that Homer drew on a traditional story – however, even if we could trace the Phaeacians back into pre-Homeric tradition, it is unlikely that we would find them to be exactly as Homer presents them. This point of poetic creativity or inventiveness is important to note, because it proves Homer’s uniqueness, for which he is singled out by Aristotle and by which he distinguished himself from the crowd.

Having unwillingly revealed his identity, overwhelmed by emotions of nostalgic despair and aimless anger, sheer horror and evil distress, Odysseus narrates his adventures on the way home from Troy in books 9 to 12. His first-person narrative (i.e. a narrative in which the narrator is internal and plays a role in the events, and this in contrast, e.g., to the external primary narrator from the beginning of the *Odyssey*, 1. 1-10) recounts a period of ten years in roughly 2,200 lines. This is by far the longest embedded story in the Homeric epics. Later on, in the *Odyssey*’s second half, Odysseus again tells stories, this time in order to hide his identity and to reach the palace without being discovered and revealed. In the final four books of the *Odyssey*’s first half, Odysseus looks back on his earlier experiences which he has managed to survive, despite everything, a fact that cannot but bolster his confidence with regard to his final adventure, his arrival at home (De Jong 2001, 221).

Odysseus describes eleven adventures in chronological order, among them those involving the Cyclops, Circe, and Scylla and Charybdis; the most notable being Odysseus’ trip to the Underworld (book 11). In the course of events, Odysseus gradually loses his twelve ships, his companions, and

eventually comes close to losing his will to go on. While at the beginning, driven by the elements to exotic places, he chooses to explore them, after Circe, he no longer has a choice, and must endure what she has foretold.

This passage during which Odysseus recounts his stories (Odysseus' *apologoi*, as they are called) offers much insight into his character. He is always careful, displaying his characteristic solicitude as a leader, trying to save his men and grieving deeply when he loses one of them. During his adventures, however, he is confronted with perverse and frightening variations on the rules of hospitality: guests are offered dangerous food by the Lotus-Eaters, or instead of being offered food, they become food for the Cyclops. Yet all these experiences reinforce traits already inherent in his character, i.e. "to use guile instead of force, to endure humiliations and setbacks, and to keep silent - which will be of prime importance in the second half of the *Odyssey*" (De Jong 2001, 223).

Odysseus' journey to the Underworld is given particular prominence: it occupies an entire book and is carefully anticipated by Circe's instructions; the Underworld-episode is set up so that the reader may imagine its content in advance. The variety of the episode's incidents, however, ranging from the hero's descent into Hades to his conjuration of the dead, suggested to some critics "that the book may be made up of a number of layers of material composed at different times" (Heubeck 1989, 75). Indeed, the poet of the *Odyssey* may well have been the first to transform the setting for the wanderings of a victor of the Trojan War from the heroic world to the realm of folk-tale. He succeeded in doing so by modelling his protagonist's adventures partly on the exploits of other mythical heroes and partly on the exploits of legendary seafarers, creating a mixed atmosphere, which in turn seems to consist of various layers.

Most conspicuous among the dead encountered by Odysseus are the great heroes of the Trojan War: Agamemnon, Achilles, and Ajax (385-565); among those, in turn, Achilles is prominent - not because he was the *Iliad's* central figure, but because he has completely changed. While Odysseus maintains that Achilles must be the most fortunate of men, and that this unique good fortune continues even in death (the honour being paid to Achilles in his lifetime is paralleled by his position among the dead), Achilles' response to him is violently angry. 'Do not try to reconcile me to death', he says to Odysseus, for in Hades his perspective has dreadfully changed (Heubeck 1989, 106): "Now that Achilles is dead, his spirit yearns for life with the same vehemence with which it had once embraced death." Now, in death, it has become Achilles' genuine conviction that life was dearer to him than anything else.

In the *Iliad*, he had once played briefly with the idea that life was dearer to him than anything else, but that was only for a moment and a wilful contradiction of his character brought on by his wild hatred of Agamemnon. "Nothing equals the worth of life – not even all the riches they say were held by the well-founded city of Troy" (*Iliad* 9. 401sq.) he responded to Agamemnon's ambassadors then.

In this passage (*Odyssey* 9. 398-416), however, "Achilles turns to less angry and more reflective thoughts and tone" (Griffin 1995, 123). He could marry and live in peace: what could compensate him for the loss of his life? Treasures and possessions, the rewards of honour, have lost their value, and Achilles rejects the kind of heroism greedy Agamemnon stands for (Hainsworth 1993, 111): in the *Iliad*, "the collision between the viewpoints of the two (...) emerges clearly. Agamemnon offered material recompense but no words of contrition; (...) what mattered was (...) an outrage that made the material compensation irrelevant. Achilles does not want compensation (...), even if Agamemnon could meet the highest conceivable demand."

In the *Iliad*, however, asking his mother for the new armour he is later to receive from her, Achilles has a different story to tell, and "the phantasy of escape he had toyed with in Book 9 (356ff.) is a thing of the past" (Macleod 1982, 10). Achilles' mother Thetis, to whom he is very close, reveals to her son that he is going to die if he kills Hector (from Hammond's translation 1987): "Then, child, I must lose you to an early death, for what you are saying: since directly after Hektor dies your own doom is certain." Not only not deterred but rather driven by that bleak outlook, Achilles answers passionately: "Then let me die directly", and a bit later, "and I shall take my own death" (*Iliad* 18. 98 & 115). He admonishes his mother not to try to keep him from battle, "though you love me – you will not persuade me" (his final line to her, *Iliad* 18. 126). Now again Achilles' "wish is to win great glory", to make the enemies' women "wipe the tears (...) and have them learnt that I have stayed too long now out of the fighting." Achilles is not at a loss for a mythical paradigm, and compares himself to Herakles: even he could not escape death (*Iliad* 18. 117-9). Achilles, however, focusses much on the terror he inflicts: "he already has in view the sufferings which will ensue for the enemy and sates himself in his thoughts of violence" as an ancient scholium comments (cited by Griffin 1980, 122).

In the *Iliad*, Achilles returns to the heroic code, not only because he wants to excel and be the bravest of the brave; he also refers indirectly to the heroic code's principle of 'help your friends and harm your enemies' (Whitlock Blundell 1989, 26-59), declaring to his mother (right at the beginning of this encounter) that "since I was not to help my friend at his killing, he has died

far away from his native land, and did not have me there to protect him from destruction" (*Iliad* 18. 98-100).

To a modern reader Achilles' guilt-sick conscience puts him into a complicated state of self-accusation and repentance at the same time, and it comes as no surprise that his mental obsession with the idea of having done wrong leads to compensating phantasies. In contrast, Achilles' counterpart on the Trojan side, prince Hector, speaks of shame. As different as that seems, the heroes have something in common, i.e. the idea that personal honour requires them to fight. Hector speaks twice of his personal motivation, his fear of being considered someone who puts the Trojans to shame. Taking leave from his wife and later from his parents, he uses the same formulaic line (6. 442 = 22. 105): 'I feel shame before the Trojans and their wives of the trailing robes' – if I sneak away from war like a coward, since I have learned to be brave and always to fight among the first of the Trojans, as he continues to his wife in book 6. In book 22, his statements to his parents are even more tragic: because he refused (in book 18) a friend's advice to lead the Trojans back into the city (which would have saved them), "he must now cover the shame that he feels for that act of folly with a hero's death; but thus he seals the fate of Troy whose only saviour he is" (Macleod 1982, 9).

Hector chooses the Greek verb *aideomai*, which is used "either to convey inhibition before a generalized group of other people in whose eyes one feels one's self-image to be vulnerable, or to express positive recognition of the status of a significant other person" (Cairns 1993, 2). The two English translations, 'I feel shame before' and 'I respect', may help to distinguish between the two meanings: in the former case, the other is just a possible source of criticism, while in the latter the recognition of some special status – of the other as well as of one self – is at stake. Certainly there is some overlap between the two cases (one may respect those whose criticism one fears, and one may fear the criticism of those one respects), "but there remains a difference of emphasis" (Cairns 1993, 3). In any case, if one feels disconcerted or discomfited, thrown into perplexity, especially as a result of a sudden sense of shame or embarrassment, one is abashed, an emotional state (Cairns 1993, 6) "regularly described as having physical or physiological symptoms (typically blushing) and as involving characteristic behavioural responses (such as averting one's gaze, bowing or veiling the head, etc.)."

However, being related to social status, such an emotion cannot be restricted to private, intimate, personal feelings. As a moral term, referring to a person's behaviour, to different stamps of genius and characters of intellect, a word like 'shame' and indeed "the whole vocabulary of moral terms is strongly permeated by values which are not personal but relational" (Benveniste 1973, 277): "What we take for a psychological terminology (...) refers

in fact to the relations of an individual with the members of his group." In Homer, for instance, the word for 'friend' (*philos*) and the concept of 'shame' are often combined (both adjectives, both nouns, and both verbs), and by its association with *philos* the Greek word for 'shame' (or rather 'respect' and 'reverence') shows that the two notions of friendship and respect were both institutional and denote sentiments proper to the members of a closed group. It also denotes the feeling of deference towards a person with whom one has ties, and defines the sentiments felt by superiors towards their inferiors, as well as honour, loyalty, and the prohibition of certain acts, and of certain modes of behaviour, "and it develops finally to the several senses of 'modesty'" (Benveniste 1973, 278). It sheds light on the proper sense of *philos* 'friend': "all those who are united by reciprocal duties of *aidos*, are called *philoï*."

Having said that, one might well wonder what, in turn, *philos* actually meant. Luckily, Homer provides a valuable clue, i.e. the connection between *philos* and *xenos* - which means both 'friend' and 'guest' as well as 'friend' and 'stranger' (Benveniste 1973, 278): "the notion of *philos* expresses the behaviour incumbent on a member of the community towards a *xenos*, the 'guest-stranger'." In other words, if you want to be a 'friend', some duties and obligations fall upon you.

This relationship is fundamental in the Homeric concept of society. As in the case of the relationship between *philos*/friendly and *aidoios*/shameful, again, one defines one's own position in comparison with and in relation to another person, time and again literally facing each other. In order to make clear these notions as they were practised and lived, one may again recall a scene from the *Iliad*'s sixth book (where Hector left his wife for battle and spoke about 'shame'): Glaucus and Diomedes, fighting for the Trojans and the Greeks respectively, meet face to face on the battleground (6. 120-236). Trying to identify each other, they discover that their fathers are bound by the bonds of hospitality (174).

The Greek Diomedes announces to the Trojan Glaucus that 'you are for me an hereditary guest (a *xeinos*) and that for a long time' (215) and that he himself is Glaucus' host in his (Diomedes') homeland (Hammond's translation, *Iliad* 6. 224-31): "So now you have me as your local host (in my homeland, i.e.) in the heart of Argos, and I have you (in your homeland, i.e.) in Lycia, whenever I come to that country." The result of this sudden and fortunate discovery in the midst of the battlefield, is amazing: "Let us keep away from each other's spears (...). There are many of the Trojans and their famous allies for me to kill, (...) and again many Achaeans for you to cut down (...). And let us exchange armour with each other, so the others too can see that we are proud to claim guest-friendship from our fathers' time."

The status of being guest-friends gives each of the contracting parties rights of greater force than the 'national' interest (the situation reminds one of the European aristocracy and their conflict of interest a century ago, if one considers the fact that they were related to each other and, at the same time, heads of states at war against each other). These rights are hereditary; the mutual obligations once established, would ideally last for ever (Herman 1987, 61), though they were supposed to be periodically renewed by means of gifts and exchanges. Hierarchy, unlike time and space, i.e. existing independently from human beings, requires constant re-enactment. For this reason the participants propose to exchange arms, though at that moment, Homer continues (232-6), 'Zeus took Glaucus' wits away from him: he exchanged with Diomedes gold armour for bronze, a hundred oxen's worth for nine.'

Homer hints at a fool's deal, though this Homeric scene provides what might be called a 'sociological' illustration (Benveniste 1973, 81): "In reality the inequality of value between the gifts is intentional: one offers bronze arms, the other gives back arms of gold; one offers the value of nine oxen, the other feels himself bound to render the value of one hundred head of cattle. This episode serves to throw light on the manifestation which in this society accompanies the type of engagement which we call a 'contract', (...) an exchange which is binding and contractual."

The Homeric world has been called one of "stylized and universally intelligible gestures" (Griffin 1980, 27), performed by human beings who "can never avoid some portion of suffering, and are always subjects to the gods", who "as ever, prevail over human wishes or calculations" (Macleod 1982, 13). By performing such a stylized and universally intelligible gesture, and thus establishing a mutual bond, Glaucus and Diomedes try to protect themselves and display modesty, which would be rendered in Greek by 'aidos'.

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EPIC POETRY: HESIOD

Hesiod is one of the oldest Greek poets, though still not what nowadays would be called a literary personality – a coveted honour most likely to be bestowed on Archilochus. Archilochus does indeed clearly emerge from his poetry, while Hesiod does not, though Archilochus writes in a different genre, or in various different genres, being younger than Hesiod. We place him in the middle of the seventh century, for he mentions Gyges (fr. 19), who died c. 652, and a solar eclipse (fr. 122), which is usually taken to be that of 6 April 648 (but may be that of 14 March 711 BC). The dating of Hesiod's life is a contested issue and has much to do with Homer.

In antiquity, from the fifth century on, Hesiod was often coupled and/or contrasted with Homer as the other main representative of early epic. The Ionian poet, theologian, and natural philosopher Xenophanes, for instance, attacks Homer and Hesiod (this sequence, DK 21 B 11sq.) for portraying the gods as behaving in ways that are blameworthy for mortals (stealing, adultery, and cheating each other). Xenophanes' younger countryman, the Ionian historian, anthropologist, and ethnographer Herodotus, however, speaks of Hesiod and Homer (this sequence, 2. 53) as the first to compose for the Greeks an account of the gods' genealogy, to award them their titles, to allot them their honours and particular talents, and to signify their forms, i.e. to be human-formed (anthropomorphic).

Both Homer and Hesiod use the same literary dialect, a literary Ionic, and both compose their works in the same metre, using six repeated dactyls, a sequence consisting of one long syllable followed by two short syllables, the last dactyl of which is reduced by one syllable at the end. The two short ones may be replaced by one long so that the number of syllables varies (between 12 and 17) in such a so-called stichic metre, i.e. consisting of successive lines of the same metrical form. Thus, at the very beginning of Greek poetry, Hesiod and Homer illustrate the fact that a literary genre, in their case epic poetry, is defined by a specific dialect and a specific metre. The situation is similar in all other poetic genres that are to come into existence later, in all of which a specific literary dialect is coupled with specific, selected metrical units.

Which was the older of the two (whether Hesiod preceded Homer or vice versa) is a question whose answer relates to and depends upon various other questions, e.g., how trustworthy biographical tradition in antiquity is, and what date one assumes for the introduction of writing, or the question of oral composition in general.

Ancient biographical tradition on Homer is of late origin and provides contradictory and unreliable information – largely depending, as in all other

cases where authors are concerned, on the literary work itself. Searching for evidence, even nowadays, one is tempted to turn to the Homeric text itself, where, e.g., the performance of the Phaeacian singer Demodocus in *Odyssey* VIII is depicted. In fact, Demodocus may be regarded as a model, as revealing Homer's own practice in such a way that the purely fictive Demodocus may reflect the real Homer. Demodocus performs three songs (8. 72-82, 266-366, 499-531): about a quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles, about Aphrodite's adultery with Ares, and about the Trojan horse, respectively. By doing so, Demodocus presents a variety of themes among which the audience might choose a suitable topic, and all that may "represent Homer's conception of poetry" (Macleod 1983, 8).

Aside from what can be plausibly inferred from Demodocus' performance, the poet who composed the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is a mere "voice without identity; it is the poetry that survives and not the person who created it" (Lefkowitz 2012, 14). Hesiod, in contrast, speaks of himself right at the opening of his *Theogony* (22sq.): 'One time the Muses taught Hesiod beautiful song while he was pasturing lambs under holy Helicon' in Boeotia. The poet is named explicitly, "and it requires some perversity to interpret the context in such a way as to deny that the author is here naming himself" (Barron/Easterling 1985, 94).

That the Muses taught him is repeated by Hesiod in his *Works and Days* (662), where again Hesiod speaks of himself: 'the Muses taught me to sing an inconceivable hymn.' Thus Hesiod is able to 'proclaim truths', as he says at the beginning of his *Works and Days* (10), inscribing himself into the line of other such 'masters of truth' (Detienne 1973, 25). Parmenides, a late sixth- and early fifth-century philosopher, is another such example. In a highly-wrought poem of his, a first-person narrator describes travelling by chariot; at the gates of night and day he meets a goddess, who takes over the narrative (DK 28 B 1. 26), describing a choice between two ways, Truth and Opinion. As there is only one truth but many opinions, she urges the young man to choose the former. The poem is composed in the same metre as Hesiod's and may well be considered as wisdom-literature, as it is the case with Hesiod's.

In addition to his own credentials as poet, Hesiod tells us something more of his life, mentioning (a) his father and (b) his brother.

- (a) In a dramatic story Hesiod reports that his father gave up a life of unprofitable sea-trading and moved to Ascra in Boeotia (*Works and Days* 633-40). A few lines later (646-62) Hesiod goes on to say that he once won a tripod for a song at a funeral contest at Chalcis (on the island of Euboea, to the north of Boeotia).
- (b) Hesiod's *Works and Days*, in which he speaks of his father and of the song-contest, seems as a whole ostensibly directed at a brother

Perses, who has taken more than his share of his inheritance (*Works and Days* 37-9); actually, it is he to whom Hesiod will proclaim truths (as he says at the beginning, 10): 'as for me, I will proclaim truths to Perses'. However, Perses' failings change with the context (27-46, 275, 396), and it is impossible to reconstruct a single basic situation.

Dating Hesiod's work to 700 BC is based on the assumption that the 'warlike Amphidamas', at whose funeral games he competed, was involved in the war between Chalkis and Eretria, two neighbouring cities on Euboea. The date of the war, though, is not known precisely. Yet the date now assigned to Homer, i.e. 725 BC, is only provisional, because it is based on the character of his poetry rather than on any verifiable external sources - and on the tacit understanding that he must be older than Hesiod.

Why Hesiod was given precedence by some in antiquity is never explicitly stated. By contrast, scholars today give precedence to Homer, arguing thus "because they believe that Homer composed his poetry orally while Hesiod did so with the aid of writing" (Lefkowitz 2012, 6) - and the skilfully organized structure of Hesiod's *Theogony* (containing very many names) makes a written composition more likely than an oral one (Detienne 1973, 17).

Hesiod's *Theogony* is his earlier work because the opening of Hesiod's *Works and Days*, 11-23, appears to explicitly modify a doctrine of the *Theogony* - there is not after all only one kind of Eris (contention), as had been said at *Theogony* 225sq.; there are two, beneficial competition as well as destructive strife. For that reason, the priority of the *Theogony* is easily established - and it is not absurd to assume that the text which Hesiod performed at the song contest, and to which he refers in the *Works and Days* (where he won the tripod mentioned above), was a part of his *Theogony*. As in the *Theogony*, the title of the *Works and Days* provides only a very inadequate idea of its contents; and as is often the case with early Greek literature, "the transmitted title is most likely not attributable to the poet himself, and corresponds at best only to certain parts of the poem" (Most 2006, xxviii).

Theogony means 'birth of god' or 'gods', and hundreds of gods are indeed 'born' in the course of the poem. Yet, Hesiod's poem recounts much more than this, i.e. the origin of and relations between four separate kinds of divine entities: (1) the familiar deities of the Greek cults, (2) other Greek gods, primarily the Titans and the monsters, who were almost never the object of any cult (at least to our knowledge), (3) the physical cosmos, including the heavens, the many rivers, a mysterious underlying region, and many other divinities contained within, and (4) various kinds of good and bad moral qualities and experiences, ranging from Battles and Murders to Justice and Peace. The *Works and Days*, in contrast, offer advice on farming and the list of bad and good days, though the two main themes of the poem

are work and justice, closely linked in the specific case of the legal dispute between Hesiod and Perses, whom the poet accuses of trying to achieve prosperity by means of injustice rather than hard work. But the link between that topic and “Hesiod’s wide-ranging mythological and anthropological meditation” (Most 2006, xxxix) is only superficial and rather casual.

Like his *Theogony*, Hesiod’s *Works and Days* represents a genre of wisdom literature which existed in Greece and was also widespread throughout the ancient world. It might be said of both Hesiodic works that they have “better analogues outside Graeco-Roman literature than within it” (West 1978, v). Originally, ‘wisdom literature’ was a collective term for the biblical ‘wisdom books’ *Job*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Ecclesiasticus* (i.e., *Wisdom of Sirach* or simply *Sirach* – regarded as apocryphal or deuterocanonical by some) and, in the New Testament, Epistle of James. As a literary genre, wisdom literature was common in the Ancient Near East, and the term now includes many more texts, not only from Semitic traditions, but also from Egypt or other.

Preceptive poetry, in which a body of moral or practical instructions is delivered by a god or sage to his son or some other specific addressee (which makes them mandatory), was already current, for example, in Sumer (in southern Mesopotamia, modern-day southern Iraq) by the middle of the third millennium. The tradition continued in Akkadian, and one text of this tradition, found in a number of Neo-Assyrian and Late Babylonian copies, “has come to be known as the *Counsels of Wisdom*” (West 1997, 77). Here again a counsellor addresses his son, offering wide-ranging advice that touches on “such topics as avoiding evil companions, improper speech, and quarrels, kindness to the needy, marriage, the temptations to which an official is exposed, piety, and honest dealings with friends” (West). The admonitions are accompanied by and supported with warnings in particular, and so-called adages in general, as there are traditional maxims, proverbs, and similar short statements expressing a general truth.

Hesiod seems indebted to this Western Asiatic tradition, though the question of transmission (i.e. how he got to know and why he became attracted to and influenced by that foreign tradition) cannot be solved in a satisfactory way: for the simple reason that “we shall never have the evidence that would enable us to pin down the exact moments at which and processes by which eastern influences became operative” (West 1997, 586). Reflecting on the more obvious possibilities of contact, one thinks of Greek trading settlements or mercenaries, migrant workers, and also domestic intercourse, e.g., bilingual families. A common literary heritage, however, can hardly be established that way. Yet the alphabet came to the Greeks from the East, and one is tempted to think that a literary text somehow managed to

pass the border between East and West, too. If an illiterate people learn a method of writing from another people (Jeffery 1990, 1sq.), at least some of those who learn the new writing might well be interested in the texts of the culture from which they borrow the letters. It would be absurd to maintain that none of those who received the letters would have not been interested in anything other than mere letter-copying.

Moreover, in one way or another, one naturally assumes that literary texts were performed orally in Mesopotamia, Syria, and Asia Minor (West 1997, 593-606), and that the Greeks might have encountered them. This idea does not necessarily imply the existence of written copies, which a Greek might not have been able to read. However, as one must always keep in mind, no evidence has yet turned up that may inform us of the precise conditions of inter-cultural borrowings such as that of divine revelation from the beginning of Hesiod's *Theogony*. This motif (i.e. whereby a poem is imparted to the poet in an encounter with a god or goddess), however, has Babylonian parallels in two texts from the eighth century BC, and the revelation of a poem in a dream might even have become a topos. Though Hesiod does not represent his encounter with the Muses as a dream, "his experience has the same pattern as many that are reported as dreams. He perceives divine visitors who address him with reproach and admonition. What is more, they leave him with a gift, the bay-branch sceptre: such generosity is often attributed to dream-visitants" (West 1997, 287). However, and it cannot be repeated too often, "it remains unclear precisely what the historical relations of transmission and influence were between these various cultural traditions (...) and exactly how Hesiod's *Theogony* is to be evaluated against this background" (Most 2006, xxxv).

Yet the idea of transmission in itself becomes a rather questionable hypothesis, for such motifs (i.e. wherein one receives a message while dreaming) are fairly common. One need not assume them to be borrowed from one particular time nor place.

Once past the *Theogony's* opening scene, which much resembles the common form of a hymn (1-115), the text deals with the origin and genealogies of the gods, including the divine world-masses Earth, Sea, Sky, etc. (cf. e.g. 116-122: The origin of the world). The first powers born are Chaos (or Chasm), Earth and, significantly, Eros. From Chaos (or Chasm) and Earth, in two separate lines, some 300 gods descend; they include personified abstracts, whose family relationships are clearly meaningful (cf. e.g. 211-32: Night's numerous and baneful progeny). Then, the events that led to the kingship of Zeus are recounted: the castration of Uranus by Cronus, and the overthrow of Cronus and the Titans (who are called the 'earlier' or 'former gods' 424) by the Olympians. This 'Succession Myth' has striking paral-

lels in Akkadian and Hittite texts, and seems to have originated in the Near East. The poem ends with the marriages of Zeus and the other Olympians, and a list of heroines, many of whom started erotic relationships with gods. This list, known as *Catalogue of Women*, is generally agreed to be a later supplement, though opinions vary as to where the authentic part ends. Catalogues, however, are found in many other cultures, and "interest in genealogies and their use as a medium for tracing the history of peoples are not peculiarities of Greek literature" (West 1985, 11). Herodotus, for instance, names such examples from the Carians (1. 171) and the Scythians (4. 45).

Hesiod's Succession Myth, though, is closely paralleled by myths known to the Phoenicians, the Babylonians, the Hurrians and the Hittites, "and in the case of the last three peoples, we can show that these myths were current in the second millennium B.C." (West 1966, 28). In such a case (i.e. where a complex narrative is known and recorded in similar versions by five peoples within a rather small geographical area, peoples who are known to have had commercial contacts), direct transmission from one to another is highly likely. The great civilizations lay in the East, and it turns out that "Greece is part of Asia" (West 1966, 30), and Greek literature is a Near Eastern literature.

Among the digressions, a detailed description of Tartarus is highly remarkable (721-819). Though Hesiod's underworld is not exactly mappable, it is clear that he envisages a three-storey universe (similar to the four-storey one in *Iliad* 8. 13-6). At the bottom lies Tartarus, a dank, gloomy place, enclosed by a high wall made of bronze. Somewhere above this are the 'roots' or 'sources' of the earth and the sea. The gulf between Earth and Tartarus is imagined as a yawning throat, about which darkness is wrapped in three layers. The underworld is entered by crossing a bronze threshold and passing through a shining gate (811), though where they are located remains unclear, as does the dwellings of Night and Day, of Sleep and Death, of Hades, and of Styx, and of the place where Atlas stands. They do not fit into the simple three-storey edifice, instead "they loom uncertainly in those vague, inconceivable regions, which may be evoked equally well by 'under the earth' and by 'beyond the streams of Ocean'" (West 1966, 359).

Hesiod's *Works and Days*, in contrast, a work which some would like to relabel as 'The Wisdom of Hesiod', gives advice for living a life of honest work. A concluding section of less than 70 lines is dedicated to the 'days' and provides an almanac of days in the month that are favourable or unfavourable for different operations. To some it looks like a later addition. During the main bulk of the work, Hesiod inveighs against dishonesty and idleness, using myths, parable, allegory, proverbial maxims, direct exhortation, and threats of divine anger. Hesiod gives much practical instruction, especially on agriculture (the year's 'works'), seafaring, and social and reli-

gious conduct (335-80 & 694-764). One passage on the rigours of winter particularly highlights Hesiod's qualities as a poet (504-35) and shows him to be a (unique) source for social conditions.

Hesiod's most notorious passage, however, is his passage on the five World Ages (106-201). It is the story of a succession of five distinct races or species of men. First was the Golden race under Kronos, free from all hardship. They no longer live on earth, but continue to exist as beneficent daimones, protecting men. Second came the Silver race, inferior to the Golden both physically and morally. It took them a hundred years to reach manhood; the rest of their life was short, marred by *hybris* ('wanton violence') towards each other and neglect of the gods. They are less honoured in death than the daimones. Third came the Bronze age, violent men who used bronze for everything because there was no iron at that time. After death they dwell in Hades, nameless and unsung. However, the decline is interrupted by the fourth race, which is not named after a metal. These are the heroes who fought at Thebes and Troy, much more noble than the men of the Bronze age; they live on happily in the Isles of the Blest.

Finally we have the Iron race, the worst of all: "plagued by hardship, destined to lose all respect for what is right and decent, and to come to a time when children are born with grey hair, whereupon the race will be destroyed by Zeus" (West 1978, 173).

The story's cohesion is established by the sequence of metals: gold, silver, bronze, and iron, which can be understood as a scale of value. Three other schematic elements are integrated: (1) the moral deterioration which advances with each new metal; (2) the encroachment of old age upon youthful beauty; and (3) the progressively less glorious afterlives. Only the non-metallic Heroic age interrupts the sequence, for in accordance with their merits the heroes' race is better than its predecessor's. Indeed, the heroes have been inserted into a system of four metallic races, each worse than the one before.

Because Greek tradition was much concerned with those who fought at the seven-gated Thebes (162) and Troy, and because influential families were linked to them by a network of genealogies, the heroes of the older age had to be accommodated in a survey of man's past. Their position in Hesiod "follows from the view that they were the people who preceded us (160), coupled with an unwillingness to identify them with the Bronze race - perhaps because the epics showed them as users of iron" (West 1978, 174).

Hesiod was the sole source of the myth for later Greek and Roman writers; and though in the orient "we do not find a system that combines all the features of Hesiod's metallic ages" (West 1978, 176) Hesiod might have been inspired by Sumerians and Babylonians, who believed, e.g., in the progressive shortening of man's life. Nebuchadnezzar II, for instance, king of

Babylon and destroyer of Jerusalem, punished by God with insanity, dreams of a large statue with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with clay, and is told by Daniel that the various parts represent five successive world kingdoms (*Daniel* 2. 31sq., cited by West 1978, 175).

Hesiod, though, attempted to historicize the scheme by inserting the Heroic Age, in favour of which he abandons the regular mythical scheme. It is tempting to see in Hesiod's insertion of the heroic world a literary tribute to Homer, who forever immortalized Achilles and the ever-lasting glory of the heroes' world. In the *Catalogue of Women*, however, a widely read poem in five books that was attributed to Hesiod in antiquity, the situation is different: there is no scheme of metal races; instead the heroes' world resembles that of Hesiod's Golden men (fr. 1. 6-13).

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LYRIC POETRY: MONODY

At the beginning of Homer's *Iliad*, the old man Chryses, priest of Apollo, comes to the Achaean camp to seek the release of his daughter Chryseis. She has been captured in an earlier attack on a Trojan town and allocated to Agamemnon as his concubine; Agamemnon, however, rejects Chryses' appeal. Apollo's vengeance is swift and terrible – a plague which ravages the Achaean army. Finally, Agamemnon has to let Chryseis go, but he insists on the provision of another 'prize' of honour. He takes Briseis, Achilles' own 'prize', and Agamemnon is presented as a stage-tyrant: insensitive, irrational, self-obsessed.

After Briseis is taken from him, Achilles calls on his mother, the sea-goddess Thetis. She tells Achilles to withdraw completely from fighting (*Iliad* 1. 422). As he does, Zeus promises major Trojan success and the discomfiture of the Greeks, so that Achilles' pain can be felt by all; and in the following passages, Zeus indeed makes the Greeks regret Achilles' absence. Chryseis, however, is returned to her father by Odysseus. Chryses prays, and Phoebus Apollo hears him: 'so all day long the young men of the Achaeans appeased the god with music, singing a beautiful paean and dancing for the god who works from afar – and he listened with delight in his heart' (*Iliad* 1. 472-4).

Already, in this line of the *Iliad's* first book, Greek lyric poetry is mentioned. Paeans were not confined to Apollo, but were also sung to Zeus or Dionysus; from the fourth century BC (at least to our knowledge) the songs are also addressed to individuals. Typical situations for paean-singing were many: religious festivals, for instance, but also other occasions, and aside from contexts of illness or plague as in *Iliad* 1, there were more joyous occasions such as weddings, for instance, or the ratification of peace. Often paeans were sung after the libations and before the symposium (as in Plato's *Symposium* 176a), and they were also incorporated in and adapted to tragedy.

As an expression of praise and admiration, as a tribute, a paean is particularly suited for the occasion depicted at the end of *Iliad* 1. When, in *Iliad* 24, Hector is finally buried, another lyric genre is mentioned, a different kind of text is performed (*Iliad* 24. 719-22): 'when they had brought him inside the great house, then they laid him on a fretted bed, and seated singers beside him to lead the laments. They sang the mournful dirge.' The Greek word for 'lament' or 'dirge' is threnos, and after the paean, the threnos appears to be the second most well-established lyric genre in the Homeric world.

Again, as with paeans, the form continued: it was elaborated in tragedy (under the name of kommos), and stately, consolatory, and gnomic threnoi

were composed as written poems, meant to offer consolation: noble, dignified, magnificent, and 'of the nature of a gnome', i.e. containing and/or structured around a proverb, maxim, or aphorism of general truth.

Lyric poetry in Homer, however, is not only performed, but also depicted as being performed: the new shield Thetis orders for her son Achilles shows two juxtaposed sections – the city at peace (*Iliad* 18. 490-508) and the city at war (509-40); and both contain musical performances.

First – the peace: the blessings of ordered communal life are represented by weddings, which unite different families and bring festivities for all, among which is depicted the performance of a wedding-song, described at some length (*Iliad* 18. 491-6): 'In one (the city of peace) there were marriages and feasting, and they were escorting the brides from their houses through the streets under the light of burning torches, and the wedding-song rose loud. The young men were whirling in the dance, and the reed-flutes and lyres kept up their music, while the women all stood at the doors of their houses and looked on admiring.'

The 'ekphrasis' of such a wedding is even more elaborate in a later shield-description among the works of Hesiod, i.e. that of Heracles' shield (Most 2007, 23 & 25, lines 272-83): 'the men were at pleasure, in revelries and choruses; some were leading a bride to her husband on a well-wheeled wagon, and a great wedding-song rose up.' The description becomes more and more detailed: 'From afar rolled the blaze of burning torches in the hands of slaves, who walked in front, blooming in revelry, and performing choruses followed them. The men sent forth their voices from their soft mouths, accompanied by shrill panpipes, and around them spread the echo; while the women led the lovely chorus to the accompaniment of lyres. On the other side from there, young men were carousing, accompanied by a pipe, some performing in dance and song, while some walked in front, laughing each one with the pipe-player.'

Second – the war: the other city (on the shield made by Hephaestus for Achilles) was surrounded by two encamped armies. One of them goes to a place that suits their ambush, waiting for the cattle that come to water (*Iliad* 18. 525-9): 'soon they appeared, and with them two herdsmen playing on their pipes, with no thought for danger. The men in ambush saw them coming and rushed out on them, then quickly surrounded the herds of cattle and fine flocks of white-woolled sheep, and killed the shepherds with them.' The shepherds and their bucolic music provide an impressive contrast to the horrors of war: "the happy, syrinx-playing herdsmen are straight out of later pastoral poetry – much unlike Hesiod's countrymen – and the swift pathos of their death is like that of the short 'anecdotes' which follow the death of so many minor characters" in the *Iliad* (Edwards 1991, 220).

This brief look at Homer's *Iliad* demonstrates that four lyrical genres were known – paean, dirge, wedding-song, and bucolic poetry, whatever exactly that may have meant, then; musical instruments such as the lyre and pipe are named, and a choreography is also mentioned. The fact that no composer's name survives may suggest, rather, a context of anonymous folk-song. Another example might be the old song sung during the grape harvest depicted on Achilles' shield (18. 570).

In the seventh century, however, a change occurs; named poets of distinction emerge. The reasons for this change are not clear, yet "the short song came to be cultivated instead of the long epic" (Fraenkel 1975, 133). Among these poets of distinction, Archilochus is the focal point for any discussion of the development of poetry in the seventh century, "since he is the first Greek writer to take his material almost entirely from what he claims to be his own experience and emotions, rather than from the stock of tradition" (Barron/Easterling 1985, 117).

By Archilochus' time, literacy was established in Greece; though there is no evidence for actual book production that early. There was a better chance that his work could be recorded and widely disseminated: this is not to suggest that the initial 'publication' would not have been oral – but "it is hard to imagine Archilochos being so popular in fifth-century Athens without the existence of a written tradition at some stage in the intervening generations" (Barron/Easterling 1985, 128). Later, however, the biographical information about Archilochus "became more enduring than his actual verses" (Lefkowitz 2012, 39).

By contrast, the only indubitable fact that Homer provides us about himself in the *Iliad* is that he lived later than the events he narrates; this is obvious from (a) his occasional references to his heroes as men of an earlier and grander generation (5. 303sq., 12. 381-3, 12. 447-9, 20. 286sq.), and (b) his account of the destruction of the Greek wall by Poseidon, Apollo, and the local rivers after the fall of Troy (12. 10-33, cf. 7. 445-63). Homer neither speaks as a Greek nor refers to the Trojans as enemies. Mentioning Poseidon's and Apollo's plan to destroy the wall, Homer describes the wall as the place 'where a race of men half-divine had fallen in the dust' (12. 23). Clearly, the heroes no longer exist, but we do not learn any more about Homer's relation to them.

Homer's intended audience is similarly undefined, "except that these same passages identify them as his contemporaries, and they are clearly already familiar with stories of the siege of Troy and other Greek heroic legends. (...) They must also know something about the main characters, who are not introduced to us unless an important occasion calls for special emphasis (as in the case of Nestor, when he attempts to mediate between

Akhilleus and Agamemnon, 1. 247-52). The world of similes is their own world (...), from which poet and audience together, united in an emotional bond, look back together upon the heroic past. Though this remoteness in time is not obtrusive, it renders easy the foreshadowing which the poet often uses for emotional effect" (Edwards 1991, 1).

Though virtually all archaic poetry was performed in public before an audience and was, unlike modern poetry, not intended to be read in private, the world of the lyric poets is different from that of the epic poets. While "first-person statements in epic poems tend to be concentrated on the roles that the poets gave themselves in their compositions, as bards or singers inspired by the Muses, (...) the first-person speakers in non-epic poetry express opinions about subjects other than poetry and performance, and hence appear to have more distinctive personalities" (Lefkowitz 2012, 30).

However, the poetic 'I' in ancient lyric poetry can even be someone other than the poet. This can be proved in the case of Archilochus' poems: one of which refers to the notoriously wealthy king Gyges (fr. 19). A speaker declares: "The possessions of Gyges rich in gold are of no concern to me, not yet have I been seized with jealousy of him, I do not envy the deeds of the gods, and I have no love of tyranny. That is beyond my sights" (Gerber 1999a, 93).

Citing Archilochus' lines, Aristotle explains that Archilochus was representing another character (i.e., Charon the carpenter) speaking about Gyges. Without this remark, one would have certainly been inclined to regard Archilochus' statement as a personal statement of dislike, whereas in fact it is a literary persona who announces with rude exactitude what he disdains. It is, however, not clear what he values: "it may have been public or private, political or erotic, decent or obscene" (Burnett 1983, 67).

Be that as it may, in most cases biographers appear to have assumed that first-person statements were spoken by the poets, and "the presence of such 'personal' information distinguishes the biographies of archaic poets from the epic poets, and from each other, so that they appear to be the first real personalities in ancient Greek literature" (Lefkowitz 2012, 30). However, in the end, what the poets have to say is neither confessional nor personal, and to interpret literary texts in order to invent a biography leads to 'whimsical misreadings and ludicrous mistakes'.

Because the works of the majority of archaic poets have come down to us only in fragments, or in quotation, it can be difficult or even impossible to discover the original source material on which any individual poet's biography was based. Consistently, however, "characterizations of the poet's lives grew out of the kind of poetry they composed"; thus, it seems obvious

that “the contexts of their songs began to shape the narrative structure of their biographies” (Lefkowitz 2012, 30).

The point at issue became highly relevant and was much discussed when, at the beginning of the 1970s, a papyrus containing a text from one notorious story connected with Archilochus’ biography was discovered and made public. According to ancient tradition, Archilochus’ favourite targets were a fellow-citizen of Paros, Lycambes, and his daughters, Neobule and her younger sister. Apparently, Lycambes first promised Neobule to Archilochus as his wife, but later insulted him by breaking the contract. The poet then retaliated with abuse so virulent that the family (or some of them) committed suicide. There is hardly evidence for that, aside from one fragment (172) that shows a vicious attack on Lycambes, who is presented as mad and ridiculous.

The new papyrus fragment (196a) dramatizes the seduction of the younger daughter, adding to the complexity of the problem. The poet’s freedom to assume different literary personae and to create fictitious situations needs always to be kept in mind – but why should one avoid assuming that invective was never used by Archilochus in a direct and personal way? In order to escape the dilemma of whether there was a real family or all this is fictitious, one may even raise the possibility that Lycambes and his family were stock characters in traditional entertainment, though this ingenious idea can hardly be proved (for lack of parallel treatments, similar characters and additional, secondary information).

The text describes Neobule (line 24) and her little sister. The contrast between the two is obvious: the older is an unattractive nymphomaniac, while the younger is a rather inexperienced and therefore highly seductive girl – “the two furthest poles of femininity” (Burnett 1983, 91). What is most surprising is that the poetic ‘I’ keeps his promise and does not rape the girl, as one might expect him to do. The nearest parallel in Archilochus’ oeuvre is fr. 23, the narrative of which appears to be a seduction scene (though the context is not as clear in detail as in 196a); another parallel is provided by fr. 188, an attack on an ageing woman (who may or may not be Neobule).

The small erotic drama of this fragment exhibits a love seemingly dependent upon its opposite, unbridled hatred; but there is another antithesis, because one passion is excessive while the other is moderate. The excessive one is purely imaginary, while the moderate one is acted upon; and again a contrast is visible between the girl that is embraced while the other is reviled: “an astonishing confluence of abuse with lyric eroticism, of crude insult with sensual detail” (Burnett 1983, 89).

Such a song might well have left the father and his daughters ready for their fabled suicides, though the miniature drama works quite well, imi-

tating the moment in which the speaker makes a choice (Burnett 1983, 91): "His action has two objects, since choice includes refusal, and these appear as two women, Neobule and the girl. They are the matter upon which he exercises his discrimination, and so the song shows him rejecting one, claiming the other, cursing one and persuading the other, vilifying one and making the other beautiful." If Lycambes and his daughters were not real people, "then Archilochus was playing a role" (West 1974, 28). In other words, Archilochus is putting on an act, pretending that "he is not really a vulgar simpleton (...), but a highly skilful and sophisticated poet" (ibid.).

The bucolic setting of the scene might be accidental, though it should be noted that the speaker converses with a girl in a country spot, and the first-person narrative is set in a pastoral scene. He accosts her as a lover, she demurs, he offers special terms, and in the end he has his way – in this light it sounds like an amorous ballad. However, two things make the frame explode – first, the furious diatribe against another woman, and second, the carefully circumscribed sexual act. Later in the history of Greek literature, bucolic poetry became a genre of its own. The most prominent Greek bucolic poet, Theocritus, in two of his *Idylls* (3 & 20, if genuine), lets men make advances to women, though both attempts are unsuccessful.

Archilochus was decidedly an artist. Whatever else he might have achieved in his life is uncertain, because whenever a person speaks in Archilochus' work, it might be that the poet is just assuming a role or making other people speak. A later writer, however, pretends to know that Archilochus "boasted first of his ability to participate in civic struggles and mentioned second his talent for poetry, saying 'I am the servant of lord Enyalios and skilled in the lovely gift of the Muses'"; citing from Archilochus' works, our 'witness' was pretty sure that he was right (fr. 1). Archilochus, on the other hand, might have heartily laughed about this lack of judgment.

However, if in this citation by Athenaeus Archilochus were to speak for himself, a kind of revolution would be "epitomised in this couplet" (Page 1964, 134) – for, in Homer's world, it is unlikely that the fighting man and the poet could be one and the same person: "In the Epic, a man may be as good in speech as in action (*Il.* 9. 443), and a great warrior might pass the time singing a song (*Il.* 9. 189); but it is inconceivable that the same man should be both soldier and poet" (Page *ibid.*), though Achilles, the *Iliad's* protagonist, of whom both citations speak, seems to have been a good performer of poetry as well as an excellent warrior.

Indeed, in *Iliad* 9, Phoenix fulfills Peleus' wish and teaches Achilles to be 'a speaker of works and a doer of deeds' (443), and Homer lets Achilles sing 'tales of men's glory, delighting his heart', while 'Patroclus alone sits oppo-

site him in silence, waiting for when Achilles would end his singing' (190). Achilles, however, is a quite exceptional hero, and later even rejects some defining ideas of 'heroism'. Archilochus also illustrates an estrangement from the heroic ideal: one of the most famous fragments of his (5) is his claim that he threw away his shield. This is nothing other than a provocative rejection of one sort of image of 'the hero': 'Some Saian or another prides himself upon my shield, a splendid piece of equipment, which I left by a thorn-bush - and I didn't leave it willingly. But I saved myself. Why should I mind about that shield? Let it go: I'll get another just as good.'

Achilles is highly unlikely to do that, though Odysseus did - at least he falsely claimed to have done so: in the second half of the *Odyssey* he invents four lie-stories to hide his true identity. In the most elaborate of them, he tells his faithful old swineherd Eumaeus about a raid he undertook after the Trojan War. He was put to flight, and in this hopeless situation, he - the 'false' Odysseus - saved his skin by putting aside his weapons, among them his shield (*Odyssey* 14. 276sq.). An important difference, however, between the Homeric and the Archilochean loss of a shield is the fact that Odysseus' decision is inspired by Zeus (14. 273sq.), while Archilochus' poetic I acts on his own.

Archilochus' gesture is boastfully iconoclastic, though "coupled with deep awareness of traditional truths", and heroic attitudes are abandoned "in favour of a new unsentimental honesty" (Barron/Easterling 1985, 119). The singer claims to be guilty of an (in a double sense) epic crime, "and yet he allows a nagging ambivalence to rest upon his lines" (Burnett 1983, 41). The shield is splendid, literally 'blameless' in Greek, i.e. everything that its owner is not. But he lost the shield to a barbarian enemy, not a noble one, and one might guess that its owner acted under duress. Survival is clearly more valuable than a piece of ox-hide, or even beaten metal, "and the present singer is happy to buy his life at the price of his claim to an outdated form of honour" (Burnett 1983, 42).

Another fragment demonstrates how much the epic world is still with us: Archilochus presents himself again as a man able to control the situation, though giving it a new turn (13); the fragment is addressed to a certain Perikles, who will turn up again later (16). Men, and they might have been comrades in a naval battle, 'drowned by the waves of the surging sea; and our lungs are swollen with grief. But, friend, the gods have given us a remedy for desperate ills - endurance.' A rhythm, a pattern, a structure is unveiled, the knowledge of which gives mental strength - and this is new: 'First, one man has trouble and then another: now we are afflicted and grieve over the bleeding wound, but tomorrow it will be someone else's turn. So now endure and put away feminine tears.'

In effect the poet says to his friend: 'since no one else will blame you for your grief I must, for it is useless' – and then the almost magical healing process begins. There is nothing of the funeral-parlour in this consolation, "for it is not resignation or self-control or gentle moderation that the poem urges" (Burnett 1983, 48). Not eschewing visceral appeal entirely, 'endurance' means tough insistence on one's own survival.

Another citation may illustrate this Archilochean tone (128). This time, the speaker addresses himself, or more precisely, his heart (not all of the text is certain, v. Gerber 1999a, 167): 'My heart, my heart, confounded by woes beyond remedy, rise up (?) and defend yourself, setting your breast against your foes (?) as they lie in ambush (?) and standing steadfastly near the enemy.' And again the poem speaks of a regular and intelligible form or sequence discernible in certain actions and situations: 'Do not exult openly in victory and in defeat do not fall down lamenting at home, but let your rejoicing in joyful times and your grief in bad times be moderate. Know what sort of pattern governs mankind.'

A heart under attack should respond like a Homeric hero, with open and unrestrained deeds of violent resistance. Heart in battle is to be direct, but heart in victory or defeat is to respond with emotional detachment (Burnett 1983, 49sq.): "it will be covert, not overt (...). There is something dandified about this heat in action followed by coolness in emotional display", which is nothing other than a rule of social behaviour. The rhythm, or pattern, a man must know, is that same inevitable shifting of fortune which makes endurance possible, though not every dandy, fop, or petit maître, might be aware of that maxim.

A final Archilochean fragment may once again illustrate Archilochus' frame of mind (130): 'Fulfilment is the gods' affair. Often when a man lies helpless on the dark earth they set him right again; often too they overturn the ones who journey at their ease, calling up a swarm of evils to pursue, and then a man will wander hungrily, with madness running in his mind' (translated by Burnett 1983, 50sq.). In Archilochus' view, fortune's rhythm is insensitive to men, beyond morality; knowledge of this inescapable pattern offers but a grim comfort. Archilochus' "gradual pointing of thought and sharpening of tone" leads to the fragment's high point, i.e. "the assertion that poverty and degradation overthrow man's thought and manner of feeling (...) and so disrupt the self. Nothing is really ours" (Fraenkel 1975, 135): at least, this is the fragment's high point, for the context is lost to us. Archilochus seems to have stressed that point a second time, again addressing Perikles, as he did while mourning his comrades, 'lungs swollen in grief' (16): 'Fortune and Destiny, Perikles, give a man everything.'

The fragments of Archilochus are arranged by editors according to their metrical form (this is due to the ancient habit of citation – references are often made to the metre used by an author, e.g., X in his iambs, and not to the work's title). The main divisions are elegy, iambic trimeter, trochaic tetrameter catalectic, and so-called epodes: a term denoting several repeating combinations of various iambic, trochaic and dactylic units that share one characteristic pattern, i.e. one longer line is followed by one or two shorter lines. This orderly arrangement, however, “may imply greater distinctions between the different metrical patterns than were felt by Archilochus and his contemporaries” (Barron/Easterling 1985, 120).

The occasions on which iambus might be performed surely overlapped to some extent with those thought appropriate for elegy, though there is one difference: the elegists seem to have avoided obscene language and the sort of topics that later belonged to the world of comedy, i.e. sex, food, and violent abuse of individuals – all of which turn up regularly in iambic poetry (considered by Aristotle as a kind of forerunner to comedy). The general heading ‘iambos’ “seems to have been the ancients’ term for poetry of an informal every-day kind which was designed essentially to entertain” (Barron/Easterling 1985, 120). In ancient Greek, the iambic is the most conversational of the metres, “and the proof is that in talking to each other we most often use iambic lines but very rarely hexameters”, as Aristotle writes in his *Poetics* (ch. 4), since “iambic verse is largely an imitation of speech” (ch. 22).

In composing epodes, iambographers juxtaposed different metres without connecting them; the result is a change of ‘beat’ that may add additional surprise if coupled with a turn of the argument. The technical term for this ‘un-connected’ composition in Greek is ‘a-syn-artetos’. To our knowledge, Archilochus is the first composer of such asynartetic verses.

The three principal iambographers of the archaic period are Archilochus, Semonides, and Hipponax, but Archilochus, at least, wrote much that does not belong under the heading of iambos. Greek elegiac poetry was one of the most popular metres throughout antiquity. The term is derived from *elegos*, a sung lament that must have typically been in this metre, but the metre was also used for many other purposes. A stricter definition distinguishes between elegiac poetry (or elegy) and epigram, which was often but not always in elegiac metre. Elegy, in the early period, was composed for oral delivery in a social setting, as a communication from the poet to others; an epigram was information written on an object (a tombstone or a dedication, for instance).

All archaic elegy is in Ionic dialect, heavily influenced by its Homeric artificial variant. Many pieces presuppose the symposium as the setting in which they were designed to be heard. An early fifth-century vase-painting

(from Vulci, Munich Antikensammlungen 2646, attributed to Douris) shows a reclining symposiast with words of an elegiac verse issuing from his mouth while an aulete plays (Pöhlmann/West 2001, 8 n. 5). There are other mentions of an aulete (one who plays the *auloi*, i.e. oboes) accompanying the singing of an elegy in the symposium. Certain elegists (Tyrtaeus, Mimnermus) are said to have been auletes themselves.

Elegy is already established on both sides of the Aegean by c. 650 BC, when the first recorded elegists appear: Archilochus, Callinus, and Tyrtaeus. A common use of elegy in the seventh century was to exhort the poet's fellow citizens to fight for their country. The most notorious example of this kind of elegy is a rather long text by Tyrtaeus, the opening of which declares that 'it is a fine thing for a brave man to die while fighting for his country' (10, Gerber 1999b, 50-3). Mimnermus, however, was famous for elegies celebrating the pleasures of love and youth (1 & 2, Gerber 1999b, 80-3).

The largest surviving body of archaic elegy is the collection of poems and excerpts of roughly 1,400 lines ascribed to Theognis. The collection, which is only in part by Theognis, offers a wide cross-section: political and moralizing verse, social comment, personal complaint, convivial pieces, witty banter, and love poems to nameless boys. Other items are reflective and develop an argument on some ethical question. Theognis, in his elegies addressed to Cyrnus, anticipates that they will be sung by young men at banquets in a fine, clear voice (239-43, opening in 237 by 'I have given you wings', moving on to 'never even in death will you lose your fame' 247), and he also mentions the oboe-player, the aulete (e.g., 533). The passage surrounding this line may give an impression of the whole (Gerber 1999b, 249): 'My heart is always warmed whenever I hear the pipes sounding a lovely voice. I delight in drinking well and singing to the piper's accompaniment, and I delight in holding in my hands the tuneful lyre.'

The Lesbian poet Alcaeus, though working a generation or two later than Archilochus, shared the Parian poet's penchant for abuse directed at fellow comrades. Brothers in arms they might have been, or at least fellow drinkers; however, despite some similarities, "the two bodies of song are far apart in both impulse and tone" (Burnett 1983, 107).

The Greek word for fellow is *hetairos*, and a club where fellows gather would be called in Greek *hetaireia*: an association, a brotherhood, a political union. The *hetaireiai* best known to us are associations in classical Athens, which served both a social and a political function: the mutual assistance of the various ambitious projects of their leading members. Though evidence is not as abundant as in the classical period, one may well assume that Alcaeus wrote some of his texts for his clique of befriended aristocrats. They had a common enemy, and Alcaeus' poetry is full of attacks on and abuse of him,

for perjury and faithlessness, low birth (probably false), drunkenness, unbridled ambition, and physical defects (fr. 72, 129, 348).

Alcaeus' poetry was divided by the Alexandrians – a collective name given to the grammarians who worked in the library of Alexandria in northern Egypt, dedicated to the collection and edition of extant Greek literature still available to them – into ten books. Alcaeus' poetry was monodic, i.e. not performed by a chorus, and was composed in a variety of lyric metres in two- or four-line stanzas, including the Alcaic strophe, named after him. The dialect is predominantly Lesbian vernacular, but epicisms, i.e. borrowings from Homer, are admitted. Alcaeus' range is rivalled only by Archilochus in the archaic period.

Using lyric for abuse, Alcaeus somehow blurred the distinction between lyric and iambos, and a fondness for literary pastiche or parody might well have been his personal trademark. One further instance of this can be seen in a fragment that recasts a passage of Hesiod in lyric form (347). The passage in Hesiod's *Works and Days* treats the deleterious effects of the dog-star, in ancient times called Sirius, which brings the heat of the dog days. The lines in Hesiod also mention the increased sexual appetite of women, to which men cannot properly respond, a line that might have been particularly attractive to a poet who performed his texts at a symposium, preferably during the dog days. Sirius' heat is mentioned also by Archilochus (in the very short 107) and by the author of the *Shield*-poem (parching Sirius 153 & 397).

Hesiod's text must have been known, for otherwise the textual interplay could not have been noticed at Alcaeus' time. Being a rather personal poem (often referring to Hesiod's brother, but also to his father and to his own biography), the *Works and Days*, having "no narrative thread to help the reciter, stood a better chance of surviving if it was committed to writing at a fairly early stage, that is, during the poet's lifetime" (Barron/Easterling 1985, 104). Indeed, the knowledge displayed in the *Works and Days* "is difficult to account for without supposing that some use was made of written texts" (Barron/Easterling 1985, 105), though this is not to suggest that there was such a thing as a regular reading public at this time. The possibility of long-term survival was enormously enhanced by the development of writing. Already a generation or two before Alcaeus, Hesiod's *Works and Days* were reworked: Archilochus' contemporary Semonides, the iambographer, transposed hexametric lines from the *Works and Days* 702sq. into an iambic couplet (Semonides 6), thus demonstrating again knowledge of the text.

Alcaeus, whose turbulent life was inextricably linked with that of his fellow citizens, was a contemporary of Sappho; their poems are the oldest

monody to survive. The poets used short stanzas in a variety of metres, and sang the songs to their own accompaniment on the lyre, presumably repeating the melody for each stanza.

Sappho's way of life has been the subject of much speculation, which has to do with the fact that most of her work was love poetry. At least that is what later sources tell us, e.g., Pausanias in his *Description of Greece* 1. 25. 1. One does not necessarily have to assume that Pausanias (an author of the second century of our time, i.e. more than 700 years after Sappho's) had access to the whole of Sappho's poetry, nor is it even likely; rather, his statement sums up the commonly held opinion of his day.

Some Alexandrian scholars divided her collected poems into nine books, based on metrical principles. The nine books varied considerably: book 1 alone had 330 stanzas, i.e. perhaps 60 to 70 poems, while book 8 was only one-tenth as long. Only one complete poem survives, a lyric prayer to Aphrodite (composed as a traditional 'clitic' hymn using a tripartite structure), and substantial parts of a dozen other poems have survived, most of them on papyri.

Like Alcaeus, Sappho seems to have performed her songs among friends, too. She is about to sing to her *hetairai*, her companions, as she announces in a short fragment, using a performative future tense (160): 'I shall now sing these songs beautifully to delight my companions.' Aside from this line, the word *hetaira* appears twice again (126, 142); the context, however, cannot be ascertained. Sappho might also have referred to her group as 'the house of those who serve the Muses' (150), an expression which suggests some kind of literary association, however informal. But she also composed for a wider audience; her wedding-songs, e.g., seem to be intended for such a public.

Nowadays, it is generally assumed that Sappho's group "met in daily intimacy and informality, and that Sappho's songs were first performed before this assembly of pupils who were also friends and temporary wards", i.e. minors under her protection (Burnett 1983, 209 n. 2). Between Alcaeus' and Sappho's circles, however, there is a major difference: Alcaeus' group was formed for action, his masculine association pressed outwards, while Sappho's group held its members back, "touching the community only in ritual moments" (Burnett 1983, 209sq.):

"Alcaeus' listeners were adults who heard another adult as he confirmed convictions that they already held, but Sappho's audience was not yet mature. (...) Sappho's songs were both education and initiation as an older woman taught them (...). Alcaeus (...) addressed men who were in principle bound together for life, and he looked to an immediate future in which his dreams would become concrete realities. Sappho, on the other hand, sang to

a group that was at leisure and yet in a constant state of dissolution (...).” Thus, the tone of Sappho’s poetry is necessarily different.

The core idea of the above-cited view, however, is that creative art is dependent on biography. Indeed, it appears difficult to separate an artist’s life from his work; nevertheless, in the case of Sappho, biographically orientated criticism may keep us from seeing what the poet says (Lefkowitz 1996, 34):

“Applying assumptions our society makes about ‘normal’ female psychology to the work of women poets can do little to advance our understanding of their poems. (...) Sappho writes about her love for her female friends and the pleasures of singing and being together because these activities, not war or games or government, were the experiences that her society and times permitted to women. Those who are secluded in some way from the concerns of the larger society are by necessity thrown onto themselves and thus have time and scope to express what others, in more diffracted contexts, do not have time to articulate or to understand.”

As is the case with Pindar, many critical studies of Sappho’s poems were not “intended to examine the poems as literature; they are almost exclusively designed to serve a biographical purpose” (Young 1970, 54).

The only completely preserved poem of Sappho has the form of a traditional hymn, which are also called ‘cletic’, from a Greek verb meaning ‘to call on’, ‘to appeal to’, ‘to make a demand upon’: first the god was addressed “by an effective manipulation of his names, his favourite haunts, and his characteristic powers. Next, he was impressed and pleased by a reminder of past deeds, the petitioner’s or his own. Finally, (...) he was made to listen to a direct appeal. (...) Sappho’s lyric prayer is plainly divided into these same three parts, and its extended reminding section (five stanzas that fall between one of invocation and one of appeal) makes it something like the great show-piece hymns that were composed for contests” (Burnett 1983, 247sq.).

The prayer-form gives the poem a tight structure: the previous coming begins by ‘I beseech you, come to me, if you ever came before’, and Sappho finishes in l. 25 with ‘come again now’, a clear example of ring-composition that frames the ‘memory’-section (the *hypomnesia*): the verbs ‘come’ (5), ‘you came’ (8), and ‘come’ (25) hold the poem together, yet the poem’s narrative “takes some interesting turns: the mention of the previous epiphany of the goddess leads into a leisurely narrative which occupies almost all of the five central stanzas, finishing with the words of Aphrodite, which move from indirect to direct question at l. 18 and to bluntly direct statement at l. 21” (Campbell 1985, 205).

That Sappho addresses the goddess that makes her suffer, Aphrodite, is only briefly surprising. To whom else should she turn? The epithets used by Sappho make that clear: the invocation consists of a patronymic and three adjectives, woven tightly together so that they occupy a line and a half. Every chosen syllable has its significance, and the whole conjures up the precise divinity Sappho would like to see.

The patronymic 'child of Zeus' is a deliberate choice, since Aphrodite has two possible mythic fathers. Sappho does not want a visit from the Hesiodic Aphrodite, who had Uranos as her father, the Giants and Erinyes for her brothers and sisters, and a birth from sperm and foam (Hesiod, *Theogony* 188-202). The Aphrodite who is to come instead is an Olympian goddess, who resembles a girl, who shies away from a mortal battle and takes refuge in her mother's lap, as does Aphrodite in Homer (*Iliad* 5. 370): rescuing her son Aineias during a dangerous situation on the battlefield, Aphrodite is touched by the strong Greek fighter Diomedes; she throws herself in the lap of Dione, her mother, who comforts her daughter in the following, telling her that 'many of us who have our homes on Olympos have suffered at men's hands.'

That deities are 'deathless' goes without saying, but the fact is mentioned here again in order to differentiate between the world of the Olympians and the mortals. The word also hints at Aphrodite's ever-lasting, inescapable and inexorable desire that "can break away every tie of family obligation, and sweep away all other natural affections" (Jenkyns 1982, 57). That there is no remedy for love is the theme of another of Sappho's poems, one about Helena. Sappho excuses her behaviour: what else Helena could have done than to follow her love, for 'whatsoever a person loves is the most beautiful thing on the black earth' (fr. 16. 2-4). In the Helena-poem, Sappho is well aware of desire's intensity, because she thinks of a certain Anactoria 'who is not here' (fr. 16. 15sq.). As in this Helena-poem, memory and desire are again combined in two other fragments of Sappho (94 & 96), one of which (94, the so-called 'confession') may consist of an 'imaginary' or 'interior' dialogue between 'Sappho' and a woman, leaving against her will. On the performance of such a text much has been speculated (Burnett 1983, 193-5, Stehle 1997, 306-11).

Even more interesting in fr. 1, however, are the two adjectives that Sappho invented especially for this occasion, her encounter with Aphrodite, or rather, Aphrodite's epiphany: *poikilothronos* and *doloplokos*, ornate-throned and wile-weaving. The first of them has been placed as the very first word of the song - it must attract the attention of the goddess and it must mean something. Its first element denotes anything richly decorated and wrought with complexity. Both intelligence and skill are needed, subtlety, complication and changefulness implied, "and every sort of heaviness is rejected with this word" (Burnett 1983, 249). This term might refer to jewels and tapestries,

but also to a mind of elaborate wit; the word certainly evokes the similarly sounding *poikilophron*, used later by Euripides to describe Odysseus. Alcaeus (Sappho's contemporary on Lesbos) also calls his arch-enemy, the foxy Pittacus, *poikilophron* (fr. 69. 7). The second element, however, is ambivalent, deriving either from *thronos* 'chair', or from *throna* '(magical) flowers' or 'herbs': either Aphrodite is to be imagined as seated on a beautiful throne or as dressed in blossom-patterned material and crowned with sweet-smelling flowers. Two types of narrative may follow, two series of poetic images are anticipated or prepared for (Silk 1974, 150-72).

Given the fact, however, that being addressed as 'ornate-throned' is not a description that makes sense in the ensuing epiphany-scene, the second meaning seems more likely; it is even more so because Homer's Aphrodite actually wore, just beneath her breast, an elaborate amulet-belt (*Iliad* 14. 215 & 220) that contained the philtres or love-potions supposed to be capable of exciting sexual desire and love. In what follows, this will be needed, and Aphrodite will have to master similar equipment if she is to help successfully.

The immediately following *doloplokos* specifies this idea, i.e. the power that Sappho would like Aphrodite to bring with her in the present moment: "she wants a goddess who can trick and deceive and even set a trap if necessary" (Burnett 1983, 251). A *dolos* is ordinarily used against an enemy, though it is the opposite of proper violence: an ambush is such a *dolos* (*Iliad* 6. 187). The second half of the compound is taken from the verb 'to weave'; thus the compound mixes the abstract with the concrete, though "the sense of a physical net is dormant in the notion of the trick" (Burnett, *ibid.*). Aphrodite herself had once been captured in a web, a trick played on her by Hephaestus, as Demodocus sings in the *Odyssey* (8. 274-6).

The appeal continues at the second stanza's opening, and Sappho divides it into two pieces. Allowing us a short glimpse, she fears being overpowered with ache and anguish (fr. 1. 3), an extraordinarily excessive emotional moment of which Sappho speaks elaborately in another text (fr. 31. 6).

Again, it is desire that 'sets my heart trembling in my breast', making it impossible for her to speak; temporarily blinded (31. 11), sweating and trembling all over, Sappho changes colour, 'and it seems to me that I am little short of dying' (31. 15sq.). Death may seem preferable in such moments, as Sappho (or a literary persona) says again in another fragment (94, the fragmentary opening).

The reminding section comes next, and the petitioner makes reference to past benefactions. The passage shows Aphrodite doing, in the past and in heaven, exactly what she must be doing in this very moment. 'Suddenly you arrived, you smiled, you asked' (1. 8 & 14sq.), Sappho reports, as if she speaks of the one being called for in that moment, "and this the more

easily because the goddess who arrives (in the past) is so exactly she to whom Sappho has just now called (in the present)" (Burnett 1983, 254). This charming goddess treats Sappho with familiar affection, and finally the fugitive will be caught and returned to Sappho's love. Aphrodite behaves towards Sappho as a true child of Zeus, while towards the fugitive Aphrodite will act as weaver of snares, "in the interest of a special erotic justice" (Burnett 1983, 256).

In addition to Love's intensity, Sappho speaks of its relentlessness in this poem. Ever and ever again, countless times it seems ('again' is found in 1. 15, 16, and 18), Sappho turned to Aphrodite for help, reminding her public of the equally countless number of past successes she has enjoyed. One other poet, Ibycus from Reggio di Calabria, living in the second half of the sixth century, spoke of this, too. Like Sappho's texts, his few substantial erotic fragments also show a penchant for elaborate imagery.

Eros wants to drive his prey into Aphrodite's nets, but an old man lacks the vigour for the game (fr. 287). Once 'again' Eros is looking at the speaker of these lines (287. 1) in which love is presented as a hunter and the poet as a retired racehorse called back to the contest, successful in earlier days, but now reluctant and/or unable to compete.

The speaker of another fragment (fr. 286) knows that 'for me Love rests at no season' (286. 6sq.); this time it is not a race to which the crazy power of Love drives him, rather, Eros' force is compared to a powerful 'north wind blazing with lightning, rushing from the Cyprian with parching fits of madness, dark and shameless, he powerfully shakes my heart from the roots' (Campbell 1991, 255, lines 8-13). The poet's destructive desire is contrasted to a fertile grove in the spring (lines 1-6).

Not much is known about Ibycus. His poems are all composed in the choral lyric dialect, show a Doric timbre, and a variety of metres is used. A late collector of proverbs, a contemporary of Hadrian's (emperor AD 117-38), mentions the saying 'more antiquated than Ibycus', and elsewhere gives 'more silly than Ibycus'. What Diogenian was driving at is unknown (Campbell 1991, 213), and we are left in the dark, though the proverbially old-fashioned stiffness of choral lyric could easily be labelled 'antiquated', while erotic madness is certainly to be called 'silly'.

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LYRIC POETRY: CHORAL

Alcman, the oldest of the choral lyric poets of whose work something substantial has survived, lived in Sparta probably in late seventh century BC. Earlier figures are no more than names, and some of the earliest names in the development of Greek song (e.g., Eumolpos or Orpheus) are mythic rather than historical figures. There are, however, two lines of a processional hymn, a Delian prosodion by Eumelus of Corinth, which may well be the oldest fragment of choral lyric and which possibly dates to the eighth century (PMG 696).

Eumelus as well as Alcman lived in the Peloponnese: Eumelus was Corinthian and composed for a Messenian choir, and Alcman composed for Spartan choirs. Other early poets of choral lyric are also associated with the Peloponnese, and as shadowy a figure as he is, Terpander is said to have come from Lesbos to Sparta, a convenient symbol for Asiatic musical influence reaching Greece.

As with many other genres dating from the seventh century, choral lyric was certainly thriving long before. The reason why the seventh century provides us with our first examples of melic poetry (as well as our first examples of elegiac or iambic poetry) is the fact that by then writing was spreading, so that the works of celebrated poets could be recorded, while those of their predecessors could not (Bowie 1986, 99).

Lyric poetry (in general) differs from epic by the prominence given to the personality of the poet or the performing singer (which need not be the same person, quite the contrary). The first person becomes the focus of attention, and the poetic 'I' speaks of 'my' loves, hates, adventures, and even addresses himself, or herself, announcing the next steps of her, or his, performance.

This fact has misled scholars into believing that the seventh century marks the beginning of individual poetry. However, not only did such poetry exist earlier, but the poetic 'I' by no means refers to the person of the singer or poet automatically or mechanically. Hence one should hesitate to use fragments in order to reconstruct biography or anything like 'personal' views. Nevertheless, the texts of the Greek poets were already being misread in antiquity, and their contents cannibalised for such a biographical purpose.

Regarding choral lyric (in particular), the 'I'-statements pose a related problem: whether it is the poet's voice that can be heard when the chorus speaks of itself, or whether the poet is just lending his voice in order to express collective values, commonly shared by the audience and somehow establishing its 'identity', is difficult to say; time and again, both sets of values, that of the poet and that of his audience, might be identical; the poet had, after all, been paid to corroborate his public's opinions, certainly not to

irritate those who had commissioned poetry from him. However, it must be said that much of what we read nowadays as choral lyric are epinician odes, composed for a very specific occasion and, at least in some cases, apparently following a pattern. Because of these formal conventions, the epinician ode seems to be cut of a different cloth (Lefkowitz 1991, 25).

Lyric poetry differs from epic in another respect, for lyric poetry was not, like epic, the reserve of a professional virtuoso, a highly accomplished artist. Although most of what survives has been ascribed to only a few names, lyric poetry was designed for occasions where amateurs contributed. This is apparent in the case of the after-dinner singing of skolia at Athens: the songs were short and simple, and a distinction was made between these and songs sung by the 'more talented'. Although this relates to one genre and one city only, other early poetry might have been designed for similar occasions, and one need not necessarily assume an evening during which only one artist sang while other people only listened or just chatted away their time.

Choral poetry, however, is a more elaborate art-form and involves not only words and music but also dance. We cannot reconstruct the vocal or instrumental line for any song (let alone its choreography), yet it was certainly an integral part of the effect. Pindar, for instance, gave his singers the following 'instruction' as the opening of one of his most splendid victory odes, *Pythian 1*:

'Golden Lyre, rightful possession of Apollo and the violet-haired Muses, to you the footstep listens as it begins the splendid celebration, and your notes are obeyed by singers when, with your vibrations, you fashion the opening, when you strike up the chorus-leading preludes that lead off the choral dance' (the translation uses those by Campbell 1988, 261, and Race 1997, 213).

The poet's responsibility was to provide the text and music and to devise the dance-movements. It was he who would train the choir at home and who might travel from his home to prepare the performance abroad. He might also provide the musical accompaniment, and Alcman, for example, even names three Phrygian pipers who performed for him (PMG 109). The poet probably had overall responsibility for the performance.

Choral poetry also differed from monody in two other respects:

- (a) Its metrical patterns were (almost always) much more complex. While Alcman used a repeated 14-line stanza in one song for a girls' choir and a 9-line stanza in another, Stesichorus and his successors employ a triadic structure: a strophe is followed by an antistrophe in the same metrical pattern, the antistrophe by an epode in a different, though related rhythm, and this threefold scheme is repeated several times. In comparison, the stanzas of solo song were short and simple.

- (b) The composers of choral lyric employed an artificial language; this can also be observed in the case of the monodists, who enlarged and embellished their expressions with borrowings from Homer – though the choral lyrics added a strong Doric flavour, which might be due to choral lyric's geographical origin.

The sound of the choral songs, however, differed from each other not only in strength, clearness, and pitch, but also in timbre, this undefinable yet unique characteristic of a voice. The word timbre corresponds to the German word 'Klangfarbe', which literally translates as 'colour of sound', and which itself is a synaesthetic metaphor, i.e. one that transfers the meaning of a word from one kind of sensory experience to another, producing an associated mental image.

The Doric element in Eumelus and Alcman needs no explanation, since those poets composed in the Peloponnese; Stesichorus lived in the Sicilian city of Himera where Doric was prevalent, though he, as a follower of the Homeric diction, added some Ionic timbre, which makes his texts unique; the fact that Pindar who came from Boeotia adopted Doric for his composition shows that he adhered to what he regarded as a rule for generic composition, though even more remarkable are the cases of Simonides and (his nephew) Bacchylides, both of whom were born in the Ionic-speaking island of Ceos.

The occasions of choral lyric varied, and one may gather that from the catalogue of nine types attributed to Pindar. Pindar, Simonides and Bacchylides form a younger group of choral lyric poets who lived in the second half of the sixth and the first half of the fifth century. To Pindar and Bacchylides, the tragedian Aeschylus was contemporary, and all three also performed in Sicily. An older group of choral lyric poets comprises Alcman and Stesichorus and Ibycus, the latter two being figures of the early and mid-sixth century respectively; both worked for some time in Sicily, too.

The Pindaric catalogue is likely to have been established by Alexandrian scholars, i.e. several centuries after Pindar's works were performed. One may doubt whether at that late date much more was known about the occasions of his poetry than the names given to the literary 'genres' seem to indicate. The list begins by mentioning hymns, paeans and dithyrambs, genres that belong together.

However, a (1) hymn might be addressed to any god, whereas (2) paeans and (3) dithyrambs (in their early form) seem to have been dedicated to Apollo (paeans) and Dionysus (dithyrambs) exclusively. The earliest hymns handed down to us are those by Alcaeus: on the Dioskuroi (34), to Zeus (69), Aphrodite (296b), and Apollo (307a), and one by Sappho to Aphrodite (1), the opening poem of her works in antiquity.

The Pindaric list continues with (4) prosodia or processional songs – which we know from Eumelus’ short fragment – and (5) partheneia or girls’ songs – which are attributed to Alcman, whose fame rested particularly on his composition in this genre for Spartan choirs. Next we learn of (6) hyporchemata (dance-songs), few examples of which survive from any period. Their name suggests that choreography played an important role, though we can hardly say in what form these songs differed from other songs accompanied by a choreographed performance.

The remaining three types, written to honour men, not gods, are (7) encomia (eulogies), (8) dirges (mourning-songs), and (9) victory odes, and seem to have developed later (at least to our knowledge). One text by Ibycus praising the tyrant of Samos, Polycrates (282a), might be labelled as such an encomium, and the encomium and victory ode are also attributed to Simonides, as are dirges or formal laments (already familiar from Homer, who mentions them as being performed at Patroclus’ funeral games).

Ibycus wrote narrative poetry so similar to that of Stesichorus that scholars have debated the authorship of a text known as the Funeral Games of Pelias. Ibycus’ themes were the same (stories of Herakles, for instance, or the Trojan War), and his style is similar to Stesichorean texts. But Ibycus had a double career: he seems to have left Sicily and ended up as a court poet of Polycrates (tyrant in Samos from c. 540 to 522, known for his short-lived piratical thalassocracy). Ibycus’ poems on love may date to this period: their tone is so intimate that they hardly seem fit for performance to a larger public; moreover, Ibycus may have even catered to the sexual preference of this court by providing or ‘procuring’ poetry, e.g. a song on the rape of the boy Ganymed by Zeus, and of the boy Tithonus by Dawn (Campbell 1983, 164). In any case, the texts suggest that their author – as well as many other lyric poets – ‘performed’ choral as well as monodic poetry.

Stesichorus’ name literally means ‘he who set up the chorus’, and if Stesichorus were a *nom de plume* one might think that, by later tradition at least, Stesichorus was believed to have arranged for a chorus to sing and dance. Stesichorus was indeed regarded as highly innovative in antiquity: he is credited with ‘inventions’ such as the triadic metrical structure, and he was known as an innovator in his use of mythology, as an ancient commentator remarks (Campbell 1983, 163). Not much of his work remains, though from the fragments that do one may gather that his texts were of considerable length, their language being characterised by a constant Dorification of Homeric expressions, and the metre of considerable complexity. Epic stylization is apparent, Homeric epithets abound. There are numerous repetitions. The tempo of the narrative seems slow, and Homeric amplitude in the sense of splendour as well as largeness prevails. Stesichorus also enjoyed portray-

ing conversations in which Homer and his public had already taken infinite pleasure. However, despite the fact that Stesichorus writes as if he had a dash of Homeric blood in his veins, the result is not Homeric.

Like Simonides and Bacchylides, Pindar wrote elaborate odes in honour of prize-winning athletes, and their texts were intended for public performance by singers, dancers, and musicians. Most of the Greek lyric poets come down to us only in bits and pieces, partly preserved in often incomplete citations by ancient authors who wrote on metric and/or style, partly rescued from papyri discovered in Egypt from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards; though Pindar's forty-five victory odes have survived complete, and Bacchylides' fourteen victory odes were re-discovered on a papyrus at the end of the nineteenth century. Both poets celebrate triumphs in athletic contests at the four great Panhellenic festivals: the Olympic, Pythian (at Delphi), Nemean, and Isthmian games.

In his complex poems, Pindar commemorates the achievement of athletes and their powerful rulers against the backdrop of divine favour, human failure, heroic legend, and the moral ideals of a society whose ideology may be labelled aristocratic, and whose rulers wanted to be perceived as noblemen. Pindar's poetic language is extremely rich and his imagery elevated, which lent his performances the air of pomposity expected by those who commissioned poetry from him.

Bacchylides worked in the same vein, although his texts seem less demanding than Pindar's. Time and again, both praised the same victory, one poet performing a shorter ode at the games (Bacch. 4), the other performing a longer ode on the occasion of the tyrant's homecoming (Pind. *Pyth.* 1), or both producing elaborate and prestigious texts (Bacch. 5 & Pind. *Ol.* 1 both celebrate Hiero's victory in 476).

Pindar's odes are comprised of disparate elements, and often the reader is surprised by the apparent contrast between successive parts. At first, they can seem a bit confusing, due to the lack of a coherent narrative. However, in a developed ode (i.e. one of those with the 'normal' length of several triads) some components, if not consistently present, can be easily distinguished (Hamilton 1974, 8sq., Willcock 1995, 12-4, Robbins 1997, 261sq.); they seem to have formed a stock of set pieces, yet again the extent of this kind of 'generic' composition is not clear. In other words: some elements are characteristic of the type of poetry we use to call 'victory-ode', however, whether all these elements appear or not, let alone their sequence, cannot be predicted; a rule applicable to a large group of victory odes seems not to be valid for all texts that were performed as such.

As for content, the odes consist of three essential ingredients: (1) factual details about the victor, his victory, his family, and so on; (2) the use of

myth, either as an ornament, or as a parallel (be it a positive or a negative one, offering either a similarity to the victor's family history, or providing a gloomy contrast to the victor's splendour) in order to illustrate moral points; (3) moralising or proverbial reflections, which are called 'gnomic'.

Stylistically, the odes tend to begin strikingly and close quietly, while the myth comes in the middle, introduced and brought to an end by circumstantial information. Gnostic statements often serve as transitional passages, connecting circumstantial information to mythological narrative; more often than not, these gnostic passages do not closely relate to what is being recounted, though they are not to be considered purposeless either.

Pindaric narrative is anything but straightforward, Bacchylides' victory odes, in contrast, appear easier to follow. The modern reader's reaction to this difficult poetry is often negative, and the ambiguity of the Greek text does not help much with comprehension, let alone with appreciating the poem's style. Pindar's poetry, as one critic put it, has sometimes the defects of its qualities (King 1904, xii): "The swiftness becomes obscurity, the splendour turgidity, the elevation sententiousness." Moreover, the Greek text is marked by discontinuity, even abruptness, which adds to the difficulty of translating it. Additional explanatory sentences may provide some help, but the ambivalence, and even obscurity, seems to have been intentional, creating a charming *chiaroscuro* of its own.

A famous ode by Pindar is his second *Olympian*. It is most memorable for the vision of afterlife which takes the place of a regular myth, and for the extraordinary lines which precede and follow that excursus (Willcock 1995, 133-42, Morrison 2007, 46-53).

The text consists of five parts: (a) a striking opening (1-7) that overlaps at its end with (b) a first and elaborate exposition of the celebration's circumstances (5-51a); transitional gnomes (51b-56a) lead to (c) the central part: the mythological narrative in this ode takes the form of a picture of the afterlife (56b-83a); again gnomes (83b-88) serve as transition, (d) leading back to the circumstances of the ode, illustrated this time much more briefly (89-95a); (e) a quiet close contains another such gnostic statement (95b-100).

The 'striking opening' fills the first strophe, a simple and suitable device. To the question 'what god, what hero, what man?' immediately comes the answer 'Zeus, god of these games, Herakles who founded them, and Theron who has now won the most glorious event in them.'

The initial expression, 'hymns that rule the lyre', i.e. that words are more important than the music, introduces a priamel: a poetic device in which a number of items or options are listed for comparison, culminating in a preferred object. A tricolon follows (or, rather, a tricolon crescendo),

answering the rhetorical questions paradoxically, by expanding from three words on the most important god (Zeus), allowing six to the youngest god who managed to become an Olympian (Herakles), and finally reaching the protagonist of the victory ode, worthy of sixteen words (Theron).

The priamel is used as a poem's opening in a range of ways. In the opening of her fragment on Helena (fr. 16. 1-4), for instance, Sappho states the central argument simply, as follows: 'some say cavalry, some say navy is the most beautiful thing on earth, but I say it is whatsoever a person loves.' Pindar's opening of the first *Olympian* (O. 1. 1-7), however, reveals a rather complex structure, not as much opposing various items as associating them in order to establish the argument's elegant move from the abstract to the concrete, from the divine to the human protagonist of Pindar's victory ode: 'best is water while gold shines preeminent, but if you wish to sing of athletics, look for the sun', i.e. the Olympian games. Pindar's and Sappho's respective series of detached statements leading up to the idea the speaker is primarily concerned with differ - Sappho works by contrast, Pindar by comparison, Sappho prefers antithesis, Pindar analogy (Gerber 1982, 3-7).

Theron's name in line 5 begins a ring-composition that is ended by the repetition of his name in line 95, just five lines from the outset and from the end of the victory ode's text. But Theron also returns at the very centre of the ode (48-51): ending his narrative with Theron's family, Pindar mentions him and his brother as victors at the games. Lines 5-7, about Theron, simultaneously conclude the proem and begin its second part, forming a ring-composition with 48-51a, where the poet returns for a second time to the victory.

A ring-composition is a form of narrative structure, particularly characteristic of the oral tradition, but not confined to it, in which a narrative develops and reaches its most significant theme before returning to its starting point. *Olympian* 1 exemplifies this device in its symmetrical pattern (Young 1968, 121-3).

Theron's family has been influential in Akragas, modern Agrigento, from the earliest days (8-15), and a first sequence of gnomic comment arises from their trials and difficulties (15-22): one cannot undo the past, but one may forget past troubles in the light of present prosperity, is the concluding thought. But this general idea applies also to Kadmos' daughters, Semele and Ino, ancient heroines of Thebes, who come next. Thus, the reflection also acts as a glide or transition. The following mythological example (22-30) illustrates what has just been said, i.e. that fortune sent from god raises mortals to the heights from out of their previous unhappiness.

In the following, the theme is illustrated in detail: while Kadmos and Peleus were the most fortunate humans who ever lived (as Pindar states in

78), they have to pay for transcendent good fortune – and both suffered through their children. Peleus had one son, short-lived (Achilles is named in 79), and Kadmos four daughters who suffered (Agauve and Autonoe are the other two); but in compensation, the two daughters highlighted here became goddesses (as Pindar tells in *Pyth.* 3. 86-103).

Another transitional gnome (30-34) leads from the eternal life of two of the daughters of Kadmos to the temporal disasters of Laios and his family, who also received compensation in later good fortune. Both mythical narratives have a happy ending.

For the second mythological example (35-45), the narrative moves away from Theron's family and back to Theron's remote ancestors, from historical present to mythical past, from something that needs explanation to the reason that might explain it, from 'now' to 'then'. Laios was killed by his son Oidipous, and Oidipous' two sons Eteokles and Polyneikes committed mutual fratricide. However, Polyneikes' son Thersandros survived: he gained glory for himself and founded the line which has come down to Theron: a happy ending or lucky outcome again. The myth of Thersandros is rather obscure; Pindar connects it to the much more prestigious stories of his ancestors, thus ennobling Theron, Thersandros' descendant.

In so doing, Pindar illustrates his own importance as not only the keeper of an archive but also a maker of myth (March 1987, xi). In the first *Olympian* ode, Pindar went even further, providing a new explanation for Pelops' ivory shoulder. There, Pindar states (*O.* 1. 36) that he does so 'contrary to his predecessors', for it is proper for man to speak well of the gods (35). He couldn't call them cannibals (52), as was implied by the older version rejected by Pindar, which told of Pelops boiled in a cauldron and his shoulder bitten away; instead, Pindar's Pelops was bathed in a cauldron and was born with an ivory shoulder (Gerber 1982, 69sq.).

Eventually, in *Olympian* 2, Pindar concludes his narrative with a return to Theron and his victory (45-51a), coupled with those of his brother Xenokrates. A generalising transition begins (51b-56), arising naturally from what has just been said, summarily commenting on agonistic success. A long, obscure phrase leads to a picture of the afterlife (53-56).

The thought expressed is that 'success in an attempt at the games relieves a man of unhappy thoughts' (51sq.). In a general way, Pindar repeats the idea in the following line: wealth, which is prerequisite for those who take part in the games, if combined with virtues, in other words, material resources embellished with the striving for excellence, offer good chances, bring the opportunity for all things, by supporting deeply held ambitious thoughts: this is a clearly seen star, the truest light for men (55sq.).

Lavish praise of wealth may surprise at first, but Theron was an excessively wealthy man, and certainly maintained “the aristocratic assumption that wealth is in itself meritorious”, i.e. deserving reward (Willcock 1995, 15); thus he was set apart from most of mankind, and at the same time Theron was given the opportunity to achieve things beyond the reach of others, for instance, an Olympic chariot victory. Wealth supported his ambitions, which, on second thought, is not surprising.

Wealth, combined with a willingness to spend it (*ploutos* and *dapana*), may indeed help to develop a natural ability (*phya*) by hard work (*ponos*), and given divine favour (*theos*), i.e. ‘things going well on the day’, we have all the Pindaric requirements for victory. The consequences of victory, however, are ambivalent in Pindar – on the one side, there is praise (*hymnos*), on the other, the danger of envy (*phthonos*), either by gods or men. Furthermore, the victor may become dissatisfied from having too much of a good thing, from not being able to cope with such affluence (*koros*). He may lose the grace (*charis*) conferred on him by the charm and beauty of poetry; in that case, his technical skill (*sophia*) and finally his talents (decisiveness, commitment, ability) remain forgotten.

Pindar finds ever new ways to make these points; sometimes, his variations on well-worn themes are far-flung, and have been a major cause of his reputation for obscurity. Those “not quite on his wavelength” (Willcock 1995, 19) are bewildered, finding hidden meanings in obscure comments, even regarding his technique as indirect allusion in ‘Aesopic’ language, and relating them to Pindar’s personal views, of which nothing is known. Instead, what appear to be personal views are not those of Pindar, the citizen of Thebes, his hometown, but of Pindar the poet, whose poetry was commissioned and who was privileged to be tasked with praising extraordinary achievements. Everything in an ode was there for one purpose and one purpose only, the praise of the victor; even unhappy or unclear expressions do not disguise anything hidden, but are there for the purpose of praise, and work as its ‘foil’.

In the second *Olympian*, the description of the afterlife is introduced by an allusion to the judgment of the souls (56-60). The conditional phrase in 56, ‘but if a man, possessing wealth adorned with virtue, knows the future’, however, is never supplied with an expected following sentence, because the following ‘that’ in 57 (until 60) introduces a description which develops and continues all the way to line 83. Its implication is that if a man who combines wealth and virtue also knows about the future rewards and punishments, then all will be well for him. He is initiated (or at least imagined as such), he knows what is to come.

'A judge beneath the earth pronounces sentence with hateful necessity upon sins committed here in Zeus' realm' (58) introduces a picture of the afterlife that concentrates for a moment on the place of those who behaved well on earth (61-67). Though suddenly, a particular kind of permanent bliss is centred upon, and those who have persevered in righteousness during several lives are introduced. The passage 68-70 proves that poets such as Pindar held the view that the soul of man is immortal and later returns in a new body (quite similar is Pindar's fr. 133).

The details of Pindar's afterlife are reminiscent of older poetry by Homer and Hesiod. Menelaus, for instance, is told that he will not die in the normal way at home (in the *Odyssey's* fourth book, lines 561-9); instead the gods will send him to Elysium; there the weather is mild, the west wind blows from the ocean. Again a perfect climate prevails on the (plural) Islands of the Blest of which Hesiod speaks (*Works and Days*, lines 166-73): there, the heroes of the fourth age, those who fought at Troy and Thebes, are placed by Zeus on these beautiful isles (plural) at the end of the earth by the river Ocean. Two fragmentary texts by Pindar (fr. 129 & 130) include a description of meadows (or Elysian fields), where the righteous have an enjoyable existence, and of a road that leads to hell for the wicked (on these fragments v. Campbell 1983, 246sq. & Willcock 1995, 169-74).

In Pindar's second *Olympian*, we hear of the journey (68-70); a description of the (singular) Island of the Blest follows; Rhadamanthys governs (75-7), his presence being already a central part of the *Odyssey* passage. The heroes who are to be found on the island are mentioned (78-83) before an abrupt break-off formula leads back from the 'myth' to the direct praise of the victor (83-8). 'I have many swift arrows' says Pindar (83), alluding to the variety of ways of praising at his command and at the same time introducing a famous simile: a pair of crows that cry in vain against the divine bird of Zeus (87sq.).

The superiority of natural ability to acquired learning is the essential gnomic point: 'wise is the man who understands many things intuitively; but those who have learned, undisciplined in their flow of words, chatter ineffectively like a pair of crows against the divine bird of Zeus.' One may assume that Pindar is striking out at his poetic rivals, though the fact that he would do so in such a sublime poem seems undignified and is thus unlikely. Indeed, it is difficult to judge the amount of interaction between the 'vehicle' and the 'tenor' of his simile (Richards 1936, 96, Silk 1974, 8-15), as well as the implication of this interaction: by speaking of a couple of crows screeching at a single eagle, Pindar might have been alluding to a wider contrast between the one and the many; as a double antithesis, an opposition between

lower humans and a god who can remain unattacked high in the air, is also clearly evoked.

The ensuing eulogy of Theron (89-95) resumes the metaphor of shooting at a target with a choice of many arrows (83sq.). Pindar asks himself what target he is to choose and indicates the Akragas direction. However, the eulogy must not go on too long lest it become counter-productive and annoying (a theme also known from other victory odes, e.g. *Pyth.* 1. 81-4). The idea is quite awkwardly expressed: 'But disapproval overtakes praise, not meeting it fairly, but coming from ill-disciplined men; it has a wish to place irrelevant chatter as a block on the memory of the noble deeds of the good' (as rendered by Willcock 1995, 165).

The close of the poem (98-100) is anticlimactic. A very simple simile (in contrast to the previous, complicated passage) states a truism: 'The grains of sand are beyond counting; and who could enumerate the benefits which that man has conferred on others?'

Pindar's belief in an afterlife appears not to have been shared by all of his contemporaries. Bacchylides, for instance, has little to say about death. He imagines the underworld as Homer represented it, a place where the souls of the wretched mortals are 'like leaves shaken by the wind' (5. 65-7).

For Bacchylides, as for Pindar, the fame won by an athlete lives on after his death (13. 63-6), and 'the finest thing is to be a good man much envied by many of his fellows' (10. 45-52). How this can be achieved is made clear in Bacchylides' longest gnomic passage, at the end of his ode for a boy from his own island who won the boxing contest at the Isthmian games. *Ode 2*, however, on the same boy's victory, reveals a much more concise Bacchylides. He begins and ends the passage with 'excellence' (1. 159-84):

'Excellence holds the greatest glory; wealth is not a stable criterion because it accompanies even the worthless. Only he who treats the gods well comforts his heart with more glorious hope. Abundance for itself brings no pleasure, for they are always trying to catch what eludes them. The man whose heart is shaken by lightweight ambitions has honour for the time he lives; but excellence leaves a man even after he has died the enviable adornment of glory.'

Both poets were not only composing victory odes for Sicilians but also encomia for them, i.e. praise songs delivered in a different context. Some at least seem to be directed at a more private audience that came together for a drink. The texts speak of themselves (Herington 1985, 189-91) as of an 'adornment for banquets at the month's end' (Bacch. 20B. 5), and state that they are sent as 'a chariot of lovely songs for after dinner' (Pindar fr. 124ab. 1sq.).

Though only a few texts survive, generic composition may be observed. Depicting the effect of becoming drunk, both poets employ a similar expression: Bacchylides says that ‘the wine sends a man’s thoughts soaring on high’ (Bacch. 20B. 10), while Pindar says that, after having had a few cups, ‘men’s wearisome cares vanish from their breasts, and on a sea of golden wealth we all alike sail to an illusory shore’ (Pindar fr. 124ab. 5-7). The lucky symposiastes in Bacchylides ‘expects to be monarch over all the world, his house gleams with gold and ivory’ (12sq.); in the phantasy world depicted by Pindar, ‘then the pauper is rich’ (8). While Pindar seems to be fonder of a certain splendour in his imaginative diction, Bacchylides appears to excel more in vivid detail and playful fancy (Groningen 1960, 100-3), though given the fragment’s shortness, generalizations are hazardous.

It is highly unlikely that the poets were unfamiliar with each other’s texts. They might even have been driven by a desire to outdo each other, while restricted in their choice of adequate themes, i.e. topoi suitable for drinking among friends.

Many more of these texts proliferated. They were not necessarily performed by well-known artists (e.g. Pindar and Bacchylides); they were also performed by other gifted and enthusiastic people willing to perform at a symposium. Plato approvingly quotes such a text, a drinking song, reminiscent of nobler passages in encomia or victory odes (PMG 890):

‘To be healthy is best for mortal man, second is to be handsome in body, third is to be wealthy without trickery, fourth, to be young with one’s friends.’

The text was well known in the classical age, made fun of, and attributed to various prominent authors, comic as well as more serious poets. And indeed, the text can serve various purposes and entertain different audiences.

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TRAGIC POETRY: AESCHYLUS

Greek tragedy differs in many ways from the various forms of modern tragedy, and even when its ancient Greek classical form seems not to, there are still many hidden and unsuspected opportunities for error in its interpretation. Moreover, what Greek tragedy was actually like in performance is a difficult question.

The evidence is not only slighter than we would like but also comes from a later period than we are chiefly concerned with, i.e. the fifth century BC, when Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides had their plays performed. In fact, the exact interpretation of late information has provoked many a discussion among scholars, mainly because it is suspected to refer to a later type of performance not necessarily related to the 'classical' form of Greek tragedy.

The evidence obtainable may be classified under three broad headings:

- the discoveries and conclusions of archaeological research,
- later tradition about the theatre, and
- the play texts themselves.

There are two different kinds of archaeological evidence: (a) one depends on the conclusions drawn from the excavation of theatre sites, (b) another upon the interpretation of the visual imagery which appears in the painted pottery of fifth-century Attica, which may (or may not) draw on the theatre. Given all these pitfalls and shortcomings, what can safely be stated, or at least plausibly assumed?

At the beginning of the fifth century BC, tragedy in Athens formed part of the Great Dionysia, the spring festival of Dionysus Eleuthereus. The epithet refers to a cult that seems to have originated, or so some thought, in Eleutherae, on the border of Attica and Boeotia; yet the name derives from the Greek word for 'free', *eleutheros*, and the form *eleuthereus* may be translated as 'liberated', or even 'libertine', i.e. free-thinker, non-conformist, a meaning that suits some of the aspects of Dionysus. At its beginning, the festival was probably organized by Pisistratus, tyrant of Athens 560-527, and towards the end of the century the Athenian statesman Cleisthenes may have reorganized it.

Three poets competed, each presenting three tragedies and one satyric play. In the former, the actors - originally only one, but Aeschylus introduced a second very early in the century, Sophocles a third, and in a play written in his last years, *Oedipus Coloneus*, he probably required four actors - and the chorus all portrayed human beings or divine beings in human form; in the latter the chorus were disguised as satyrs, mainly human in form but

with the ears and tails of horses and indecently costumed, and the play depicted parts of ancient legend which were grotesque in themselves or could easily be made so. All of the actors and chorus-men in Greek tragedy were male; female parts were performed not by boys as in the Shakespearian theatre, but by adult men.

The addition of the satyric plays to the tragedies probably took place about 500 BC. Dithyrambos were also performed at the festival contests. 50 singers danced in circular formation, whereas the tragic chorus was arranged in a rectangle.

The scenes of a tragedy consisted of set speeches or dialogue as might be required. The scenes are separated by choral odes of considerable length and of high excellence as lyric poetry; the odes were sung (whereas dialogue was spoken). This suggests that tragedy sprang from a performance which was entirely lyric. Many different metrical elements were employed by the Attic dramatists, "who put them to the most effective use by varying them so as to differentiate the various styles which they employ" (Maas 1962, 10).

Metre was thus a means of imparting a special character to a composition. The Attic dramatists took their dialogue metres from Archilochus and his followers, the metres of their choral lyrics and actors' arias from the lyric poets, their marching anapaests from the Dorians, and added the dochmiac (whose origin is unknown). This produced a threefold effect: in addition to the dialogue metres (trimeter and tetrameter) and the out-and-out lyric metres (glyconic, dochmiac, etc.) there were several semi-lyric metres (in particular, anapaests and dactylic hexameters).

A number of interesting observations confirm and, at the same time, expand upon this picture (Maas 1962, 53sq.): "Characters of low social standing (except for the Phrygian in the *Orestes*) are never given lines in sung metres, but instead are given anapaests (...). But some characters of exalted station and great importance in the plays in question (...) are given no lyrics; perhaps this depended on which particular actor was to play the part. Euripides often aims at a particular effect by having only one actor speak and another sing throughout a scene, usually a scene between a male and a female character (...)."

Aside from this metrical variety, a classical Greek tragedy is comprised of a rather limited number of elements (a survey on these set pieces and the patterns formed by them is provided in Jens 1971) forming a typical structure, the limits of which, however, are very broad. The entrance-song, the chorus' *parodos*, is regularly (though not always) preceded by a speech or a scene forming a prologue. After the *parodos*, the normal structure consists of a regular alternation of acts, so-called *epeisodia* (hence 'episode'), in which the actors take the main part, though the chorus may join in the dialogue, or

make brief comments on the speeches, and *stasima*, i.e. the succeeding choral odes; the odes may comment on the scenes, anticipate future developments, or refer to things past, thereby helping the audience interpret what is being represented by the actors on stage.

The number of *epeisodia* (acts, scenes) and *stasima* (dividing the acts and scenes from each other) may be as few as three or as many as five or six of each. This scheme, however, varies: in Aeschylus, for example, there are scenes which are mainly lyric, which contain brief speeches by an actor or bits of dialogue between the lyrics. This structure is called epirrhematic because it consists of lyrics and *epirrhemata* of spoken dialogue; *epirrhema* simply means 'that which is said afterwards' (or 'in return'), i.e. after the chorus has sung (or as a reply to it).

In Sophocles and Euripides, an act or scene, particularly a long one, may again be broken up by the insertion of lyrics or passages in anapaests; it also happens that the strophe and its corresponding part, the antistrophe, are separated, interlaced with parts of an act or scene.

Rarely in Aeschylus and Sophocles, though commonly in Euripides, an anapaestic or lyric monody by one of the actors is introduced. These arias, as they are sometimes called, offered the chance of spectacular solo-performances. They may have even contained impromptu additions by the respective performer, the technical term for which is histrionic interpolation. In the case of Euripides, its great period might have been from 400 to 200 BC (Page 1934, 14). These monodies abandon the regular strophe-antistrophe form for free lyrics (*melos apolelumenon*).

In some plays there was a secondary chorus (this is suspected in the case of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* and Euripides' *Hippolytus*). In other plays, scholars discuss whether all the text belonging to the chorus was performed by all its members, or whether it is more likely that conflicting views, particularly at moments of excitement and uncertainty, were divided between several members of the chorus. Two halves of the chorus are likely to have sung such conflicting passages respectively. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (lines 1346-71) each member of the chorus gives his individual opinion after Agamemnon has been killed by Clytaemnestra (Dawe 1963, 45sq., Taplin 1977, 323sq.).

The play concluded with a final scene (*exodos*) that was very variable in structure. However, there was never a great choral finale, like that of a modern opera. At most, the chorus speak a few quiet words. Some scholars thought this fact unsatisfactory.

The introduction of a single actor, delivering a prologue and set speeches, is attributed to Thespis, who gave a performance at Athens about 534 BC. Thespis was the first to appear as an actor separate from the chorus, his face disguised in various ways and ultimately in a linen mask - the

disguise which would most easily allow an actor to change from one character to another. He probably began the use of the iambic trimeter for speeches, though the trochaic tetrameter was never entirely abandoned for dialogue.

The actors and chorus in tragedy wore masks, and one may reasonably assume that there was a kind of 'green room', a place to change in, without being observed by the public. Vase paintings may serve as an illustration of this; the 'Pronomos Krater' (c. 400 BC), for instance, showing actors, a satyr chorus, an aulete, the play-wright and a lyre-player, is the most famous of the theatrical 'genre scenes' (Csapo/Slater 1995, 69sq., pl. 8 = *Cambridge History of Classical Literature I: Greek Literature*, pl. VIII: Pronomos Painter, Naples, Museo Nazionale 3240). The number of the chorus employed in the early days is disputed; some think that it was fifty (as in the dithyramb), though others point to the fact that the chorus in many plays consisted of twelve or, later, fifteen singers.

Tragedy in Greece was a religious ceremony in the sense that it formed part of the festivals of Dionysus, and that it dealt with grave religious problems; but it was not an act of worship, and tragedies were not literary texts used in the same way as were hymns, or paeans, or dithyrambs, which at least for some time served or accompanied a ritual purpose. The tragic chorus did not represent the Athenian people paying honour to a god: on the contrary, the tragic chorus was always dramatic and 'in character'.

The chorus' action and lyrics did not commonly refer to Dionysus, and if there is an ode to Dionysus, it is because the dramatic situation suggests it (as in Sophocles' *Antigone* 1115-52). Instead, the plays presented in dramatic form themes chosen freely from the whole range of epic story and circulating legend (according to Aristotle's *Poetics* 14), gradually dwindling down to a narrower range (largely non-Dionysiac), as it was found that the legends of certain houses furnished better material for dramatic treatment than others, not many families providing subjects for tragedies. The only Dionysiac play to have survived is apparently Euripides' *Bacchae*. In particular, the dysfunctional family to which Orestes belongs was a subject treated by all great tragedians, as was the fate of the Trojan hero Philoctetes.

However, the tragedies of the three great poets and their contemporaries were in a certain sense always religious: they were not interested in the plays' action merely as an exciting series of events (as the poets were free to vary the legends which they found current, the action was exciting and unpredictable indeed), nor were they interested merely in the study of striking characters, though this interest was strong, too. The plays were religious in the sense that the action exemplified the relation of man to the powers controlling the universe, and the relation of these powers to man's

destiny. One may call this the “questioning spirit so characteristic of Greek tragedy” (Barlow 1986, 9).

Though our understanding of the development of classical Greek tragedy is limited, for there are so many plays missing (Garland 2004, 196sq.), and the work of even the most well-known exists in such a state that any attempt to generalize seems quite audacious, the development of tragedy in the fifth century shows a growing interest in the character of human beings as such. That the tragedians may have influenced each other in the course of this development goes without saying, although Sophocles in particular devotes much energy to displaying the effect of some terrible crisis or strain upon certain noble and distinguished (or in any event not abnormal) characters (at least in his seven extant plays). The characters, however, of Sophocles’ younger contemporary Euripides are less elevated, and time and again his plays appear to be studies of disturbed minds, minutely analysed in a way foreign to the oldest tragedian, Aeschylus, and not common in Sophocles either. To Sophocles, in contrast, being much “concerned to keep alive the interest of his audience at all costs, (...) consistency of character was entirely dispensable” (Dawe 1963, 22).

The importance of the actor’s art grew accordingly, until, in the fourth century, the actors seem to take precedence over the poets (according to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* 3. 1). One may assume that, attention being concentrated on the performer, less attention was paid to the message, and that tragedy in the Sophoclean style (i.e. always maintaining high moral earnestness) was no longer fashionable; in other words, one may suspect that tragedy was no longer taken seriously enough to provoke strong antagonism, and that it had become a mere form of art. These considerations may find support in the fact that the chorus was by this time only a singer of interludes (since Agathon, according to Aristotle’s *Poetics* 18), while a century before, it had conveyed the poet’s message, or had at least come close to doing so.

In light of these considerations, it is hardly surprising that, at the turn of the fifth to the fourth century, the same tragedian Agathon, who first had the chorus sing only interludes unconnected with the play, composed the first tragedy in which both characters and plot were entirely invented (as Aristotle reports in *Poetics* 9). This step was inevitable: the public may have appreciated such new trends, and the new political situation (i.e. following the collapse of Athenian supremacy at the end of the fifth century) certainly influenced the public’s perspective, and changed its expectations regarding art and entertainment.

It is natural enough that all three classical poets praise Athens in various passages, but again, as in the case of the ‘religious’ element, the ‘political’ tendency of the tragedians is not easy to judge. Aeschylus, in his *Eumenides*,

by letting Athena decide the outcome, is clearly referring to the Athenian justice system, tracing it back to a legendary source. Euripides might also have been referring to Athenian politics in his play on the victims of the Trojan War (his *Troades*) at the moment when the Athenians were heavily afflicted by the ever more disastrous Peloponnesian war, and about to send their navy to Sicily. The play's depiction of the horrors of war is often understood as a reproach to the Athenians for war-crimes and other atrocities, and as a warning against further imperialism (Scodel 1980, 11). The Euripidean *Trojan Women* is part of a trilogy of the type Aeschylus often wrote, i.e. one in which the plays are connected by a continuing narrative; in Euripides' work, however, this type of trilogy is rather rare.

Aeschylus also chose a subject taken from then recent history. His *Persians* depicts the scene at the Persian court when the message of defeat at Salamis arrives: a queen haunted by a nightmare, a son so interested in his lyrics that he is unable to understand the catastrophic nature of the events, and a dead father, the legendary great Darius, who seized power and remained on top, returning from the grave, bewildered and angry. In modern times, productions of Greek tragedy are often loaded with such a political or ideological agenda (Garland 2004, 231sq.), and Aeschylus' *Persians* was performed as if it contained topical allusions to events of the hour (Flashar 2009, 164).

What position did each of the great tragedians hold in the development of tragedy's technique?

Aeschylus was born at Eleusis in 525; his first appearance in tragedy is likely to have occurred early in the fifth century, and his first victory was in 485/4. Of his seven extant plays, the *Persians* was produced in 472, the *Seven against Thebes* in 467, and the *Oresteia* (of which the tragic trilogy is preserved – *Agamemnon*, *Choephoroi*, *Eumenides*, while the satyr-play *Proteus* is lost) was performed in 458.

The Persian invasions were sweeping down upon Athens as Aeschylus came of age as a professional tragedian. He served at Marathon, where the Greeks achieved their first victory over Persia (490), and he also took part in the naval battle at Salamis (Sept. 480). That he served at Marathon is based on Aeschylus' epitaph. That he took part in the battle at Salamis is drawn from part of a legend that involves all three tragedians: tradition tells us that Euripides was born on the very day of the great victory, while Sophocles at the age of 16 was chosen to lead the choir of boys who performed the paean celebrating the victory of Salamis in Athens.

Aeschylus twice visited Sicily, where during the first part of the fifth century the courts of the Sicilian tyrants were seats of culture and great wealth. On the first occasion, he accepted the invitation of Hiero (king of Syracuse

and client of Pindar and Bacchylides), and composed a play celebrating the city Hiero was founding on the slope of mount Etna. A papyrus preserving a summary (Lobel 1952, 68) suggests that the play's *epeisodia* are set in four or five different locations, a fact that made the play appear quite unusual, if not innovative. A second visit to Sicily took place after Aeschylus had won the prize with the *Oresteia*. He was never to return to Athens: the story goes that Aeschylus was sitting on the hillside near the city of Gela when an eagle, flying with a tortoise in its claws in quest of a stone upon which to crush it, dropped its prey upon the bald head of the poet and killed him. He left two sons, who pursued the tragic art, a tradition which persisted in the family for generations.

Of Aeschylus' two sons, Euphorion was a tragic poet, while the other, Euaion, was a tragic actor. Aeschylus' nephew, Philocles I, was also a tragic poet, as was Philocles' son Morsimus, as well as his grandson Astydamos I, and his great-grandsons Philocles II and Astydamos II, the latter being the author of some of the fourth century's most successful plays (Easterling 1993, 565). This was the most extensive dynasty, though Sophocles' son Iophon also produced plays (and is regarded as talented in Aristophanes' *Frogs* 73, from 405); Sophocles the Younger produced his grandfather's *Oedipus Coloneus* in 401, and Euripides' son (or nephew) Mnesilochus staged Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, *Alcmaeon* and *Bacchae* after their author's death.

The great technical change brought about by Aeschylus was that he was the first to 'introduce' a second actor, consequently (a) diminishing the importance of the chorus, and (b) assigning the leading part to dialogue (as Aristotle in his *Poetics* ch. 4 states). This development was very important, for tragedy, having been launched by the man who invented the one-actor form, did not merely double its resources. It was now possible "to bring two opposed or sympathetic characters face to face, to exhibit the clash of principles by means of the clash of personalities, (...) a change so great that to call Aeschylus the very inventor of tragedy is not unreasonable" (Norwood 1920, 11sq.).

We cannot say with certainty whether Aeschylus invented trilogies or tetralogies of plays connected in subject, though he was for some time certainly quite fond of this poetic device. Aside from the *Oresteia*, one such tetralogy consisted of the plays *Laius*, *Oedipus*, *Seven against Thebes*, and the satyric *Sphinx*. If genuine, three plays on *Prometheus* formed such a unit, too.

Aeschylus' Iliadic trilogy, focussing on the story of Achilles, was notorious: a participant in the party depicted in Plato's *Symposium* (a party arranged by the tragedian Agathon on the occasion of his victory in the tragic competition) complains about Aeschylus, who in his *Myrmidones*

(the Achilles-trilogy's first play) makes Achilles appear as Patroclus' lover (180a = TrGF 3 F *134a).

The trilogy was also known to (and derided by) Euripides: when he turns up in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, he mocks the play's opening scene, which portrayed a silent Achilles, which was to Euripides 'a mere pretence of a drama' (*Frogs* 913). In the same breath, Euripides also ridicules Aeschylus' silent Niobe (*Frogs* 905-950) for making the public wait in expectation (919), like an audience brought up in the outdated school of Phrynichus (909sq.), one of the very few pre-Aeschylus tragic poets of whom we know. He authored a play on the Persian defeat at Salamis, and also performed a play on the destruction of Miletus by the Persians in 494, for which he was fined by the Athenians (Herodotus 6. 21).

The Seven against Thebes (which won the prize in 467 BC) deals with the fratricidal quarrel of the sons of Oedipus. Eteocles, the elder, and the king of Thebes, has expelled his brother Polynices, who attacks the city with six comrades-in-arms. The seven invading champions are met at the seven gates by as many Theban warriors. The scene is set in an open space in the town; a messenger brings the news to Eteocles, and the entering chorus, consisting of Theban maidens, express their frantic terror. During the ensuing pairs of speeches between the messenger and Eteocles, the seven warriors who are about to attack at the seven gates are characterized by means of their shields. This long scene (375-676) is reminiscent of Aeschylus' earlier *Persians*, during which a messenger reports to the queen (at similar length and also at the outset of the play's action, 249-514) about the crushing Persian defeat at Salamis. Eteocles, in *The Seven*, however, is elevated to the status of a tragic hero, being much more involved in the play's action, and is forced to take fateful decisions of which he is to eventually become a victim.

Much later in the history of tragedy, in a play that was probably performed between 411 and 408, Euripides refers to this Aeschylean scene. In his *Phoenissae*, the seven warriors attacking Thebes are again described by means of their shields (1104-40), a fact that makes it likely that the passage was intended as a reference to Aeschylus' play and its impressive scene. However, the scene's authenticity is not beyond doubt, although it may well be truly Euripidean (Mastronarde 1994, 458sq.).

Earlier in the play, Eteocles seems to refer to the Aeschylean description by pointing out to Creon (who became king of Thebes after Oedipus' fall, and is to become king again after Eteocles' death) that 'to tell you the name of each man would consume too much time with the enemy camped at our very gates' (751sq.), and the later, much abbreviated catalogue may be viewed as a further deconstruction of the weight of the older play's central

scene. But then this might have been exactly what the interpolator who added the lines in question intended, and the argument works both ways.

As each fighter is described in Aeschylus, Eteocles chooses one of his comrades for defence (in Euripides the fighters are the same with the exception of Adrastus for Eteocles). The seventh enemy is Polynices, the king's own brother; Eteocles declares that he will confront Polynices himself. The chorus lament the frightful story of Oedipus' curse. The messenger returns with the news that the brothers have fallen by each other's hand. Their corpses are brought in. Eteocles is to be honourably buried, his brother is to be left to the dogs and birds of prey. Antigone defies this decree and declares that she will bury Polynices; the chorus divide into two parts, one supporting Antigone, the other obeying the state.

The first half of the play is not dramatic at all, being merely a static presentation of the situation: a besieged city, panic among the women, resolution in the mind of the general as shown in his choosing of the champions. The latter portion, however, provides action: the king, spurred on by the paternal curse, the invisible 'force', rushes to the deathly duel. A dramatic conflict of personalities, however, is only provided at the very end, when Antigone defies the state.

The structure of both plays, *The Persians* and of *The Seven against Thebes*, is slightly similar; long passages by the chorus frame a central part in which speaking predominates, and much of the plays' action is reported. Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, however, consists of more developed plays that communicate a tragic vision centred on the name of Zeus, but a vision in which there is also room for Apollo and the Eumenides.

Everything that is of the nature of *hybris* – unless it has become incurable – is pruned of its selfishness and its excess. Evil is purified, and by the grace of a god there may be at last an escape from the fatal chain of evil, even inherited evil, for example, the curse upon a house. For that was the theme of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, the first three plays of which constitute the only Athenian tragic trilogy to survive. In its slow but certain working the connected trilogy was a form especially suited to the presentation of a divine operation.

The story of how Agamemnon was murdered on his return from Troy, together with his Trojan concubine Cassandra, by his wife Clytaemnestra and her lover Aegisthus (the plot of the trilogy's first play, *Agamemnon*), and the subsequent story of how Agamemnon's son Orestes later returned from exile to take revenge on his father's killers (the plot of the trilogy's second play, *Libation-Bearers* or *Choephoroi*), had taken already many forms in poetry and in art before Aeschylus brought it to the tragic stage (Prag 1985). However, Aeschylus was the first to make a tragedy of the story.

After the death of Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra (who, as Homer tells the story, enjoyed their power for seven years) the accounts diverge widely, though the pursuit of Orestes by his mother's Furies (Erinyes), and Apollo's protection of him against these Eumenides (the plot and title of the trilogy's last play), date back at least to the sixth-century lyric *Oresteia* of Stesichorus. It is not clear whether an Athenian version (in which Orestes was tried and acquitted on the Areopagus for the murder of his mother) existed prior to Aeschylus' version, or whether this was Aeschylus' own invention (Sommerstein 2008, xisq.).

Be that as it may, presenting Clytaemnestra as a powerful masculine woman was (almost) certainly Aeschylus' own invention. The theme is evoked in the watchman's prologue, when he speaks of (11) 'the ruling of a woman's hopeful heart, which plans like a man.' This suggests that Agamemnon is killed by Clytaemnestra alone, while Aegisthus was not even in the building, while a roughly contemporary (though maybe slightly earlier) red-figured vase-painting shows both Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra attacking Agamemnon (*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, s.v. Agamemnon no. 89, Dokimasia-painter, Boston 63.1246 = Csapo/Slater 1995, 58-60, pl. 2A&B).

Clytaemnestra's ominous dream, the meeting of Orestes and Electra at their father's tomb, and the identification of Orestes by means of a lock of hair, were all already featured in Stesichorus' poem. However, identifying the Semnai Theai (who were worshipped near the Areopagus) with the Furies, who were normally thought of as impervious to prayer and accordingly received no cult, was Aeschylus' invention.

The *Oresteia*-plays are the earliest surviving Athenian dramas providing evidence of a building as part of the performing space; in the first two plays, this so-called *skene* represents the palace of Agamemnon and Menelaus, both transferred from Mycenae or Sparta to a joint kingship at Argos for the play's purpose. Aeschylus also appears to have made free use of the *ekkyklema* (from the Greek verb meaning 'to wheel out'), a theatrical device used to display an interior:

In the *Agamemnon*, the *ekkyklema* is needed for the tableau of Agamemnon dead in the bathtub, with Cassandra beside him, and Clytaemnestra standing triumphant over them; in *Libation-Bearers* for a very similar tableau with different characters, this time the two corpses being those of Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus, slain by Orestes; finally, in *Eumenides*, Orestes appeared on the *ekkyklema* as suppliant at the 'navel-stone' of Delphi, surrounded by sleeping Furies. Aeschylus may also have used the flying-machine (the *mechane*) for the entrance of Athena in his *Eumenides* (397). However, exactly

how such crude mechanical devices were used is keenly disputed (and the *ekkyklema*, e.g., is ruled out for Aeschylus by Taplin 1977, 442sq.).

The *Oresteia* was produced at a critical time in Athenian history: Athens had made an alliance with Sparta's traditional enemy, Argos, and was at war with a major Greek power, Corinth. At the same time, there had been great changes in its internal politics: Cimon's policy of alliance with Sparta had been reversed, Cimon himself had been ostracized, and a disputed reformer-figure, Ephialtes, had died under circumstances that convinced most people that he had been murdered. Many supporters of democracy would have believed that Ephialtes' murderers were still in Athens and free to plot further mischief.

Some of these events and/or tensions seem to be alluded to in the plays, particularly in *Eumenides*, the action of which develops in two different places: first, at the temple of Apollo at Delphi, then, from line 235 onwards, at the temple of Athena in the Acropolis in Athens. Orestes, or Apollo acting on his behalf, thrice promises an eternal alliance between his city of Argos and Athens (289-91, 667-73, 762-77): both Athena and the Erinyes pray that Athens may have no civil strife (858-66, 976-87). Most strikingly, the play is centred on the trial of Orestes for homicide before the Areopagus council, which is represented as the first such trial ever held and the occasion for the council's foundation. Ephialtes had decreed a measure drastically reducing the powers of the council of the Areopagus, confining it to a few functions with roots in traditional religion, the most important of which was the trying of certain cases of homicide. Aeschylus gives Athena a speech in which she praises the council lavishly (690-706).

At the end of the trilogy the Furies are given the new name of Semnai Theai, i.e. 'awesome goddesses'. A group of goddesses, they had a sanctuary between the Acropolis and the Areopagus, and were closely associated with the Areopagus council, which was located near their sanctuary. It is likely that Aeschylus identified these very Athenian goddesses with the Furies who persecuted Orestes. With this innovation, he deepened the significance of the connection between the Semnai Theai and the Areopagus council, creating a solid new link between the story of Orestes and the world of contemporary Athens. Thus, towards the end of the *Eumenides*, images and symbols of evil are transformed into those of blessing. Both the Semnai Theai and Athena could now be seen as working together in order to protect Athens, and Aeschylus may have appeared as a prophet of democracy (Sommerstein 1996, 416-20).

How is the fabric of such plays woven? Why do they not fall apart?

The Aeschylean message is clearly conveyed, his subject well chosen to illustrate his theme. In order to give an equally clear impression of the

powerful mechanics that force the actors and, at the same time, limit their range of action, different objects for related purposes are constantly referred to, e.g., curb, yoke, snare, and net, all of which convey the motive of entanglement. The images of the *Oresteia* form part of a larger whole, a system of kindred imagery; they relate to and prefigure each other, preparing the recipient's mind for the next to come.

Such an entanglement, arranged to impede movements or to obstruct natural course, is expressed quite early in the play by the 'curb' forged to subdue Troy's army (132). The image returns later when Clytaemnestra speaks of Cassandra as a person who doesn't yet know how to bear the 'bridle' (1066). When the chorus reminds us of Iphigeneia being killed at the altar by her father Agamemnon, a 'bit' is used to gag her (234), a guard on her lips 'with a silencing power of a bridle' (238), to restrain her from cursing Agamemnon, who is forcing a 'yoke' of slavery on Troy (529).

Zeus cast an all-covering 'net' (358) over Troy, a sign of Troy's slavery, a net that also captured Cassandra (1058), ready for slaughter. A similar 'net of death' for Agamemnon is evoked by Cassandra (1115), a net which is later compared to hunting-nets (1375), and described as 'endless' (1382). From other descriptions of the net (in particular its being exhibited by Orestes *Choe.* 980-4 & 997-1004, later also *Eum.* 634sq.), one gathers that it was thrown over Agamemnon like a tent and covered him completely, that it fettered his hands and hobbled his feet. This endless net returns in Sophocles (fr. 526, from his *Polyxena*-play) and Euripides (*Orestes* 25, in *Electra's* prologue).

Clytaemnestra anticipates her murder when she recounts her dreams and terrifying fantasies during Agamemnon's long absence: she imagines him as having got more holes in him than a net has, if Agamemnon really has been wounded as often as he is said to have been (868) – an image to which she returns in her confession of murder (1382sq.). This example illustrates how the concrete thing embodies the abstract idea, which, in turn can be seen in the thing itself (Lattimore 1972, 78).

A variation of Agamemnon's entanglement is mentioned by the chorus, who describes him as lying in a 'spider's web' (1492), spun by Clytaemnestra, her husband's murderer. Now Agamemnon is 'lying in a state unfit for a free man, laid low in treacherous murder' by Clytaemnestra (1494sq.), who is described by Cassandra in her vision thus: 'the net is she who shares the bed' (1116). Clytaemnestra lured Agamemnon into it with flattery, persuasion, with her sex.

A woven garment embellished with beautiful embroideries, another 'web' of fine fabrics (908sq.), twice called clothing (921, 963), is spread by Clytaemnestra at Agamemnon's feet. At first he recoils from stepping on the gorgeous robe – "the words 'embroidered' and 'doormat' don't go well

together" he puts it (926q.), but soon surrenders, sealing his fate (922-7). He cannot trample on these splendours, he says, for fear of such treading on lovely things. Earlier in the play the Trojans are accused of having 'trampled underfoot the grace of the sacrosanct' (371), and Paris, who trampled down the delicacy of things inviolable (Lebeck 1971, 74-9), is recalled: 'trampling with the foot' is a metaphor which describes the crime of sacrilege.

Now it is Agamemnon, who is defending his code of conduct, by asking his wife to revere him as a man, not a god (925), maintaining male rationalism against the irrational persuasion of the woman. The same Agamemnon, who punished the barbarians, is being turned into a barbarian in order to be punished. The fabric, evidently fine in texture, and which might have served either as a garment of exceptional luxury or as a wall-hanging, is dyed with crimson (910). Later on, Agamemnon is to dye another such fine fabric with his own blood; it will become crimson, too, and "the robe on which he walks prefigures the robe in which he is to be entangled and killed" (Lattimore 1972, 79).

Addressing his sister, Orestes returns to the image of a net, this time describing a dead man's children as preserving his fame, and comparing them to corks that 'bear the net up, keeping safe the spun flax that stretches up from the depths' (*Choe.* 505-8). Obviously, Orestes is referring to Electra and himself in this compressed simile, in which "the literal and figurative elements, the 'tenor' and the 'vehicle', are fused" (Garvie 1986, 183). This expression, in which the last survivors of the House of Atreus are likened to 'corks which save the woven net from sinking into the depths' (Lucas 1959, 118), clearly maintains an image developed much earlier in the trilogy. The lines reflect on the preceding play, *Agamemnon*; their authenticity, however, is disputed. Though as grand, impressive, even majestic as many other lines that are considered as genuine, the sententious passage seems inappropriate in a scene of short, impassioned appeals. Having had its origin in a marginal note, the passage is nowadays regarded as being conceived by a congenial follower and admirer, carried away by the poetic force of Aeschylus, becoming more Aeschylean than Aeschylus, rather than by Aeschylus himself.

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TRAGIC POETRY: SOPHOCLES

Sophocles was born some five years before Marathon; as a youth he led the chorus which celebrated the victory of Salamis; he died in the year before the fall of Athens. Sophocles was famous for his beauty, a fact that may have contributed to his being chosen as leader of the chorus after the battle of Salamis, 'naked and anointed with oil'. But one may also assume that he would not have been chosen unless he had also been well born, and Sophocles' father seems to have been a wealthy man indeed.

Sophocles' lifetime covers the most glorious century of Athenian history. He grew up during the Persian wars, he saw the Delian confederacy (or league) turn into empire, and the empire into tyranny, and the tyranny fall to ruin in the Peloponnesian war. Sophocles took full part in this Athenian history both as poet and as citizen; he acted as priest of two heroes, being twice elected general, and also served as a member of the Treasury Board that administered the funds of the Delian confederacy. Certainly, Sophocles 'hellenotamias' (his official title as one of the 'stewards of Greece') was as highly regarded as Aeschylus 'marathonmakhes', one who fought at Marathon (a word for 'veteran', first attested in works of the Attic comedian Aristophanes); Euripides, however, seems to have cared little for society, save that of a few intimates, and Athenian community values were not always to his liking.

Although the evidence is meagre, we can form some idea of Sophocles' early life, his dramatic career, his friends, his public life, and his old age. Sophocles was born in 497/496 at Colonus. Sophocles' birthplace, a hill a mile north of Athens, is the mythical place where Oedipus found refuge and was buried. This was the site of the bronze threshold of Hades, by which Theseus and Pirithous descended into Hades, invading the lower world in an attempt to carry off Persephone. Theseus was ultimately rescued by Heracles from imprisonment, but Pirithous remained below. Sophocles' last play is set in Colonus; Sophocles was about ninety when he wrote it.

In his youth, Sophocles was given prizes for athletics and his school work; he was allegedly taught by Lamprus, who was highly esteemed by later tradition, because his music was judged as sober and restrained rather than wild and realistic. The same contrast can be observed between Sophocles' choruses and those of Euripides (particularly the later ones). Euripides, being allegedly influenced by Timotheus, was given to a different style. Indeed, parallels have been noted between the highly-colourful and not entirely intelligible aria of the Phrygian in Euripides' *Orestes* (a late work of his from 408, the most original scene of which lasts from l. 1366 to l. 1502) and the likewise not entirely understandable speech of the Phrygian in

Timotheus' *Persians* (ll. 150-61). Euripides is said to have written the prologue to this lyric nome of Timotheus', which is an account of Salamis, combining a crude realism with a grotesque imitation of high style: in tone unquestionably different from Sophocles'.

Ancient biographical tradition has it that Sophocles broke the tradition of the poet performing his work, because his voice was weak, though at first he seems to have performed himself, and his skill in performing Nausicaa in his *Nausicaa*-play garnered great applause (TrGF T Ha). Whether plausible or not, the idea may well have been invented in order to explain why he chose to use a third actor (Lefkowitz 2012, 80), the most prominent change Sophocles is credited with.

The opportunities for dramatic effect afforded by the employment of a third actor, and by the consequent increase in the number of the characters, may be clearly seen in the existing plays; two examples illustrate this point.

If one compares the scene in Aeschylus' *Libation-Bearers* (the *Choephoroi*-play, 668-718), where the news of the supposed death of Orestes is brought to Clytaemnestra, with the similar scene in Sophocles' *Electra* (660-803), the difference is apparent. In the *Choephoroi*, the sole persons present are Clytaemnestra and the bringer of the message, Orestes; the ensuing dialogue is full of suspense, for Orestes is disguising his identity, and Clytaemnestra is apparently unable to recognize her own child. However, only these two speak, and the tone of their dialogue is uniform throughout. In the *Electra*, on the other hand, when the messenger, an old slave, arrives, both Electra and Clytaemnestra are standing before the palace gates. They receive the news with different emotions, "and the contrast between the abject despair of Electra, and the transient remorse and subsequent exultation of Clytaemnestra, produces one of the finest effects of the play" (Haigh 1896, 139).

Another scene of the same kind, during which the presence of a third actor enabled the audience to discover another layer, to witness another interpretation of the play's action 'in the making', is found in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*. In the play's third *epeisodion* (911-1085), Oedipus and his wife Iocaste are listening to the story of the messenger from Corinth. Oedipus, hearing for the first time of his exposure on Cithaeron, is filled with joyful anticipation at the prospect of finding his parents. (Mount Cithaeron in central Greece, standing between Boeotia in the north and Attica in the south, is the scene of many events in Greek mythology; Aktaion and Pentheus, for instance, were both dismembered on its slopes.) As the tale proceeds, Iocaste (who is standing by his side) gradually realises the appalling truth, i.e. that Oedipus is her son. Each of the messenger's answers, "while it kindles the delusive hopes of Oedipus, plunges Jocasta into a deeper abyss of agony" (Haigh 1896, 139sq.), until she rushes from the stage in desperation.

Sophocles is also thought to have been the first to use scene-painting, invented for his performances, and the plays of his tetralogies no longer (necessarily) formed parts of a greater whole, as was often the case with Aeschylus; furthermore, Sophocles increased the number of the chorus from twelve to fifteen. Finally, he is said to have been the first tragedian to use Phrygian music.

The invention of scene-painting was momentous, for it made it easy to set the action in any desired location, and a change of scene also became possible. Aeschylus may well have made use of this development in his later years. By 'breaking up' the tetralogy, Sophocles did something equally fundamental. Now tragedy works on a narrower and more subtle scale where simple ideas and gigantic grasp can no longer impress much. Instead, plays must rely on themselves, for the import from the significance of the whole organism is disregarded. However spacious and statuesque Sophocles' plays may be, their precision and economy have reached a new level, as compared with Aeschylus: Sophocles seems to pack more into each line. By introducing a second actor, thereby enabling dramatic personae to interact on stage, Aeschylus certainly invented tragedy as we know it. By focusing on subtler gradations of shade and colour, Sophocles certainly revolutionised tragedy.

Sophocles' dramatic career started in 468, when he won his first victory; apparently, his first success coincided with his first production. This was the beginning of his long and successful life as dramatist, during which he wrote (probably) one hundred and twenty-three plays, and with these won 24 victories. Even when he failed to win first prize, he never finished lower than the second place; one of these occasions was when he presented the *Oedipus Tyrannus* (a play frequently cited by Aristotle in his *Poetics* and seemingly regarded by him as a model). The exact dates of most of the surviving seven plays are unknown: *Antigone* was performed in 443 or 441 (Webster 1969, 2), *Philoctetes* in 409, and *Oedipus Coloneus* was staged posthumously, in 401. Sophocles died in late 406, a few months after Euripides.

Sophocles seemed the embodiment of all that man can ask: genius, good health, industry, long life, personal beauty, affluence, popularity. There is some evidence of his social charm; he was a friend of Herodotus, for instance, to whom he addressed certain elegiac verses. With regard to his own art, we possess two highly interesting remarks.

The first is reported by Aristotle (*Poetics* ch. 25), who notes that Sophocles said that he portrayed people as they ought to be and Euripides portrayed them as they really are. Sophocles, however, seemed to have esteemed his rival; when he led forth his chorus for the first time after the

news of Euripides' death in Macedonia had reached Athens, he and his singers wore mourning attire.

The second is reported by Plutarchus (*On the Progress of Virtue* ch. 7), who notes that Sophocles said that he began as a follower of Aeschylus, and that later, having rid himself of Aeschylean bombast, he evolved his own crude mannerisms, and that, finally, he adopted the style he found to be the best, by changing the character of the language in order to more accurately portray human nature (i.e. introducing an ethopoetic element). Accordingly, one may divide his work into three periods: having been influenced by the pomp of Aeschylus in his earlier years, Sophocles then found his own more forceful or incisive style, before eventually developing a style which was most suitable for the rendering of character and its gradations of shades or colours.

The structure of the surviving seven plays is of two principal types:

The *Ajax*, *Antigone*, and *Trachiniae* are each divided into two parts. In the first, the fate of the hero or heroine is accomplished. In the second, a consequential issue is brought to its conclusion: Ajax is honoured, Creon is punished, for 'the gods punish the proud, and punishment brings wisdom', as the chorus states, and Heracles is to be burnt alive, as an end to his suffering.

The other plays contain a single plot, and there is nothing in any play which is irrelevant. Each stage in the action is linked with what has gone before by a necessary or probable connection, even if the connection is only revealed by a startling sudden reversal or a recognition-scene. Sophocles' two *Oedipus*-plays are related in a unique way: while the first play depicts Oedipus' fall, the second presents his rise. The king becomes a blind beggar in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the blind beggar becomes a hero in *Oedipus Coloneus*, both plays apparently reflecting each other.

Sophocles almost entirely avoids allusions to contemporary events. However, the discussions of the rights of the individual in opposition to the government and the assertion of a higher law than that of the State may have had a special meaning in his day, though which meaning in particular is not known.

Sophocles is mainly interested in representing noble characters confronted with some terrible crisis. They suffer immensely, out of proportion to any fault in themselves which may have contributed to the disaster. While they are by no means perfect, they are simply being subjected to some almost unendurable strain. Sophocles' *Ajax*, generally supposed to be the oldest of the seven surviving plays, illustrates the case.

The scene plays out before the tent of Ajax on the plain of Troy. Ajax has not received the arms of the dead Achilles; instead, they have been awarded to Odysseus. Ajax sought to slay Agamemnon, Menelaus, and others in

their sleep, but the goddess Athena sent madness upon him so that he slaughtered cattle instead. Coming to his senses, he realizes his shame, and eluding his friends (the chorus of Salaminian sailors and the Trojan captive Tecmessa, who has borne him a son) he retires to a lonely spot by the sea and falls upon his sword. Ajax's half-brother Teucer returns too late to save him, but he confronts and defies Agamemnon and Menelaus, who have decreed that Ajax's body shall be left unburied; at length Odysseus persuades Agamemnon to change his mind.

The only other example of such realism in Greek tragedy is to be found in the *Supplikes* by Euripides, where Evadne throws herself down from a rock onto her husband's funeral pyre despite the entreaties of her father (980-1071). Evadne performs two stanzas of her lyric dirge over her husband's pyre (990-1008 & 1012-30), evoking 'the most pleasurable death, which is to die with one's dearest as he dies' (1006sq.). Her suttee-like immolation, however, is only an episode, not (in the Aristotelian sense) necessarily an integral part of the action, while Sophocles' narrative is much more straightforward and undeviating.

Ajax delivers a dying speech (815-65), characterised by a pensive sadness of tone. There is no unnatural bravado in his words, nor regret, nor weakness. In his last scene, he is restored to his right mind. Two of his earlier speeches provide insight into his character, although they conceal more than they reveal.

Concentrating on Ajax's frame of mind, Sophocles traces the mental phases through which his hero passes. Upon recovering his sanity, Ajax gives utterance to bitter lamentation, deploring the triumph of his foes and his own disgrace, and praying for death (430-80). After an interval, he comes forward again, sword in hand, and delivers a speech, which has divided the opinions of critics (646-92). Having just departed from his friends expressing his resolve to die, now his first words announce at least a change of mood.

Ajax's first speech is preceded by a dirge, or lament (consisting of three pairs of strophe and antistrophe, sung by Ajax), in which he addresses the chorus and Tecmessa, who try in vain to comfort him. Each successive utterance makes it clearer that Ajax can think of only one course of action. In the first pair, addressed to the chorus of sailors, his only friends who are still loyal to him (349sq.), Ajax asks for help: he wants them to kill him (359-61). In the second pair, Ajax speaks of the mockery he fears for having done mighty deeds among beasts that frightened no one (366); in particular, he imagines Odysseus as the 'filthiest trickster', 'laughing in his delight' (381sq.). The much longer third pair sums up Ajax's state of mind: 'darkness is my light', he says (394), fearing that escape is no longer possible (403), again strongly expressing his wish that the army kill him (408sq.). Ending

his dirge, Ajax addresses not just the human listeners but also his inanimate surroundings (413sq.), desiring that they no longer look upon a man (421sq.) deprived of honour (426sq.).

Anger, desperation and fear of dishonour dominate Ajax's mind when he begins to speak more coherently in this first episode of the drama (201-595). His long speech (430-80) can be divided into two parts of roughly equal length (there is a break and a change of argument after line 456). At first Ajax remembers his father, who won the army's first prize for valour while his son was dishonoured by the Atreidae, who pushed aside Ajax's mighty deeds by handing Achilles' weapons to the 'unscrupulous fellow' Odysseus (445). The second part begins with Ajax asking himself what he must do. Returning home is out of the question. 'What kind of face shall I show to my father when I appear' (462), he asks himself. However, dying in battle, challenging all the Trojans single-handed, will not do either. Ajax decides that he should prove to his aged father that his son was born no coward (472). Ajax speaks of his nature as 'physis', a word he chooses again when departing from his little son (549), a word that is to be the leitmotif of Sophocles' much later *Philoctetes*-play. Ajax concludes with a general statement (479sq.): 'the noble man must live with honour or be honourably dead.'

Ajax resolves to die with full deliberation, and after a review of the possible alternatives. Bidding his child farewell, he again evokes the relationship between father and son. Wishing that his son will be luckier than his father (550), he reminds him (who is much too young to grasp the sense of his father's words) of the phases of life: 'the happiest life is lived while one understands nothing', Ajax says (554). However, having learnt delight or pain, one has to show in the presence of enemies what kind of son one is, and what kind of father one had (556sq.).

Ajax then retires into the solitude of his tent. After an interval, during which the chorus chant an ode, he comes forth again, sword in hand, and delivers another speech (646-92). Parts of this speech beg the question of how Sophocles wanted the public to see Ajax's frame of mind at the moment he was facing death.

The fiercer spirit with which he was earlier possessed, and which might have driven him to rash and sudden self-violence, appears to Ajax now a far-off thing. Time, which changes all things, has changed him. He is gentle and submissive, or so it seems. But has he really relinquished his purpose, a purpose that he must hide from Tecmessa and the chorus? Is he subtly deceiving them and still bent on suicide? It has often been argued that this utterance, like all the others in the speech, must be regarded as deliberately designed by Ajax to mislead his listeners. Some have inferred that he must be grimly ironical when he speaks of having been 'softened', or of 'feeling

pity' at leaving his wife and child (650-3), and his words now suggest, indeed, that his new pity will prevent him dying.

Ajax continues by announcing that he will go to the shore where he can wash himself so that he can clean off the dirt and escape the grievous anger of the goddess. There he can conceal the sword, digging a hole in the ground (658sq.). These words, however, reveal his real intentions: they may sound as if he were continuing his line of argument, i.e. that he won't kill himself, but Ajax is indeed going to purge his stains – by dying, and he is going to fix his sword in the earth and bury it – in his body. However, it is not clear that, after his previous reference to the change in his mood, his listeners would necessarily understand these words in their literal sense, for Ajax's words are intentionally ambiguous. Ajax is resolved to die, and he deliberately deceives his listeners by making them believe that he wants to wash off the stains left on him by the slaughter of the cattle with sea-water, propitiate Athena, and bury his ill-omened sword in the ground, where it can do no more mischief.

Ajax next says that (666sq.) 'for the future we shall learn to yield to the gods, and we shall learn to revere the sons of Atreus.' Those audience members who think that Ajax does not intend to kill himself interpret these lines as the speech of a man who has gained insight, a particular knowledge that enables him to humbly accept hierarchy both human and divine. Those who sense that Ajax is just pretending, and thus deceiving the audience, note his sarcastic irony. However, if Ajax was being ironic, it would mean that he was defying the gods and the Atreidae, and there would be no humility at all. In fact, his words are sad, and are tinged with bitterness.

Submission to the gods and reverence for the Atreidae are expressed in the form of an image drawn from the elemental powers of nature: 'winter's snowy storms make way before summer with its fruits, and night's dread circle moves aside for day.' If one assumes that Sophocles is portraying Ajax as meaning what he says, then Ajax has recognised his offence against social order and accepted the award of the arms without attempting to exact vengeance – his conversion is real. If it is not, then Ajax is practising a sophisticated dissimulation, simultaneously saying what he really means, darkly, indeed, yet without the intention of deceiving. A rather complex image emerges: "direct expression of his real mind; irony in a form which does not imply the intention to mislead; and artifice of language so elaborate as necessarily to imply such an intention, at any rate when addressed to simple hearers" (Jebb 1896, xxxviii).

As Ajax is about to speak for the last time (815-65), the scene changes from the tent and sea-shore of the play's beginning to an unfrequented thicket, not far off, probably, where Ajax is seen with his sword partially

buried in the earth. Such scene changes are very rare in extant Greek tragedy, the only other verified instance being in the *Eumenides* of Aeschylus, where the change is merely from one temple to another – from before (and, from line 64, within) the temple of Apollo at Delphi to, beginning at line 235, the temple of Athene Polias on the Acropolis at Athens.

Ajax's suicide takes place on stage in sharp contrast to the former stage-picture (from line 333 onwards) of Ajax sitting motionless among the slain oxen and sheep. Scholia on the Sophoclean passage indicated that Aeschylus' *Thracian Women* also included the suicide of Ajax, though in this case it was narrated by a messenger (TrGF F 83). Sophocles also deviates from the earlier treatment by ascribing the defeat of Ajax in the contest for the arms to the intrigues of the Atreidae (and not to the testimony of the Trojans), his intention clearly being to provide some better excuse for Ajax's rage and violence.

Sophocles' Ajax, however, is reminiscent of Aeschylean figures. Ajax, for example, seems as remote from Tecmessa as Eteocles was from the messenger, standing side by side but not impinging one on the other (Lucas 1959, 138), which is remarkable in that Tecmessa is his wife. She reminds Ajax that she has slept with him and borne him a child, and that the child with no one but a captive mother to shield him will fare ill. He has been softened, he says, by Tecmessa (651), but when she spoke he did not show it (Lucas *ibid.*): "The mood of Ajax changes, but we do not see it change." If Sophocles' statement on his own poetic development is to be taken seriously (and not as an invention of a much later period) then it would make sense to attribute his *Ajax* to the middle period, during which he was developing his post-Aeschylean style.

Much later in his life Sophocles composed a *Philoctetes*, once again focusing on innate ability (in which the aristocratic societies depicted by Homer and Pindar so typically believed). While the same type as Ajax, generally, Philoctetes, is milder and more courteous, more flexible even, and now we can observe the play of Philoctetes' character on Neoptolemus, Achilles' son. Again, Odysseus is there, masterminding the plot.

Philoctetes was produced in the spring of 409, when the poet was eighty-seven years old, and won the first prize. Sophocles' *Ajax*, however, cannot be dated. It is generally assumed that it is one of his earliest extant plays. That the *Ajax* is less mature than his other plays leads most scholars to assume an early date of production, though "no author's work can be relied upon to give an impression of steadily increasing maturity" (Lucas 1959, 132). Moreover, the surviving plays of Sophocles, although written over a period of nearly forty years, are far more homogeneous than the works of the other two poets, Aeschylus and Euripides, which makes them difficult to assign to

phases in Sophocles' life and work. On the other hand, no other play of Sophocles is as didactic as the *Ajax*, which corresponds with the typically Aeschylean idea that a dramatist should attempt to convey direct instruction in his play (of which Aeschylus reminds Euripides in Aristophanes' *Frogs* 1013-88).

The hero Philoctetes was one of the Greek commanders who sailed for Troy. When the fleet landed at Chryse, a small island in the northern Aegean Sea, Philoctetes was fatally bitten by a viper. The wound was incurable, its odour unpleasant, and the victim's cries horrible. Eventually, the Greeks deserted Philoctetes as he slept on the neighbouring island of Lemnos, leaving with him a little food and clothing, and his bow and arrows, the latter a legacy from Heracles.

In the tenth year of the war, however, the Greeks learned that Troy could only be taken with the help of Philoctetes and the weapons of Heracles. Two men were sent to Lemnos to bring the maimed warrior to Troy - Odysseus, because of his cunning intelligence, and Neoptolemus, because he was unknown to Philoctetes.

The scene is a desolate spot on the island where Philoctetes has been living in a cave. Odysseus and Neoptolemus arrive at the cave, and Odysseus persuades the unwilling Neoptolemus to trick Philoctetes into giving him his bow. Neoptolemus leads Philoctetes to believe that he is sailing home because the Greeks have wronged him. Philoctetes appeals to Neoptolemus to take him home. As he tells his story, Philoctetes suffers three successive attacks of violent pain, and finally falls asleep after giving Neoptolemus the bow. Neoptolemus is deeply moved by Philoctetes' heroism and his agony. When Philoctetes wakes, Neoptolemus tells him the truth, that he must go to Troy, for without him the bow is useless. Philoctetes, of course, refuses, and Odysseus' attempt to persuade him is equally unsuccessful. He goes off with Neoptolemus, who has the bow. In the ensuing lyric dialogue with the chorus, Philoctetes expresses his utter misery, his hatred of the Greeks, and his desire for death, while the chorus tries in vain to make him see reason. Eventually, Neoptolemus and Odysseus return, and Neoptolemus gives Philoctetes his bow. After a last futile appeal, Neoptolemus and Philoctetes start off towards the ship to return to Greece. Heracles suddenly appears, and Philoctetes obeys his command to go to Troy.

Sophocles had three actors at his disposal: the first would have played Philoctetes (protagonist), the second Neoptolemus (deuteragonist), and the third Odysseus, the merchant and Heracles (tritagonist). The first actor would have been able to manage the whole range of metres, sung, recitative and spoken lines (Webster 1970, 161-3); the second and the third would have only delivered recitative and spoken lines.

By introducing a new character, Neoptolemus, a young hero whom Philoctetes had never seen, and who therefore had no need to conceal his identity, Sophocles makes the play about intrigue. Neoptolemus, although the active agent in the play's main intrigue, is also manipulated by Odysseus in a subplot he announces at the opening and finally carries out at the end of the first scene (542-627). In the event that Neoptolemus takes too long to persuade Philoctetes to give him the bow, Odysseus will send his scout, in disguise (123-34), to tell a cunning tale of which Neoptolemus is to take what advantage he can (130sq.).

The episode of the (pseudo-) merchant is a sub-plot within the play: the (pseudo-) merchant pretends that he just happened to anchor in the same place (546); he thought that he should warn Neoptolemus, for the Argives not only have new plans for Neoptolemus, but are already acting on them (555sq.). In the following lines, Odysseus' agent acts as if he is reluctant to say what he wanted to say in front of a person unknown to him (573sq.). Eventually, he reveals the secret – that Diomedes and Odysseus are coming, having sworn to bring Philoctetes back, 'either by persuasion or by brute force' (593sq.). Going into more detail, the (pseudo-) merchant reveals that Odysseus has promised to bring Philoctetes to Troy (617-9): 'He thought he would take him of his own free will, but if he refused, he would capture him against it, and if he failed, he would allow anyone who wished to cut off his head.'

The episode is most brilliant: it reveals to Philoctetes that he is being pursued by the Greeks without causing him to suspect Neoptolemus. Accordingly, the pressure mounts on Philoctetes, and an opportunity to obtain the bow arises when the sufferer's fit seizes him. But the episode also conveys a strong reminder of the urgency of his mission to Neoptolemus; finally, it enables Odysseus to learn how his plot is progressing. Neoptolemus, a novice in the art of duplicity, must have been deeply impressed by the cunning of the arch-deceiver Odysseus; although it might have opened his eyes, allowing him to see Odysseus' viciousness more clearly than ever, which may have made him more independent, more of an adult.

The legend of Philoctetes was dramatised by each of the three great tragic poets; and although the tragedies of Aeschylus and Euripides have perished, their general character is fairly well known. Dio Chrysostomus, like Plutarchus, a representative figure of Greek culture in the late first and early second century of Imperial Rome, compared the three *Philoctetes*-plays in one of his many discourses (*or.* 52). It is an interesting bit of ancient literary criticism. His text is our chief source of information about two of the three plays with which it deals, the respective *Philoctetes*-plays of Aeschylus

and Euripides, both known today only in scanty fragments. It is interesting to describe the other variations on the story.

Aeschylus was the first to dramatise Philoctetes' story. In his version, Philoctetes is represented as embittered, and thus Odysseus, who is sent to retrieve him, has a dangerous task to perform: if recognised, he will be slain by the arrows of Heracles. Tricky as he is, however, he gains Philoctetes' confidence with a fictitious story about the disastrous condition of the Greek army. Then, he apparently succeeds in obtaining possession of the bow; eventually, he reveals his identity and persuades Philoctetes to accompany him to Troy. The simple story of Philoctetes is made into a tragedy, its dramatic effectiveness heightened indeed; but the Aeschylean drama seems to have consisted of only narrative accounts, such as Philoctetes' description of his sufferings, and Odysseus' account of the disasters which had befallen the Greek army.

Euripides mostly followed the example set by Aeschylus, though he added a new twist to the story with the device of a Trojan emissary, who comes to Lemnos to counteract the intrigues of Odysseus. This innovation provided Euripides with an opportunity for one of those rhetorical displays in which he excelled (and of which the 'duel' between Jason and Medea is an often cited example). While Philoctetes is in doubt as to his course, the Trojans arrive, and endeavour to persuade him to reject the overtures of the Greeks. Odysseus replies on the opposite side, and it is easy to imagine how such a situation would have been utilised by Euripides. In the end, patriotism wins the day, and Philoctetes agrees to join the Greek army.

In both these plays, the audience is meant to sympathise with Odysseus. Sophocles adds a new aspect to the tragedy, again fully exploiting the possibilities offered by the third actor. Shifting the audience's interest from Odysseus to the interplay between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus, Sophocles converts the drama into an interesting psychological study on the gradual, and sometimes unconscious, assimilation or transfer of ideas, the subtle interchange that goes on between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus.

A young and ingenuous hero, Neoptolemus becomes the active agent in the intrigue, prompted by Odysseus in the background. He wins the sympathy and affection of Philoctetes with a false story of the wrongs suffered by the Greeks, and thereby obtains possession of the bow. Odysseus then appears, and the truth is made known. Philoctetes, frantic with despair, refuses to yield. Neoptolemus, ashamed of his deception, returns the bow to Philoctetes.

By introducing the artless Neoptolemus along with the unscrupulous Odysseus, Sophocles succeeds in presenting a more multifaceted Philoctetes than would have been possible in the earlier dramas. We see the violent side

of his character, his bitter indignation, his fury against Odysseus and the Greeks (as we did in the Sophoclean presentation of Ajax), but now Neoptolemus draws out all his better qualities as well, “his warmth and large-heartedness, his pining for love and sympathy, and his scorn for deceit and meanness” (Haigh 1896, 197).

The play’s major theme is innate ability, *physis*, how strong it is, and also the interplay between people equipped with the same innate ability, as Philoctetes and Neoptolemus are. Odysseus is fully aware of its power, addressing Neoptolemus right at the beginning as someone who (79sq.) ‘by nature’ is not the sort of man to speak such lies or to plot to harm others. Philoctetes, upon waking, does not fail to recognise this, describing Neoptolemus as someone whose (874) ‘nature is noble and sprung from noble ancestors’, a fact that determines Neoptolemus’ behaviour. He cannot do otherwise, for as he says (902sq.) ‘everything is distasteful, when a man has abandoned his own nature and is doing what is unlike him.’ Sophoclean Ajax would have been proud if Sophoclean Neoptolemus had been his son.

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TRAGIC POETRY: EURIPIDES

Euripides is different from Aeschylus and Sophocles; though neither Aeschylus' nor Sophocles' works can be said to represent a singular attitude, Euripides appears unwilling to say where he stands at all. A critical assessment of his work would be a rather complex task because his tragedies are surprising.

To begin with, not only do we possess more of Euripides' plays than of any other Greek dramatist, but also the selection is much more random. This is partly because, when representative works of the great classical authors of the ancient world were selected, ten of his 92 plays were chosen, whereas only seven of both Aeschylus' 90 and Sophocles' 123 plays were; in each case, the exact number of the whole literary output is disputed, but they at least provide an impression of the size of the tragedians' work.

Furthermore, purely by chance, we have nine additional plays, comprising a section of the complete edition of his work assembled by the Alexandrians. Written out in Greek script, they fall into a partially alphabetical arrangement (in groups according to the first letter), which seems to have been a feature of the collected edition. This fact (i.e. that about half of the plays are preserved by chance and not choice) may explain in part why it is so much harder to assess the work of Euripides as a whole than the work of the other two tragic poets. Similar difficulties in critical assessment would arise if more of Aeschylus' or Sophocles' works had been preserved.

Exactly why each of the respective tragedian's surviving plays was chosen remains unknown. Some of the plays were indeed well-known, and thus obvious choices: in the fourth century, Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, for instance, was the first tragedy, or set of tragedies, allowed to be re-performed; likewise Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* was held in high esteem. According to Aristotle, it represented an ideal tragedy, and it was cited more often than any other tragedy as a typical example. These plays were likely to become included in a classical selection, but what about the other plays?

If one assumes that the selection was intended to provide an accurate impression of the poet's work, and rules out the idea that the plays were selected at whim by an incompetent literary critic, or a group of them - what unifying idea could have informed the selection? It must be noted that any answer (including the one developed in the following paragraphs) would be highly likely to change if more of their plays were to turn up in the future. Moreover, the thinking of both these poets developed, and the character of their work changed, with the passage of time, and their works may well have strongly influenced each other. Given that perspective, is there anything left we may safely assume?

Attempting to characterise the thrust of each of the tragedian's work, one might say that Sophocles offers a conception of a world in which man, if not more virtuous, was more magnificent than man as we know him, more proud than vain, more noble than selfish, slightly conceited but at the same time highly admirable. This assumption would be in keeping with Aristotle's view of Sophocles, namely that he portrayed people as they should be, and not as they are (*Poet.* 25).

Aeschylus, however, represents the forces that impinge on human life as merciless powers in their own right. Free will is not denied, but is powerless to overcome the will of the gods and ancestral curses. His characters are composed out of granite, and never completely emerge from the block out of which they have been hewn (Lucas 1959, 138).

Aeschylus expresses himself by means of pompously dark and visionary metaphor, and he is rightly classified by an ancient literary critic as representative of an austere style (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On literary composition*, 22), which "requires that the words stand firmly on their own feet, and occupy strong positions; and that the parts of the sentence be at considerable distances from one another, separated by perceptible intervals. It is not adverse to harsh and dissonant collocations, like blocks of natural stones laid together in building, with their sides not cut square or polished smooth, but remaining unworked and rough-hewn."

Sophocles, however, was not among those who opposed such Aeschylean austerity with a polished style of composition (ch. 23), which "requires that every word shall keep on the move, swept forward and riding along on top of one another, all sustained in their movement by mutual support, like the current of a stream that never rests." Instead he is praised for belonging to a group of writers who compromised between the two, employing a mode of expression which may be called the tempered style (ch. 24).

Having no form peculiar to itself alone, it nevertheless deserves to win first prize, as Dionysius of Halicarnassus put it. The style is "an elaborate mixture of austere and polished structural elements" (ch. 24) and appears as "well-blended" (ch. 21): "I cannot say whether it is formed by abandoning the two extremes or by combining them, for it is not easy to find a clear solution to the problem. So perhaps it may be better to say that it is by the relaxation and the intensification of these extremes that the many varieties of mediant forms arise. It is not the same as in music, where the middle note is equidistant from the lowest and the highest; the middle in literature is not like this, standing at an equal distance from the two extremes."

This passage from Dionysius states that the respective styles in which Aeschylus and Sophocles express themselves, different as they are, nevertheless share common characteristics, i.e. the 'blended' being not totally free of

'austere' elements. This was to be expected, for, in his autobiographical remark, Sophocles hinted at the fact that he started as a close follower of Aeschylus, which implies that the austere style was very familiar to him, a fact that would not have escaped the attention of a careful reader like Dionysius.

The contrast between Sophocles and Euripides was also clearly expressed by Dionysius. In his opinion, Euripides was the only tragedian who excelled in the polished style (ch. 23), the component parts of which are made to "convey as far as possible the effect of a single utterance. (...) In this respect the style resembles finely-woven net, or pictures in which the lights and shadows melt into one another. It requires all its words to be melodious, smooth and soft and like a maiden's face. It shows a sort of repugnance towards rough and dissonant syllables, and careful avoidance of everything rash and hazardous."

One notices what Sophocles' and Euripides' styles have in common, i.e. the 'blended' being not totally free of 'polished' elements. However, the contrast between Aeschylus and Euripides, between 'austere' and 'polished', is marked. How Euripides differed from his predecessors may be further illustrated by the various anecdotes surrounding him.

According to tradition, he was a pupil of Anaxagoras, who was seen by later generations as the typical rationalist; moreover, the comedian Aristophanes not only confronts Euripides with Aeschylus but also links him with Socrates, suggesting they had something in common, and indeed, both were prosecuted for impiety. Euripides, whose public activities seemed to have included nothing more than a single mission to Syracuse as an emissary, was said to have owned a library. He was also known to be fond of a cave by the sea on Salamis, where he used to sit and brood, indulging in a love of solitude regarded as highly abnormal: 'for we Athenians consider the man who takes no part in public affairs (...) as foolish', as Pericles put it in his funeral oration on those who died in the first year of the Peloponnesian war (Thucydides 2. 40. 2).

Having said that, one must immediately add that Euripides was by no means unaware of or ignorant regarding politics. His *Troades*-play proves the contrary. The action of the play takes place outside of Troy after its capture. The captive Trojan women are presented on stage: Hecuba, for instance, ponders her former greatness and present misery, Cassandra utters a horrible parody of a marriage-song in her own 'honour', Hector's infant son Astyanax is hurled from the battlements, his mangled body brought in, and the play ends with the burning of Troy. The play formed part of one of the rare thematic tetralogies of Euripides (Scodel 1980, 64-79). This in itself marks the exceptional status of the play, which was performed after the sack

of Melos and before the departure of the Sicilian expedition: "it is a statement, by a member of the nation which annihilated Melos, of the horrors wherewith the vanquished are overwhelmed" (Norwood 1920, 244).

In 408 Euripides accepted an invitation from King Archelaus, a patron of art and letters, to go to Macedon, where he died some eighteen months later. Whether his decision suggests a certain coldness between him and the Athenians – some of whom cannot have failed to notice what Euripides had expressed in his *Troades*-play – cannot be determined; though the city's atmosphere during the last desperate years of the Peloponnesian war was certainly strained and suspicious. And the king's court had a good deal more to offer.

Archelaus, and his successors, made concerted efforts to attract well-known poets from other parts of Greece, and to make Macedonia a centre of Panhellenic culture. In addition to Euripides, the tragedian Agathon spent time there. Agathon produced at least one original play (i.e. in which he invented the plot and the characters). He also began the practice of letting choral songs pertain as little to the piece as to that of any other tragedy. Timotheus, who shared Euripides' musical taste, also died in Macedonia; and Choerilus of Samos received a stipend from Archelaus, who believed that earlier writers had already excelled in every type of poetry (SH 317, and so composed an epic on the Persian wars, which was something 'new').

Euripides was embraced only after his death. In the fourth century, his plays were read and performed far more than those of all the rest of the tragic poets together. Euripides differs from his contemporaries in this respect as well. Though during his own lifetime Euripides was hardly their equal in repute (having obtained the first prize only five times), after his death his popularity began to overshadow theirs (Norwood 1920, 20): "Aeschylus became a dim antique giant; Sophocles, though always admired, was too definitively Attic and Periclean to retain all his prestige in the Hellenistic world." From 400 BC onwards it was Euripides who was unquestionably better known and admired than any other dramatist, a fact proved by innumerable passages of citation, praise, and comment by writers of every kind.

This might have been simply because Euripides' plays were not considered to be as boring or outdated as those of the other two. Such an assumption, however, would reduce literary history to a sequence of literary trends, and if there was anything particularly attractive in Euripides' works, it would neither be identified nor properly understood. What was it then that made his plays so appealing? Or was it just the fact that he always offered something new and unexpected that made his plays so popular?

Of the nineteen extant plays, those that can be reliably dated are the *Alcestis* (438), *Medea* (431, placed third), the revised *Hippolytus* (428, first place), the *Trojan Women* (415, placed second), *Helena* (412), and *Orestes* (408); *Iphigeneia at Aulis* and *Bacchae* were posthumously produced in 405; a lost play, *Andromeda*, appeared in 412. Euripides first appeared in a tragic contest in 455. He placed third. His first victory was in 441. Euripides won only five victories, one of them posthumously.

A main and recurrent characteristic of Euripides' portrayal of persons, which distinguishes him from his predecessors, is realism. Euripides is content to paint men and women 'as they are' (Aristotle *Poet.* 25), and a few examples may illustrate this observation.

Agamemnon, for instance, the commander of the Grecian fleet, becomes an irresolute and querulous old man, who shrinks in dismay before the anger of his wife (*Iphigeneia at Aulis* 730-50), and sits weeping in his tent, the picture of indecision, writing letter after letter, and tearing them up as soon as he has written them (*Iphigeneia at Aulis* 34-42). Hermione, in turn, daughter of Menelaus and Helena - married to Achilles' son Neoptolemus to whom the Greeks had given Andromache, widow of Hector, as a prize of honour - persecutes her husband's mistress. With her vulgar pride (*Andromache* 147-53) and her hysterical bad-temper (*Andromache* 163-9), she is a spiteful portrait of an ill-bred woman. And to Hecuba, Helen, the idealised figure of the old epics, is just an artful and rapacious courtesan, a greedy escort-girl, who follows Paris for the sake of his Asiatic wealth (*Trojan Women* 993-7), skilfully receiving his waning affections by feigning regret for Menelaus (1004-7): 'whenever you received news that Menelaus was winning, you praised him so that my son (i.e. Paris) would feel grief because he had a great rival in love. But if the Trojans were successful, Menelaus was nothing.'

In a scene of violent and uncontrollable emotion, this Euripidean naturalism produces impressive results. Euripides shows no reserve in depicting such passions, exhibiting unadorned all the outward effects of mental suffering; physical symptoms are presented in vivid detail. The difference of method may be exemplified by comparing his portrayal of Orestes' madness with that of Aeschylus.

In Aeschylus, Orestes' frenzy, during which he is gripped by intense terror, is a weird and supernatural visitation, mysterious as well as unearthly (*Libation-Bearers* 1048-62). Trying desperately to convince the chorus of the Erinyes' actual presence, Orestes has difficulty explaining himself (1053), speaking literally (and rather incoherently) of 'they are not for fancies consisting in these troubles', when one would logically expect something like 'these troubles are for me no fancies' (Garvie 1986, 346).

That the Aeschylean scene depicts a kind of idealised madness is made clear by the contrast provided by Euripides, who treats the case as one of ordinary delirium (*Orestes* 211-82). This time Orestes is with his sister, Electra, to whom he speaks about his impressions of his surroundings.

Sitting up half-awake on his bed in the sick-chamber, gazing vacantly around him, his face unwashed, his hair hanging over his eyes, Orestes asks his sister to wipe the foam from his mouth (220) and to brush back the unkempt hair (224). Showing symptoms of unrest, he wants to lie down again (227), though one moment later he asks her to make him sit up straight again (231). Both are engaged in a dialogue on Menelaus and Helena; suddenly beginning to show signs of distress again, Orestes quickly descends into madness, as Electra notes (254).

Orestes desperately tries to escape the Erinyes' onslaught. Speaking to an imaginary attendant, he asks for Apollo's gift, the bow of horn (268), with which to kill them. As suddenly as he became mad, Orestes returns to sanity (277sq.): 'But what is this? I'm raving and out of breath. Where ever have I leapt to from my bed?' He feels ashamed before his sister.

The Furies are seen only by their crazed victim during this short though spectacular fit of madness, and at the end of the first scene climactic lines contrast reality with fantasy (spoken by Orestes 235sq., by Electra 259 & 312-315). Making his first and significantly self-revealing statements about the matricide (Willink 1986, 120), Orestes is much moved by the sight of his sister's agony, as well as her trustful and loving character.

One encounters similar tenderness in a scene in which Electra's sister Iphigenia, clasping her father's hands in supplication, reminds him of her childhood days, when she used to sit on his knees and talk about the future, fondly anticipating the time when she would have a house of her own, and be able to receive her father as a guest (*Iphigenia at Aulis* 1220-40).

The moment is extremely moving: as Agamemnon is about to slaughter his daughter, she says (1220): 'I was the first to call you father, and you called me your daughter first of all.' She reminds him of her childhood days, when he used to ask (1223sq.): 'Shall I see you happy in your husband's house', to which she responded (1228sq.): 'Shall I lovingly receive you into my house as an old man, father, repaying you for the toil of my nurturer?' The dialogue recalls happier days, and Iphigenia continues (1231sq.): 'I remember these words, but you have forgotten them and wish to kill me.'

Women's thoughts and feelings feature prominently in Euripidean plays. Indeed, and he may well be called "the dramatist who seems most interested in suggesting the full potential of the female pattern of experience" (Lefkowitz 1981, 5). Two tragedies illustrate his interest in the effects of female passion, plays focusing on Medea and Phaedra.

Medea played a prominent part in the story of the Argonauts, the sailors on the ship *Argo*, who, under the leadership of Jason, set sail for Colchis, the region at the east end of the Black Sea, just south of the Caucasus mountains, in order to bring back the Golden Fleece. Having had several adventures along the way, and having finally arrived, they are confronted with a seemingly impossible task: they must yoke a pair of fire-breathing bulls, plough a field, sow it with teeth from a dragon, and overcome the warriors who sprout therefrom. Jason succeeded in doing so because Medea, being in love with him, helped him with magic. She escapes with him. They go to Corinth, have two children, and live happily until Jason, seizing an opportunity to improve his position, marries the daughter of the king of Corinth, Creon.

Euripides' plot consists in the working out of Medea's revenge, which, if carried to its logical conclusion, will mean Medea's ruin as well. For midway through the play, after she manages to find refuge in Athens, Medea revises her plan: she plots to kill Creon's daughter so that Jason will never have children with his new bride, and then kill Jason's two boys. Jason will then die childless, which, in Medea's view, is a better revenge than killing Jason himself.

However, his children are also her children, and at two crucial points (*Medea* 1021-80 and 1236-50) her will to revenge clashes with her maternal feelings; they can be suppressed for a time but will return to make Medea wretched later. By the end of the play, Jason has been brought low, but while there is no reason to feel pity for him (he is portrayed throughout as callous and vain), it is unclear what attitude Euripides wants us to take toward Medea.

Phaedra, however, commits suicide, having taken revenge on an innocent person with whom she fell in love. Phaedra is married to Theseus, who has a son from his first marriage, Hippolytus. Theseus being long absent (on his journey to the lower world, according to Euripides), Phaedra lusts after her stepson Hippolytus, but he, being honourable (or rather anti-sexual), rejects her. Phaedra hangs herself, leaving behind a letter accusing him of rape.

Upon his return, Theseus reads the letter, and does not believe Hippolytus' protestations of innocence. He banishes Hippolytus and uses one of the three wishes which his father Poseidon has granted him. He asks Poseidon to kill Hippolytus. Poseidon keeps his promise, sending a sea-monster which frightens Hippolytus' horses as he is driving away. Thrown from his chariot, Hippolytus is dragged to death. Theseus learns the truth from Artemis too late. Hippolytus, who despised Aphrodite, calling her the basest of deities, was especially favoured by Artemis.

Using her power as goddess of love, Aphrodite brings about Hippolytus' death by an indirect, complicated but clearly foreseeable chain of events. She causes Theseus' wife Phaedra to fall in love with him. The passion is doubly dishonourable, being both adulterous and quasi-incestuous. Rather than give in to it, Phaedra means to starve herself in silence (*Hippolytus* 377-430). Her secret, however, is wormed out of her by her old nurse, who resolves to save Phaedra's life by gratifying her passion.

Though she is under strict instructions not to tell Hippolytus, she goes to him and tells him of Phaedra's love for him, urging him to become her lover. Hippolytus, under the impression that Phaedra has sent her, berates his stepmother but promises not to reveal anything. Phaedra, however, afraid that her secret will be revealed to the world at large, decides to hang herself, leaving a note accusing Hippolytus of raping her.

Both Medea and Phaedra speak of the same paradox: how one can be aware that one is taking a wrong decision, and yet, overwhelmed by intense emotions, take it nonetheless. Medea states that she notes well what she is going to undertake, though 'wrath overbears calculation' (*Medea* 1078), while Phaedra speaks of the fact that 'we know what is right and understand to be noble, but we fail to carry it out' (*Hippolytus* 380sq.), 'some out of laziness, others because they set some pleasure in front of virtue, - and there are many pleasures in life', she continues.

The phrase is to return in one of the fragmentary plays of Euripides. His *Chrysippus*-tragedy depicts Laius as the first Greek to practise pederasty (or, to be more precise, child rape, because he took him by force). It seems to have portrayed Laius' action as wrong, Chrysippus as an innocent victim, and the outcome (Chrysippus' suicide) as disastrous. In a fragment of two lines given to Laius, Phaedra's lament returns (F 841): 'Alas, this truly is a terrible evil for men, when someone knows the good but does not practise it.'

In many another play, Euripides focuses on women's thoughts and feelings (e.g. *Alcestis*, *Hecuba*, or *Electra*), but also in some lost plays the central figure is a woman afflicted with passion: Stheneboea, for instance, becomes intensely enamoured of the virtuous Bellerophon. Euripides also depicts women who become the victim of a god's lust, and are doomed to misery through no fault of their own: Antiope, for instance, attracts Zeus' attention and he impregnates her, or Melanippe, who is seduced or raped by Poseidon.

The traditional stories had no special sacredness for Euripides. His *Orestes*-play is, for the most part, his own: Orestes and Electra, having slain Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus, are imprisoned in their own house by the Argive state, which will decide that day whether they are to be stoned to death. Orestes is tormented by madness, while Electra hopes that they may yet be saved by Menelaus. Orestes passionately begs his help. The Argive

Assembly, however, sentences the criminals to die by their own hand. Orestes' friend Pylades declares that he too will die, but suggests vengeance on Menelaus, and they both try to slay Helen. A Phrygian slave explains in a strange lyric narrative how Helen has vanished amid the confusion. Orestes rushes forth in pursuit, but he is now insane; Menelaus rushes in, distraught, and sees Orestes with his sword at Hermione's (Helena's daughter) throat. As the altercation escalates Apollo appears: Electra shall marry Pylades, and Hermione Orestes; Apollo will reconcile him to the Argive state.

Euripides' lost *Oedipus* and *Antigone* are departures from any pre-existing versions. Sophocles' *Antigone* canonised her: after her brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, had killed each other disputing the throne of Thebes, the new king Creon forbade burial for Polynices, who was condemned as a traitor for leading the Seven against Thebes. Antigone, however, defied the edict, was caught giving Polynices symbolic burial, and was sentenced to death. She was engaged to Creon's son Haemon, who killed himself upon her body after she hanged herself. Euripides tells the same story, except that Antigone is captured at the burial together with Haemon; she is given to him in marriage, and bears him a son.

Euripides and Sophocles gave Oedipus the same past: as a baby, he was left out to die of exposure after the god Apollo had warned Laius that any child he fathered would kill him; he was saved and brought up by Polybus, king of Corinth. Later, he killed Laius unwittingly, destroyed the Sphinx and became king. He was subsequently revealed to be the long-ago abandoned child, and thus a parricide and incestuous husband, whereupon he blinded himself. Euripides' *Oedipus* differs markedly from that of Sophocles, however: he includes a long narrative of the Sphinx' riddle and, it seems, of how Oedipus solved it; Oedipus is blinded not by his own hand but by servants of the dead Laius; and when the truth of Oedipus' life is revealed, Jocasta does not kill herself out of shame, as she does in Sophocles' version, but lives on, resolved to share Oedipus' guilt and suffering; in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* she tends to Oedipus in seclusion at Thebes, and kills herself only after their twin sons Eteocles and Polynices have died at each other's hands.

The *Phoenician Women*, however, is nearly epic in structure; Agathon seems to have also taken an entire epic subject (in his case the Fall of Troy), instead of just an episode, and turned it into a tragic play, for which he was criticised by Aristotle (*Poet.* 18). The *Phoenician Women* was part of a selection of three plays that continued to be read in the Byzantine period. Its lengthy narrative, however, is obscured by incidents which add much to its episodic structure.

One reading of Euripides' disrespectful treatment of myth regards it as an attack on moral authority. In his *Electra*-play, showing Electra in her

cottage with her peasant husband, Euripides takes this to an extreme, and of all his extant plays, *Electra* goes the furthest in reducing the grandeur of the heroic world to an ordinary level. The play is a bitter attack on Aeschylus and his presentation of myth (Solmsen 1967, 43-5 = 1982, 44-6): the famous recognition-scene between brother and sister in Aeschylus' *Libation-Bearers* (164-245) is, if not ridiculed, then at least ironically alluded to, and the whole scene is semi-comic.

Having made an offering at the grave of Agamemnon, Electra tells the chorus that there is something new about it (Aeschylus' *Libation-Bearers* 164 & 166). She finds a cut lock of hair on the tomb (168), though there is nobody who could have cut it except herself (172). Electra is concerned because the lock resembles her own hair, which may mean that it looks very much like the locks of Orestes (178). Discussing the various ways the lock could have ended upon the tomb, Electra dismisses the idea that it was put there by Orestes' killer (189); in her emotional turmoil Electra wishes that the lock had a mind and a voice like a messenger, i.e. that the lock could tell its story (195).

During her rather long soliloquy (183-211), Electra suddenly notices a second piece of evidence – footprints similar to her own (205sq.). At that moment when 'agony and mental breakdown are close' (as Electra sums up her emotional wavering and irrational hoping in 211) Orestes appears and reveals himself to his sister. In order to prove his identity, Orestes asks his sister to put the lock of hair next to the place it was cut from and to look at a piece of weaving (231), woven by her.

Both the footprints and the piece of weaving are foreshadowed by two statements (Silk 1974, 152-7): the first reaction of the chorus to Electra's discovery of the lock is to deny that it could have come from Orestes, for (182) 'his foot is never going to touch the soil of this land'; and Electra's first reaction to Orestes' sudden appearance is to question his identity by asking (220) 'are you trying to weave some web of trickery around me?'

The recognition scene in Sophocles' *Electra* is entirely different: a disguised Orestes pretends to hand Electra an urn containing his own ashes; Electra comes close to committing suicide; eventually, both discover Orestes' real identity in a dramatic climax (Sophocles' *Electra* 1221-4); both speak in half-lines, a stichomythia that speeds up the narrative's tempo. In Aeschylus' *Libation-Bearers*, Electra accepts Orestes when he proves his identity with a piece of clothing woven by her; in Sophocles' *Electra*, Agamemnon's signet ring (1222sq.) serves a similar purpose; in Euripides' play, a scar on Orestes' face identifies him.

Before Electra recognises Orestes, however, in the second scene of his *Electra*-play (487-698), Euripides follows Aeschylus' example. An old man, who took care of Orestes as a child and saved his life, is sent for. Arriving at

Electra's place, the old man tells how, as he was passing Agamemnon's grave, he noticed shorn locks of blond hair (515). Electra, however, dismisses the notion that it was her brother who came, declaring that it would be impossible for her hair to resemble his (527-9): 'how should his hair be like mine since his was grown in the wrestling schools of young noblemen while mine is feminine and combed?' The old man, though, pursues his argument, asking Electra to step into a footprint (532); again, his bizarre idea is refuted by Electra, who points out the fact that a footprint cannot be there (534sq.): 'how could a footprint be made on ground well-stoned?'

The old man tries a third time, exploring a possibility: if Orestes ever came (539sq.), 'is there not some bit of your weaving by which you could recognise him?' The old man alludes to a weaving in which he preserved Orestes from being killed, but again Electra rejects the idea: even if she had been weaving clothes (543sq.), 'how could a man who was a child at that time be wearing the same garments unless his clothing were to grow with his body?'

The recognition comes about in Euripides, however, by means of a hitherto unmentioned sign as it does in Sophocles' version. After the dialogue between Electra and the old man, both Orestes and Pylades turn up again. The old man identifies him, hinting at 'the scar next to his eyebrow' (573): both brother and sister embrace each other, rejoicing in a lively *stichomythia* (579-81).

Many have been tempted to read this scene as a critique of the defects of earlier *Electra*-plays: "after ridiculing (vv. 524 sqq.) the various proofs of recognition adduced by Aeschylus, the poet criticises the long scene of rejoicing introduced by Sophocles, by cutting these ebullitions, and proceeding at once with the plot against the royal assassins of Agamemnon" (Mahaffy 1879, 60). Euripides was in his twenties when Aeschylus' *Libation-Bearers* was produced, "and presumably saw it acted, as did other old men who saw his *Electra*" (Denniston 1939, 115). And although the evidence is by no means sufficient to establish the priority of either Sophocles' or Euripides' *Electra*-play, "it seems to tend to the conclusion that Euripides' *Electra* is the later of the two" (Denniston 1939, xxxix). Thus, such a piece of deliberate, and even malicious, criticism, a "*feuilleton spirituel*, as the French call it" (Mahaffy 1879, 60), would certainly not pass unnoticed.

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'OLD' AND 'NEW' IN GREEK POETRY AT THE END OF THE CLASSICAL AGE

One winter morning in 405 BC, the Athenians came crowding into their open-air theatre to see the new comedies written for the Lenaeon Festival. They were expecting good entertainment, for the Lenaea, at the end of January or beginning of February, normally brightened the gloom of the darker and colder days. But early 405 BC was not a jovial time for the Athenians. The Peloponnesian War had been dragging on for over twenty-five years. The city's economy had been suffering greatly, and the Athenians were at their wit's end.

In this winter of discontent, Aristophanes decided that the Athenians would most enjoy a play which let them escape from the reality in Athens for a while. His *Birds* had already transported the audience to a Cloudcuckooland in the sky during the Sicilian Expedition in 414. In that play, an ingenious Athenian persuades the birds to build a city in the clouds, and compels the gods to accept humiliating terms. Now, in his *Frogs*, Aristophanes transported the audience to Hades, the underground realm of Persephone and Pluto – a sadder place to visit, but he does his best to make it enjoyable.

Going to Hades to bring back Euripides, Dionysus finds that he has to be the judge in a contest between Aeschylus and Euripides for the throne of poetry. Dionysus, as literary critic, has an air of the happy amateur: at the beginning, his reading of Euripides' play *Andromeda* arouses in him a desire to bring Euripides back at all costs (52-4), although he changes his mind completely and ends up bringing back Aeschylus. The central, and connected, themes in Aristophanes' *Frogs* take the form of two questions: (a) how to save Athens and (b) how to save tragedy (Sommerstein 1996, 7-9), which brings us to a discussion of the topic of 'old' and 'new'.

Both themes are explicitly addressed and closely linked in Aeschylus' attack on the moral impact of Euripides' plays (1006-98). Aeschylus accuses Euripides of having altered noble-hearted and virtuous men for the worse (1011): heroic souls are now idle, low, or vulgar (1013-5). Though Euripides had the chance to cultivate the old heroic, Aeschylean-style qualities, he preferred not to (1025). Instead, whereas Aeschylus had depicted his characters as courageous (e.g. Patroclus, Teucers, and other illustrious names), Euripides deformed his plays with his renderings of Phaedras and Stheneboeas as women in the throes of unsatisfied passion, whores, as Aeschylus bluntly puts it (1040-3).

In Aeschylus' view, Euripides failed because instead of concealing what is wicked in man's nature, he put it on stage (1053sq.); even worse, he taught

people the habit of chatter and babble (1069). Due to all that, Aeschylus concludes (1083-8), Athens has become filled with buffoonish monkeys who constantly lie through their teeth, and physical exercise is so neglected that no one has enough training to run with a torch any more. The young now spend their time sitting around engaging in intellectual discussions, instead of improving their physical fitness; the bath-house is full, and the wrestling-schools empty (Dover 1993, 10-37).

Indeed, Aeschylus' criticisms illustrate how endangered tragedy must have appeared to some in 405. Consequently, his spiritual resurrection (i.e. a recovery of the spirit of unity, discipline, and self-discipline he represented) might have been an appealing idea. And now, with Sophocles also dead, there was good reason for Dionysus to go down to Hades to fetch a real tragic poet (Easterling 1993, 559sq.).

In any event, despite the fact that Athens was running short of money, as the chorus in the *parabasis* of *Frogs* lament, most of her traditional silver coinage having been spent on the war abroad (718-37), theatre nevertheless maintained the old level of quality and did so even well beyond Athens' complete defeat in 404. Excellent masterpieces were still to come, among them Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus*, which was staged in 401, five years after the author's death in 406/5; and Euripides' last plays (*Iphigeneia at Aulis*, *Alcmaeon of Corinth*, and the *Bacchae*, all written in exile, before he died in 407/6) were produced posthumously in the Dionysus theatre at Athens (Kuch 1993, 547sq.).

These productions were staged by close relatives: Sophocles the Younger produced his father's *Oedipus Coloneus* in 401, and Euripides the Younger, son or nephew of Euripides, put on *Iphigeneia*, *Alcmaeon* and *Bacchae* after their author's death (Easterling 1993, 565sq.). It looks as though a dramatist's work was initially the property of the descendants. The Aeschylean dynasty, however, was the most extensive, his son Euphorion and his nephew Philocles I being tragic poets (as well as his grandson Astydamas I and his great-grandsons Philocles II and Astydamas II), and his other son, Euaion, performing as tragic actor. This family network may well have influenced Aristophanes' choice of Aeschylus as representative of the 'old school'.

Aristophanes has his Aeschylus emphasise a dramatic change: Euripides did not follow his example; instead he chose a different path. Clearly, to Aeschylus, there was something 'old' and good that contrasted sharply with something 'new' and bad. Though a bit humorous in itself (as a caricature is expected to be), by sharply contrasting the old-style soldiers, who knew nothing at all, to the modern ones, disputing their orders (1072sq.), Aeschylus' hyperbolic diatribe or paratragic tirade relates to 'old' and 'new' in

Greek dramatic poetry. It is quite ironic that Aeschylus, who was so innovative (Herington 1985, 125-50), is turned by Aristophanes into an outstanding conservative, an advocate of poetic exclusiveness: a surprising coup that almost certainly made some in the public smile and raise their eyebrows, if not laugh.

Aeschylus was not the only one convinced of the symbolic power of tragedy, in addition to its social function: the Athenian who speaks about education in Plato's *Laws*, for example, dismisses comedy as unbecoming for citizens (817a-d), whereas serious poets, tragedians, for example, are much praised. If foreign tragedians keen on performing turn up, he continues, they shouldn't expect to be allowed to treat the same subjects as the Athenians, for Athenian tragedy is the best and noblest, and is held in high esteem. Only after having successfully passed a critical rehearsal by an Athenian jury are they to be granted a chorus for their performance.

This passage demonstrates how thoroughly Attic tragedy was considered to be part of Athenian collective self-understanding, and how essential to Athenian social memory it was. Aeschylus spoke of it in the fifth century, as did Plato in the fourth century. Thus, one may assume that tragedy as a genre was still thriving after the catastrophe of the Peloponnesian War (Easterling 1993, 565 & 568): both the continuing prestige of the competition for new plays as well as the productivity and fame of some of the fourth-century dramatists serve as further evidence (Nervegna 2014); last but not least, actors also became enormously famous during the fourth century (Easterling 2002), a fact that provides more proof of the genre's popularity. Plato himself proves the fact by making tragedy a subject of (in a double sense) 'academic' discourse, discussing it in his Academy in a serious tone, a tradition followed by Aristotle in his *Peripatos* (Seidensticker 1995, 184). What Plato had to say about Greek dramatic poetry, however, refers more to the contrast between 'home' and 'abroad', and a reference to 'old' and 'new' should not be inferred.

Nevertheless, Plato does discuss Greek lyric poetry, and 'old' and 'new' remain prominent in his thoughts: in the third book of Plato's *Laws*, a slightly nostalgic speaker evokes a revolution in melic poetry. According to Plato, the relationship traditionally established between certain forms of musical accompaniment and the themes of the poems they accompany changed drastically. Plato no longer restricts himself to a critique of literary content alone; literary form is also carefully analysed. Plato is concerned with the correct method in music and performance, repeatedly criticising fashionable deviations harshly (e.g., 657a & 669b-670a); he might have studied music himself, as had many other upper-class Athenians in his day (Moutsopoulos 1959, 92sq.).

In the old days, the Athenian begins (700a-e), music was divided into various stylistic categories and forms. One type or class of song was that of prayers to the gods, which were termed 'hymns'; another very different type or class, were called 'dirges', i.e. laments. 'Paeans' made up a third category, and yet another, a fourth, was 'dithyramb'; a fifth one was 'nomes', further described as citharoedic nomes, i.e. solemn chants sung to the cithara or lyre. Transferring elements from one class to another was forbidden: once these categories and a number of others had been fixed, no one was allowed to pervert them by using one sort of tune in a composition belonging to another category.

Later, however, as time went on, the Athenian continues, composers started to break the rules, offending good taste. Possessed by a spirit of pleasure, though by nature poetic, they were ignorant of the correct and legitimate standards. They jumbled together laments and hymns, mixed paeans and dithyramb, and imitated flute-tunes with harp-tunes, i.e. they imitated oboe-tunes on the lyre.

The result of this was a total confusion of styles, the Athenian continues: the theatregoers became noisy instead of silent, as though they knew the difference between good and bad music – the new was bad, only what was old was good. In place of an aristocracy in music there sprang up a kind of vulgar theatrocracy, mob rule, a degenerated and perverted form of democracy, declares Plato's Athenian. The new word, coined for the occasion and found only here (701a), denotes 'rule of the audience', who from then on sat in judgment: 'rule exercised by the spectators' in a theatre. Clearly, categories of 'old' and 'new' in poetry are dealt with, and the popularity of the new much disliked, by Plato. In his view, the new style was by no means daring, courageous, brilliant and intensely modern; instead it was bizarre, revolting, affected and decadent.

Since Plato did not have the opportunity to listen to many old-fashioned paeans or hymns of, say, a Pindaric kind, his enthusiasm for the melic genres of the past is likely to be an enthusiasm for the for ever departed (Fantuzzi 2004, 18sq.). Among the lyric genres of his day, the dithyramb flourished almost exclusively; moreover, the only verified radical change in music during Plato's time was the revolutionary development of dithyrambic poetry. From these two considerations it may be inferred that Plato's remarks were directed at the so-called 'new dithyramb', a vogue in lyric poetry that reached its peak at the end of the fifth century, and at the beginning of the fourth, with Timotheus of Miletus.

Reading Timotheus' *Persians*, one is tempted to say that the work foreshadows a characteristic of Hellenistic poetry – that of the crossing of the genres (Kroll 1924, 202-24, on this term's 'archaeology' Fantuzzi 2004, 17sq.).

By combining heterogeneous and obscure language with a metrical diversity up to this time unheard of in the history of Greek poetry, Timotheus managed to anticipate two defining facets of Hellenistic poetry, i.e. being recondite and different. In the eyes of a literary historian, Timotheus' affectation may also be seen as elegance, sensationalism looks like refinement, and decorativeness resembles sophistication (Easterling 1993, 560sq. & 568sq.), a mirroring that prepares the way for the later Hellenistic poets, who are as influenced by and engaged with the classical repertoire as Timotheus.

Timotheus' *Persians* marks a turning-point in the history of the dithyramb: a rather primitive cultsong, elevated to political community poetry, eventually becomes the playground of avant-garde innovators (Zimmermann 1992, 137-47). The ceremonial dithyramb, however, such as the one sung at Delphi for three months of the year in place of the paeon, was a different genre; only those poets who specialized in composing dithyrambs for the festivals approach the status of dramatic (as distinct from lyric) poets. A certain confusion results, which might explain why the Alexandrian edition of Bacchylides' dithyrambs is entirely different from the book of the same name by Pindar. As for the classification of texts labelled as paeon, for which there seems to have been no rules at all regarding composition (Harvey 1955, 172-4), there is similar confusion.

Much of the confusion stems from the fact that little is known of the circumstances surrounding the performance of the dithyramb. Some dithyrambs might have been composed for reading only, as is suggested by Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 1413 b 12-6): the authors of these texts did not rely on the performance of their work by actors or a chorus – in other words, these works were better read than performed. Likymnios, whom Aristotle mentions, and who lived at the turn of the fifth to the fourth century, as can be inferred from Plato's *Phaedrus* 267b (Jebb 1909, xiii), is one example.

In more than one respect, it is regrettable that the Alexandrian scholars appear never to have used the ancient Greek system of musical notation, which was not highly regarded in antiquity: in Alexandria, text-only editions of the lyric poets were produced (Pöhlmann/West 2001, 1, the documents also in West 1992, 277-326). If the musical notation had been preserved, it would significantly help us to understand the nature of the performance. It is doubtful, however, that any kind of systematic categorisation of lyric poetry will ever be established, i.e. one that goes beyond a dualistic approach identifying 'eastern' and 'western' variants (Davies 1988, 64), or a tripartite approach that distinguishes between Aeolic, Ionian and Doric traditions (West 1982, 29-56).

That a literary work such as a tragedy or a dithyramb might be appreciated without its being performed is alluded to in Aristophanes' *Birds*,

in which the theatre-god Dionysus appears as a lonely reader. It is as though he were able to judge the quality of a play, in his case Euripides' *Andromeda*, solely by reading it, as if tragedy were fulfilling its function without being performed, as does epic poetry. An allusion to books is unusual in tragedy, and it might not be a coincidence that, among the tragedians, only Euripides alludes to books in his works: twice to Orphic writings (*Alcestis* 962-9, *Hippolytus* 954, in a play where the intrigue unfolds in epistolary form) and once to reading from tablets (*Erechtheus* fr. 369).

Thus, Aristophanes might have been referring not only to the dramatic decline towards Euripidean decadence, but also to a completely new (and by implication bad) development, i.e. the experience of tragedy mediated by writing (rather than in performance), which developed in the fourth century (Aristotle *Poetics* 1462 a 10-2). This bookish turn is anticipated by Aristophanes, who knew Euripides' *Andromeda* very well: a parody of its opening scenes is to be found in Aristophanes' *Women at the Thesmophoria* 1008-1134 (Sommerstein 1994, 223sq.). The play was produced in 411 BC, the year following the premiere of Euripides' *Andromeda*. In addition to a prominent characteristic of Hellenistic poetry being 'foreshadowed', i.e. the crossing of the genres, a secondary characteristic of Hellenistic poetry is 'anticipated' - experiencing poetry by reading it, rather than exclusively, or primarily, in performance.

Another piece of evidence - one dating half-way between Aeschylus and Plato - again draws attention to a change in music, which Timotheus most conspicuously and spectacularly exemplifies. The late fifth-century author Pherecrates is believed to have written a *Chiron*-play, of which only mysteriously diverse fragments have survived (Norwood 1931, 164) - i.e. parodies of Hesiod and Theognis (162 PCG), a reference to and/or parody of the ninth book of the *Iliad* (159 PCG), which suggests Achilles as a character in the play, and a long fragment on the degradation of music (155 PCG).

Pherecrates seems to have felt the desire to break new ground, not only because, in 420 BC, he produced a play at the Lenaea that depicts the fortunes of men who have abandoned civilization, but also because he is singled out as an 'inventor of stories' by the anonymous author of *On Comedy* (Pherecrates T 2a PCG). In that respect Pherecrates closely resembles his younger contemporary tragedian Agathon (the host of Plato's *Symposium*), in whose *Antheus*-play all the characters were invented, rather than taken from legend: "and yet it is none the less a favourite" Aristotle adds (Agathon F 2a TrGF). Agathon was also quite innovative (Norwood 1920, 26sq.): he began the practice of letting the chorus sing mere interludes, choral odes that have not much to do with the plot (Agathon T 18 TrGF),

and he is also said to have introduced the chromatic scale into the music of tragedy (Agathon F 3a TrGF).

Agathon made the writing of tragedies more demanding, for now they had to be innovative, as had always been required of comedies. For this reason, comedies have always been much more difficult to write. Half a century after Agathon, the comic author Antiphanes (189 PCG) derides this discrepancy, envying tragedians also such devices as the crane by which at the end of unconvincing plays a new figure may be lifted on stage, who rescues not only the plot but also the by the play badly damaged reputation of its author (Handley 1985, 412). Unlucky comedians, however, were simply hissed off the stage.

Antiphanes' play that compares comedy and tragedy was entitled *Poetry*. Aristophanes is credited with having written a comedy bearing the same title and some have thought that the fragment of Antiphanes comparing tragedy and comedy came from Aristophanes' *Poetry*-play. If the elaborate comparison had been Aristophanean, the whole debate would have been staged half a century earlier, close to the turn of the century. In another fragment Antiphanes mentions 'the sort of songs they used to sing of old, in seven chords and all alike', which may refer to Timotheus' innovation of a lyre consisting of eleven chords (467 PCG).

Be that as it may, the above-mentioned texts indicate that the history of drama, tragedy as well as comedy, was about to take a turn at the end of the fifth and the beginning of the fourth century, and it is a text by Pherecrates that provides insight into this in a double sense 'dramatic' change. His long fr. 155 PCG, one of the longest book fragments of Old Comedy, is a speech by Music, complaining of her treatment by contemporary musicians, and the mistreatment of Music by modern dithyrambic poets is expressed in sexual double entendres (Herington 1985, 153, Zimmermann 1992, 122sq., LeVen 2008, 94-8, D'Angour 2011, 200-2). With the exception of one of them, these alleged corrupters were men from overseas who came and went (West 1992, 359, a portrait of the whole group 356-72, also Hordern 2002, 34), a sentiment later echoed by Plato's reservations about foreigners who want to perform in Athens (though strictly speaking Pherecrates' Music is harassed by dithyrambic composers, while Plato's Athenian has to deal with foreign tragedians).

The only Athenian among them is Cinesias, an often satirised figure in comedy. Pherecrates regarded him as a corrupter of traditional dithyrambic composition. Aristophanes refers to him as a representative of the 'new dithyramb' (*Birds* 1373-1409, produced 414). The comic poet Strattis wrote an entire comedy lampooning him (14-22 PCG).

The list of the accused begins with Melanippides of Melos, who – according to Music’s sexual innuendo – was ‘the first of them to grab me.’ Indeed, Melanippides is credited with compositions that did not use the usual strophe plus antistrophe construction, instead of which he seems to have used dithyrambic preludes, which came into fashion in the course of the fifth century (Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1409 a 25-8 & b 24-30, on Melanippides’ musical innovations Campbell 1993, 17-19).

Next comes Cinesias, who is much worse, and who is labelled a damned Athenian (Edmonds 1927, 248-65, Campbell 1993, 40-61): he inserted off-key modulations in his stanzas, i.e. inappropriate inflections of the voice or of the sound of a musical instrument with respect to tone and its intensity. In so doing, he perverted the traditional form of the dithyramb such that it could no longer be accompanied by proper movements in performance. ‘His right seems to be his left, like objects in a mirror’, Pherecrates’ Muse puts it (PCG 155. 12).

Phrynus, the next poet mentioned, is also criticised by Music for ‘turning and twisting’, and thrusting her into a whirlwind and nearly killing her (Campbell 1993, 62-9). Phrynus, like Cinesias, was also ridiculed by Aristophanes (*Clouds* 969-71, produced 423). A century later, Aristotle writes that without Phrynus there would have been no Timotheus, and if there had been no Timotheus, much of our lyric poetry would have been lost to us, and we would not possess much of our music (*Metaphysics* 993 b 15-7). However, given the fact that he mentions Phrynus in the course of a discussion of the contributions of even the most superficial of poets, Aristotle’s opinion of him could hardly have been positive.

Cinesias was also a character in a comedy by Eupolis (Storey 2003, 169-72), and it was Eupolis, Aristophanes’ contemporary (Olson 2007, 410sq.), who introduced the categories of ‘old’ and ‘new’ into lyric poetry. He did so in a comedy likely to have been performed in 429/428, thus preceding the Aristophanean *Frogs* and their discussion of ‘old’ and ‘new’ in tragic poetry by a quarter of a century. By no means, then, was Aristophanes the first to speak on that subject.

The title of Eupolis’ *Helots*-play suggests a chorus constituted by Spartan lower class people (whose status was higher than that of ordinary slaves but lower than that of free Spartan citizens), and some Doric expressions may confirm this suggestion. The speaker, however, of fr. 148 PCG remains unknown. It is he who declares that it is old-fashioned to sing the songs of Stesichorus, Alcman and Simonides. Instead, he recommends a certain Gnesippus. In what follows, Gnesippus is the subject of a comic joke, for having invented the songs for adulterers.

This is the same view expressed by Aristophanes, where Aeschylus rails against Euripidean moral failure, and it is characterized by the same moral tone: Euripides' *Aeolus* depicts a young man seducing his sister, while Gnesippus' poetry is fit only for adulterers bent on their conquests (Storey 2003, 332sq.). Gnesippus was derided by other authors of comedies as well (e.g., Chionides 4 PCG, Cratinus 17, 104, 276 PCG, and Teleclides 36 PCG). And Eupolis, who mentioned Stesichorus, Alcman, Simonides with respect, and who lets a person sing some Stesichorus to the lyre (395 PCG), also said (398 PCG) that Pindar's songs had been consigned to silence because of the decline in popular taste, and had become obsolete because most people had grown too vulgar to appreciate him (Norwood 1931, 198).

For Pherecrates' Music, however, the worst is yet to come. The one who has maltreated her most is Timotheus from Miletus; it is he who has caused real problems, far outdoing all the others. Timotheus may well have ended this enumeration as its apogee, yet Philoxenus may have followed, though his name is not in the transmitted text (Campbell 1993, 70sq. & 144sq.).

It is difficult to extract the precise details of the musical developments from this passionate outburst; nevertheless it is quite obvious that the poets of the 'New Music' broke away from the formalism of the old musical categories (Hordern 2002, 34sq.). All of the poets mentioned use their mischievous energy, talent, and cleverness for a reckless purpose.

Pherecrates made several ways of speaking overlap in his Music's presentation of the New Musician (LeVen 2008, 97sq.): the poetic and musical use of comedy's favourite sexual vocabulary is combined with a moral discourse on what is acceptable or not, to which add terms that echo a discourse on innovation, even revolution. The New Musician is a stranger, like Timotheus, who is called a 'red-head from Miletus' (155. 21 PCG), a foreigner unfamiliar with and doing harm to society's norms.

Fortunately, the staging of Timotheus' *Persians* can be reconstructed with a degree of assurance (Herington 1985, 151-60, Csapo/Wilson 2009, 287-90). Two new editions (Hordern 2002, 132-248, Lambin 2013, 109-85), and recent secondary literature that put related texts in perspective (LeVen 2008, D'Angour 2011, Ford 2013), provide a close examination and contribute to our understanding.

The *Persians* was first presented to the public probably earlier than 408 BC, but not much. The place was Athens, and the occasion was a competition in citharody. We may infer this mainly because the *Persians* is a citharodic nome, which means the text was likely performed at a citharodic contest; and Euripides, who is said to have composed the prelude to the *Persians* (Campbell 1993, 77), left Athens in 408 for Macedon.

Whether this is a trustworthy story may well be doubted (Hordern 2002, 16). However, the story indicates a certain closeness between Euripides and Timotheus. And indeed, an aria from Euripides' *Orestes*, staged in March 408 BC, performed by a 'Phrygian', a Trojan slave, reflects the newly popular music of Timotheus, a composer of dithyrambic poetry: the long aria begins in 1369, lasts until 1502, and is interrupted only a few times by short lines sung by the chorus (Willink 1986, liv & 305).

There were repeated performances of Timotheus' *Persians*, one of which is reported by Plutarch in his biography of Philopoemen (called 'the last of the Greeks', still fighting for Greece's independence even after Titus Flamininus defeated the Macedons in 197 at Cynocephalae), who happened to attend a performance at the Nemean games in 207 or 205 BC. The singer's splendid voice conveyed the majesty of the poet's words, Plutarch writes (ch. 11); such brilliance and majesty, combined with Philopoemen's sudden appearance, garnered an ovation from the audience. However, the red-headed man from Miletus was a rather controversial figure during his lifetime, and we have this not only from Pherecrates.

Staging a provocative work of art (Edmonds 1927, 280-97, Hordern 2002, 73-9) may sound like a clever means of self-promotion, a kind of careerist strategy that helps to distinguish oneself from the crowd. From this point of view, it is not surprising that Timotheus appears rather boastful in one of his texts (796 PMG), making a statement that would be out of place in old fashioned poetry: 'I do not sing in the old fashion. My music is new and better too. Now the young Zeus is King, and ages have passed since Kronos reigned. Begone, Old Dame Music!' (Düring 1945, 194). Thus, it is small wonder to find a mention of Timotheus in Plutarch's *On praising oneself inoffensively* (ch. 1, 802 PMG), for there seems to have been 'good reason to be disgusted at his (sc. Timotheus') tastelessness and irregular heralding of his own victory.'

In Sparta, Timotheus was ill received, 'on the grounds that I dishonour the older muse with my new song' (*Persians* 211sq.), and the going was also rough in Athens: in his text on *Old men in public affairs* Plutarch speaks of Timotheus' reception in Athens (ch. 23), where he was hissed at for being trendy, unconventional and perpetrating musical sacrilege. Nevertheless, Timotheus was told by Euripides to be of good spirits, 'for in a little while the theatres would be at his feet.' Again we hear of their being friends and of Euripides as being the only one realising how great a composer Timotheus was (Campbell 1993, 75) – a rumour that may explain why Timotheus is said to have written the epigram on Euripides' cenotaph in Athens (Page 1981, 307sq.).

This gorgeous figure on the platform raises its lyre high, provocatively revealing the plectrum in the other hand. His attitude is that of Apollo Citharoedus, and Apollo will be summoned by the poet at the end of his poem to bless the song and the city (237-40). Just imagine him there (Herrington 1985, 153): his music was already considered revolutionary, because Timotheus broke the tradition by employing a lyre with eleven strings instead of seven; he abandoned the modes traditionally assigned to each poetic genre, varying or inflecting the music from mode to mode within the same poem; finally, he ornamented his music, all of which was to be expected in his *Persians*, too.

Even if, when talking about music, there is 'a considerable admixture of imprecision, and little to rely on' (as Socrates puts it in Plato's *Philebus* 56 a 6sq.), Pherecrates' Music impressively describes its effects, saying that Timotheus 'treated me so harshly that he surpassed all the others I have enumerated, turning from the common course and dragging me alone crawling ant-tracks, in shrill disharmonies with sinfully high-pitched and piercing notes and whistles, cramming me with modulations just as a cabbage-head is crammed with caterpillars' (Düring 1945, 195).

Other well-established aspects of Timotheus' performances were mimetic character, realism in music, voice, and gesture. Again, he may well have been carried away by his own boldness and impudence, entranced and seduced by his ingenious playfulness (Schmidt 1845, 113). Aristotle testifies to this when he speaks of inferior musicians, who, performing Timotheus' *Scylla*, accompany Timotheus' music with excessive movement of their bodies, as if they were imitating the monster's customary behaviour to its victims (*Poetics* 1461 b 30-2). At least one other work of Timotheus was known for the excessive gestures of its performers (*The Birth-pangs of Semele*, 792 PMG); in the case of *Persians*, Timotheus himself might have performed his work similarly.

Once the dithyrambs had become imitative, Aristotle writes (*Problems* 918 b 18-20), they were no longer antistrophic, i.e. consisting of strophe and antistrophe, as they had previously been. The reason is that, in the old days, free citizens acted in the chorus, and for them it was easier to perform their songs in the enharmonic scale. A single person, however, may execute certain variations the performance of which is practically impossible for a number of people; moreover, for a professional (innovative) artist, this is easier than for those who have to preserve the (conservative) character of the music (21-5).

The opening of the *Persians*, however, is rather conventional, a dactylic hexameter on Greece's glorious freedom (788 PMG): 'building for Greece the great and splendid ornament of freedom', a line that may refer to Themistocles, who, first, persuaded the Athenians to build new warships, and second,

persuaded the Spartan admiral Eurybiades to fight a decisive naval battle against the Persians at Salamis. Lyre-sung poems in epic verse had been a practice since Terpander, as the author of the pseudo-Plutarchean text *On Music* states (ch. 4), although Timotheus sang his first nomos in a mix of hexameter and dithyrambic phraseology. He did so, the anonymous author continues, in order to conceal 'his sins against the musical tradition.'

After that intriguing introduction, or rather ambivalent opening, only a few one-line fragments give some text before the papyrus begins; at least one of them sounds advisory: 'have respect for Shame, the helpmate of spear-fighting Valour' (789 PMG). This line is from Plutarch's short text *How the young man should study poetry* (ch. 11). It states that Timotheus' expression is somehow modelled on or inspired by similarly paraenetic lines from Homer's *Iliad* (13. 121sq., 16. 422): perhaps another indication of a startlingly conservative opening.

The Abusir papyrus, discovered in 1902 and on display in Berlin, provides us with a substantial part of Timotheus' poem, including its ending and large passages of readable text (791 PMG). The performance of these lines 60-240 takes between 10 and 15 minutes. Calculations indicate that the whole work comprised 700 lines, and that a complete performance may have lasted 45 minutes (Herington 1985, 275 n. 25). One must, however, allow for considerable variations in tempo, as well as for breaks which would have been used for miming during Timotheus' original performance.

Of the roll's six columns, the first is almost completely destroyed, the second (1-59) badly damaged. Even so, we can glean what is happening: the singer is in the midst of a dramatic rendering of the tempestuous naval battle. The meter is iambo-trochaic, not too different from what the tragic audience was used to, but with the crucial exception that the text is no longer structured by strophe and corresponding antistrophe. The lines run free, varying according to the mood and course of the narrative. Just as striking is the diction, which seems like a verbal equivalent to the thrills and whistles that so offended some of Timotheus' musical contemporaries. The obscurity of Timotheus' diction reminds some scholars of Lycophro's *Alexandra* (Lambin 2013, 147sq.), itself composed in strict Aeschylean-style iambic trimeters. Indeed, Lycophro's text is in many respects as overwrought as Timotheus' *Persians*.

Lines 31-9 of Timotheus' *Persians*, fairly complete, may give an impression of the Timothean manner of style (adapted from Herington 1985, 155 & Campbell 1993, 97, as are the following citations, too): 'the emerald-haired sea had its furrow reddened with rain of ship-blood; babble of shouted orders filled it, and howls of pain; again the barbarian naval host, massed in

disarray, swept into battle among the shining seafolds, fishgarlanded.' Drowning sailors among the fishgarlanded seafold reminds of Aeschylus' *Persians* (424), where a messenger compared the half-dead Persian sailors to tuna or some haul of fish, an image taken up in Lycophro's *Alexandra* (381-3), where a bolt in the night tastes the skulls' of the dead sailors, compared to tuna.

As the kitharode's song proceeds, the poem modulates from metre to metre, just as the music varied from traditional mode to traditional mode, as the ancient sources report. Aside from the speech of the drowning Persian (recognisable from 40sq. onwards, speaking from 72 until 91), choking and spitting out water, belching like an animal, the most identifiable and most outstanding examples from the text are two other speeches: the frantic supplication of a simple Phrygian captive about to be beheaded, or something like that, against which is set the final dramatic speech by the Great King, recognising that he has lost the battle.

In the first speech, the Phrygian, grabbed by the hair and menaced by a Greek swordsman, desperately tries to remember his forgotten Greek. This is a passage where the kitharode's vocal mimesis may have reached its height (150-61): 'Me speak you how what use? What thing speak? Never here me come again. This time lord of mine, he brung me to this place. (...) from now on, no longer I come here again to fight. I no come here to you. I go over there to Sardis, to Sousa, Agbatana be my home, Artemis my great god (...).'

The second speech, Xerxes', is divided into two halves: uncharacteristically, they correspond to one another in their number of verses, but not in their rhythms. In themselves highly formal, they are anti-strophic in a new sense, no longer referring to the scheme of strophe and antistrophe, instead presenting a different beat on the same number of syllables, although in general still being of archaic simplicity. The dithyrambic diction has disappeared; there is nothing of it left in the King's speech (178-95): 'Woe for the wrecking of our House, woe for your scorching ships of Greece that killed the young men, a great throng of my contemporaries, so that the ships will not carry them backward-travelling, but fire's smoky strength will burn them with its savage body. (...) Woe for the deadweight of Fortune, who brought me to the land of Greece! Go my servant, wait no longer (...) carry my countless riches on to the wagons; burn our pavilions, let no Greek enjoy our wealth!'

The end of the poem is mostly set in a singable and fast-moving metre; its form (glyconic-pherecratean) shows very little resolution and contains, surprisingly, quasi-responsions, thereby assuming a traditional air. Invoca-

tions to Apollo should look like that; but the bulk of this text is comprised of the poet's defence against a Spartan charge of dishonouring the ancient musical craft (216-8): 'it is the corrupters of the old muse that I fend off, debauchers of songs.' The singer defends himself, claiming descent from Orpheus through Terpander, thus closing his innovative poem with a polemical defence of his own. Likewise Callimachus, a century later, opens his *Aetia* with a polemical defence of his own.

The last four lines are a prayer to Apollo: 'Come, far-shooting Pythian, to this holy city, bring prosperity, send to this unscarred people peace that flowers with harmony.' These lines could be sung anywhere, a standard item in the repertoire of a migrant poet attempting to prolong a noble tradition before an unsympathetic audience, an audience, however, which Timotheus seduced, winning the first prize. During the performance, the audience was treated to a large spectrum of archaic and classical Greek verse styles: Homeric epic, personal lyric, tragedy to the New Music. The outcome of such an experiment, during which the rhythm changed whenever something new began (Korzeniewski 1974, 27), might have set the tone for great artists to come.

Without Timotheus, much of our understanding of lyric poetry would be lacking. Archelaus, the Macedonian king (413-399), who, like his successors, made concerted efforts to attract well-known poets from other parts of Greece, seems to have noticed Timotheus' qualities. A patron of Euripides and Agathon (he brought the two of them to Macedon), he also supported Timotheus, who died in Macedon (Hordern 2002, 5), as did Euripides and Agathon. Choerilus of Samos also received a stipend from Archelaus. In one of his works, Choerilus complains about the desolate state of arts (317 SH): 'Blessed indeed the man who was skilled in song in those days, a servant of the Muses when the meadow was still undefiled! Now, when everything has been portioned out and the arts have reached their limits, we are left behind in the race, and one looks everywhere in vain for a place to drive one's newly yoked chariot.'

The fact that Choerilus had the pleasure to work among the great men of the new direction in poetry - at a recently established centre, not in Athens, but at the margins of the Greek-speaking universe - provides his text with another layer of meaning. Though this quote may seem gloomy (Hopkinson 1988, 1), it is not. Choerilus anticipated Callimachus' poetry by more than a century, abandoning the well-travelled high-road and driving his poetic chariot along untrodden byways. Moreover, he enjoyed the company of the very men who were revolutionising Greek poetry: Euripides, Agathon, and Timotheus.

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The story of Achilles

ILIAD 1

I.

The Greeks, with insignificant exceptions, believed that both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were composed by one man whom they called Homer, but they had no certain or accepted facts about his life. The existence of a poet called Homer, however, was accepted throughout antiquity, but the restriction of the Homeric corpus to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* became acknowledged only at the end of the 6th century BC, in the 520s. Before this date, his works, the *corpus Homericum* as it is called in Latin, included for instance the *Epic Cycle*, a large number of stories relating to the Trojan War, and all the so-called *Homeric Hymns*, the songs in praise of the Greek gods, e.g. Apollo. The *Iliad* (like the *Odyssey*) is divided into 24 books by the Alexandrian grammarians and, given the greater frequency of older forms, is generally regarded to be more ancient than the *Odyssey*.

The date

Some believed that Homer lived during the Trojan War, or shortly after, some of which he depicts in his *Iliad*. Troy, now Hisarlik, lies in north-west Turkey, the ancient Roman province of 'Asia Minor', five km. from the Hellespont: the narrow strait dividing Europe from Asia, where the waters of the Black Sea and Marmara flow into the Aegean, the modern Dardanelles. The town had been destroyed several times, and the strata, i.e. the series of layers discovered during the excavations, are given Roman numerals. It is generally agreed that VIIa ended around 1180 BC and that its destruction is the best archaeological location for the 'Homeric' Trojan War. The broader context is the so-called Mycenaean civilization, which developed in the late Bronze Age, and which is named after the archaeological site of Mycenae, located about 90 km. southwest of Athens, in the north-eastern Peloponnese.

The man who pretends to know that Homer lived only one generation later than Helen (and the Trojan War) is Johannes Tzetzes, a careless and quarrelsome Byzantine polymath who lived in the twelfth century BC, more than two millennia later. Although the Greek word polymath means 'having learnt much', Tzetzes' manner of writing is generally judged to be extremely inaccurate. Accordingly, what he has to say on Homer (*Chiliades* 12. 183) is viewed with much suspicion, and Tzetzes, who was certainly a person acquainted with many fields of study, cannot be called an accomplished scholar.

Herodotus, however, regards Homer as an author who lived and died no later than the middle of the ninth century. Himself living in the 5th century BC, Herodotus comes much closer to Homer's time than Tzetzes. Moreover, Herodotus comes from Ionia (modern western Turkey), where Homer might have lived as well, and it is at least possible that Herodotus had access to a local and better informed tradition. Aside from that, it is more likely that Herodotus is right (rather than Tzetzes), because Herodotus is very much interested in the accuracy of his report, as is clear in his own work, a large part of which provides a detailed historic account of the great wars between the Greeks and the Persians that dominated the first half of the 5th century BC. Herodotus, who at the beginning of his work compares the Persian wars with the Trojan (which he considers to be a historic event), claims that Homer lived no more than four hundred years before he did (*Histories* 2. 53). In any event, this significant divergence between Tzetzes and Herodotus indicates that the Greeks knew little more than we do. To whom we can turn for further information?

Literary evidence provides at least a *terminus ad quem* – that is a 'date at which' Homer's texts were known – a fact that implies not only that they were composed earlier, but also that they circulated among and were used by other poets. In the seventh century, various early poets echo Homeric phrases (e.g. Tyrtaeus, Semonides, and Alcman), and a great but rather shadowy figure, Terpander, is known to have recited Homer in Sparta (the main Doric settlement, their 'capital', on the Peloponnese). The evidence of some of Archilochus' texts proves that Homer's were already sufficiently well known that another poet could try to play with and allude to them. Archilochus' texts show clear signs of intertextuality, i.e. they can only be fully appreciated in reference to another text, which must be not only older but also well-known.

Thus, we may place Homer before 700 BC, though we must admit that there is always the possibility that his text has been altered. But in making Homer an older contemporary of Archilochus we may not be too far from the truth. A curious detail may support our calculation, which dates Homer before 700 BC: a vase from the Dipylon-district, the ancient cemetery of

Athens, bears as an inscription a retrograde hexameter, one word of which is ostensibly borrowed from the Homeric language (IG I² 919). The inscription promises that 'he who dances most harmoniously will get the vase as a gift', and the method of inscription dates to the end of the 8th century BC. Given the fact that a vase decorated by a Homeric line was found in Athens, one may safely assume that Homeric lines circulated widely in the Greek world - and probably not only single lines. If you can scratch one line on a pot, you can write hundreds on a papyrus.

The place

His place, Homer's native country, was a matter of dispute in antiquity. Chios was regarded as his home by Semonides (who composed elegies and iambics), while Pindar (whose famous victory songs can still be read) believed it was Smyrna. Chios, a large Aegean island, some 7 km. from Asia Minor, and Smyrna, a city on the west coast of Asia Minor (today Izmir), are both likely places (they are quite close to each other), and Chios was the home of the Homeridae, a group of professional reciters of his poetry who maintained Homer's memory (the Greek term of their profession being *rhapsode*, 'he who sings and stitches together', or 'sows together', i.e. pieces of poetry). The predominance of Ionic elements in Homeric language strongly suggests Ionia as Homer's home. A blind poet of Chios, of which the *Homeric hymn to Apollo* speaks (172), may refer to him, and his condition might have resembled that of the bards in the *Odyssey* who earned a livelihood by singing at the courts of princes.

Our lack of knowledge regarding the dates and location of Homer's life, however, has led to scepticism about his existence. It has been theorised that the poems are collections assembled from different sources, or original poems much expanded and altered, or single examples of poems of which many different variants existed. The early arguments for such views were based on the belief that no man could have composed poems of such length before writing was known (the *Iliad* contains a bit less than 16,000 lines, the *Odyssey* some 12,000). But these arguments have been dispelled by a young American scholar. In the time between the two wars of the last century, Milman Parry (1902-1935) discovered a still living tradition, where singers perform an enormous amount of text that may well be compared to the Homeric works. Between 1933 and 1935, Parry, at the time Associate Professor at Harvard University, took two trips to Yugoslavia, where he studied and recorded traditional oral poetry in Serbo-Croat. He worked in Bosnia, where the literacy rate was lowest, and where the oral tradition was, in

his view, 'purest'. Parry introduced the hypothesis that the formulaic structure of Homeric epic is to be explained as a characteristic feature of oral composition.

Repetitions make a text easier to memorize, and memory can achieve a lot when writing is lacking. Certainly, the presence of repetitions indicates that poems such as those by Homer were meant to be heard recited rather than read. Parry's monograph *L'Épithète traditionnelle dans Homère: Essai sur un problème de style homérique*, Paris 1928 (an English version, edited by his son A. Perry, is published in *The Making of Homeric Verse, The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, Oxford 1971) contains much material that shows the regular repetitions of noun plus adjective (e.g., table 1), a consistent feature of Homer's text. Whole scenes were schematic and repetitive, following a common pattern. The description of the games in honour of Patroclus follows such a common structure (illustrated, e.g., by table 1 in E. Minchin, *Homer and the Resources of Memory*, Oxford 2001), as do many other typical Homeric scenes (as was shown by W. Arend, *Die typischen Scenen bei Homer*, Berlin 1933).

Given the large number of set-pieces and of formulae he uses, Homer appears to have belonged to an old tradition which provided him with a very mixed collection of material. This implies that he was not the beginning of something new, but rather the heir to something old. However, he worked with what he got, and the *Iliad* (and the *Odyssey* as well) bears the marks of a controlling and unifying poet. Aristotle, lecturing on poetry, stated that Homer, in writing the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* 'did not put in all that ever happened to' Achilles and Odysseus (ch. 8, 1451 a 24-9). On the contrary, Homer constructed his two epics 'round a single action'. In Aristotle's view, it is wrong to assume that because Achilles or Odysseus were single individuals any plot constructed around them must for that reason have unity; instead the component incidents must be so arranged that if one of them is transposed or removed, the unity of the whole is dislocated and destroyed.

In the *Iliad*, the whole poem is built around the wrath of Achilles, his anger, and though many other episodes are introduced, this (and only this) gives a unity to the whole. The last book picks up the themes of the first, and depicts the end of Achilles' anger, with which the poem began. The *Iliad* does not deal with the whole of the Trojan War, but rather, with one major episode. The theme is announced in the first two lines, where we hear of 'the wrath of Achilles, son of Peleus and its devastating consequences, which inflicted pains a thousand-fold upon the Achaeans' (*Iliad* 1. 1sq.). The *Iliad* is framed by careful ring composition (which is another sign of its being constructed 'round a single action'): it begins in book 1 with a negative interven-

tion of Apollo, the refusal of Agamemnon to release Chryseis to her father, and two visits of Thetis, first on earth when called by her son Achilles, and then to Zeus; it ends in book 24 with a positive intervention of Apollo, the return of Hector's corpse to his father, and two visits of Thetis, first to Olympus when called by Zeus, and then to her son on earth.

The whole poem is now generally assumed to be virtually as it was composed (with the exception of book 10); the older theory - that Homer's *Iliad* somehow developed from an Achilles-poem, called *Achilleis* - has been abandoned. For practical reasons, however, this lecture highlights the books once regarded as the oldest parts of Homer's *Iliad*, which is divided into three parts:

Books 1 to 9 cover the quarrel with Agamemnon and its consequences: the withdrawal of Achilles from the battle and the plan of Zeus to avenge him by supporting the Trojans (book 1); the sending of a deceptive dream to Agamemnon (2); a truce and a duel between Paris and Menelaus (3); the breaking of the truce by Pandarus (4); the beginning of general fighting in the plain with a particularly admirable performance of Diomedes (5); the visit of Hector in Troy (6); the duel between Hector and Ajax (7); the success of the Trojans (8); and the sending of emissaries to appease Achilles and their failure (9).

A particularly admirable performance, an individual warrior's glorious rampage, is called *aristeia* in Greek. Poetically speaking, one may use the expression 'purple patch' for it, which means a patch of royal fabric, a brilliant piece of writing. The Roman poet Horace coined this expression in his remarks on poetry (*Ars Poetica* 15, *pannus purpureus* in Latin): purple was the colour of choice by the royalty, as the purple dye was the rarest and hence most expensive. The first deemed worthy enough by Homer to be honoured with such a 'purple patch', i.e. the first who excelled, was Diomedes, but others will follow. More precisely and less poetically, an *aristeia* may also be called a 'set piece', i.e. a standard part of an epic poem like Homer's. It was even so characteristic that the word made its way into Latin, and Cicero speaks of an *aristeia* in the same way as he uses the word *nekyia*, the title of a book of Homer's *Odyssey* that tells of Odysseus' wanderings in the underworld.

The second part of the *Iliad*, books 10 to 18, include: the Dolon-episode (10), regarded as a forgery since antiquity; the *aristeia* of Agamemnon, the casualties of the Achaean leaders and the appeal of Nestor to Patroclus (11), the success of the Trojans (12), the advance of Hector checked by Ajax (13), the distraction of Zeus by his wife Hera and the defeat of the Trojans (14), the awakening of Zeus and the Trojan victory (15). Then (16) Patroclus enters the battle, killing Sarpedon, the son of Zeus and leader of the Lycians;

pressing on forwards Troy, however, he is called to his death by the gods (16. 693). The fight around the corpse of Patroclus (17) and the *aristeia* of Menelaus follow. Achilles decides to avenge his friend Patroclus; his new armour that he gets from Hephaestus is largely described (18).

Books 19 to 24, the third part, begin with the reconciliation between Achilles and Agamemnon (19); Achilles begins his attack, among his victims is Polydoros, the youngest and favourite son of Priam (20). Achilles fights against the river Scamander, and the battle of the gods follow (21). Finally, he kills Hector (22). The funerals of Patroclus and games in his honour (23), the ransoming of Hector, i.e. his being sold by Achilles to Hector's father Priam, and Hector's funeral (24) conclude Homer's *Iliad*: 'such were the funeral rites of Hector, tamer of horses' is its last line.

This brief survey demonstrates how much the *Iliad* is characterised by an extraordinary concentration both in space and time. Its action is located in only four places: the city of Troy, the Achaean camp, the plain in between, and Mount Olympus, where the gods dwell. And its action covers a period of 53 days, but the bulk of the poem, books 2 to 22, covers only five days and the narrative of the central day alone occupies eight books, i.e. 11. 1 to 18. 238.

Homer, however, manages to work the story of the entire war into the *Iliad*. Books 2 to 4 recall the beginning of the war. The catalogue of ships in book 2 takes up the traditional catalogue of the army at Aulis, where the Greek fleet assembled before sailing to Troy (a small harbour at the coast of Boeotia, opposite to Chalkis on Euboea). In book 3, the view from the wall and the single combat between the two husbands of Helen (Paris challenges Menelaus to a duel, which Menelaus joyfully accepts) depicts events during the first year of the war, and the actions of Paris and Helen recount the origin of the war without actually narrating it. Pandarus' breaking of the truce in book 4 is a symbolic re-enactment of the original Trojan crime. There are also foreshadowings of the two major events that occur after the end of the poem. Achilles' coming death is constantly lamented by Thetis (his mother), and reaffirmed in books 19 to 22 by his immortal horse, and by the hero himself, as well as by Hector. In the *Aithiopis* (one of the works belonging to the *Epic Cycle*, completing and supplementing the narrative of the *Iliad*), his funeral is to be attended by the Nereids. In the *Iliad*, it is prefigured by the Nereids' participation in the mourning of Patroclus in book 18. The sack of Troy is successively evoked from book 4 to book 24, by characters, omens, and comparisons. The *Iliad* even looks beyond the end of the war: for an audience well acquainted with the tradition, the wrestling match between Odysseus and Ajax points to their fatal conflict over the arms of Achilles (which itself was also narrated in one work of the *Epic Cycle*).

The Olympian gods play an important role in the plot. The action is initiated by Apollo, who drives Agamemnon and Achilles into conflict; Zeus' plan to damage the Achaeans, though momentarily disrupted by Hera in book 14, commands the action from book 2 to book 18, until Achilles decides to avenge Patroclus. Zeus' final intervention in book 24 convinces Achilles to return Hector's body to Priam, king of Troy and Hector's father.

The gods' interventions in the human world are usually based on partisan attachments to one or another human figure. They help their children, their favourites, their priests and those who offer them lavish sacrifices. They harm their enemies or those who dare to compete with them, and often punish entire groups for the crimes committed by one of their members: all the Trojans pay the price for Paris' crime.

Gods may reveal their will indirectly through omens, dreams and prophets. In the heroic world, they may also intervene physically, in an assembly - e.g. as Athena, in book 1, takes Achilles by the hair to prevent him from killing Agamemnon - and on the battlefield. Miracles, however, are rare. The gods also influence mental processes, directly or indirectly, and for better or for worse, and thus one often sees an inseparable connection between divine and human causation (the technical term for which is 'double determination').

Two facets of the gods' frame of mind or way of being can be distinguished:

The supreme power of the gods, on the one hand, throws the weakness and insignificance of mankind into relief. The encounter between Apollo and Diomedes on the battlefield (5) is emblematic of this disparity. Encouraged by Athene, Diomedes attacks Apollo four times before he hears Apollo shout his final warning (5. 440-2): "Think (...) and shrink back! Never think yourself gods' equal - since there is no likeness ever between the make of immortal gods and of men who walk on the ground" (the translation is by M. Hammond, London 1987); or, as an older translation has it: "Think (...) and give way! Do not aspire to be the equal of the gods. The immortals are not made of the same stuff as men that walk on the ground" (the translation is by E.V. Rieu, London 1950; the translations are discussed by P.V. Jones, *Homer's Iliad: a commentary on three translations*, Bristol 2003). Later, Patroclus will be warned by Apollo in the same way (16. 707-9, tr. Hammond): "Back Patroclus, it is not Troy's fate to be sacked by you, nor even by Achilles, a far greater man than you."

Their utter frivolousness, on the other hand, acts as a foil for the tragedy of men. Their immortality, their carefree life and their happiness set them apart from the wretched mortals. They ignore death, and their quarrels are trivial and end quickly: the quarrel between Zeus and Hera (1) spoils the

enjoyment of the gods' feast only for a short time, whereas the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles provokes endless killings. The marvelous description of Poseidon's chariot ride over the sea (13) contrasts sharply with the descriptions of Hector's (11) and Achilles' (20) chariots trampling down dead men.

Given the gods' nature, it is even more striking that they do not merely watch the mortals' fighting with delight, but also come to care deeply about them, feeling pity for them as would the audience at a performance of a tragedy: thus their presence serves as a device to heighten for us the emotional significance of terrible events.

Nevertheless, gods and goddesses are only background. The true protagonists of the *Iliad* are the heroes, those who, like Sarpedon, know that all men are born to die, but also that they can choose to die well and win renown, fame, and honour (12. 310-28). Sarpedon addresses his comrade Glaukos on the battlefield, asking why he and Glaukos are held in the highest esteem in their homeland. The answer is that they are now about to lead their troops into battle, so that people at home will say: 'These are not worthless men who rule us, these kings we have who eat our fat sheep and drink our honey-sweet wine. No, they have strength too and courage, since they fight at the front of our lines.' Having evoked this imaginary situation to his friend Glaukos, Sarpedon sums up what the whole story means (tr. Hammond):

"Dear friend, if we were going to live for ever, ageless and immortal, if we survived this war, then I would not be fighting in the front ranks myself or urging you into the battle where men win glory. But as it is, whatever we do, the fates of death stand over us in a thousand forms, and no mortal can run from them or escape them - so let us go, and either give this triumph to another man, or he to us."

An older translation renders the text thus (tr. Rieu):

"Ah, my friend, if after living through this war we could be sure of ageless immortality, I should neither take my place in the front line nor send you out to win honour in the field. But things are not like that. Death has a thousand pitfalls for our feet; and nobody can save himself and cheat him. So in we go, whether we yield the glory to some other man or win it for ourselves."

Sarpedon's great speech to Glaukos on the theme of 'noblesse oblige' begins with a mention of food. But what Sarpedon is talking about is not food, but honour, as an ancient commentator already observed (Scholium T on *Iliad* 4. 343 as cited by J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death*, Oxford 1980, 15). Thus we see that food is a tangible form of honour, and indeed the word 'honour' is often used to mean simply 'gifts' or 'possessions'. The psycho-

logical situation, however, is characterised by a certain complexity; social obligation uplifts and compels the hero, who yet remains aware of inevitable death (Griffin 73): "It is not unreflective or unselfconscious heroism that drives these men on. Facing death, they see both the obligation and the terror, and their speech reflects the totality of their situation and their response."

And this is what the hero faces each and every time he goes into battle (Griffin 93): "If the hero were really godlike, if he were exempt, as the gods are, from age and death, then he would not be a hero at all. It is the pressure of mortality which imposes on men the compulsion to have virtues; the gods, exempt from that pressure, are, with perfect consistency, less 'virtuous' than men. They do not need the supreme human virtue of courage, since even if they are wounded in battle they can be instantly cured." And their wounds are quickly healed, indeed (as is shown in *Iliad* 5, the *aristeia* of Diomedes).

Noble ancestry obliges one to behave honourably. Privilege entails responsibility, and obligation is a function of high social standing. Homer's heroes are condemned to 'noblesse oblige', as is any aristocrat who must preserve his good name. The entire quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles might be regarded as an argument over the interpretation of this leitmotiv of 'noblesse oblige'.

These considerations highlight the fact that the crucial decisions in the poem are made by men and not by gods: it is the wrath of Achilles that causes the plague sent by Apollo in book 1, and Zeus' plan is the consequence of Achilles' appeal for help to his mother. Achilles' rejection of the emissaries' proposals is explained only by his own wrath in book 9. The hero also acts entirely on his own when he dispatches Patroclus in book 16. And again, Achilles acts entirely on his own when he decides to avenge him and to reject Hector's entreaties, both in book 18.

As a warrior, Achilles is the best of the Achaeans: after his withdrawal from the battle, the Achaeans are driven back to their ships, and when he re-enters the fight, he surpasses all the others. His mother is a goddess, his horses are immortal, and his arms are a gift from the gods who consistently grant him special favours. His wrath, his vehement and violent anger, his intense exasperation, resentment, and deep indignation, is first directed against Agamemnon, then against Hector. Quasi-divine in its magnitude, it compels Achilles to refuse the compromise offered to him by Agamemnon (9) and to behave with unparalleled savagery towards Hector (22). But he obeys the orders of Athena (1) and Zeus (24) without protest.

Achilles is most heroic when looking death in the face; given a choice between two fates, a return to his fatherland, and a long life, but one without

glory, or everlasting glory if he dies at Troy, he goes to war (9. 410-6, tr. Hammond): "my mother says (...) that I have two fates: If I stay in Troy and fight on, then gone is my home-coming, but my glory will never die. If I come back to my dear native land, then gone is my great glory, but my life will stretch long and the end of death will not overtake me quickly." Having heard from his mother that his death will soon follow (18), he decides without hesitation to return to the fight and kill Hector. This awareness of his own imminent death enables him to feel compassion for Priam (24), the father of his much hated enemy, Hector.

In contrast to Achilles, Hector is totally human and has only a limited perception of his circumstances. Firmly located in a family and a city, son of Priam, husband of Andromache, father of Astyanax, and the leading warrior among the Trojans, this hero embodies the ideal norm of Homeric society. Tragically trapped in contradictory obligations, i.e. to his family (whom he wants to protect) and his city (which he wants to defend), he realizes that his time has come. His heroic decision is - in his own words - (22. 304sq.) 'to die not without glory, but after having done something great, for future generations to learn of.'

The Greek word for Hector's virtue is *aidos*. This word has two meanings: (a) inhibition before a generalised group of other people in whose eyes one feels one's self-image to be vulnerable, and (b) positive recognition of the status of a significant other person. The two stock English translations of the verb *aideomai* make it clear. They mean 'I feel shame before' and 'I respect'. These translations succeed in isolating the two distinct meanings of the Greek term. And yet the two meanings are not unrelated: inhibition implies shyness, and respect for another person's shyness, a respect that makes the other feel respect towards oneself (D.L. Cairns, *Aidōs: The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature*, Oxford 1993, 2).

Achilles was certainly sensitive, and definitely wanted to protect his wounded self-image, but he exaggerated his refusal so much that his best friend Patroclus died and the Greeks nearly lost the war. How did all that start - how did Agamemnon and Achilles fall out? Let us begin by examining the narrative of the first book of the *Iliad*.

II.

The *Iliad* opens with the Trojan War, in its tenth year. The scene is the Achaean camp on the shore of the Troad, where the ships that brought the army to Troy are beached. Almost all the human action in the *Iliad* is set

either in this camp, or in the beleaguered city of Troy, or in the plain between Troy and the camp, the scene of most of the fighting. The divine action, of course, takes place on Mount Olympus. Homer's regular name for the Greeks is Achaeans, but he also refers to them as Danaans and Argives.

The cause of the war was the seduction and abduction of Helen, the wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta, by the Trojan Paris. Also known as Alexandros, Paris is one of the sons of Priam, king of Troy. Menelaus and his brother Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae, have raised an army from all over Greece. They gathered at Aulis and then sailed to Troy to recover Helen and punish the Trojans for Paris' crime. At the time of the abduction, while being entertained in Menelaus' home, Paris had broken the laws of hospitality which were regarded as sacred by the heroic code. By the beginning of the *Iliad*, the war has been in progress for a long time, and it is clear that the Achaeans have been prevailing against the Trojans and their allies, primarily because Achilles, the leading Achaean fighter, is a much more formidable warrior than the champion of the Trojan side, Hector. Major Trojan success only comes once Achilles withdraws from the fighting.

The *Iliad* opens directly, without any elaborate exposition. Some perspective – the setting of the immediate events in the wider context of the whole war – comes from foreshadowing, which is more significant in the latter part of the poem as the death of Achilles becomes inevitable and the fall of Troy grows sharper. Some perspective also comes from flashbacks to much earlier events. In particular, books 2 to 4 function as a sort of reprise of the beginning of the war: either there are direct allusions to the beginning of the war, for instance, when Odysseus retells Kalchas' prophecy at Aulis, issued before the whole Trojan expedition started (2. 300-56). More often, however, the allusions work indirectly, for instance, in the 'anachronistic' presentation of events more likely to have happened during the first rather than the tenth year of the war, i.e. when Helen comes to the Trojan wall to watch the combat and, at Priam's request, identifies the leading Achaeans, who they can see in the plain below (despite the fact that it is highly likely that Priam has had any number of opportunities to identify the enemy during the preceding ten years).

The **first book** of the *Iliad* describes the disastrous quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon that determines all subsequent action in the poem. Book 1 also introduces elements, both human and divine, that will have major significance in the course of events – the characters of Agamemnon and Achilles, the role of Achilles' divine mother Thetis, and her knowledge of Achilles' fate, and the power of the gods and the nature of their involvement in human affairs. And it is established at the very start that the story will be one of suffering and death, as part of the divine will. The short pref-

ace, or introductory discourse, at the beginning of the *Iliad*, its proem, announces this:

It was Achilles' anger that "hurled down to Hades many mighty souls of heroes, making their bodies the prey to dogs and the birds' feasting; and this was the working of Zeus' will" (tr. Hammond). Or, in the words of an older translation, it was the wrath of Achilles "which, in fulfilment of the will of Zeus, brought the Achaeans so much suffering and sent the gallant souls of many noblemen to Hades, leaving their bodies as carrion (i.e. dead flesh) for the dogs and passing birds" (tr. Rieu).

In the very first scene, the poet presents archetypes which will have central thematic importance in the poem as a whole: a man named Chryses comes to the Achaean camp to seek the release of his daughter, Chryseïs. She has been captured in an earlier attack on a Trojan town and given to Agamemnon as his concubine, his mistress. Chryses is the innocent whose life has been ruined by the war, through the loss of a son or daughter. He is a particularly sympathetic figure, full of dignity and pathos. His daughter represents that other class of innocents, the Trojans' wives and little children. What is outline in the Chryses and Chryseïs episode is fully developed later between Priam and Achilles, and the early scene prepares us for a parallel and contrasting scene in the final book, the one in which Priam comes to the Achaean camp and appeals to Achilles for the return of his son's body. The early episode foreshadows a later one, anticipates a recurring pattern; similarities are prepared for.

At the *Iliad's* opening, Chryses, a priest of Apollo, brings adequate ransom, and his claim is upheld by all the other Achaeans. But Agamemnon rejects his appeal and dismisses Chryses with deliberate cruelty. Apollo's vengeance is swift and terrible – a plague that ravages the Achaean army. An assembly is called to consider this crisis. A quarrel quickly flares up between Agamemnon and Achilles, because Agamemnon insists on the provision of another 'prize': seeking compensation for the loss of Chryseïs, Agamemnon threatens to take Achilles' own prize of honour, the girl Briseïs, a threat he carries out immediately after the assembly.

The quarrel is presented in a dramatic style that interrupts the 'stream flowing on in majestic size and fullness' so often typical of Homer. Again, preparation is made for later parallels and contrasts. Agamemnon is presented as a tyrant – insensitive, irrational, self-obsessed. He is clearly in the wrong, the Achaeans believe; his own heralds are reluctant to carry out their orders to take Briseïs, and Briseïs goes with them reluctantly. The roles are to be reversed later on. When Agamemnon offers full reparation – this will happen in book 9, when Achilles reappears – and sends a group of Achilles' closest friends to plead with him to return to the fighting, it is Achilles who

remains self-obsessed. In book 9, Achilles is resistant and relentless, intractable, unresponsive to persuasion and insensitive to moral influence – as is Agamemnon in book 1. Both figures are at the mercy of their ruinous pride which overrules all reason. In book 9, Achilles is in the wrong. The other Achaeans believe he is, as do his own Myrmidons, and his companion Patroclus. And Achilles knows it himself.

At the end of their verbal outbursts Achilles threatens to leave Troy. There is no longer any sense in fighting alongside a man who has turned out to be a ‘great shameless creature’, as Achilles calls Agamemnon (1. 158): ‘And now you even threaten to take away my prize yourself – I laboured hard for it, and it was awarded to me by the sons of the Achaeans. (...) My hands bear the brunt of the battle’s fury. But when the division comes, your prize is by far the larger, and I come back to the ships with something small but precious, when I have worn myself out in the fighting. Now I shall leave (...). It is a far better thing for me to return home with my (...) ships, and I have no mind to stay here heaping up riches and treasure for you and receiving no honour myself’ (1. 161-71). At the beginning of book 9, Achilles’ parallel, Diomedes, will accuse Agamemnon of lacking courage (and courage is the secret of power), and Achilles will say the same to Agamemnon shortly.

Now in the dispute with Achilles, Agamemnon couldn’t care less: ‘Yes, run home’, he replies, ‘I care nothing for you, your anger does not touch me’ (1. 180sq.). As Achilles is about to draw his sword and kill Agamemnon, Athena comes down from heaven: ‘Athena came up behind him and caught the son of Peleus by his yellow hair, visible to him alone – none of the others saw her. Achilles was startled, and turned around, and immediately recognised Pallas Athena – there was a fearful gleam in her eyes.’

And Athena speaks to Achilles: ‘I have come from heaven to stop your fury (...). Come then, leave your quarrelling, and do not let your hand draw the sword. But use your tongue to bring shame on him, telling him how it will be. (...) There will be a day when three times these splendid gifts will be laid before you because of this insult. Restrain yourself, and do as we ask.’ Obeying Athena, Achilles starts insulting Agamemnon and calls him a coward, one who is only interested in stealing the prizes (1. 243sq.): ‘And you will tear your heart within you in remorse, that you showed no honour to the best of the Achaeans.’

After Briseïs is taken from him, Achilles calls on his mother, the sea-goddess Thetis. This is the first of their various (and always rather intense) encounters in the course of the *Iliad*. Bursting into tears, Achilles draws away from his companions, sits down on the shore of the sea, and looks out over the boundless ocean. Stretching out his hands, he prays to his mother (1. 352-6):

‘Mother, since it was you that bore me, if only to a life doomed to shortness, surely honour should have been granted to me by Olympian Zeus (...). But now he has shown me not even the slightest honour. The son of Atreus, wide-ruling Agamemnon, has dishonoured me – he has taken my prize with his own hands, and keeps it for himself.’

Thetis is an immortal with a mortal son who is doomed to die. She feels for him like a mortal mother would. We catch a glimpse of her feelings when she speaks to her sisters, the Nereids (18. 52-64):

‘Listen, Nereids, my sisters, so you can all hear and know the sorrows in my heart. (...) Oh, the pain of being mother to the best of men! I bore a son who was to be noble and strong, the greatest of heroes (...). I tended him like a plant in the crown of a garden, and sent him out with the (...) ships to Ilios, to fight the Trojans. But now I shall never welcome him back to Peleus’ (his father’s) house – there will be no homecoming. And yet all the time I have him alive and looking on the light of the sun, he is suffering, and I can give no help when I go to him. But even so I shall go, to see my dear child and hear what it is that has come to grieve him now he is withdrawn from fighting.’

The fact that Achilles’ mother, Thetis, is a goddess does not exempt him from mortal suffering; instead, and this is not without irony, it exposes her to such suffering.

Thetis tells Achilles to withdraw completely from the fighting. She promises to secure Zeus’ agreement to show honour to Achilles by granting such success to the Trojans as will make Agamemnon realise his folly in treating Achilles with such disrespect. Zeus agrees, but Hera starts a domestic argument with her husband; which provokes laughter from the other gods. There is a strong contrast between the deeply serious human quarrel which begins this first book and the frivolous divine dispute which closes it. The first will be resolved only after much suffering: the second is easily dismissed by the Olympians, one of whom observes that it is not worth quarrelling over humans. ‘We shall have no pleasure in the excellent feast, since unworthy things will be foremost’, i.e. ‘if you two – Zeus and Hera – quarrel over mortal men’, argues Hephaestus (1. 574-6).

This contrast is essential to the *Iliad*. The frivolity of ‘the gods who live at their ease’ (6. 138) imbues the pain and suffering of humankind with both meaning and dignity. When, at the end of the *Iliad*, Achilles and Priam are united in their fellowship of grief, and Achilles mourns his dead friend Patroclus, and Priam his dead son Hector, Achilles sums up this contrast (24. 525sq.):

“This is the fate the gods have spun for poor mortal men, that we should live in misery, but they themselves have no sorrows” (tr. Hammond); “we

men are wretched things, and the gods, who have no cares themselves, have woven sorrow into the very pattern of our lives" (tr. Rieu).

The world of gods and the world of men relate to each other, and the figure of Thetis is a symbol of this relationship. Throughout the *Iliad*, divine and human causation work in parallel, and major events are doubly determined. The quarrel is divinely caused, but it evolves in purely human terms. This duality is established at the opening of the poem, in the first five lines. The story is about both the anger of Achilles and the fulfilment of the will of Zeus. Human causation has its own coherence and logic, but it is the will of Zeus that necessarily lies behind all events, inscrutable, inexplicable, and inevitable. The gods frame the action of the first book, and are revealed in all the aspects that will be fully explored in the *Iliad* – overall control, effortless intervention, passionate involvement in the world of men, and all that combined with ease of detachment, majestic grandeur, and sublime frivolity.

III.

Twelve days (1. 493) after Thetis promises to help, the gods return to Mount Olympus, and it becomes possible for her to plead Achilles' case. Mount Olympus, located on the border of Macedonia and Thessaly (on the eastern side of northern Greece), and the highest mountain in the Greek peninsula (with an elevation of nearly 9,600 feet), was regarded as the home of the gods.

Since one cannot address a god or a goddess directly, it is necessary (or at least highly advisable) to follow a kind of ritual or ceremony (*Iliad* 1. 500sq.): "Thetis crouched in front of Zeus, and took his knees with her left hand, and reached with her right hand to hold Zeus under the chin" (tr. Hammond). She asks Zeus to help her: "Grant victory to the Trojans for such time until the Achaeans recompense my son and raise him in honour among them." Zeus agrees, but passes a sleepless night, as the opening of **book 2** shows (2. 2-4): "But sleep did not keep its sweet hold on Zeus, who was pondering in his mind how he might bring honour to Achilles, and death to many by the Achaean ships." Zeus has a brilliant idea (2. 8-15): "This seemed the best plan to his thinking, to send evil Dream to Agamemnon son of Atreus. And so Zeus spoke winged words to him: 'Away with you, evil Dream (...). Go into the hut of Agamemnon (...), and speak to him exactly as I tell you. Tell him to arm the long-haired Achaeans for battle in all speed, because now he can take the Trojans' broad-wayed city.'"

The speaking Dream delivers his message to Agamemnon, "and left him there with thoughts in his mind which would not see fulfilment. Agamem-

non thought that he would take Priam's city on that very day – poor fool, he knew nothing of Zeus' design" (tr. Hammond). After calling a council of the other Greek leaders, Agamemnon tells them of his dream. Then the entire army gathers to listen to their great leader. Secretly, however, Agamemnon has changed his mind, and what he has to say to his troops sounds quite different (2. 110-41).

'My friends', Agamemnon begins, 'Zeus has deluded me. A cruel god, he promised in the beginning that I would sack and conquer Troy before my return. But now he tells me to go back to Argos in dishonour, after having lost many of my people': "This is a shameful thing for future men to hear of, that an Achaean army of such power and size should wage a war like this without success or issue, fighting an enemy fewer in number, and no result yet seen. (...) Nine years now have passed (...), and our ships' timbers have rotted and their rigging decayed. And our wives and young children are sitting in our homes, waiting for us: while the task which brought us here stands quite without completion. No, come, let us all do as I say – let us away with our ships to our own dear native land. We shall never now take the broad streets of Troy" (tr. Hammond).

Of course, he is testing the morale of his soldiers – but it does not work out as he might have imagined. "The men swarmed cheering to the ships, and under their feet the dust rose high in a cloud" (tr. Hammond), or as the other translation has it: "The dust they kicked up with their feet hung high overhead. They shouted to each other to get hold of the ships and drag them down into the friendly sea" (tr. Rieu).

This catastrophe is averted by Hera, Zeus' wife, who speaks to Athena. She admonishes Athena to move among the Achaean army, to use gentle words to turn the men back one by one, and to not let them enter their ships nor bring them to the water. Athena obeys and turns herself to Odysseus. Standing fast, Odysseus has not even touched his good black ship – he is broken-hearted and anguished. Again we meet a hero who suffers from excruciating grief (as Achilles did earlier in the first book). Odysseus hears the goddess' voice, runs straight up to Agamemnon, and takes the sceptre from him – then, with the sceptre in his hands, he runs down to the ships and turns whomever he meets back with gentle words. For the time being, Odysseus becomes the real leader, exposing Agamemnon's weakness – he is not only unable to treat his fellow heroes as he ought to, but he is unable to lead his troops. What a blow to his self-esteem – but maybe there is no longer any feeling of shame to prompt Agamemnon to do the right thing.

One man, however, still rails on, the (Hammond) 'loose-tongued' Thersites 'who refuses to hold his tongue' (Rieu). Thersites is the irrepressible, reckless insubordinate, never at a loss for some vulgar abuse (212-77). Hated

most of all by Achilles and Odysseus, Thersites now attacks Agamemnon, openly declaring that it is wrong for a man like him to lead the Achaeans. Becoming ever more furious, Odysseus finally beats Thersites with Agamemnon's sceptre. He even threatens to strip Thersites and flog him out of the assembly - depriving him of all that covers his shame, all that hides his nakedness. Again we are confronted with shame and shamelessness, a theme recurrent in the shame-culture of the heroic age (on which more in the next part of this lecture on *Iliad* 9).

Finally, the situation is under control again. Homer (2. 453sq.) chooses a beautifully poetic way to express the changing of the Achaeans' mood (tr. Hammond): "Then war became a sweeter thought to them than returning in their hollow ships to their own dear native land", or, as the older translation renders it (tr. Rieu): "Before long they were more enamoured with the thought of fighting than with that of sailing away to their own country in their hollow ships." The Greeks have fallen in love with fighting once again. They become amorous, and fighting is sweet. It offers a chance for success, and Greek morals indeed were so orientated to individual success that any failure was necessarily a disgrace (J. Griffin, *Appendix: On dying for one's country*, *Classical Quarterly* 26, 1976, 186sq.). Given that perspective, even death can be a success, if only one is killed in society's defence.

A decision is taken to muster the troops, and the situation changes completely. Homer chooses two similes to describe the change, both of them recalling peace and innocent delight or creative activity, thus, by contrast, emphasising the grimness of the war. First, the shining weapons of the parading soldiers are compared to a blazing fire on a mountain's peak (2. 455-8):

"As annihilating fire blazes through the deep forest on a mountain's peaks, and the glare can be seen from far off, so as they marched the gleam from the awesome bronze struck glinting through the air and reached the heavens" (tr. Hammond). "As the soldiers fell in, the dazzling glitter of their splendid bronze flashed through the upper air and reached the sky. It was as bright as the glint of flames, caught in some distant spot, when a great forest on a mountain height is ravaged by fire" (tr. Rieu).

The first simile focuses on what can be seen, the second (2. 459-68) on what can be heard, and the Achaean fighters are compared to the sound of birds moving from one river to another in huge numbers (first Hammond's, then Rieu's translation):

"Like the great flocks of flying birds - geese, or cranes, or long-necked swans - in an Asian water-meadow, by the streams of Kaÿstrios, which wheel this way and that in their wings' glory, and the meadow echoes to their cries as they settle in tumult: so the many companies of men poured out from their ships and their huts on to the plain of Skamandros, and be-

neath them the earth rang fearfully (...). They stood (...) in the flowering meadow by Skamandros, in their tens of thousands, as many as the leaves and flowers that come in springtime." – "Their clans came out like the countless flocks of birds – the geese, the cranes or the long-necked swans – that foregather in the Asian meadow by the stream of Cayster, and wheel about, boldly flapping their wings and filling the whole meadow with harsh cries as they come to ground on an advancing front. So clan after clan poured out from the ships and huts onto the plain of Scamander, and the earth resounded sullenly (...) as they found their places in the flowery meadows by the river, innumerable as the leaves and blossoms in their season."

These lines begin the second half of the second book, which consists entirely of catalogues. The largest part comprises the so-called 'Catalogue of Ships' (which ends in 759) – a list of the Achaean forces enumerated as they appear on the Trojan shore in their ships; the smaller part, which ends the book, speaks of the Trojan troops. Catalogue poetry makes texts easy to remember, a fact that might explain the overwhelming presence of relatively dull material. In particular, the 'Catalogue of Ships' organizes the material spatially, and the catalogue is presented as a kind of circular tour of Greece and the islands (interrupted only at 2. 645-80 to include Crete, Rhodes, and the islands close by) – a device particularly suitable for memory's spatial imagery (E. Minchin, *Homer and the Resources of Memory*, Oxford 2001, 84-7).

Catalogues, however, have a different meaning to people for whom written records play a smaller part, or no part at all, people with whom the scientific study of history is undeveloped, and who "delight in factual knowledge for its own sake, especially where it relates to people and places beyond their own limits of time and space. They enjoy listening to catalogues and genealogies. This taste was not alien to the Greeks. In Plato's *Hippias Major* (285b-c) Socrates asked the learned Hippias what it is that the Spartans so enjoy hearing him discourse about. Is it cosmology? No, they cannot stand that. Mathematics? Not on your life; most of them can scarcely count. Prosody, metre, music? No, no, nothing of that sort. What they enjoy hearing about is the genealogies of heroes and of men, the founding of cities, and antiquity in general" (M.L. West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women: Its Nature, Structure, and Origins*, Oxford 1985, 8).

But the development of genealogical literature is not merely due to what pleasure one takes in listening to strings of names. Catalogues, and the genealogies that go with them, put things in their place, and Homer lived in such a society (West 8sq.): "Late Geometric and Archaic Greece was a loose network of aristocratic communities in which rival clans and families competed for wealth and influence. Prestige (...) depended on a combination of factors: property, honourable behaviour, stability over several generations.

A family's status was not fixed once and for all by some prehistoric conferment or denial of nobility. It could rise or sink with the long-term fortunes of the house. Access to wealth did not immediately transform a nobody into a man of quality (...), but if he could sustain it and hand it on to his sons and grandsons, they became persons of account. The system naturally led to tensions between the up-and-coming and previously established houses upon whose status they were encroaching. The latter had to compensate for their decline in prosperity by insisting on their claims to superior standing (...) inherent in their stock. They contrasted the celebrity of their fathers and forefathers with the humble origins of their rivals. Genealogy flourished. And in an age entranced by heroic poetry about the great kings, warriors and seers of late Mycenaean period, it was only to be expected that some families should seek to trace themselves back to the heroic age and attach their line to some figure mentioned in that poetry."

Aside from the large catalogue of ships, Homeric poetry readily admits genealogies. They are introduced in connection with the appearance of a new hero, or heroic exploit. Short pedigrees are supplied for several of the commanders listed in the catalogue of ships; Glaukos, however, in book 6. 150-211, speaks of the six generations preceding him. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus' visit to the underworld provides an opportunity for a whole series of genealogical narratives about various women (11. 235-332). They have much in common with a catalogue of women ascribed to the early Greek epic poet Hesiod. And even Homer's *Iliad* contains a catalogue of women, those with whom Zeus fell in love (14. 315-28).

By no means, however, was catalogue-style poetry confined to the archaic age. On the contrary, it remained a poetic device used at prominent places by classical authors such as Aeschylus or Herodotus. Aeschylus' *Persians*, for instance, the earliest surviving European drama, performed in 472, contains three long catalogues of leaders of the Persian army. A substantial proportion of them are probably genuine Persian names; most of the others sound Persian or at least exotic (21-54, 302-28, 957-99). Herodotus, the historian of the Persian wars, lists the Persian fighters in a long picturesque catalogue in the seventh book of his *Histories* (7. 61-80). And Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, produced in Athens in 467 BC, contains a catalogue-like survey of the seven fighters waiting to attack the seven gates of Thebes, presented by a scout reporting to the Theban king Eteocles (375-652).

The second book of the *Iliad* closes with a catalogue of the Trojan forces waiting in front of the city. The Trojans were led by Hector, 'the great Hector of the glinting' or 'flashing helmet' as he is called by Homer (2. 816), and they came on with cries and shouting, like birds - "as when the cries of cranes fill the sky, when they make their escape from the huge downpours

of winter, and with loud cries they fly on towards the Ocean's stream, bringing death and destruction to the Pygmies: and at early morning they launch their grim battle" (Hammond); or, in another translation, they "filled the ear with clamour, like the cranes that fly from the onset of winter and the sudden rains and make for Ocean Stream with raucous cries to bring death and destruction to the Pigmies, launching their wicked onslaught from the morning sky" (Rieu). The Achaeans, however, attacked silently, 'they moved forward in silence' as we hear, 'filled with resolve to stand by one another.'

ILIAD 9

I.

Reading Homer, one notices regularly recurring expressions. Homer speaks, for instance, of 'winged words' or 'long-haired Achaeans', and Troy is called 'the broad-wayed city of Troy'. Hector, in turn, is not simply Hector, but 'Hector of the glinting' or 'flashing helmet', and Achilles often 'swift-footed'.

Various repetitions, standard phrases, and verbal or thematic templates conventionally known as 'formulas' play a dominant part in Homeric composition. These relatively small micro-structures determine the sequence in which words or phrases are assembled into a larger macro-structure: words follow each other in a specific sequence in order to give the desired shape to a verse. Although these templates may appear to us as ready-written schemes, they form a characteristic and essential feature of orally composed and transmitted poetry. Obvious examples in the *Iliad* are recurrent combinations of noun and epithet (the Greek word for adjective), e.g. 'swift-footed godlike Achilles', 'sacred Ilios', 'long-shadowed spear'. Aside from these word-combinations, there are also whole lines that recur over and over, introducing a speech or reply, or describing an attack, a wound or a death, e.g. 'he fell with a crash, and his armour clattered around him', or 'over his eyes came the surge of death and strong fate took him'. More than 1,800 lines are repeated. 4,730 lines are repetitions. It is estimated that ca. 12,000 lines (i.e. the entire *Odyssey*) are filled with formulaic repetitions. In addition, there are also more extended descriptions of important or ritual processes (such as arming, sacrifice and preparation of food) which are more or less identical or only slightly adapted for the actual purpose.

A reading of only a few hundred lines of the *Iliad* reveals the extent of this principle of composition. Reading larger narrative blocks, the attentive reader will become aware of the poet's use of thematic 'formulas' - repeated

situations, with or without variants, repeated sequences of events, and parallel narrative structures. Such a system, developed to a greater or lesser degree of elaboration, was an essential aid to the oral poet: using those formulas enabled the poet to meet the demands of his metrical unit.

Thus the success and the quality of a singer's creation will depend on two things: firstly, on the richness of the tradition within he works and, secondly, on his own skill, experience, and originality in handling this material. The Greek epic tradition was rich and offered not only many themes but also many poetic devices that could be used in giving a certain poetic form to the narrative. By the time of Homer, centuries of selection, rejection, and refinement had created a formulaic system of amazing complexity and flexibility.

Without that tradition the Homeric poems could not have taken shape, yet Homer seems to have been a poetic genius of quite exceptional power and range (and Aristotle singled him out as such). Homer might well have far excelled his predecessors (practically unknown to us, or rendered insignificant by Homer's artistry) in technical skill, breadth of vision, quality of imagination, and sheer ambition. His objective and unemotional style, depicting evocative and expressive details, transforming characters and events into highlights, in other words, his technique was certainly in part inherited, though he adapted it for his new purpose.

The pure scale of the Homeric poems demonstrates their uniqueness (the *Iliad* a bit less than 16,000 lines, the *Odyssey* some 12,000), and their creation demanded two things from Homer: he had to be not only ambitious enough to compose a poem of such scale, and confident enough to manage it, but he also had to be acclaimed enough to command an audience, and determine an occasion (or several occasions), for its performance. Apparently, Homer had the authority to impose his monumental epic concept – a concept that might well have been his own invention – on his audience. This hypothesis is proved by the fact that the Homeric poems became widely known throughout the Greek world, and recognised as the definitive voice of epic poetry, and the major influence on all subsequent Greek literature. Otherwise Homer would not have been referred to by the Greeks simply as 'the poet'.

We – as people reading Homer, rather than listening to him – note all these repeated epithets and descriptive phrases for gods, people and things, the standard lines for regular actions and events, the unvaried descriptions of ritual or half-ritual processes. The general effect of this pervasive formulaic expression is to lend dignity to the Homeric world. The story is one of pain, discord, and destruction, set in an ordered and stable world in which all things have their proper excellence and beauty. Certainly this contrast was intended, it was design not accident that created this tension, which is

similar to the tension established in a tragedy. And, as in a tragedy, it is only at the very end, in the last book of the *Iliad*, that the disorder is set to rights, and a perverted world is restored to proper order – albeit only for a short while. The *Iliad* opens with Chryses appealing to Agamemnon for the return of his captive daughter. His appeal is rudely rejected. In the great closing scene of the *Iliad*, Priam visits Achilles to beg for the body of Hector. Once more, an old man, a father, and a suppliant, appeals to a proud, unstable, violent king for the return of his child; this time, however, his appeal is accepted. Both suppliants are threatened with rough words and frightened into submission. The same line, ‘So he spoke, and the old man was afraid and did as he was ordered’, is used to depict Chryses’ response to Agamemnon and then once again to depict Priam’s response to Achilles (1. 33 = 24. 571). The second context recalls the first, and serves two purposes: on the one hand, it emphasises the parallel, on the other hand, it points to the contrast between the two related scenes. Such a cross-reference reveals the unity of conception which runs through the whole length of the poem. It is the result of the work of a poet who was very much aware of how to use formulaic lines, and who distinguished himself by doing so.

Another of these cross-references, reserved specifically for important events, is an identical half-line (which does not recur elsewhere) by which the gods call Patroclus and Hector to their respective deaths (16. 693 and 22. 297). The passage describing the moment of death (16. 855-8 ‘phaidimos Hektor’ at the end = 22. 361-4 ‘dios Achilleus’ at the end) appears only in these two episodes. Thus the particular and tragic relation between the death of Patroclus and the death of Hector (Achilles’ best friend and worst enemy respectively) is further emphasised. Forms of word, descriptions of death, and narrative structure are common to both episodes but not used elsewhere in the *Iliad*. Both episodes also contain an otherwise unparalleled sequence of verbal exchanges between victor and victim, in which the dying hero warns that the killer will himself be killed. These verbal and thematic repetitions, specific and exclusive to the deaths of Patroclus and Hector, however, not only serve to link the two but also point forward to that still greater death which becomes part of the *Iliad’s* focus – the death of Achilles, a fact that lies outside the *Iliad*.

II.

At the beginning of **book 3**, we expect a general engagement of the two armies. This, however, is delayed until near the end of book 4 and happens later in the single day which occupies the narrative from book 2 to book 7.

A coup de théâtre, a sensational turn, is about to happen: instead of the battle between the armies, Paris challenges Menelaus to a duel. Helen comes to the wall to watch this combat between her two 'husbands', and identifies the leading Achaeans on the plain below for Priam. Menelaus wins the duel, but Aphrodite rescues Paris and carries him to his bedroom. Then, in a scene disturbingly demonstrating Aphrodite's power, and Helen's helplessness under its influence, Aphrodite forces Helen into bed with Paris. She attempts to resist and rebukes Paris but finally goes to bed with him. On the battlefield, Agamemnon claims victory for Menelaus.

The book introduces the world of Troy. The immediate contrast between the manner of the Trojans and the Achaeans as they advance in war (the Trojans noisy and ill-disciplined, the Achaeans silent and full of grim resolve, at 3. 1-9) will reappear when the two sides clash later that day (4. 422-38: Achaeans – sea, wave after wave, Trojans – female sheep, no single language shared by all). But there is another contrast. Paris, the first Trojan we meet, is not a completely heroic figure. Dressed in flashy clothes inappropriate for real fighting he takes up his armour (3. 328-39), though Paris ends the book resplendent in his bedroom, like one who 'was going to the dance, or had just left dancing and was taking his rest' (as Aphrodite puts it to Helena, 3. 392-4).

Book 3 concentrates on the relationship between Paris and Helen. Paris is the charmer, much criticised by his brother Hector, who calls him a pest (3. 39): 'good for nothing but looks, you woman-crazed seducer!' Helen is aware of her past (being seduced and/or abducted by Paris); she speaks of her longing to be dead (3. 173-6 & 6. 345-53), being conscious of herself as manipulated by forces whose imperative she hates but cannot resist. Her response to Paris' sexual advance prefigures the seduction of Zeus by Hera in book 14. The power of Aphrodite works on gods and humans alike: but although the divine world mirrors the world of men, there is neither real pain nor any consequence. Again we see how divine and human causation work inextricably towards the same end when Priam says to Helen that he is not blaming her, but the gods, who brought upon him the misery of war with the Achaeans (3. 164sq.). Priam's sons Hector and Paris, in turn, mirror each other, too; they seem like the two sons in a fable, the good son and the never-do-well.

The whole picture of Troy and the Trojans in book 3 is resumed and balanced by that given in book 6, for the exploration of the relationship between Paris and Helen in book 3 is complemented by a similar exploration of the relationship between Hector and Andromache in book 6; this one a relationship that emphasises the human cost of a disastrous war, whereas Paris' and Helen's was much more frivolous.

Athena selects the vain and foolish Pandarus for the breaking of the truce in **book 4** (the truce having been established for the duration of the duel between Paris and Menelaus). Athena persuaded Pandarus' fool-like mind to shoot at Menelaus, after which the fighting resumes (4. 104). However, before it comes to that, we get a glimpse of life on Mount Olympus. Opening a discussion among the gods in a sarcastic vein, Zeus slyly observes (like an umpire watching a match on the playground) that two goddesses, Hera and Athena, support Menelaus, while one goddess, 'laughter-loving smiling' Aphrodite always keeps close to Paris and shields him from calamity. Then, Pandarus' arrow leapt forward and scratched the surface of Menelaus' thighs, and immediately dark blood trickled from his wound. A peaceful simile, contrasting much with the bloody war, describes the wound (4. 141-7): "As when a woman stains ivory with crimson, purple dye, some Carian or Maeonian woman, in order to make a cheek-piece for horses. It lies there in her room, and many horsemen long for it and yearn to have it: but it waits there to be treasure for a king (...). Thus, Menelaus, blood stained your sturdy thighs and legs and ran down to your fine ankles below." The listener's (and reader's) imagination is guided away for a moment.

The wound is trivial, but decisive. Agamemnon declares his conviction that this perfidy will mean the destruction of Troy and its people; something has to be done. Re-establishing his claims to leadership, Agamemnon reviews his troops and commanders, thus extending the survey of leading Achaean figures which was begun by Helen's responses to Priam's questioning. Agamemnon boastfully utters three lines on the oncoming destruction of Troy: "One thing I know well in my heart and in my mind. The day will come when sacred Ilios shall be destroyed, and Priam, and the people of Priam of the good ashen spear." Curiously enough, on the other side of the wall, Hector is to say the same to his wife Andromache. In fact, the three lines in 4. 163-5 are identical with the lines of book 6. 447-9. Hector, of course, cannot have heard Agamemnon's words to his comrades, and no spy is likely to have communicated them to him. So it was Homer who wanted to point out to his listeners (and to his readers) that these two moments belong together: on the one side, the boastful chief of the Greeks, hunting the seducer of his brother's wife, beauty-queen blond Helen, addressing his men, worn out from nine years of luckless fighting; on the other side, the family-man and father Hector, taking leave from his beloved wife Andromache and their baby son Astyanax, frightened by his father's helmet in that intimate moment.

The two sides clash, gods driving them on, and the book ends with an account of the first full-scale fighting in the poem: first the massed encounter, then, in what will become a familiar mode of description, a series of in-

dividual encounters. The use of details and similes that show sympathy for the young who must die (cf., e.g., the death of the young Trojan Simoeisios, killed by Ajax 4. 473-89) – and there will be many doomed young men in the *Iliad* – is characteristic of Homer's battle-poetry.

The fighting continues throughout **book 5**, but the evenness of initial fortune is soon to be disturbed by Diomedes' overwhelming career, his Athena-inspired supremacy. Just before the opening of the battle (in 4. 422), however, he was very much rebuked by Agamemnon; having compared Diomedes to his father, Agamemnon finally insults him by saying 'Tydeus fathered a son inferior in battle, though better at talk' (4. 399sq.). Later in the *Iliad*, it is Diomedes who speaks of Agamemnon as of a coward, declaring openly that Agamemnon may go home if he wishes (9. 31-49); he will remain for sure and fight 'until we reach our goal in Ilios, since god is with us in our mission here'. The peer pressure helps Diomedes a lot (in book 9) and renders Agamemnon speechless for a moment. Diomedes has taken control of the situation, and he has the right to do so – because he has shown (in book 5) that he is the greatest Achaean fighter. His reaction, however, to Agamemnon is different from Achilles': Diomedes stays in the army, while Achilles refuses to continue fighting after Agamemnon treats him badly. Thus Diomedes parallels Achilles, and he even parallels Patroclus.

Diomedes attacks Apollo three times. But when Diomedes attacks for the fourth time, Apollo calls out to him with a fearful shout (5. 440-2): 'Never think yourself gods' equal.' This foreshadows Patroclus' sequence of three attacks. In book 16 (783-89), it is again Apollo who stops him after three attacks, and kills him. Diomedes – who is not killed by Apollo, but instead is simply made aware that he is overdoing it – appears not only as a second Achilles but also as a second Patroclus, thus doubling both Achaean heroes. His behaviour shows that it was possible to restrain oneself, and Diomedes' behaviour calls into question the behaviour of Achilles and Patroclus.

At the beginning of **book 6**, with the gods now out of the fighting, the Achaeans break the Trojan line and drive them back towards the city. Hector is compelled to rally the Trojans and to go into the city. But before Hector arrives in Troy – this will happen in line 237, and the rest of the book is set in Troy – there is the famous meeting between Diomedes and the Lycian Glaucus, who fights on the Trojan side. They meet on the battleground, and we expect a major fight, as there were so many in book 5. But the two fighters introduce themselves to each other, and, as Glaucus tells the story of his ancestry, Diomedes realises that their families are linked in guest-friendship. Such a guest-friend (the Greek word for which is *xenos*) cannot be treated as an enemy. On the contrary, such a person must be treated as a friend: the theme of 'noblesse oblige' returns. The meeting between the two ends in joy

and an exchange of armour (6. 236): Glaucus exchanges his gold armour for Diomedes' bronze armour, thus giving 'a hundred oxen's worth for nine oxen's worth.' Glaucus is said to have been deluded by Zeus (6. 234), and certainly he must have been, otherwise he would not have given away his golden armour so easily.

Zeus, however, would hardly operate so frivolously, and no critic, ancient or modern, has satisfactorily explained this unexpected change in his ethos. The action seems intended to be humorous in some way, and most readers, including Plato and Aristotle, have been sufficiently amused by the strange turn of events to refrain from further analysis. Homer seems to abandon his characteristic narrative mode for a moment, a fact regarded by some as so atypical that some critics have been tempted to regard the passage as inauthentic, i.e. interpolated by another poet.

The remaining part of book 6, from line 237 onwards, is set in Troy, and consists of three scenes that link Hector and the women of Troy; he meets his mother, then Helen, and finally his wife Andromache. These meetings illustrate the strong ties that bound him in times of peace, and the scenes define the proper spheres of men and women, and of war and peace. The third and most important of the triptych of encounters with women, marked by its length and intensity, is the meeting of husband and wife.

The tension between a man's duty to fight and his duty to his family is marvellously expressed when Hector's great helmet terrifies his baby son. Hector removes his helmet for a moment of domestic tenderness. The formulaic phrase 'Hector of the glinting helmet' is no longer a simple formula; the distinguishing feature of the helmet by which Hector is so often characterized "invades the narrative" (from Hammond's introduction to his translation, p. xxix), and becomes central to the plot, because the helmet starts acting as if it were a character in a drama. It is no longer an object that characterizes its owner; it becomes a character-defining item. The words 'of the glinting helmet' change their meaning - from a general formula to a specific expression. Similarly, the formulaic phrase that so often characterizes Achilles, i.e. 'swift-footed', takes on dramatic (and tragic) meaning when Achilles literally "chases Hektor to his death" (Hammond l.c.). Again a formulaic expression takes hold of a dramatic situation, and a second layer of meaning is attached to it. Achilles becomes literally 'swift-footed', indeed.

At the end of his conversation with Andromache, Hector decides to fight, because he would feel terrible shame before the people of Troy if he did not. In addition, his own heart urges him to do so, because as he says (6. 444sq.), "I have learnt always to be brave and to fight in the forefront of the Trojans, winning great glory for my father and for myself."

The moment marks Hector's choice, and Andromache recognizes it as such – a choice that foreshadows his fatal decision in book 22, when once again Hector chooses to stay outside Troy and reject his family's appeals. The scene ends on a note of impending tragedy – the servant-women in Hector's house mourn him (6. 499-502), "because they thought he would never again return from the fighting, and escape the fury of the Achaeans' hands."

Hector's statement in book 6 is put in terms that are elementary to the understanding of his mind. When, in her speech at 6. 407-39, Andromache begs Hector to pity hers and her son, and to carry out the future defence of Troy from within the fortifications, Hector replies (*Iliad* 6. 441-6, cited from D.L. Cairns, *Aidōs: The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature*, Oxford 1993, 80sq.):

"Truly, all these considerations weigh with me, lady; but I feel terrible *aidōs* before the Trojans and their wives of the trailing robes, if I sneak away from the war like a coward (*kakos*). Nor does my *thumos* bid me, since I have learned to be brave (noble, *esthlos*) and always to fight among the first of the Trojans, winning great fame (*kleos*) for my father and myself.

"It is *aidōs*, then, which drives Hector to fight in open battle, in spite of the pity he feels for his wife and child. It is clearly unbearable for him that others should consider him a coward. But this is not his only reason for rejecting Andromache's appeal; he knows that there is something else that impels him to risk his life, something within himself not dependent on his fear of what the Trojans might say, and it is to this factor that he refers when he indicates that his *thumos* produces the same result as his *aidōs*. Hector effectively tells us that it is not his own wish to face the Greek heroes in battle, and, indeed, that it is unthinkable for him to do otherwise. Neither the commands of his *thumos* nor his 'education' in meeting the standards required of an *esthlos* should be sharply divorced from the *aidōs* which he has just expressed. His *aidōs* is his first expression of his inability to act in a cowardly way, and it explicitly refers to 'other people'; but the demands of his *thumos*, a product of his 'education', have the same effect, and so Hector's *aidōs* is clearly not the reaction of a person who is solely concerned with the unpleasant consequence of popular disapproval. His *aidōs* does not inhibit conduct which he would contemplate, if he were convinced that he could get away with it, but rather reinforces and expresses his rejection of certain behaviour as unthinkable. Hector alludes to an education in the values and expectations of his society, and the sensitivity to custom thus produced will be *aidōs*, a quality which will later figure prominently in Greek theories of education and character development. Hector's education will have taught him how society expects him to behave, and so contributes to the formation of his social role; in as much as his *thumos* and his *aidōs* combine in leading him to pursue his role, he has obviously made the values under which he acts his own, made the

expectations of society equivalent to his own expectations of himself. The reference of *aidōs* to other people, therefore, does not necessarily entail simple conformity to others' standards, and, in his attitude to his own behaviour, as well as to that of his brother, Hector considers more than just 'how things look' to other people.

"Hector is faced with a similar situation in Book 22, when it is his parents who attempt to dissuade him from going into battle. Again, he is inexorable (91), and again he sees his choice to remain in the field in terms of *aidōs*. This time, however, his *aidōs* is not directed at the implication of cowardice, but at the charge that he has failed in his duty to protect Troy and its people."

Hector's feeling was shared by the Greeks as well. Only cowards want to escape, Odysseus says to himself in a soliloquy, passing a difficult moment on the battleground (*Iliad* 11. 404-10).

Book 6 closes with the sudden appearance of Paris, who has been lounging in the women's quarters and fussing over his armour. He dashes through the city, bright in his armour like the beaming sun, laughing as he comes. He begins to apologize to his brother, who is ashamed that Paris refuses to enter the battleground. 'Strange man', Hector replies to his brother, 'you deliberately hang back and refuse to fight: and my heart within me is pained at that, when I hear shaming things said of you by the Trojans' (6. 521-5).

At the beginning of **book 7**, the reappearance of Hector and Paris leads to some immediate Trojan success, but Athena and Apollo agree that the fighting should stop for another duel – this time between Hector and an Achaean champion. A parallel is established, repeating the Paris-Menelaus scenario of book 3, but something is also being anticipated. Hector's challenge is an altogether more serious affair than Paris' challenge. Hector is concerned with the return of the loser's body for burial (7. 76-86), a fact that anticipates his own treatment when killed by Achilles, who refuses for a long time to hand back Hector's corpse, and finally does so only after having received a huge payment. On the Achaeans' side, Ajax is chosen by lot to face Hector. Ajax is the much better fighter, but their combat is stopped by heralds from both sides. Darkness is coming on, and the combatants part with the exchange of gifts.

A day is spent in order to take care of the dead on both sides. On the next day, the Achaeans build a defensive wall around their ships and encampment. The first phase is over, the first dead buried, but Zeus' plan has been ineffective so far – the Achaeans have the upper hand. The desired Trojan victory, however, comes in the next day's fighting, wholly contained in **book 8**.

The book begins with a scene on Olympus in which Zeus forbids the gods to intervene in the war. The fighting resumes, and fortunes remain even until Zeus holds out his golden scales and the tide turns against the Achaeans. Zeus uses his scales, two golden pans attached to a balance, here in 8. 69-72, and again in *Iliad* 22. 209-13, both times at decisive points in the action. The text of the two lines, when he holds out the golden scales, then places 'two fates of death's long sorrow' in them, is identical in each case. There follows a verse defining the owners of the fates: Trojans and Achaeans here, in book 8, Achilles and Hector in book 22; a slightly varied description of Zeus holding up the scales and the sinking of 'the day of destiny' of one or the other follows (8. 72 & 22. 212).

Zeus' use of his scales in book 8 foreshadows the critical moment in book 22 when he weighs the fates of Achilles and Hector, and Hector is doomed to Hades. In book 8, the golden scales are the beginning of the long process of reversal for the Greeks, fulfilling Zeus' pledge to Thetis. The scales are referred to twice (at 16. 658 & 19. 223). When the scales finally appear for a second time in book 22, the process is reversed again, and Hector is to die.

Hector, inspired by Zeus, drives the Achaeans back behind their new defences. Athena and Hera plan help for the Achaeans, but Zeus warns them off. They agree that it is not worth fighting Zeus for the sake of mortals (8. 427-31).

On the following day, the Trojans, confident of victory over the Achaeans, set up camp out in the plain. The book ends quietly, with the image of innumerable Trojan watch-fires burning in the plain at night. The opening of book 9, however, is striking. Both, the eighth book's quite closure and the ninth book's confused opening reflect each other. Moreover, both Homeric scenes are made more impressive by the use of similes. The Trojan fires at the end of book 8 are compared to stars showing brilliant in the sky: "when the air is windless calm (...), and brightness bursts infinite down from the sky (...) every star is seen, and the shepherd's heart is glad"; the Achaeans, however, at the sight of these fires, are gripped by panic: "as when two winds come suddenly and whip the fish-filled sea, the north wind and the west wind," and dark waves swell that pile up seaweed all along the beach.

III.

At the opening of **book 9**, the great leader Agamemnon responds to this Trojan threat with characteristic despair. He repeats the suggestion he made in book 2, namely, that the Achaeans should sail home; but this time the danger is real, and Agamemnon is not trying to fool his comrades; he is simply at a loss as to how to rescue them otherwise.

Agamemnon feels deceived by Zeus, who tells him to go back to his homeland in dishonour, after having lost many of his people. "Come then," concludes Agamemnon, "let us all do as I say – let us away with our ships to our dear native land. We shall never now take the broad streets of Troy" (9. 26-8, tr. Hammond). Agamemnon's proposal is received in complete silence by his soldiers, until Diomedes begins his speech. He harshly criticises Agamemnon, who called him a coward earlier. Diomedes ends his speech by announcing that he will stay and fight until Troy is sacked. The soldiers shout their approval.

In what follows, Nestor also criticises Agamemnon. He proposes that they appease Achilles, and chooses and instructs three emissaries. Agamemnon lists the spectacular range of gifts that Achilles will receive from him if he abandons his anger. Odysseus and Ajax are selected to convey this offer. They are to be accompanied by an old man, Phoenix, who acted as Achilles' tutor in his youth. The three set off on an expedition which will become one of the most memorable Homeric scenes in many senses. A close reading of it is to follow.

Surprisingly, "when they came to the Myrmidons' huts and ships, they found Achilles enjoying music. Achilles was singing of famous men and accompanying himself on a tuneful lyre, a beautifully ornamented instrument with a silver crossbar, which he had chosen from the spoils when he destroyed Eëtion's city. He was alone but for Patroclus, who was sitting opposite with his eyes on Achilles, quietly waiting for him to stop singing" (9. 185-91, tr. Rieu).

Homer depicts Achilles as performing music and enjoying the company of his friend. This is slightly surprising, for Achilles has just been betrayed by members of his own social class. Now, by performing a song about glorious heroic deeds, Achilles evokes the social memory of the group to which he belongs: why should we not assume that he seriously hopes to rejoin that group? If he doesn't, why should he remember them? Achilles sings of the heroic deeds of figures like himself, although for the moment he is excluded from their company, and prevented from performing those heroic deeds.

On second thought, however, perhaps it is not so surprising. It seems quite appropriate that Achilles, sitting in front of his beloved companion, praises the acts of heroes. The heroic code has to be preserved, and there was no better means of doing so than for a hero to recount heroic deeds – a performance of literature in an oral culture offers an ideal occasion to do exactly that. In our case, the hero par excellence is the performer. Who but the protagonist of the *Iliad* would have been as impressive and convincing?

Agamemnon's envoys find Achilles entertaining his friend Patroclus. They have come to ask Achilles to return to the fight against the Trojans.

Each of them uses their own lives as narratives with which to evoke the heroic code.

Odysseus speaks first, reminding Achilles of the words of Peleus, Achilles' father. When Achilles was leaving home to join Agamemnon, Peleus gave him some instructions. As if he knew what was to come, namely that his son would be unable to control his emotions, Peleus advised him directly (9. 252-9, tr. Rieu): "My good friend, when your father Peleus sent you from Phthia to join Agamemnon, did he not admonish you in these words: 'My son, Athene and Hera, if they wish you well, are going to make you strong. What you must do is to keep a check on that proud spirit of yours, you must restrain your proud soul; for a kind heart is a better thing than pride. Quarrels are deadly. Be reconciled at once; and all the Argives young and old will look up to you the more.' Those were the old man's precepts - which you have forgotten."

Reminding Achilles of his father's words, Odysseus implores him to yield to his requests. Nothing, however, will persuade Achilles to restrain his proud soul or to hold back his anger; he remains uncompromising. Achilles is not being controlled by any god. If he had wanted to restrain himself, he could have done. Odysseus clearly addresses him as one possessing free will.

We can only guess why Homer chose the departure scene to convey the central tenets of the heroic code. One reasonable answer might be that scenes of that kind are fraught with strong emotions. A son leaving for war cannot be sure he will ever see his father again, not only because he may die in battle, but also, even if he returns home safely, his father might well have died in the meantime. It is a memorable moment. Citing Peleus, tricky Odysseus wants to play on a brave son's emotions. But his pleas are in vain.

Phoenix, who speaks next, tries again, and harder, although indirectly, using a variety of tools - autobiography (citing himself), allegory (hinting at a moral symbol by creating the perfect 'father image'), and analogy (introducing a mythic example); the old man chooses a slightly circuitous approach (a fact that highlights his experience in dealing with Achilles). In fact, he is a particularly good choice when it comes to reminding Achilles of his father's words, because Phoenix is Achilles' foster father, and reminds Achilles of his childhood.

At the outset of his long speech (434-605), Phoenix is in turmoil because Achilles had categorically rejected all of Odysseus' gifts, and has announced that he is leaving Troy. Bursting into tears, Phoenix reminds him of their departure. To Achilles, this is a mere theatrical trick performed by a hypocrite (i.e. Phoenix, acting at Agamemnon's behest). Phoenix not only remembers Achilles as unskilled in war and debate (9. 440sq.) but he also

remembers Achilles' father's wish that Phoenix would teach him all these things, "to be both a speaker of words and a doer of deeds" (443).

Achilles is not inclined to listen to a sobbing old man (433), even if he happens to be his foster father, Phoenix. Later, however, Achilles is very impressed by Hector's father weeping; he himself cries when he and Priam remember the lives of father and son respectively (24. 507-12, J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death*, Oxford 1980, 99sq. & 123-7). Remembering Patroclus, Achilles suffers tremendously again (23. 59-109), and finally, burning the corpse of his friend, Achilles is compared to a father lamenting his dead son (23. 222-5): "As a father weeps when he is burning the bones of a son who has died on his wedding-day and left his stricken parents in despair, Achilles wept as he burned his comrade's bones, moving round the pyre on leaden feet with many a deep groan."

Phoenix, however, has only just begun; he is familiar with Achilles' stubbornness and not the least deterred by it. He tells a story from his own youth, comparing it with the present situation. Once, he was very upset and wanted to kill his own father, Amyntor. One of the Immortals stopped him by reminding Phoenix of the dreadful gossip he would provoke, the attention he would attract (469). Not wanting to be called a patricide by the Achaeans, Phoenix flew to Phthia, the home of Achilles (Phthia or Phthiotis is the southernmost region of ancient Thessaly). By telling a sympathetic story, Phoenix conveys his comprehension of Achilles' strong emotions: Achilles, as the son of a hero (Peleus), and brought up as an adopted son by another hero (Phoenix), can never renounce the heroic code.

Recalling Achilles' youth, Phoenix describes Achilles as a young boy, at the time when Phoenix was in charge of rearing him. Mixing individual remembrance with social memory, Phoenix invokes Achilles' infancy in order to remind of his moral obligations (9. 485-98, tr. Rieu): "Since then, most worshipful Achilles, all my loving devotion has gone to make you what you are. Do you remember how you would refuse to go out to dinner or touch your food at home with anyone but me; how I always had to take you on my knees and pamper you, by cutting titbits for you from my meat and holding my cup to your lips? You often soaked the front of my tunic with the wine that dribbled from your clumsy little mouth. Yes, I went through a great deal for you and worked hard. I felt that since Heaven was not going to send me a boy of my own, I had better make you my son, most worshipful Achilles, so that you could save me some day from a miserable end. Conquer your pride, Achilles. You have no right to be so stubborn. The very gods, for all their greater excellence and majesty and power, are capable of being swayed, even they can bend."

Again, the message is plain; Achilles, educated as a hero by a hero, has to follow Phoenix's example. It is as simple as that: just as Phoenix did not give in to his emotions and kill his father, Achilles now has to stop his arrogant behaviour. Achilles, however, does not show any sign of relenting or softening. At that point, he is so dour that he does not even grace Phoenix with a reply.

Looking for an ever stronger argument, Phoenix now reminds Achilles of a mythological paradigm. After (a) the departure scene, (b) the reminiscence of his own youth and (c) the reminiscence of the heroic childhood of wine-spitting Achilles, Phoenix tells Achilles (d) the story of Meleager. Meleager is depicted in a situation quite similar to the one that Achilles is now confronted with. He too was angry and refused to fight, but eventually returned. However, he returned to the battle too late, and Phoenix warns Achilles not to make the same mistake. Instead of indulging in sullen ill-humour, Achilles should immediately accept Agamemnon's gifts and return to battle (527-603).

One would think that telling a story about a hero of the older generation should do the job, but Phoenix again fails to convince Achilles (and this was his fourth try). Although Phoenix has reminded Achilles of many things – his father's wish, his foster father's youth, his own upbringing, and finally of another hero's shortcomings – his words have had no effect on Achilles. Achilles withdraws, as if he were not even listening, as if the heroic code meant nothing to him. The social memory, however, still exists, otherwise Odysseus' and Phoenix's speeches would have made no sense to the audience.

Ajax, the third speaker, also reminds Achilles of the heroic values. But Ajax does not remind Achilles of his father or of any other father-figures. Ajax uses himself and the other two envoys as examples. They behave properly, unlike Achilles. When they arrived at his camp, Achilles addressed them as the dearest of the Achaeans, even in his wrath (9. 197). The envoys appreciate this status, as Ajax's only wish is that Achilles will rejoin their company. He cannot understand why Achilles no longer respects the rules which guide the heroes. Achilles should return to the fold, and abandon his grotesque anger, by which he is endangering the whole Greek army, and jeopardizing their victory over the Trojans.

To Ajax, it does not make sense that Achilles is hosting them and at the same time rejecting Agamemnon's gifts. Achilles appears discourteous, disrespectful even, to Ajax (which is unacceptable behaviour among persons of equal status). By doing so, Achilles is making himself unworthy of respect (9. 636-42, tr. Rieu): "But the gods have made your mind so implacably furious over a girl, a single girl. And here are we, offering you seven of the very best, and a great deal more into the bargain. Be a little more forbearing.

And remember your obligations as our host. We are under your roof; we were picked from the whole Danaan army; and we wish for nothing better than to remain your closest and your dearest friends of all the Achaeans that there are."

Ajax's clever argument - that the gods have caused Achilles' current state - gives Achilles a chance to respond. Ajax does not regard him as powerless; he regards him as capable of taking a decision to change his situation. In the same way, Odysseus perceived Achilles as the master of his own will, which is not determined by divine power - and Phoenix even mentioned the astonishing fact that the gods also give in sometimes. This is what is meant by "be a little more forbearing", i.e. become mild, lessen your anger, and by "restrain your proud soul, keep a check on your proud spirit."

Ajax, however, appeals to Achilles in vain (as Odysseus did earlier). The peer pressure is of no use. Although Achilles considers Ajax a congenial character, it does not occur to him to take his advice. If he did, he would be excusing Agamemnon's behaviour, as he puts it himself (9. 645-8): "There is much in what you say. But my blood boils when I think of what happened, and the vile way in which Agamemnon treated me in public, like some disreputable outcast", a line used again by Achilles when addressing Patroclus at the opening of book 16 (9. 648 = 16. 59).

In Achilles' view, Agamemnon has humiliated him. In doing so, Agamemnon was not acting in accordance with the heroic code, for heroes have to be treated differently from ordinary people: heroes are heroes and good manners prevail between them (or at least appearances ought to be kept up). Agamemnon has apparently forgotten the rules (which does not speak well for his leadership qualities, incidentally).

Agamemnon's obliviousness, his lack of social memory, is of great importance in the present situation. The dilemma is apparent: why should Achilles follow the rules of the heroic code, when Agamemnon apparently could not care less about it? Achilles comes close to giving in, simply because he likes Ajax, whom he regards as a congenial character, but the hatred between Achilles and Agamemnon is too great. Achilles continues to resist. An exceptional hero, he will not accept, as the price of his cooperation, the sort of restitution other heroes normally accept.

Let us sum up: The centrepiece of Odysseus' speech is the unparalleled magnificence of Agamemnon's offer of material and honorific compensation, the importance of which is underlined by the repetition of Agamemnon's catalogue of gifts. Gifts do not only increase a man's possessions, they indicate his status. Achilles acknowledges this later (alone, addressing dead Patroclus in 24. 592-5).

Phoenix draws attention to the obligations between father and son. His account of the special relation that grew between him and the young Achilles doubles the force of his appeal by exploring his own role as a sort of surrogate or deputy father to Achilles. Later, Achilles is to be confronted again with the emotive force of this motif (when Hector's father Priam meets Achilles in book 24. 486-92).

Ajax is brusque and blunt. Achilles remains unmoved. Even to Patroclus, Achilles' callousness is so apparent that he accuses him of not being human, not having Peleus as his father nor Thetis as his mother (16. 34sq.): "Only the grey sea or the stark cliffs could have produced a monster so hard-hearted."

Achilles rejects everything Odysseus offers in his speech (307-429), the longest continuous argument in the *Iliad*; speeches by Phoenix, 434-605, and Nestor, 11. 656-803, are longer, but contain long passages of narrative. Achilles, being better at action than words (as he admits himself 18. 105sq.), speaks his mind plainly (9. 308-14). Being "weak on logic and strong on emotion" (B. Hainsworth, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume III: Books 9-12*, Cambridge 1993, 100), he expresses again and again his contempt for Agamemnon.

These repetitions give the speech a 'spiral pattern', an emphatic form of ring-composition. There are many turns of phrase like 'hateful to me as the gates of hell' or 'whether a man does much or little', which lead to Achilles' final disillusionment (401-16) where he denies the heroic doctrine that glory outweighs life. The standard heroic equation sets the risk of death against the certainty of honour. If there is no appropriate honour or glory, there is no point in inviting death. For Achilles, Agamemnon has devalued the equation such that certain death is no longer set against the guarantee of honour. Why then should Achilles throw away his life?

Achilles has three different replies to the three different speeches; the complexity of his character - demanded by the *Iliad's* complex plot - is reflected in his exceptionally varied speeches (J. Griffin, *Homeric Words and Speakers*, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 106, 1986, 36-57): Replying to Odysseus, Achilles declares that he will leave for home in the morning. To Phoenix he says that he will decide in the morning whether to go or stay. In response to Ajax, Achilles declares that he will fight, but only when Hector has reached the Myrmidons' ships and huts (the Myrmidons being the soldiers Achilles commands).

Later, in the opening of book 16, Achilles is to make another concession, this one in response to the appeal of his friend Patroclus - it will mean Patroclus' death. After that, Achilles must return to battle. What will motivate him then, however, is not heroism; the quarrel, the gifts, and his own death will mean nothing to him. What will motivate him then, after the death of his friend Patroclus, is hatred and desire for revenge.

ILIAD 16

I.

Before we get to book 16, let us have a brief look back at how the narrative has developed so far. We have just passed the key to the *Iliad*, book 9, at the end of which the Achaean leaders know where they stand: on their own. Book 9 contributes nothing to the action of the poem, the situation on the ground being the same at the end as at the beginning: the Trojans on the plain, the Achaeans behind their wall. But book 9 has added something much more relevant: it has reintroduced Achilles, who had been out of sight and mind from the end of book 1, and, what is more, the idea of his moral responsibility – an idea that up to now has been latent in the story – is now at the centre of the narrative. Book 9 makes it clear that, through an explicit error of judgment, Achilles has become morally responsible for the rest of the action. In book 9, he is given a fair chance to abandon the futile stance he had taken up in book 1; Achilles, however, refuses. He is then warned that his stance is wrong and dangerous; Achilles, however, takes no notice. His obstinacy is, in the classical sense, an error – a tragic error: Achilles rejects a fair offer, but he does so for classically heroic reasons; he is certainly in the wrong, “but from an excess of rectitude” (B. Hainsworth, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume III: Books 9-12*, Cambridge 1993, 57).

Books 9 to 12 begin with a major attempt to conciliate Achilles. The attempt fails, and after the night-expedition digression in book 10, we see the serious fighting of books 11 and 12, and finally, Hector’s breaking into the Achaean camp. There is a break between 12 and 13, as we are halfway through the poem. Now, in book 13, having brought Hector through to the ships, Zeus turns his eyes away from Troy. From now on, in the *Iliad*’s second half, this division of the *Iliad* into four-book segments no longer works properly although in the first half it was revealing to look at the poem through such an artificial structure, in that it helped us to discover its organic transitions and boundaries. In the first half in particular, the segments have an organic character: “Thus books 1-4 culminate in the first engagement in battle to be described in the poem; books 5-8 see further delays and diversions, among which the Troy-scenes of 6 serve a special purpose after the exploits of Diomedes in 5” (G.S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume I: Books 1-4*, Cambridge 1985, 44). Books 9 to 12 extend this structure, and can be grouped together. Let us see what happens.

The action of **book 10** takes place entirely at night, the night of the day that began in book 8. The last line of book 9 speaks of the Achaeans as ‘they lay down and enjoyed sleep’, whereas the first line of book 11 begins ‘when

dawn had risen from the bed where she sleeps'. The singular night interlude of book 10 contains the description of a singular action: The Achaeans decide that a spy should infiltrate the Trojan camp and gather what information he can. Diomedes volunteers, and chooses Odysseus to accompany him. At the same time, on the Trojan side, Hector asks for a volunteer to spy on the ships of the Achaeans. Dolon, a man of unheroic disposition, is chosen, and is later captured by Diomedes and Odysseus, and interrogated and killed. Diomedes and Odysseus use the information extracted from Dolon to kill king Rhesos, the newly arrived Thracian leader, who has beautiful white horses, a chariot, and armour of gold. Thus, book 10 is a break in the tension established by the intense emotion in book 9, which will return with the fighting that starts in book 11.

At the end of the first century BC, the Roman poet Virgil seems to adopt this Homeric pattern in his *Aeneid*. Books 3 and 5, for instance, relax the tension of the highly dramatic books 2 and 4. The third book of the *Aeneid* tells the story of the wanderings of Aeneas in Aeneas' own words, just as in Homer the major part of Odysseus' wanderings is recounted by Odysseus (*Odyssey* 9-12). The major part of book five is concerned with the games held in honour of Aeneas' father Anchises, and Virgil's description repeatedly recalls Homer's account of the funeral games for Patroclus in *Iliad* 23. Book 3 of the *Aeneid* is placed between two books of high tension, i.e. the fall of Troy (in book 2) and Dido's death (in book 4); in this way, Virgil achieves a type of tonal contrast that appears again in the fifth book, where the tension is less marked than in the preceding or following books. Virgil, one of Homer's most attentive readers in antiquity, seems to have imitated his narrative technique, the modulation of speed and/or density, "the principle of variation in emotional tension, of contrast between light and darkness, between storm and peace" (R.D. Williams, *Vergili Aeneidos liber quintus*, Oxford 1960, xi). From this we may deduce that Virgil considered the poetic sequence established by Homer to be aesthetically good. Although book 10 of the *Iliad* deviates somewhat – displaying a relish for the macabre and a fondness for details of clothing and unusual armour – it appears the sequence formed a part of the concept of the *Iliad* as a whole. Given the fact that it varies the narrative's tempo and relative speed beautifully, this might well be the case. Its opening lines, for instance, recall the way in which book 2 is joined to book 1 – 'all retired to bed' (end of preceding book), 'but X could not sleep' (opening lines of the following book); in book 2, it was Zeus, in book 10, it is Agamemnon.

Nevertheless, the universal opinion among Homerists since antiquity has been that the book does not form part of the design of the *Iliad*. However, to insert a substantial episode into a poem such as the *Iliad* is more difficult

than some critics of the analytical school have assumed. If, for a moment, we consider book 10 as an expansion of the overall unity, as one might expand an *aristeia* with an additional duel, then the interpolated episode must begin from the situation established immediately prior to the interpolation, and must necessarily then diverge from the main storyline. The trouble (for the interpolator) arises at the end of the interpolated episode (i.e. where the original story is to be resumed), because the continuation of the original story will not presuppose the interpolation, but rather what preceded it (B. Hainsworth, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume III: Books 9-12*, Cambridge 1993, 152): "That difficulty can be surmounted by making the expansion return to the same situation as obtained as its beginning" - and this is exactly how book 10 ends, "but that may not be easy either and if achieved may undercut whatever point the expansion ever had"; in other words, the audience (as now we as readers) may well wonder what all that was about, what it had to do with the rest of the *Iliad's* design.

But the worst is yet to come. Assuming, for the sake of argument, that book 10 is indeed an interpolation, by whom, at what time, and for what purpose was the interpolation made? The scholia, ancient explanatory notes, claim that it was Homer who composed book 10, and that the book was inserted in the sixth century, but it is impossible to say who first made this allegation and on what grounds.

The book's plan is basically simple: it is divided into almost exactly equal halves (1-298 & 299-579), and the second half begins with a Trojan council, apparently echoing the Achaean council with which the book began. The plot requires the two scouting parties to meet, and so they do. Book 10 seems well-balanced in general. It reads like the work of a 'down to earth' poet, who knows something about Homer, but who has altered the colour and tension of his narrative, slowed its movement, and diminished its power. The whole episode seems a purposeless digression.

With the dawn that begins **book 11** comes the most sustained and violent fighting in the *Iliad*. A particular grimness invades the narrative, as well as a kind of monotony, not in the sense of a lack of variety, rather a sameness of tone. A wealth of similes is contained in the narration of this book, and in the following book 12, enlivening the dreadful and dull routine of the killing. Homer makes much of these similes, or illustrative argumentations, and his similes do not merely illustrate; they also ennoble the subject they describe. The long and crucial day (that begins in book 11) continues until the end of book 18 (*Iliad* 2. 48-7. 380 describe one day, as 11. 1-18. 238 another). By then the Achaeans' walls will have been breached, their ships set on fire, and Patroclus will be dead. This is the fulfilment of Zeus' promise to Thetis, a complete granting of Achilles' wish. The consequences, however,

are disastrous for Achilles. Driving the Trojans almost back into their city, Agamemnon has now his hour of glory. Then, however, three leading Achaean fighters are wounded and disabled in succession – first Agamemnon, then Diomedes, finally Odysseus. Of the great Achaean fighters only Ajax now remains on the field, and he threatens to reverse the tide of battle. But Zeus causes Ajax to retreat, and he slowly gives ground. Homer uses two similes to illustrate this extraordinary event, to put it in perspective: a donkey (who has had his food) and a lion (who did not get the flesh he was after).

The first simile compares Ajax to a lion (*Iliad* 11. 548-55): “As country farmers and their dogs drive a (...) lion from the inner yard where the cattle are: (...) in his hunger for meat he charges in but gains nothing – spears fly thick against him (...) and at early morning he goes away in distress of heart.” The second simile compares Ajax to a donkey (*Iliad* 11. 558-62): “As when a donkey (...) ignores the efforts of the boys leading him alongside a fields; (...) the boys beat him with their sticks, but their strength is feeble, and they only drive him out with much effort, when he has had his fill of food.”

Achilles watches what is going on and sends out Patroclus. Nestor rescues a wounded man. Patroclus gets the news, wants to return to Achilles, but is restrained by Nestor, who starts his long speech, the longest of his reminiscences, in which he criticises Achilles’ attitude. Nestor ends with the suggestion that Patroclus should persuade Achilles to let him go into battle wearing Achilles’ armour. Achilles’ interest and Patroclus’ attempts to gather news on Achilles’ behalf set in motion the sequence of events that leads directly to Patroclus’ death, as is explicitly and succinctly noted by the poet in 11. 604. When Achilles calls Patroclus and begs him to find out more about Nestor and the wounded warrior he is carrying, the poet notes laconically that “this was to be the beginning of his doom.”

Patroclus, however, is the moral opposite of Achilles, whom Patroclus calls “forbidding and quick to anger” (11. 649, tr. Hammond), i.e. repellent, repulsive, uninviting. Or as the older translation renders it (tr. Rieu): “(...) a difficult man (...), quite capable of finding fault without a reason.” In this line Patroclus uses a unique combination and a unique sense of the Greek epithet (B. Hainsworth, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume III: Books 9-12*, Cambridge 1993, 295): “he means that Akhilleus’ prickly pride is ‘apt to take umbrage’ if Patrokos is sent on an urgent errand and then spends time in social courtesies.” Patroclus, however, is the kindest of the Achaeans, and his kindness dooms him: he listens to old Nestor, meets wounded Eurypylos, helps him to his hut, and spends some time entertaining him with talk; finally, and fatally, this kindness leads him to appeal to Achilles at the beginning of book 16.

The nadir of the Achaeans' power comes in **book 12**: the Trojans form into divisions for the assault on the wall. Sarpedon and Glaucus lead a powerful attack, Hector smashes through the gate with a huge stone, leaping inside. The Trojans swarm through and over the wall, and the Achaeans flee in panic among their ships. At the book's climax, Hector is standing in the open gate. Preceded by a kind of speed-up or hastening towards this climax, the scene is depicted in heightened heroic colours: in life, however, one did not attack a gate in a chariot, which would have been suicidal, nor shatter a gate with a stone held in one hand, which simply would not have worked. Thus the basic constraints of the Homeric narrative become visible; some things are not really realistic.

Hector, in this moment of triumph, is likened to a boar or a lion; again, a simile is used to add a second layer to the text (*Iliad* 12. 41sq.): "As when a boar or lion, revelling in his strength, turns and turns about amid a company of dogs and huntsmen." For a literary historian, it is well worth examining the expression which concludes the simile (12. 45sq.): "but his glorious heart feels no fear or fright, and it is his courage that kills him."

The expression recalls Andromache's words to Hector in book 6, where she addressed a husband with the words "your own brave spirit will destroy you" (407). At the same time, the expression foreshadows the simile used to describe Patroclus at the height of his glory, and shortly before his death (16. 753): "his own courage brings his death." These intra-textual references are characteristic of the texture of the *Iliad's* narration. One may call them intra-textual references, because they occur within the same work (as opposed to inter-textual references, which relate to two different works by two different authors). The same idea is expressed by three different Greek words, a fact that may indicate the absence of a fixed terminology, a stable system of terms used to express mental states (6. 407 *ménos*, 12. 46 *agēnoría*, 16. 753 *alké*): one idea may well be expressed by several words, which nevertheless do not mean exactly the same thing.

Despite the midpoint climax, i.e. Hector's breaking into the camp in book 12, the *Iliad* might be most naturally divided into three 'movements'. In music, movement means a principal division of a longer musical work, usually differing in tempo from the other divisions and having a distinctive character of its own. In the *Iliad*, the first of these movements describes the wrath of Achilles and its early consequences, and the delays before the battle turns decisively against the Achaeans; the second movement comprises the severe fighting in the central part of the poem, ending with the death of Patroclus; the third movement is Achilles' re-entry into the action: Hector is annihilated and Achilles re-established as hero.

II.

The following books, 13 to 16, contain some 2,970 verses. Such a unit (the largest of six units of four books into which the *Iliad* is divided) "would be suitable for oral performance on a single day as part of a six-day rendition of the whole" (R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume IV: Books 13-16*, Cambridge 1992, 39). The only surviving Attic tragic trilogy, Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, contains some 3,800 lines, to which must be added the several hundred lines of the lost satyr-play that was performed along with it. The only surviving satyr-play, Euripides' *Cyclops*, contains some 700 lines. The longest Pindaric epinikion, the fourth *Pythian* ode (462 BC), consists of roughly 300 lines.

Like 5-8 and 9-12, books 13-16 each open with a Greek success, but this is followed by losses even worse than those which closed 5-8 and 9-12, and at the end of book 16, Patroclus, sent to the rescue by Achilles, is slain. Thus the Achaean defeat finally involves the hero who had done the most to precipitate it – and the defeat involves Achilles in a most personal way. But this must not happen too fast. Indeed, the main function of **book 13**, entitled in antiquity 'the battle at the ships', is to delay the action. Poseidon is one of the major divine supporters of the Achaeans. In the course of the fierce battle, Ares' son Askalaphos is killed, and this death of a god's son prefigures the death of Zeus' own son, Sarpedon, in book 16. At the end of the long book, the Achaeans still stand firm.

Book 14, however, opens with three wounded Achaean leaders talking with Nestor about the possible outcome of the war (1-134). (Again we notice that Homer appears to have enjoyed the opportunity to represent lively conversation, in which he and his audience apparently took infinite pleasure. As if composing a tragedy, he preferred to reveal his characters by letting them speak and present their ideas to the public.) By this time Agamemnon is completely shattered, openly despondent, and proposes retreat – not for the first time (14. 80sq.): "There is no shame in running from disaster, even by night: better to run and escape disaster than be caught in it." Odysseus harshly rebukes Agamemnon for his proposal, reminding him that "no man would ever allow through his lips (such a proposal) if he had the power of mind to speak good sense" (14. 91sq.). Diomedes, the third speaker, suggests they return to the fighting, even though they are wounded (14. 128): "I say we must go back into the fighting even though we are wounded – we have no choice." Diomedes is much concerned with genealogy in his speech, and emphasizes that he is of noble birth and of good family. He does so in order to give more weight to his arguments, because the words of a man of noble birth cannot be disregarded (113-27).

Poseidon yells loudly at the Achaeans, attempting to raise their morale (147-52). To keep Zeus from noticing Poseidon's intervention, Hera seduces

her husband. Aphrodite lends her an irresistible love-charm, Zeus is seized with passion, and the divine couple sleep together beneath a golden cloud. The story is brilliantly told, in a sophisticated style which combines fantasy and humour, an example of which is Zeus' catalogue of previous conquests (in 14. 315-28). Poseidon now spurs the Achaeans on to general success, in the course of which Ajax disables Hector with a stone. At the beginning of **book 15**, Zeus wakes to discover the Trojans fleeing and Hector lying stunned in the plain. In his anger, Zeus threatens Hera, prophesying first the deaths of Sarpedon and Patroclus, then the death of Hector and the capture of Troy. After the humour and indignity of the seduction, Homer re-establishes the majestic, all-knowing, all-controlling Zeus. The power of the gods is further illustrated by Apollo, who smashes the Achaean wall with the ease and lack of concern of a little boy destroying a sand-castle (15. 361-6, tr. Hammond): "And he threw down the Achaeans' wall with utter ease, as when a little boy knocks over sand-castles on the sea-shore - he builds them to play with in his childish way, and then amuses himself by flattening them again with hands and feet. So you, lord Apollo, smashed all the work the Argives had laboured at with much pain, and started a panic among them."

Zeus, however, orders Poseidon to leave, and Apollo, also at Zeus' command, revives Hector and spurs him back into battle. The Trojans drive the Achaeans back among their ships, and Hector, "blazing with fire all round" (15. 623), "fell on them like a vicious lion attacking cattle" (15. 630). The book ends with Hector gripping one of the ships and calling for fire, opposed only by Ajax. Notably, Hector is compared to Ares himself, but the day of his doom draws ever closer (15. 605-14, tr. Hammond):

"And he raged now like Ares with spear in hand, or as destroying fire rages on the mountains, in the thick wood of a deep forest. Foam gathered at his mouth, his eyes flashed under his grim brows, and the helmet shook fearfully round his temples as he fought - because his ally was Zeus himself in the sky above, who was giving honour and glory to his one man among the multitude of others, as he would live only a short time: already Pallas Athena was advancing the day of his fate, at the hands of the strong son of Peleus." Athena "was already speeding up the fatal day when he should fall" (tr. Rieu): nobody has ever escaped the gods, and neither will Hector.

III.

Patroclus' death occurs in **book 16**, and again we catch a glimpse of Homeric characterization and heroic personalities. Later on, in book 23, the ghost of Patroclus will visit Achilles in a dream in which he delivers instructions

for his funeral (23. 57-107). Achilles tries to embrace him, but Patroclus' spirit slips away and leaves him. Achilles awakes and tells his companions of the vision. Let us consider briefly that final moment in the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus.

In the ancient Mesopotamian Gilgamesh-epos, the hero is also visited by the spirit of his dead friend Enkidu, and the "comparison with the ghost of Patroclus in the twenty-third *Iliad* is, indeed, almost irresistible" (G.S. Kirk, *Myth: Its meaning and functions in ancient and other cultures*, Cambridge 1970, 108). And the episode that depicts Hera seducing Zeus in *Iliad* 14 is so strongly influenced by literature from neighbouring near-eastern cultures that some lines look as if they have their "ancient roots in Mesopotamian hymnic literature" (M.L. West, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth*, Oxford 1997, 385). Observations like these have led modern historians of Greek literature and religion to speak of an 'orientalizing' epoch in early Greek history. A figure like Hesiod, another important archaic Greek poet, also fits well into this category, because his *Theogony and Works and Days* belong to the genre of wisdom literature, many examples of which come from 'eastern' literature.

This relatively new concept (developed in the 1980s) substantially changes a traditionally held view of the Greeks. The ancient Greek world is no longer an isolated entity but is being recontextualized as one of many hybrid cultures in Africa and in the East. Greek culture is now primarily considered to have been a mixture of incongruous elements, themselves stemming from heterogeneous sources. An interesting although in several aspects unorthodox and independent-minded study of Greek civilization which adopts part of this 'Orientalism'-agenda was Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* (1987-2006). Bernal (1937-2013) took an extreme position, arguing that Greece was colonised by Africans and Phoenicians, and owed its culture to them. The whole line of argument, however, was initiated by Edward Said's (1935-2003) monograph on *Orientalism*, published in 1979.

Orientalism means dealing with the Orient: making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, teaching it, settling it, ruling over it. To put it more directly, Orientalism is a Western way of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. The real problem, however, with Orientalism (and the authority it gives to westerners) is not that it is knowledge, but that it is knowledge that does not recognize that it is inaccurate. The 'Orient' of which Orientalism speaks was created by Europeans, particularly in the context of European imperialism, in order to provide a positive, strong image of Europe. This 'Orient' is thus presented as lacking all active characteristics: it is effeminate, decadent, corrupt, voluptuous,

despotic, and incapable of independent creative development. The Greeks were considered to be the exception to the rule. Although settling in the eastern Mediterranean, the Greeks owed their brilliance to Aryan origins in central Europe. What does that much disputed term mean?

Historical evidence indicates that the ancient Indian and Iranian members of the Indo-European language family were called Aria, Arya or Ariya; in a wider sense, it is now the most convenient and least misleading name for the primitive type of speech from which all Indo-European languages developed. In the 19th century, the notion of an Aryan race corresponding to a definite Aryan language was taken up by nationalistic historical and romantic writers. It was given special currency by Arthur de Gobineau, who linked it with the theory of the essential inferiority of certain races. A French diplomat and writer, Gobineau (1816-82) became notoriously famous for his racist book, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, published in 1853-5.

According to this wide-spread 19th-century view, the study of ancient Greece was predicated on its uniqueness – its isolated, exceptional and untouchable brilliance. Classicists were used to thinking of 'Greek culture' as solid and self-evident, perpetuated through the ages by the repetition of certain forms of social praxis such as religion, education, athletics. But this can be only one aspect of Greekness, because collective identities have many different modalities. They can certainly be defensive and conservative, but they need not be. Scholars of Greek literature have had a tendency to adopt the most conservative definitions of Greekness possible. The Greek world, however, might better be understood as part of the Iraqi-Syrian-Palestinian-Egyptian complex.

The contrary view interprets this line of argument as a multiculturalist tactic, the aim of which is to deny Greek originality by fashionably attributing their achievements to a vaguely defined East. That the Greeks borrowed from their Mediterranean neighbours is obvious: no human society lives in a vacuum, untouched by the customs of other people. That the Greeks were well aware of this is proved by classical authors such as Herodotus in his *Histories* and Aeschylus in his *Persians*. More important, however, is what the Greeks made of their borrowings. The Greek alphabet, the elements of which were adapted from the Phoenician around the 9th century, is one example. The Greek changes made possible the language of Homer's epics, a literary speech unrivalled in expressive power by anything found among the few remnants of Phoenician writing.

The whole debate among classicists reflects a conceptual and methodological change in classical studies, a major change in outlook, which may result in a paradigm shift.

IV.

As book 9 was the key to the *Iliad*, an instrument to be turned in order to unlock a door, **book 16** is its hinge, a mechanism by which that door is opened. Book 9 enabled us to understand the working of Achilles' anger, book 16 redirects Achilles' anger and ensures the fall of Troy. Patroclus appeals to Achilles emotionally, begging him to at least allow him to lead the Myrmidons into battle dressed in Achilles' armour. Patroclus' appeal is specifically linked to his own death (16. 46sq., tr. Hammond): "So he spoke in entreaty, the poor fool – what he was begging would be a wretched death for himself and his own destruction." The older translation by Rieu renders the Greek text even more impressively: "So Patroclus made his appeal. But how simple he was! Had he but known it, he was praying for his own doom and an evil death." Homer stresses Patroclus' blindness in seeking his own death. The pathos is now greater than at 11. 604 'that was the beginning of evil for him.' The Greek word used in 16. 46 is *népios*, which refers both to present ignorance and to future suffering (R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume IV: Books 13-16*, Cambridge 1992, 320sq.). Patroclus is again labelled as such in 16. 686.

Achilles' reply (16. 49-100) consists of three parts. In a first section, Achilles explains his continuing absence from battle (49-63). Then he gives Patroclus his permission (64-82). Finally, he explains why Patroclus must not exceed his orders. Achilles shifts abruptly from topic to topic, which might well be intended to mirror his character. He appears to be alarmed by the crisis his behaviour has caused and at the same time moved by a certain joy at his enemy's defeat. Both reactions are somehow perverse, not only because Achilles shows no sympathy towards his own people, but also because he is the cause of their misfortune. Exasperated by this mad war and the folly it entails, Achilles wishes that he and Patroclus alone will survive, and that neither the Trojans nor the Argives will escape death (16. 97-100).

However, neither hero will see Troy fall; Apollo announces it (16. 707-9, tr. Hammond): "Back, lord Patroclus! It is not fate for the proud Trojans' city to be sacked by your spear, nor even by Achilles, a far greater man than you." As far as Achilles is concerned, both the enemy, and the Greeks who allowed his humiliation, may perish; he is sending Patroclus only because his friend wishes it. Achilles' harsh stance, however, is ambiguous: his outburst of rage and merciless hatred might well conceal genuine concern about the disaster, though one cannot be sure.

Heroic friendship is certainly a firm bond, and Achilles' words 'let everybody perish but us' evoke even an erotic theme; they have a ring of intimacy about them. It could be that Homer was suppressing the fact

that Achilles and Patroclus were lovers, well known to us from Aeschylus' *Myrmidones*-play, in the course of which they are explicitly portrayed as lovers. Aeschylus' play was well known in antiquity, widely discussed, and is even mentioned by Phaedrus in Plato's *Symposium*, a text in part dedicated to and concerned with homosexual love. Achilles' speech seems "based on a typical vacillation between continuing concern for his honour and an unstated wish to save Patroclus and himself from ruin" (R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume IV: Books 13-16*, Cambridge 1992, 314), and he bids Patroclus to do only the minimum.

The following three parts of book 16 become ever shorter and more dramatic – they illustrate an accelerating movement towards Patroclus' death:

In a first part (101-418), comprising more than 300 lines, we see Patroclus taking Achilles' arms, except for the hero's great spear. Achilles prays to Zeus that Patroclus will drive the Trojans from the ships and return safely. And indeed the Trojans are driven back from the ships, after suffering heavy losses. Then, in a second part (419-683, a bit more than 260 lines), we see Sarpedon intervene. He kills Patroclus' horse, but is slain by Patroclus. The Greeks manage to strip Sarpedon of his armour, and Zeus sends Apollo, Sleep and Death to convey his son's body to Lycia for burial. Finally, in a third part, which consists of less than 200 lines (684-867), we see Patroclus driving the Trojans back to the wall of Troy. Patroclus kills Hector's chariot-eer Kebriones and the Greeks claim his body, but then Apollo strips off Patroclus' armour. Patroclus is wounded, and eventually Hector stabs him in the belly. Hector admonishes the dying Patroclus that he failed to obey Achilles' orders, but Patroclus defiantly predicts that Hector himself will soon be slain by Achilles.

In the following, some scenes are discussed in more detail; from the first part (101-418):

(a)

Patroclus does not take Achilles' spear, and Homer describes this moment as follows (16. 140-4, tr. Hammond): "Only the spear of the excellent Achilles he did not take, the huge, heavy, massive spear which no other Achaean could wield, but Achilles alone had the skill to handle it, the spear of Pelian ash from the height of Pelion, which Cheiron had given to his father to be the death of fighting men." We encounter the motif of an object that only one man can wield, which is nothing else than a poetic way of stressing Achilles' strength. In addition, we notice something already familiar – a genealogy, this time pertaining to an object. Homer goes to great lengths to describe the origin of the spear – and in so doing he speaks of

Pelian ash, from the mountain Pelion. This is done by design, as it serves to prepare his audience for the name of Achilles' father, who once upon a time received the spear. Achilles is very often called Peleides (from the first line of the *Iliad* onwards), and his father's name is Peleus.

Homer was apparently fond of etymological wordplay. In the case of Odysseus, the hero of Homer's *Odyssey*, Homer even offers two 'explanations'.

(i) His name derives from *odýssomai*, which means 'to hate', because Odysseus, hated by the gods, is not granted his wish to return home. At the opening of the *Odyssey*, Zeus is asked by Athene why Zeus hates him enough to refuse to grant him his homecoming (*Od.* 1. 62): "So why, Zeus, are you so at odds and issue with Odysseus?" Later on in the text, Odysseus' father Autolykos is reported to have said that he gave the name Odysseus to his son in order to reflect the fact that he, as his father, "has often been at odds and issue with men and women all over the nourishing world" (*Od.* 19. 407-9).

(ii) The desired homecoming, however, provides the second etymological play on the name 'Odysseus'. When Calypso receives the order to let Odysseus go, she turns to him and finds him "as he wept for his return" (*Od.* 5. 153). The Greek verb is *odýromai*, and the 'weeping for his return' trope is often connected to the figure of Odysseus (and is also an established formula or metrical pattern).

Homer was not the only one to use this device. It seems to have been imitated by later poets as well, for example, when Sophocles prominently lets his hero Ajax speak of himself as 'wretched' (*Aj.* 372) or 'ruined' (*Aj.* 384), introducing his statements by 'ai ai' (*Aj.* 370), the Greek interjection of grief and sorrow.

(b)

A few lines later an elaborate simile is used. Before their onslaught, the Myrmidons are compared to wolves (16. 156-63, tr. Hammond): "They gathered like wolves, eaters of raw flesh, their hearts full of boundless fury, who have pulled down a great horned stag (a male deer) in the mountains, and then tear him, so that all have their jaws running with blood. Then they go in a pack to drink from a spring of black water, lapping with their slim tongues at the dark surface of the stream, and belching clots of blood: their bellies are strained full, and their hearts fearless in their breasts. Such were the leaders and lords of the Myrmidons (...)."

This simile is quite elaborate and seems to have been expanded to suit the gravity of the moment. It serves to advance the narrative; the attack is still to come, but the wolves' meal anticipates the battle. The Myrmidons are

portrayed as hungry for battle after long abstinence, and given the wolf's reputation for secretly attacking, this image may reflect the unexpectedness of the Myrmidons' onslaught (R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume IV: Books 13-16*, Cambridge 1992, 338): "Repeated words and ideas create a pleasing symmetry: the wolves' fierce and carnivorous nature appears at 156 and 162f.; the gore round their snouts reddens 159 and 162 (...). Epithets paint a vivid picture: the wolves lap the dark water's surface with their narrow tongues, staining it with the gore they belch forth", their bloody vomit.

(c)

The simile includes the men. A catalogue of the Myrmidons' five captains (16. 171-97) is concluded by the statement that Achilles is their commander (16. 198sq.). This statement repeats the opening lines of the Myrmidons' catalogue, thus forming a ring-composition, i.e. stressing the same point at its beginning and at its end (16. 171sq.): "Achilles had made five leaders, men he trusted to command, while he himself ruled over all in his great power."

Catalogues stress the importance of an impending attack - as in the Catalogue of Ships (the second half of book 2). The aforementioned list's preamble, in ring-form, stresses Achilles' power over his men, contrasting the many and the one.

(d)

One last impressive part of this section culminates in a series of similes that nearly obscures their respective meaning, overwhelming the audience. In a long section (364-97), Homer attempts to make his audience hear the noise of the fleeing Trojans. A few lines at the opening introduce the theme (363-7, tr. Hammond): "As when a cloud comes from the bright air above and spreads over the sky from Olympos, when Zeus is setting a storm, so the Trojans spread in clamorous flight away from the ships, and crossed back to the plain in disorder." A passage two times longer at the end of this section sums up the horrific sound (384-93): "As all the dark earth is burdened under a storm on an autumn day, when Zeus pours down the most violent rain, in anger at men who have raised his fury by forcing corrupt judgments in the assembly and driving out justice, with no regard for punishment from the gods: then the flow of all their rivers is swollen in spate, and many slopes are cut away by torrents rushing with a loud roar headlong from the mountains into the heaving sea, and the work of men's cultivation is ruined - such was the sound raised loud by the Trojan horses as they ran."

A fine storm-simile brings the initial cloud-image to a climax, and the noise is likened to a rain-fed river in flood. Zeus' storm has now hit

the earth, and the torrents do fearful harm. Noise is the explicit point of comparison, but there is an implicit point of comparison, too.

The storm shows Zeus' anger at men's crooked judgments; this is stated in three verses, too many to be a redundant detail in this extended simile of nine verses. Here the Trojans are linked with wrongdoing, and the poet comes close to openly justifying Troy's fall. His words are all the more persuasive because we are left to infer their meaning for ourselves. Although the *Iliad* emphasises the amorality of the gods, we are sometimes made to think that these powers are on the side of right and justice. Of course, this is a highly controversial point, and it may seem highly presumptuous to extract such far-reaching interpretations from one simile among so many in the *Iliad*. In order to support our interpretation, however, it should be said that "this image is less isolated than it seems: when Zeus grieves for his son, he sends bloody rain (459), when he plans a grim battle, he thunders all night (7. 478), and when angry, he lashes the earth until she groans (2. 781-3)" (R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume IV: Books 13-16*, Cambridge 1992, 365.). And Zeus is the one we turn to when we look for justice.

From the second part (419-683):

The episode that shows Sarpedon intervening and eventually being slain by Patroclus is important for the rest of the narrative in book 16. Patroclus' exploit is needed to make him rush forward and neglect Achilles' warning (16. 83-96, tr. Hammond): "But follow exactly the aim of the instruction I now put in your mind, so that you can win great honour and glory for me from all the Danaans, and they bring me back the beautiful girl and offer splendid gifts besides." Achilles is quite concerned with his own prestige. "When you have driven them from the ships, come back. And if the loud-thundering husband of Hera grants you the chance to win glory, do not press on without me to fight the war-loving Trojans - that will reduce my worth." Achilles, too, wants to gain glory - if there is a chance. "And do not lead your men on towards Ilios, slaughtering Trojans, in the delight of battle with the enemy, or one of the ever-living gods from Olympos might come against you - Apollo the far-worker has much love for the Trojans. No, turn back again once you have brought saving light to the ships, and let the others fight on over the plain." Achilles concludes his instructions with the wish that he and Patroclus may be the sole survivors of the destruction.

By slaying Sarpedon, however, who is second in rank to Hector, Patroclus proves himself a worthy deputy to Achilles. Patroclus wins Sarpedon's armour, but not his body (which outcome will be repeated at his own death later); this armour of Sarpedon is to become a prize in Patroclus' funeral games (23. 798-800). Zeus makes Hector his agent in avenging his son Sar-

pedon (649), and by killing Sarpedon Patroclus gives Zeus no choice but to kill him. Sarpedon has been built up as a powerful and sympathetic figure; his true awareness of 'noblesse oblige' in his speech to Glaukos (12. 310-28) makes his fall all the more tragic.

Even now, as he dies, Sarpedon is vigorous, direct and mindful of the heroic code (16. 492-501): "Glaukos, dear friend, now is the time above all to show yourself a spearman and a brave fighter. Now grim war must be all your desire, if you have courage in you. First you must go round all the leaders of the Lycians and urge them to fight for Sarpedon – and then fight for me yourself with your own spear. After this I shall be a shame and disgrace to you all your days without end, if the Achaeans strip me of my armour where I have fallen, here by the assembly of ships. No, hold firm, and spur on all our people."

Uniting the poem's three major casualties, the following line speaks of 'the end that is death' which enveloped Sarpedon. The same distinctive verse, 502, follows the last words of Patroclus (855), who will kill Sarpedon, and Hector (22. 361), who will kill Patroclus.

From the third and final part (684-867):

Patroclus becomes ever more confident now that the Greeks have won the armour of Sarpedon. Homer lets us see Patroclus' state of mind as he plunges him (and us) back into battle (684-91, tr. Hammond): "But Patroclus called to his horses and Automedon (his charioteer) and went in pursuit of the Trojans and Lycians, and this was a fatal error, poor fool – if he had kept to the instruction of the son of Peleus, he would have escaped the vile doom of black death. But Zeus' mind is always stronger than the mind of men – he can bring terror on even the brave man and easily rob him of victory: and then again he himself will spur a man to fight. And it was Zeus then who put the urge in Patroclus' heart."

Patroclus was already called 'fool' at 16. 46sq., and 'what he was begging would be a wretched death for himself and his own destruction.' Now a second layer is added, and we encounter another case of dual motivation: Patroclus' foolish delusion, his ruinous overconfidence, is his own responsibility – but also part of Zeus' plan, against which nothing can be done: the gods called him to his death (as Homer says in line 693). Apollo strikes Patroclus, knocking off his armour; Patroclus is dazed and confused, and Euphorbus wounds him in the back. Then Hector stabs Patroclus in the belly.

Patroclus' death is exceptional. Why does Apollo knock Achilles' armour off his body, leaving him helpless and without his mental faculties? Why is he first hit in the back? Why does Homer diminish Hector's glory by giving

the first blow to Euphorbus, a hero of whom we have never heard (and who is killed without ado by Menelaus at the opening of the next book)? Why is it later implied (three times, 17. 13, 125, 205) that Patroclus' body still wears its armour?

First, the armour: Having no divine ancestry, Patroclus is, strictly speaking, not the right man to wear divine armour. He is bound to lose it sooner or later, and it is less shameful that a god strips off his armour than if Hector does so. Another reason might be that Achilles' armour, being divine, was thought of as impenetrable; accordingly, Patroclus is invincible until he is disarmed. But the fact that a god stripped him of the armour is quickly forgotten; it is no longer important once Patroclus is dead, and the narrative soon reverts to the usual pattern where a body wears its armour until it is stripped.

Second, Euphorbus hitting the disarmed Patroclus with a spear hurled at the small of his back (between the shoulders, 806sq.), and then fleeing, resembles another hero's death: in the *Nibelungenlied* (XVsq.) Hagen steals Siegfried's armour and kills him with a cowardly blow in the same spot, the only spot where he is vulnerable. The *Nibelungenlied*, translated as *The Song of the Nibelungs*, is an epic poem in Middle High German; the story tells of dragon-slayer Siegfried at the court of the Burgundians, how he was murdered, and of his wife Kriemhild's revenge. The dragon's blood had made the rest of Siegfried's body impervious to steel, but it was not smeared between his shoulders; after killing Siegfried, Hagen runs away, too.

But another hero's death comes much closer than Siegfried's: there is a parallel to Achilles, who was invulnerable save at his heel; the killing was depicted on a now lost Chalcidian vase from around 550/540 BC (*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, s.v. Achilles, no. 850). Achilles was shot in another early Greek epic, called *Aithiopsis*, and his death closely resembles the Homeric killing of Patroclus: Achilles dies by the Skaian gates, as does Patroclus (as we hear from Thetis at 18. 453). And Achilles dies as the result of the joint action of Apollo and a Trojan, as does Patroclus. Like Euphorbus, Achilles' killer, Paris, strikes from afar, and both Euphorbus (*Iliad*) and Paris (*Aithiopsis*) are noble herdsmen, excellent at games, handsome, and arch-enemies of, and much detested by, Menelaus. It might well be that Homer based Euphorbus, Patroclus' killer, on Achilles' murderer, Paris. This could explain this extraordinary death of Achilles' intimate friend: Patroclus closely resembles Achilles in death as in life.

This argument assumes that the poet of the *Iliad* was familiar with another literary text, i.e. the *Aithiopsis*, or at least with one scene that inspired him to create a similar situation. But this argument also assumes that a hero's death could be a typical folk-tale motif, one that might be identical in different

literary traditions, for example, the motif of invulnerability in the case of Achilles and Patroclus and also in the case of Siegfried. Homer might have drawn on both (i.e. the *Aithiopsis*, and folklore) in order to create something extraordinarily new, i.e. the astonishingly complicated way in which he depicts the killing of the poor fool Patroclus.

A fine simile is employed to convey Hector's victory over Patroclus (823-6, tr. Hammond): "As when a lion masters an untiring boar in battle, when they fight in high fury on the peak of a mountain over a little spring of water where both want to drink, and the boar, panting hard, is brought down under the lion's power – so Hector, son of Priam, with a close spear-thrust took the life from the brave son of Menoitios (i.e. Patroclus)." Earlier in the text, when Hector's contest with Patroclus was equal, they were likened to two warring lions (756-8). But when Patroclus kills Sarpedon Homer's simile evokes an even more unequal contest – a lion killing a bull (487-9). Patroclus is now described as untiring, because up to this moment he has not been defeated.

Two short speeches conclude book 16 of the *Iliad*. Hector addresses the dying Patroclus, and his boast reveals his self-delusion (830-42). He calls Patroclus a foolish person at the beginning and the end of his short address, thus forming a ring-composition (tr. Hammond): "Patroclus, you must have thought that you would sack our city, and take the day of freedom from the women of Troy and carry them off in your ships to your own native land – poor fool! (...) Poor wretch, not even Achilles, for all his greatness, could help you. He must have given you firm instructions when he stayed behind and sent you out, saying, 'Let me not see you back at the hollow ships, horseman Patroclus, until you have ripped and bloodied murderous Hector's tunic on his chest.' That is what he will have said, and swayed your foolish heart." Like a lunatic, Patroclus took Achilles at his word, or at least Hector imagines him as having done so. He couldn't be more wrong, since we ourselves have heard what Achilles said to Patroclus (83-96): Achilles never persuaded Patroclus, but warned him about Apollo, and, as he later claims (in book 18. 14), he warned him about Hector too. And what does Patroclus say to this? He does not try to justify the fact that Achilles was not there to defend him, a fact for which Achilles will reproach himself later (in book 18. 98sq.).

Instead, Patroclus speaks of the involvement of Zeus, fate, Apollo and Euphorbos in his killing, a fact that increases his own stature and reduces Hector's (844-54): "Yes, make your great boasts now, Hector. You were given the victory by Zeus, the son of Kronos and Apollo – it was they who overpowered me with ease: they took the armour from my shoulders. (...) No, it is cruel fate and Leto's son that have killed me, and of men

Euphorbos – you are the third in my killing.” Dying was generally believed to grant one precognition (Socrates speaks of it in Plato’s *Apology*, 39c), and Patroclus is no exception to the rule: “I tell you another thing, and you mark it well in your mind. You yourself, you too will not live long, but already now death and strong fate are standing close beside you, to bring you down at the hands of Achilles, great son of Aiakos’ stock.”

Whether Hector expected to be safe after killing Patroclus, one cannot know. But if he did, he was a fool, and, when Achilles is about to kill him in book 22, it is Hector who is addressed as ‘fool’ (22. 333). Achilles is left to avenge Patroclus, and it is Hector who will be torn by dogs and birds. Hector had not long to live, indeed. The dying Hector will repeat to Achilles what he heard from Patroclus: he will prophesy the circumstances of his killer’s death, just as Patroclus did when Hector killed him. Blind rejection of advice brings disaster to all the great men of the *Iliad* – Agamemnon, Achilles, Patroclus, and finally Hector.

ILIAD 19

Following the death of Patroclus, and before the news is announced to Achilles, a long struggle for possession of the corpse ensues. The Achaeans ultimately manage to lift the body and carry it back towards the ships – this happens at the end of book 17, after 761 lines of fighting. The Achaeans, however, are still under strong pressure from the Trojan pursuit, and the rescue of the body will not be accomplished until 18. 238. Thus the whole affair is treated in roughly a thousand lines – some Attic classical tragedies are not much longer (e.g. the *Libation-Bearers*, the middle-piece of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*, which comprises 1076 lines).

I.

The final rescue of Patroclus’ corpse is a remarkable scene (18. 228-38, tr. Hammond): “Three times godlike Achilles gave his great shout across the ditch, and three times the Trojans and their famous allies were thrown into turmoil. There and then twelve of their best men were killed by their own chariots or their own spears. And then the Achaeans gladly took their chance to drag Patroclus out of the weapons’ range, and placed him on a litter. His dear companions gathered round in mourning for him, and swift-footed Achilles went with them, his warm tears falling when he saw his trusted friend lying there on the bier, torn by the sharp bronze, a friend

he had sent out to war with his horses and chariot, and could not welcome back on his return.”

Again, we may well wonder what kind of character Achilles was – one who was able to throw the enemy into turmoil with just his voice, and a moment later is weeping for a dead friend! One may well ask how Achilles, relying completely on his mother, even as an adult, would be depicted today: some may regard him as an emotionally unstable maniac, others may consider him as a strong man who is not afraid to show his emotions. Like many a modern soldier, Achilles may have suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. Modern soldiers struggle in the same way as Achilles to maintain mental stability, which has been much damaged by their war-time experiences.

Until Achilles intervenes to save his friend’s body, the battle must be continued inconclusively, and without the loss of major figures on either side. The narrative cannot move on without him – he is the reason for this disaster. Homer expands on two motifs which often occur, albeit briefly, in the account of a victory: the first of these is the seizure of the victim’s armour, the second motif that of the pursuit of the victim’s horses and chariot. Homer’s amplification of both motifs adds grandeur to the plot, and to the death of Patroclus. Later on in the *Iliad*, a whole book is dedicated to the funeral games held in Patroclus’ honour.

In the case of the rescue of the body we can observe a standard treatment often found in Homer: two similar but briefer struggles – over the body of Sarpedon (16. 530-683) and Kebriones (16. 751-82) – have already occurred. Moreover, the poem will conclude with a further adaptation of the theme, the ‘struggle’ – not literally, but metaphorically – of Achilles and Priam for the body of Hector, Priam’s son. This Homeric anticipation of plot-themes (M.W. Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume V: Books 17-20*, Cambridge 1991, 21) comes close to foreshadowing what is to come. One suddenly has an intuition, or one can foresee the consequence of an action. This Homeric device is clearly a preparation technique that assists the audience’s comprehension. It may well be characteristic of oral composition, wherein the author needs to guide the listener by specific means. Regularly recalling a typical scene, a set piece, helps to hold the attention of the public.

This might best be illustrated by some examples. At the end of book 17, Menelaus worries that Achilles cannot fight without armour (711): now, in the midst of the battle Menelaus had sent for Achilles, but it is clear to him that Achilles won’t turn up “right now, however great his anger at godlike Hector – there is no way he could fight the Trojans without armour” (tr. Hammond). By this we are informed that Achilles needs new armour; this hint by Menelaus prepares us for Homer’s amplification of the armour-

theme in book 18 (188-95, tr. Hammond): "How then am I to enter the fighting? The enemy have my armour: and my dear mother has told me not to arm myself until I see her returned to me here – she promised to bring me beautiful armour from Hephaistos. And I do not know any other whose glorious armour I could wear – except perhaps the shield of Aias son of Telamon. But he is there himself, I am sure, keeping company with the front ranks and fighting with his spear over the body of Patroclus." With these words Achilles draws the audience's attention to what might come – and to what indeed happens – his rescue of Patroclus' body without armour, and its replacement by Hephaistos.

Such foreshadowing, on a much larger scale, however, can be seen in the respect and burial Achilles offers to Andromache's father Eëtion. It is but briefly mentioned in book 6. 416-20 (by Andromache, addressing Hector, who is so keen on fighting), but clearly precedes Achilles' respect for Priam and his agreement to the honourable burial of Hector at the end of the poem: a microcosm embedded in a huge narrative that comprises the whole of the *Iliad*. This hint on Andromache's father functions like a prequel, a telling of events that precede the major narrative (in opposition to sequel, which tells of events that follow a main narrative).

Another instance of foreshadowing is Priam's loss of Hector, which is preceded by Zeus' loss of Sarpedon (not to mention the many other times the father of a dying hero is referred to); and all these prefigure the loss Peleus will suffer after the poem ends, when his son Achilles has to die as well.

On a minor scale, Achilles' despatch of Patroclus on an errand (11. 598-616) foreshadows his sending him into battle later (16. 64sq.) – only four books separate these events – and Hector's vitally important stripping of Patroclus' armour is foreshadowed by Menelaus' stripping of Euphorbos.

In the case of Euphorbos, his father's grief over his son's death is mentioned, too. The bereaved father is a dominant figure throughout the *Iliad*: beginning with Chryses, who called on Apollo to create a plague (in the *Iliad's* first book), and ending with Priam (in the *Iliad's* last book), who appeals to Achilles in the name of another tragic father, Peleus, to whom Priam is compared.

Achilles' grief for Patroclus is compared to that of a father for his son in *Iliad* 23. 222-5 (tr. Hammond): "As a father weeps for his son as he burns his bones, a son newly married whose death brings anguish to his unhappy parents, so Achilles wept for his companion as he burnt his bones, dragging his steps up and down beside the pyre in ceaseless lamentation." This fact shows that there was no greater grief imaginable than that of a father for his son.

Discussing Homeric foreshadowing, one may say that the poet of the *Iliad* used a system of related images. In this he has had many a follower,

among them, for instance, Aeschylus. In the first play of his *Oresteia*-trilogy, the *Agamemnon*, this system of related images works on two layers – Aeschylus foreshadows in metaphorical form something that will later appear in literal form on stage. The so-called Carpet Scene in the Aeschylean *Agamemnon* is a classical example of this poetic device, which can already be observed in Homer (A. Lebeck, *The Oresteia, A Study in Language and Structure*, Cambridge/Mass. 1971, 74-9).

A later author, much concerned with literary gossip of any kind, reports (Athenaeus 8. 347E = T 112a) that Aeschylus considered his tragedies to be slices from Homer's great dishes, steaks cut from Homer's large banquets. Generally this expression is understood to refer to the subject of Aeschylean tragedy, i.e. the life and death of heroes. However, it might well be that Aeschylus was referring to form as well as content.

Let us now have a closer look at the opening of **book 17**, where Menelaus kills Euphorbos and where some of these above mentioned Homeric characteristics are closely interwoven.

II.

Patroclus is dead, and there is intense fighting over his body. The first and immediate encounter is between Menelaus and Euphorbos. Menelaus runs onto the battlefield and straddles Patroclus' corpse. The logic of the narrative and the audience's expectation demand that Euphorbos should die. Euphorbos was partly responsible for the tragic death of Patroclus, probably the most attractive figure in the *Iliad*, and we want him dead. Not so Homer.

Homer's treatment of Euphorbos' death is marked by sympathy, and may even appear compassionate, due to the fact that Homer will not forget Euphorbos' youth and beauty. This was Euphorbos' first day in battle, his apprenticeship in war (16. 810sq.) "and on this day he had brought twenty men down from their chariots." But there is another indication of compassion on the part of Homer: Homer gives him a sympathetic reason for attacking Menelaus – he had killed his brother, widowing his new wife and bringing intolerable grief to his parents. Homer then lavishes on Euphorbos' death a most intricate simile (17. 47-52, tr. Hammond): "As Euphorbos was moving back Menelaus stabbed him at the base of the throat, and pressed on the spear with all his weight, trusting in the strength of his hand. The point went right through the soft neck: he fell with a crash, and his armour clattered about him. Blood soaked his hair, lovely as the Graces' hair, and his plaits tight-bound with gold and silver."

The expression is understood to denote golden spirals binding Euphorbos' hair, perhaps alluding to the colour of yellow bands, as well as to a particular way of binding them. The verb occurs here in Homer first, but is common afterwards. The unusual description does not seem to condemn any extravagance on Euphorbos' part; rather, it emphasises the contrast between Euphorbos' pride and his fall. There is one Trojan fighter who wears gold and goes into battle as if he were a maiden, i.e. naively. He is immediately killed by Achilles, who takes the gold for himself. This Trojan's story is told briefly at the very end of the Catalogue of Ships (2. 871-5).

Now we come to the Homeric simile that describes Euphorbos' death (17. 53-60): "As when a man nurtures a flourishing olive-shoot in a solitary place, where plenty of water wells up – a fine, healthy shoot it is, shaken by the breath of every wind that blows, and it blossoms thick with white flowers: but suddenly there comes a wind in a great storm, and uproots it from its trench and lays out its length on the earth. Such was the son of Panthoös, Euphorbos of the ash spear, as Menelaus son of Atreus killed him, and set to stripping his armour."

There are more points of comparison than usual between simile and narrative: the strength of the flourishing and free-standing young tree (54) is like the young Euphorbos' exceptional athletic performances (16. 809-11); the devoted care of the olive-grower recalls the love of his parents (28, 37); the breezes which give strength may mirror Euphorbos' successes in previous battles (16. 810); the tree's beauty (55sq.) reminds us of his lovely hair and its adornment (51sq.); finally, both tree and Euphorbos meet abrupt and violent destruction.

The comparison of a cherished son to a carefully nurtured plant anticipates Thetis' moving lament over the fate of her own son Achilles (18. 54-60, tr. Hammond): "Oh, my misery! Oh, the pain of being mother to the best of men! I bore a son who was to be noble and strong, the greatest of heroes, and he shot up like a young tree. I tended him like a plant in the crown of a garden, and sent him out with the beaked ships to Ilios, to fight the Trojans. But now I shall never welcome him back to Peleus' house – there will be no homecoming." Though Homer (unlike Virgil) never indulges in subjective emotions (J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death*, Oxford 1980, 103sq.).

Now, in book 17, Menelaus is forced back from the body, and Ajax cannot help either. Hector carries off Achilles' divinely-made armour. He puts on the armour he has captured from Patroclus, Zeus looks on with pity. There is prolonged and furious fighting over the naked body of Patroclus, both sides aware of the great importance of winning it. Hector urges the Trojans on, but they cannot manage to get hold of the body.

The Trojans fail, and Hector's attempt to capture the immortal horses is eventually foiled (459-542). An impressive scene depicts them standing motionless, grieving for their dead charioteer (426-58, tr. Hammond): "But the horses of Achilles, standing away from the battle, were weeping, ever since they first learnt that their charioteer had fallen in the dust at the hands of murderous Hector. Automedon (the charioteer) (...) tried hard (...): but the two horses would not move, either back to the ships by the broad Hellespont or to join the Achaeans in the battle, but as a grave-stone stands unmoving, set on the mound of a man or a woman who has died, so they stood there holding the beautiful chariot motionless, hanging their heads to the ground. Warm tears ran down from their eyes to the earth as they mourned for the loss of their charioteer: and their thick manes were dirtied where they spilled down from under the yoke-pad on either side of the yoke."

Capture of a victim's horses and chariot is a common sequel to a victory. Here the motif, which has been foreshadowed twice (16. 864-7 & 17. 75-8) is expanded into a whole scene (rather than just a vignette), which reminds us again of the absent Achilles. We are already expecting his grief when he hears the news. Homeric heroes pay great attention to their horses, and Patroclus' care of his is mentioned posthumously at 23. 281sq., where Achilles speaks of Patroclus as (tr. Hammond) "that gentle man who so often would pour soft olive oil down over their manes after washing them in bright water." Patroclus is regularly called 'gentle' or 'kind', and one adjective (*enēēs*) is almost exclusively reserved for him in the *Iliad* (e.g. 23. 252). In spite of Achilles' ill temper (11. 654), and his own haste, Patroclus stops to aid Eurypylos, treating his wounds, using drugs he has learnt of from Achilles (11. 831), and he is still treating Eurypylos when this thread of the narrative is picked up (at 15. 390-4). Patroclus is Achilles' double – the mild one, not the angry one, and, quite similarly, Diomedes may be regarded as Achilles' double – the one who remains in his place, who does not exceed the limits.

Hector and Achilles address their horses (8. 185-97, 19. 400-3) – but now it is Zeus who provides an example of the closeness between hero and his horse (443-55, tr. Hammond): "Poor wretches, why did we give you to lord Peleus, a mortal man, when you are ageless and immortal? Was it for you to share the pain of unhappy mankind? Since there is nothing more miserable than man among all the creatures that breathe and move on earth. But at least Hector son of Priam will not be carried by you and your crafted chariot: I shall not allow it. Is it not enough that he has the armour, and glories in that?" Once more, in a new form, the ever-present contrast between mortals and immortals is introduced.

C.P. Cavafy (1863-1933) evokes the scene in his poem *The Horses of Achilles*, beginning with what we know from Homer; Zeus' speech in Cavafy's poem, however, is more focussed on the great Homeric theme, mortals' deaths and the gods' immortality.

III.

The final scene from book 17 deserves particular attention because it contains a series of five consecutive similes (725-61): the first simile compares the Trojans to dogs attacking a wounded boar, the second simile describes a sudden blazing fire rushing over a city, and compares the windstorm which accompanies it to the noise of horses and spearmen. This is immediately followed by a close-up of willing mules struggling to haul timber down a rough mountain trail to bring wood down from the mountain along a rocky path. After a quick summary, we return to the real scene – the two Aiantes (two fighters bearing the same name, Ajax) are not retreating. They are as unyielding as a wooded ridge holding back the streams of mighty rivers. Finally, the leading Trojans, Aeneas and Hector, are named. They appear to the Greek soldiers like a hawk must appear to little birds, namely as the bringer of death (tr. Hammond):

When the Trojans saw the Achaeans lifting Patroclus' corpse (1st simile) "they charged in like dogs that rush after a wounded boar (...): for a while they race on, intent on tearing him apart, but when at last he turns on them in the confidence of his strength, they give back and run scattering in terror. (...) whenever the Aiantes turned round and stood to face them, their colour changed, and none (of the Trojans) had the courage to spring forward and fight for the body. (...) And the battle was strained round them" (2nd simile) "violent as a fire which suddenly breaks out and falls on a city to set it alight, and the houses go down in the huge blaze, as the force of the wind blows it roaring." The Achaeans laboured hard to carry the body away (3rd simile) "like mules that put out all their great strength to haul a beam or a huge ship's timber down from the mountain along a rocky path, and their hearts are wearied with the exertion and the sweat as they press on." Behind them the Aiantes keep the Trojans back (4th simile) "as a wooded ridge that stands right across a plain keeps back the water, and holds off even the persistent stream of the powerful rivers, turning all their flow straight out over the plain, and the strength of their current cannot break it." But the Trojans keep up the pursuit, and (5th simile) "as a cloud of starlings (...) goes screaming in panic when they see a hawk coming at them, the bringer of death to

little birds, so the young Achaeans went screaming in panic before Aineias and Hector, and forgot their fighting spirit.”

The similes form a ring-composition: at the end of the first simile the Trojans are suddenly panicking and lose their courage against the Achaeans; at the end of the last simile the Achaeans are described as screaming in panic before the Trojans. All five similes have in common the strains and struggles against opposition, not on the battlefield, but in everyday life, as in the conflict among natural forces and in the animal world. This unrelenting pressure, and the opposition to it, unifies the different scenes described. Like a group of statues, the men – Aeneas and Hector as well as the two Aiantes, including Menelaus and Meriones, who try to carry Patroclus’ corpse away – are frozen into position until the narrative returns to them roughly 150 lines later, at 18. 148 (although the picture at that point is not quite consistent with this one, as by then time has passed and the struggle has reached an even more dangerous stage).

There is only one parallel for this in the *Iliad* (i.e. a passage where five similes follow each other). It occurs just before the Catalogue of Ships, in a description of the Greek army. There, however, the five similes produce the opposite effect – their focus gradually narrows, the centre of the five similes becomes ever more clear (2. 455-83). Eventually, at the centre of all that poetic splendour, there is one man (tr. Hammond): “As annihilating fire blazes through the deep forest (...), and the glare can be seen from far off”, the 1st simile begins, so the Greek soldiers marched, their bronze armour gleaming. “Like the great flocks of flying birds”, the 2nd simile continues, “so the many companies of men poured out from their ships (...). Like the great crowds of swarming flies (...) such were the numbers of the long-haired Achaeans”, adds the 3rd simile. And the 4th simile immediately follows: “As herdsmen easily separate their ranging flocks of goats (...), so the commanders ordered their men into separate troops for the advance to battle, and among them went lord Agamemnon, looking in eyes and head like Zeus (...), like Ares in his waist, and his chest like Poseidon’s. Just as in a herd the bull is far the foremost of all the cattle, and among the crowding cows he stands preeminent”, as it is put in the 5th simile, so was Agamemnon, “outstanding in the mass and foremost among the heroes.”

That was the Greek world at the outset of the *Iliad*, completely focussed on Agamemnon. We see him in close-up, having zoomed in on him from an establishing shot of the whole army we zoom back out, and Achilles enters the scene. What does he have to say at the opening of book 18 – how did he grieve for Patroclus? Something must have happened, for the old world is no longer there. The centre is empty, and everybody is waiting for someone

new to fill it. In fact, book 18 concludes the theme of Achilles' withdrawal from the battle and begins that of his revenge on the slayer of his best friend, preparing the way for his confrontation with Hector.

IV.

In the course of the fighting in book 17, Menelaus sends Antilochus to Achilles to bring him the news of Patroclus' death (17. 401sq.): Achilles and other 'men of renown' (17. 378) did not know that Patroclus was dead. At the beginning of **book 18**, Antilochus delivers his terrible message. Achilles has already feared that Patroclus is dead, calling him obstinate and foolishly adventurous in his soliloquy that opens book 18 (18. 13). He does not say anything in reply to Antilochus, but takes up dust from the ground and pours it over his head; he is covered by the black ashes of the earth. Antilochus holds Achilles' hands, being afraid that Achilles might take a knife and cut his own throat. Finally Achilles lets out a terrible cry. His mother, by the side of her old father in the depths of the sea, hears him. Thetis brings her sisters, the Nereids, and "one after another they came up on the shore, where the Myrmidons' ships were beached (...) around swift Achilles" (18. 68sq.). His mother takes his head in her hands.

Let us briefly comment on the scene – a grieving son seeking refuge with his mother. He is suffering tremendously, as it was he who caused the disaster. What else is there for him to do but declare his intention to kill Hector in revenge? This he does, despite Thetis' warning that his own death must follow soon after Hector's. The only thing his mother can do is to delay his action; Thetis forbids him to enter the battle until she returns with new armour made by Hephaestus (18. 1-147).

From now on – from Thetis' short acknowledgement in 18. 95sq. that she must lose Achilles to an early death – the imminence of Achilles' death is insistently mentioned: by the hero himself, who laments his short life for the first time in *Iliad* 1. 352 (then another half a dozen times, 330-2, 19. 328-30, 19. 421sq., 21. 110-3, 277sq., 23. 150), by Hephaestus (464sq.), by the horse Xanthos (19. 416sq.), by the dying Hector (22. 359sq.), by the ghost of Patroclus (23. 80sq.), and by Thetis, who lamented her son for the first time in 1. 415-8, in her continuing mourning (24. 84-6, 91, 104sq., 131sq.). Achilles knows that neither he nor Patroclus will live to sack Troy (17. 406sq.), a fact that makes his character all that more tragic.

It is essential to appreciate the depth of Achilles' grief for Patroclus in order to understand his later barbaric treatment of Hector's corpse. We know of Achilles' great love for Patroclus from his prayer to Zeus for his

friend's safe return in book 16. 220-48 (tr. Hammond): "Zeus (...), grant this my (...) desire. Myself, I shall stay in the assembly of ships, but I am sending my companion to fight, and the Myrmidons with him in their numbers. Send glory with him, wide-seeing Zeus, strengthen the heart within him (...). But when he has driven the fighting and the clamour away from the ships, then let me see him come back to the fast ships unharmed (...)."

For a moment, it looks like he's going to turn the grief against himself (18. 34). Be he doesn't, he directs it outward, turning his grief into rage, willing to give up his life for the sake of vengeance. Why should he direct in inward? He is not Judas Iscariot.

Thetis' short reply to her son ends with her stating that "since directly after Hector dies your own doom is certain." Achilles' answer begins with the same Greek word: "Then let me die directly, since I was not to help my friend at his killing." The repetition of the same word (in Greek *autika*, which means 'on the spot', 'immediately', 'directly', in both lines 96 and 98) is striking. There are examples of echoing of the words of a previous speaker, but none as vivid as this one. It might well be that Achilles interrupts Thetis with the repetition of the word she used – probably she had a good deal more to say, and Achilles is certainly an impetuous man (cf. 1. 292, 19. 76-84). However, Achilles uses the word he takes up from his mother's reply in a different sense: Thetis has said 'straightway after Hector your fate is set', whereas Achilles means 'right now would I be dead, since I was not to help my friend.'

Meanwhile the struggle for Patroclus' corpse has continued. Hera sends Iris to rouse Achilles, who is still waiting for his new armour. But Iris urges Achilles to show himself to the Trojans, and, with Athena's help, his appearance and his mighty war-cry make them panic and allow the corpse to be borne back to the Greek camp (18. 148-242).

Greek and Trojan scenes alternate in this book, and the long presentation of Achilles' grief and his return to action is succeeded by a renewed depiction of Hector's over-confidence (18. 243-315). An account of Achilles' sorrow and anger follows (18. 316-355). Achilles mourns over the body of Patroclus, speaking of his own death and his vow to take vengeance on Hector. The corpse is washed, anointed, and clothed, and the Myrmidons lament through the night. Three different actions on three different stages take place during this night: the Trojans hold their assembly, the Myrmidons grieve for Patroclus, and Thetis makes her way to Olympus and speaks with Hephais-tos, who sets to work fashioning the new armour. Before the final day's battle, Homer carefully characterizes Hector, and carefully depicts Achilles' emotional state, as well as elaborately describing the preparation of the armour which makes the duel possible. Suddenly the scene changes to a con-

versation between Zeus and Hera (18. 356-68) during which Zeus remarks that it must be she who has brought about the return of Achilles. Then we see Thetis reaching Hephaistos' home on Olympus. After hearing the tale of her unhappy son, Hephaistos agrees to fashion new armour for him (18. 369-467). Having finished his work, Hephaistos gives it to Thetis who bears it down from Olympus (18. 609-17).

The description of the shield comprises roughly 150 lines, a considerable expansion of Achilles' arming-scene, which will be resumed at 19. 369; then, Achilles will put on his new armour. The huge scale of this expansion is proportional to Achilles' return to battle and, like the Catalogues of book 2, to the size of the *Iliad* itself.

Such an extended and detailed literary description as this, or of any object, whether real or purely imaginary, is called by the Greek word for description, *ekphrasis*. Such *ekphraseis* can be found all throughout Greek literature, from Homer's shield of Achilles to an author called Paulus Silentiarius, who described at length a church in Istanbul, then called Byzantion, the Hagia Sophia ('Holy Wisdom'). The church served, from its construction in 537 until 1453, as an Eastern Orthodox cathedral (apart from the period 1204 to 1261, when the church was used as a Roman Latin cathedral). It became a mosque in 1453, and remained one until 1931. Now it is a museum.

Composing an *ekphrasis* was part of literary education in antiquity. If your family could afford to pay for your education, they would send you to a rhetorician's private institute. Among the principal exercises were, for instance, commenting on a maxim, discussing a common place, composing a refutation and a confirmation of the same thesis, and also writing an *ekphrasis*, describing a work of art or an object or a person or a building, etc.

Ekphrasis is the verbal representation of a visual representation, and over the ages its 'practitioners' have created a 'museum of words' about real and imaginary paintings, sculptures, vases and many more such objects. In Homer's *Iliad*, the long passage on the shield of Achilles (18. 478-608) seems wholly detachable from the rest of the *Iliad* because few of the scenes described have any obvious connection to the poem that surrounds them. In this respect it differs sharply from a previous example of *ekphrasis* in the poem, i.e. the brief description of the red robe in which Helen weaves unspecified pictures of the numerous struggles endured by the Trojans and the Greeks on her behalf (3. 126-8): "Helen in her room, working at a great web of purple cloth for a double cloak, and in it she was weaving many scenes of the conflict between the horse-taming Trojans and the bronze-clad Achaeans, which they were enduring for her sake at the hands of Ares." Unlike those pictures, the scenes wrought in metal on the new shield made by Hephaistos do not seem (or do not immediately seem) to mirror the action of

the poem (J.A.W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery*, Chicago/London 1993, 10): “Nor do they open a window on the past of the major characters (...). Nevertheless, the making of the shield completes a turning point in the poem – the point at which Achilles has finally decided to bury his anger at Agamemnon and join the war against Troy to avenge Hector’s slaying of Patroclus.”

After Homer, the closest Greek parallel to his *ekphrasis* appears in a text known as *Shield of Heracles*, a poetic fragment about one of the many fights of Heracles, which includes a 181-line description of the shield itself. Heracles’ shield is reminiscent of Achilles’ in that it represents such peaceful activities as a marriage festival and grape-harvesting; it also includes, among other grotesqueries, a fiery-eyed dragon and twelve serpents with gnashing teeth, certainly intended to be terrifying. The horrifying face of the Gorgon also stared out from the centre of Agamemnon’s shield (*Iliad* 11. 36sq.), but is nowhere to be found on the shield of Achilles. The things depicted on the Homeric shield mirror Achilles’ situation: they work as a contrast, a bright foil to a sombre fate.

In the first scene of book 18, Achilles chooses between long life and everlasting glory, which he has described in book 9. He chooses to return to the battle and take vengeance on Hector, then face the imminent death of which Thetis has forewarned him. You will never welcome back your son to his home, Achilles says to his mother, who can imagine how much she must suffer (18. 88-93). His decision is taken, as he declares, “since my heart has no wish for me to live or continue among men, unless first Hector is struck down by my spear and loses his life, and pays me the price for taking Patroclus son of Menoitios.”

Homer describes the images on the shield depicting the everyday human life which Achilles has given up. All the scenes are full of ordinary people taking part in the activities of ordinary life. With a few vivid words, the pleasure the participants feel in their communal life is emphasized: the women stand in their doorways admiring the wedding procession, the ploughmen receive their refreshment, the busy vintners harvesting their grapes, sing along with the musician, spectators enjoy the beauty of the dance. The same delight in the details of day-to-day life is reflected in the similes. The contrast between the doomed hero and the depiction of the continuing life of ordinary human folk on the shield, borne into battle by him and made ‘visible’, is sharp.

Homer typically describes a manufactured object by describing the way it was made. His descriptions imitate the process of the object’s creation, proceeding from stage to stage. A very short example of this is the description of a bow, used by Pandaros. Having killed a goat, Pandarus gave his horn away to a man able to build him a bow (4. 106-11, tr. Hammond):

“These horns a bowyer skilled in hornwork had prepared and fitted into a bow, then smoothed the whole to a fine polish and capped it with a tip of gold.”

Setting to work, Hephaistos forges a mighty shield, decorated with many scenes. The ancient commentators on the text were impressed, because ‘Homer has marvellously crafted the craftsman, as if wheeling him out on the stage and showing us his workshop in the open’ (cited from M.W. Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume V: Books 17-20*, Cambridge 1991, 209). Before he describes the shield in detail, Homer gives us a general description in a few lines (483-9): the depictions of human life on the earth (in 490-606), the stream of Ocean which surrounds the whole (in 607sq.), and the sky, which occupies the central position and is described in six verses (484-9). Exactly how Homer envisages their depiction on the shield, however, is unclear.

A portrait of a city at peace follows: weddings uniting different families are represented, as is the peaceful settlement of a dispute over a man’s death by a city’s judicial institutions (490-508). (The description of the *Shield of Heracles* also contains a description of a wedding and other revels in vv. 272-85.) The scene continues with a second city, this one under siege. The picture includes an ambush, and the capturing of cattle, the latter being among the mundane activities of life (509-40). The third band of decoration includes three scenes depicting the seasonal work of the farmer’s year, and all three scenes also contain the pleasurable rewards of labour – the refreshing cup of wine, the feast, and the song and dance at the harvest. A depiction of cattle and sheep is to follow, which render a bucolic atmosphere to the shield (573-89). The penultimate band (590-606) shows young men and women dancing amid spectators. A circular dance is depicted, as is a dance where rows of dancers face each other. The happy scene forms a fitting conclusion to the pleasant picture of human social life that the shield presents. The river of Ocean surrounds the pictures on the shield, as it surrounds the flat disc of the earth on which men and women work out their lives.

The creation of the shield of Achilles is described, and we hear of Achilles’ reactions to it, a combination of anger (at Hector) and admiration (for Hephaistos). Aside from these two reactions, Achilles makes no effort to read the scenes on the shield, nor does the text make any connection between his emotional response to the armour (Achilles’ anger, prominent since the first word of the *Iliad*) and what the shield actually represents. Later in the history of ancient epic poetry, when Virgil creates his *Aeneid*, which resembles Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in many respects, another description of a shield is to be found. This time it is Aeneas who gets a new shield, but everything is different: whereas Homer narrates the making of a shield, Virgil simply describes the finished object, and the action comes

to a standstill during this time. It is as if his *ekphrasis* has become a messenger-speech in the performance of a tragedy in which the action has come to a standstill. By no means does Virgil convert the scenes on the shield into narratives, as Homer did. On the contrary, Virgil represents Aeneas' response to the scenes – even though Aeneas cannot understand what they signify (at the end of book 8). This shield is in fact just one of several works of visual art that affect Aeneas in the course of the poem. He successively views and absorbs them. These works reveal his own history to him, and Aeneas cannot gaze on the latter enough (*Aen.* 8. 608-25).

This difference between Homeric and Virgilian *ekphrasis* begins to emerge in book 1 of the *Aeneid*. Aeneas and his men have landed, exhausted, on the shores of Carthage, where they find their way to a temple being built for Juno. On the temple walls Aeneas sees paintings depicting what he has just survived: the Trojan War. (This is a *mise en abyme*, as the technical term is: within the structure of a literary work a self-reflection is to be found, a form of interior duplication, as for instance the play that is performed in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.)

But just as important as the paintings and their subject matter is Aeneas' response to them. While, in Homer, the scenes on the shield of Achilles are not commented on and seem to provoke no new impression, no emotional response aside from the always present anger (we know that already) and a banal admiration for divine craftsmanship (all that gods do is divine, is it not), now in Virgil's *Aeneid* we repeatedly see the temple paintings of the Trojan War through the tear-filled eyes of Aeneas. He responds emotionally and bursts into tears. Aeneas' response to these pictures is so intense that he can scarcely distinguish what he sees from what he imagines.

The Virgilian shield, being largely concerned with the victory of Augustus in the battle of Actium and his triumphal return to Rome, gives a substantial part of the whole description in 8. 630-728, i.e. 675-713, to Caesar Augustus driving Cleopatra in flight from Actium; war is the essential link between the Carthaginian paintings of book 1 and the shield of book 8. But while, for Aeneas, the paintings represent the memory of a catastrophic loss, and therefore elicit rivers of tears for the past, the shield signifies the promise of future triumph for his descendants. Art imitates life, one is tempted to say, but poetry imitates poetry too, as can clearly be observed. A contest is going on, as everybody who knows these *ekphrasis* will compare them from now on. However, let us return to Homer.

In spite of the many peaceful human figures on Achilles' shield, the total effect of all the armour makes Achilles' men tremble. When Thetis delivers the armour to Achilles, none of his men have the courage to look straight at it, they are afraid of it (19. 14-15a): "Fear took hold of all the Myrmidons, and

none dared to look full at the armour, but they all shrank back." Achilles' reaction is described in more detail (19. 15b-27, tr. Hammond): "But when Achilles saw it, then the anger reached deeper into his heart, and his eyes glared out from his lids as if they were flames: and he delighted to hold the splendid gifts from the god in his hands. When he had given his heart full pleasure in looking at the beautiful work, he spoke to his mother (...): 'So now I shall arm myself for battle. But I am terribly afraid for the brave son of Menoitios during this time - flies may crawl into the wounds cut in him by the bronze and breed worms there to foul his body, now that the life is killed from him, and so all his flesh will rot.'" Thetis promises to keep away the flies and save Patroclus' body from those pests that devour the bodies of men killed in battle (tr. Rieu): "He could lie here through all the seasons of a year and still his flesh would be preserved; indeed it might be fresher than now", is Thetis' reply to her son (19. 32sq.).

V.

By the time Thetis brings the new armour to Achilles it is the dawn of the following morning, and one might expect the grieving and furious hero to immediately set off to take vengeance on Hector. However, the plot and intent of the poet demand a fitting conclusion to the theme of anger, withdrawal, disaster, and return, before the vengeance-theme is worked out. This is the content of **book 19**: how Achilles and Agamemnon are reconciled before the assembly of the Achaeans, and how Achilles goes forth with them to battle.

Achilles calls an assembly and formally renounces his anger. Feeling uncomfortable, Agamemnon replies with an uneasy speech. He appears painfully affected and/or sharply touched by something, yet he sits out the sermon he himself has offered to the assembly. Maybe he is just pretending in order to get away with rewriting his own past. In any event, when Agamemnon offers all the gifts promised by the emissaries in book 9, Achilles has no time left for gifts or formalities. Nor is he interested in the practicalities of war - he is eager to enter the battle. But Odysseus insists on a meal before fighting, with all the public formalities, including the parade of the promised gifts. Briseïs now returns to Achilles. She utters a moving lament for Patroclus (19. 287-300), and Achilles laments too, prefiguring the emotion of his meeting with Priam, Hector's father, in book 24.

The book ends with a description of Achilles' arming for battle, and the prophecy of his horse Xanthos. His horse has been temporarily endowed with human speech by Hera, and it tells Achilles that he will be brought

down in battle 'by a god and a man' (19. 417). This prophecy adds further detail to Achilles' approaching death as foretold by Thetis. Later on, the final detail is added by the dying Hector: the man will be Paris (his brother Alexandros, who abducted and seduced Helen), the god Phoebus Apollo, the place the Skaian gates (22. 359sq.).

It is dawn the following morning that Thetis brings the new armour to Achilles, and there are many examples in Homer of this contrast between the light-bringing dawn and the sorrows of mankind. Achilles has been granted a special favour from a god, and this special favour, his splendid armour, is symbolized by the coming of the light of dawn. This divine favour, however, has been granted to a sorrowful man, and will bring sorrow to other men, those whom Achilles is about to slaughter, and the Trojans as a whole. The direct mention of Patroclus' corpse – Thetis found her dear son lying prostrate over Patroclus, weeping loud (19. 4sq.) – highlights the specific contrasts between immortal goddess, god-made armour, and mortal men. The whole setting, the phrase for daybreak, and the brief exposition of what can be seen, illustrates Homer's ability to use elementary phrases for a deeper purpose, in our case to further highlight the contrast between light and dark, divine and human, everlasting shine and mortal gloom (C.W. MacLeod, *Homer, Iliad, book XXIV*, Cambridge 1982, 48).

Having delivered the new armour to her son, Thetis protects his friend's body with ambrosia and nectar (1-39). Achilles summons a council of the Greeks, where he expresses his willingness to control his anger. Agamemnon, ever the coward, declares that he must have acted under the influence of Ate, a goddess, daughter of Zeus, who blinds gods and men (40-144). Achilles has just shown himself magnanimous enough to admit his mistake directly to the man who injured him. Agamemnon, however, is not big enough to accept this without mean-spirited jibes at the man he hates; his aggressively snobbish way of degrading another person, characteristic of a weak character, is in complete accord with his inept and effete frame of mind. Another example of his jibing is to be found when Agamemnon alludes to an earlier quarrel with Achilles (19. 79sq.): "it is proper to listen, and not right to interrupt a speaker – this is troublesome for even an experienced speaker." Attempting to gain control through emotional manipulation, Agamemnon singles out Achilles, who rudely interrupted him in the final exchange of the quarrel depicted in the first book of the *Iliad* (1. 292), the last time they met.

At the end of his speech, Agamemnon asks Achilles to wait a moment while Agamemnon's servants fetch the gifts from his ship (19. 142-4) "so that you (Achilles) can see how my offer will please your heart." The scene is reminiscent of the scene in book 9 in which pompous Agamemnon offered

the gifts for the first time (9. 158-61): "Let him submit to me, in that I am the greater king and can claim to be his senior in age" – the speech of a man so arrogant that he does not even consider the possibility that Achilles might refuse. Agamemnon proves to be an utter fool, not just a dreadful orator.

Now, in book 18, Achilles is still not in the least concerned with Agamemnon's gifts, but only with marching out to battle immediately. Odysseus, however, says that the men need a meal before the long day's fighting; the gifts, too, must be displayed, and Agamemnon must swear that he has not slept with Briseïs. Achilles still objects, but Odysseus does not give in; even after a personal loss one must eat in order to continue the struggle (145-237). Agamemnon's response to Achilles was hardly gracious; and Achilles displays open disdain. Odysseus, practical as ever, declares that "those of us who survive the hateful fighting must take thought for food and drink" (19. 231). His words will be echoed by Achilles, addressing Priam, Hector's father, in book 24. 602, when he reminds Priam of Niobe, who in her grief for her children also thought of food. Then Achilles uses a mythological paradigm as Phoinix has done so addressing him in book 9.

Agamemnon formally swears that he has not slept with Briseïs. The restored Briseïs laments over the body of Patroclus, and Achilles and the other Greek leaders lament too (238-356a). Performed in a group, this lament dramatizes the return to Achilles of his prize of honour: at the same time it does not detract attention from his grief over Patroclus, and thus Briseïs' grief for Patroclus enlarges our comprehension of the loss he himself has suffered. Moreover, the picture of the mourning Briseïs reminds us of the fact that she has been restored at the cost of Patroclus' life, and it prefigures the mourning soon to come at Achilles' own death.

Achilles puts on his armour, and a simile adds another layer to the standard marching-out-of-an-army scene. Then Achilles' furious lust for combat is described, and the glare that blazes around him as he takes up his armour and weapons. Finally, he rebukes his immortal horses for their failure to bring their driver, Patroclus, home from battle. The horse Xanthos reminds Achilles that his own death is near, though it will not come about through any fault of theirs. With a short rejoinder, in which he again accepts the inevitability of his death, Achilles leads Xanthos into battle: "and with a shout he drove his strong-footed horses on among the leaders" is the book's closure.

Let us end with the beginning of the final battle and the beautiful picture Homer paints of this dreadful scene (356b-68, tr. Hammond): "and the Achaeans streamed out away from their fast ships. As when the snowflakes fly thick from Zeus, driven cold under the blast of the north wind, child of the clear air, so thick was the mass of the bright-shining helmets moving out

from the ships then, and the (...) shields and (...) spears. The glitter struck into the sky, and all the earth around them smiled in the gleam of bronze: and a thunder swelled under the feet of the men. In their midst godlike Achilles began to arm himself. The noise of grinding came from his teeth, and his eyes glowed like the light of a fire, and grief past endurance entered into his heart. With fury for the Trojans he dressed himself in the gifts of the god, the work of Hephaistos' labour." An intolerable fury possesses Achilles. He gnashes his teeth. His eyes blaze like fire. Then he raises the battle-cry and drives his powerful horses to the front lines. Achilles accepts his own death, a fact that may ennoble his slaughter of Trojans, or may at least make bearable the contents of the last books. Now Achilles becomes a lord of death, the master of horror, a true monster. He, who loved to sing of the glorious deeds of men to Patroclus, finally manages to become the subject of these songs of the glorious deeds of men, but he has to pay for it with his life. He would have died unknown, if not for Homer, but he had to die in order to become famous.

ILIAD 22

At the end of **book 19**, Achilles starts his war. He does so by addressing his horses. He begs them to make the outcome different this time, i.e. to bring the charioteer home safely. He implicitly accuses the horses of having left Patroclus behind, 'lying dead there on the field' (19. 403). In fact, the formal structure is that of a rebuke, which often earns an indignant reply. Of course it comes natural to Achilles to blame the horses who happened to be there when Patroclus was killed, but Xanthos, one of the horses, reminds Achilles of the real facts: 'It was not through any lack of speed or any slackness in us that the Trojans took the armour from Patroclus' shoulders', Xanthos explains, but it was the greatest of gods who killed Patroclus. 'We two could run even with the speed of the west wind's blowing, which men say is the fastest of all things: but it is your own fate to be brought down in battle by a god and a man'.

The horse's words provide a further grim reminder of Achilles' mortality, and of his own awareness and acceptance of it – just as he sets out for his greatest battle, arrayed in his new divinely fashioned armour. The prediction is made the more powerful by the fresh detail that Achilles – like Patroclus – will be killed 'by a god and a man'. But why does Homer have a horse say that to Achilles? The answer might be that neither a god nor a man could have said such things: a god would hardly speak to a mortal like this, he would not provide insight into divine working, he would not steep so low as

to address a human being in such a way; and mere humans cannot perceive past and future divine actions so clearly. Mortal humans can only hope or fear; they may anticipate a certain outcome based on their experience of similar events, but for a human being nothing is certain.

The horse's speech is arranged in a ring-form:

A 408-10: we will save you now, but your death is near, at the hands of a god and destiny,

B 411-2: it was not because we were slow that Patroclus died,

C 413-4: but Apollo killed him,

B' 415-6: we are as swift as the wind,

A' 416-7: but it is your destiny to be killed by a god and a man.

Up to this time - i.e. before the horse's speech, before these very lines - Achilles has known only that he will die soon after Hector: his mother told him so (18. 95sq.); exactly what is meant by the horse's reference to 'god and man' will be discovered later, when the dying Hector names Paris and Apollo (22. 359): again, Hector and Achilles are inextricably linked. Two contrasts are to be noted: one between Achilles' divinely made armour and his approaching death, and the other between the unsurpassable speed of the horses and their powerlessness to prevent their master's fate.

It is the Erinyes, mythological figures who appear only here in the *Iliad*, who stop the horse speaking: they are kind of guardians of the natural order, and punish those who violate the rights of the gods or the rights of elder family members. It appears that their power here has been extended to maintaining the normal rules of behaviour, which bar horses from speaking. It is also possible that Homer has in mind tales in which the Erinyes are sent not to end the unnatural phenomenon of a talking horse, but to prevent the disclosure of some secret of prophecy which must not be revealed to mortals. Later in the history of Greek poetry, the Erinyes become prominent in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (performed 458). The story of how Orestes killed his mother Clytemnestra to avenge his father, and of his subsequent madness, depicts, in the trilogy's last play, the avenging Furies, called Eumenides (the play's title). Virgil's *Aeneid* (3. 331 & 4. 471) describes Orestes as 'hounded by the madness of his crimes' and 'hounded over the stage'.

Ending the dialogue with his horse, Achilles at the very end of the book, speaks of his fate, i.e. to die in Troy, 'away from my dear father and mother' (19. 422). This is hardly appropriate in the case of Thetis, who is always close to her son. However, this is a Homeric motif, often brought out in Homer, the death 'far from home'. A series of Homeric warriors die far from home, while another series of Homeric warriors die 'near to friends', they are slain close to friends, who cannot help them (J. Griffin, *Homeric Pathos and Objectivity*, *Classical Quarterly* 26, 1976, 161-187, in particular p. 167). Achilles' and

Patroclus' relationship combines these two motifs – Patroclus dies 'near to his friend', Achilles is also about to die 'near to his friend', and both die 'far from home'. This combination of motifs links them.

I.

At the end of book 19, Achilles speaks of his intention to 'drive the Trojans to satiety of war', if we translate the last line of his speech literally. The expression used by Achilles means that he wants to give the Trojans their fill of war: a coarse expression by which Achilles shows his hardened feelings towards the enemy. The formal register is abandoned; his language becomes more direct, a fact that implies greater intimacy or familiarity between two persons. The Greeks and the Trojans know each other well by now; indeed, as the war has dragged on for nine years. In particular, however, Achilles has a precise idea of what he is going to do, i.e. killing as many Trojans as possible, and eventually killing Hector, who killed Patroclus. The blame for Patroclus' death, however, lies with Achilles.

The end of book 19 depicts the beginning of the war for Achilles; at the beginning of **book 20**, the Greeks are arming themselves, preparing to follow Achilles into battle. We expect Achilles' *aristeia* to begin immediately. However, the proper scale of events, and the tribute, due to Achilles' greatness, demand two things: before he meets Hector in the final duel, not only must the furious hero cause devastation among the Trojans, but a good deal of time must elapse.

Two main episodes are used to expand the action: first, the preparatory scene for the Battle of the Gods, itself to be concluded in book 21; second, a lengthy and inconclusive encounter with Aineias: both episodes delay the main action. Subsequent to this, Achilles has a short meeting with Hector that fails to produce any result, but which prepares the way for their final duel. The other Greeks receive a short exhortation from Achilles (353-63), but otherwise disappear from the action.

Instead of saying that these two episodes expand the action, one might say that the formal structure of Achilles' *aristeia* is twice interrupted. First, just as the arming has been completed, the scene shifts to Mount Olympus for a divine council. After that, the deities set off for war: Hera, Athena, Poseidon, among others, on the Achaean side, and Ares, Apollo, Artemis and Aphrodite on the Trojan side. The usual preliminaries to a battle are run through (e.g. a catalogue of the forces, or a description of the march out to battle). The main Battle of the Gods is then interrupted (until 21. 385).

At this point a further interruption in the normal development of an *aristeia* takes place. Instead of a series of successful duels, there is a long encounter between Achilles and Aineias, which is set up by Apollo, and ended by Poseidon (79-352). Apollo incites the reluctant Aineias to fight Achilles. Aineias stalls for time, rambling on nervously. Finally, Poseidon comes to his rescue. Much of the episode is taken up with Aineias' account of his genealogy (200-58), which is not only appropriate in this context but also recapitulates the history of Troy (M.W. Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume V: Books 17-20*, Cambridge 1991, 314): "Many of the items in this are very much expanded, not only for their intrinsic interest but in order to give length and dignity to the whole (just as Nestor's speeches are long because of the importance of what he has to say ...)." This seems to be a defining characteristic of Homer's narrative, a basic principle of Homeric style.

Earlier in the *Iliad*, a Greek fighter, Diomedes, questioned a Trojan, Glaukos, about his ancestry. This time Achilles jokes about Aineias' relationship with the king of Troy, Priam. Achilles' assertion, however – that the gods, who saved Aineias the first time, will not save him now (195sq.) – is proven wrong (20. 291 & 336). As in Glaukos' encounter with Diomedes, it is the weaker man's distinguished ancestry which saves his life. Aineias is a man in whose affairs the deities take a positive interest (as already in book 5. 312 & 445-8, where he was protected by gods). Aineias is fated to survive. In the course of the next book, Achilles once again asks a Trojan fighter, Asteropeios, about his ancestors (at 21. 150). That time, however, his interlocutor is fated to be killed, and Achilles slays him.

The rest of Aineias' argument is a condemnation of people who speak too much. As he himself speaks quite a lot, he seems like a hero who knows he is weak, apprehensively talkative, fearful of what is to come; there is a certain irony in this, and we may speak of a semi-humorous characterization of Aineias here. At the same time, Homer is very earnest: he does not include the normal polite conventions of such meetings, which appear, for instance, in the Diomedes/Glaukos encounter in book 6. These niceties certainly would not fit the ferocity of Achilles' mood at this point of the plot.

The theme expressed in this dialogue may be summarized as something like 'weapons, not words'. This is a standard theme in Homer. Hector evokes it when he eloquently addresses Ajax in book 7. 234-43 (tr. Hammond): "Ajax, (...) do not try to frighten me as if I were some feeble child or a woman without knowledge of war's work. No, I know about fighting and killing of men well enough." And in book 20, after the Aineias-episode, he speaks twice on this theme; first to the Trojans (20. 367, tr. Hammond): "(...) men of Troy, do not be afraid of the son of Peleus. I too could fight with words, even against the immortals (...). But even Achilles will not give effect to all that he says – he will achieve part, and part will be thwarted in mid-

course"; then to Achilles (20. 431-3, tr. Hammond): "Son of Peleus, do not think you will frighten me with words as if I were a baby – I too know how to deal insults and slighting talk. I know that you are a great fighter, and I am much your inferior. But these things lie in the lap of the gods: lesser man though I am, I may yet take the life from you with my spear-cast, since my weapon too has proved sharp before now." The most explicit and epigrammatic expression of this theme comes from Patroclus (16. 630sq., tr. Hammond): "It is actions that win wars – words are for debate. So it is not long speeches that we need, but fighting." Addressing another Greek fighter (Meriones), Patroclus admonishes him not to waste words with a Trojan fighter, i.e. Aineias.

In what follows, Achilles savagely kills Polydoros, the youngest son of Priam. Hector, in turn, attacks Achilles in anger for the death of his young brother, and they exchange challenges. A mysterious prefiguring of their final encounter is to follow: Hector lets fly his spear, which is blown back by Athena "with the lightest puff of her breath", so that the spear comes back to Hector and drops at his feet (20. 438-41). Apollo snatches Hector away, wrapping him in thick mist. Achilles resumes his slaughter of the Trojans. This is followed by a general description of the fighting, which is concluded at the beginning of book 21.

One might expect a sequence of killings that fall into a kind of catalogue. But Homer avoids this kind of monotony; the fate of a certain Moulis, for instance, begins at mid-verse (20. 472); in other cases some inserted clauses break the sense at mid-verse, or the naming of a victim is postponed to the beginning of the second verse, and his actual death is omitted. Thus, what might have been a monotonous casualty list is transformed into something more poetic, something that even displays restrained emotion. There is similar variety in Patroclus' killings (at 16. 399-418), although they conclude with a remarkable name-only catalogue (where another Moulis is mentioned 16. 696).

The killings appear drastically realistic. On closer inspection, however, they seem more like bogus realism. Much has been written about a certain lack of realism in Homer (e.g. his anatomical errors in this case), and he has been treated as if he had been pretending to write a medical handbook about war wounds for the military – which of course was not the case.

II.

Both books (20 & 21) consist of descriptions of the battle of the gods. The two separate books comprise "what is better regarded as a single sequence of events" (N. Richardson, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume VI: Books 21-24*,

Cambridge 1993, 1): at the opening of book 20, Zeus urges the gods to intervene directly, and at the end of **book 21**, Apollo, rescuing a Trojan fighter under duress, takes his place and lets Achilles pursue him – leading him to believe that Achilles is pursuing a Trojan fighter.

A beautiful passage describes the cosmic effects of the gods' entry into battle (20. 47-66, tr. Hammond); a passage that sheds some light on Homeric composition:

“But when the Olympians came among the company of men, then Strife, the rouser of armies, broke out in strength, and Athena kept up her shout, now standing by the ditch dug outside the wall, and now shouting loud along the thunderous sea-shore. And Ares, like a black storm-wind, shouted on the other side, giving his piercing call to the Trojans from the height of the city, and then again running to the hill Kallikolone by the side of Simoeis. So the blessed gods drove on both sides and brought them to the clash: and they broke out bitter conflict among themselves. The father of men and gods thundered fearfully from on high, and beneath them Poseidon shook the limitless earth and the high peaks of the mountains. All the foothills and peaks of Ida (the main Trojan mountain) with the many springs were shaken, and the Trojans' city and the ships of the Achaeans. And down below Aïdoneus, the lord of the dead, was terrified, and leapt screaming from his throne for fear that Poseidon the earthshaker would break open the earth above him, and the dwellings of the dead be revealed to mortals and immortals, the ghastly places of mould which the gods themselves hold in horror – such was the crash that arose as the gods joined in conflict.”

The conflict rises to the cosmic level, indeed. In position and effect, however, the passage takes the place of a simile, an ornamental comparison, a fact made more obvious by the concluding line “such was the crash”, which sounds like the end of a comparison, as if the sound was contrasted to another sound. A very similar verse ends a simile in Hesiod (*Theogony* 705 ‘so great a sound was produced as the gods ran together in strife’), and Hesiod also relates three versions of a fight between divine figures – one for the Titanomachy, and two in Zeus' battle with a certain Typhoeus – which come close to Homer's description here. The Homeric involvement of sky, sea, earth, and the very Underworld in the strife, plus the shaking of the mountains beneath the feet of the combatants, echo a standard theme common in descriptions of the Titanomachy, namely the warfare of the Titans, a family of giants, the children of Ouranos (Heaven) and Gaia (Earth), who contended for the sovereignty of heaven and were overthrown by Zeus.

A poet thought to be a close contemporary of Homer employs a quite similar line; moreover, he depicts another fight in which the gods take part,

using expressions very similar to Homer's in his passage on the Battle of the Gods. Before discussing this coincidence, let us have a closer look at the relevant texts:

First, *Theogony* 678-83 (the translation is taken from G.W. Most, *Hesiod 1*, Cambridge/Mass. 2006, and slightly adapted): "The boundless ocean echoed terribly around them, and the great earth crashed, and the broad sky groaned in response as it was shaken, and high Olympus trembled from its very bottom under the rush of the immortals, and a deep shuddering from their feet reached murky (dark, dirty, grimy, impenetrable, gloomy, blurred, indistinct, unclear) Tartarus (the Underworld), and the shrill sound of the immense charge and of the mighty casts." Second, *Theogony* 839-43: "Zeus thundered hard and strong, and all around the earth echoed terrifyingly, and the broad sky above, and the sea, and the streams of Ocean, and Tartarus in the earth. As Zeus rushed forward, great Olympus trembled under his immortal feet, and the earth groaned in response." Third, and last, *Theogony* 847-50, where the same motif is adapted for the effects of Zeus' thunderbolt: "And all the earth seethed, and the sky and the sea; and long waves raged around the shores, around and about, under the rush of the immortals, and an inextinguishable shuddering arose. And Hades, who rules over the dead below, was afraid."

Homer adapts these conventional elements (M.W. Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume V: Books 17-20*, Cambridge 1991, 293sq.): first, by having Zeus thunder from a safe distant (so not threatened by anyone), and leaving the shaking of the earth to Poseidon; then, by elaborating the quaking of the earth by adding the mountains and then linking this to the local topography by adding references to Troy and the Greek camp; finally, by amplifying the motif of Hades' fear: this was only one line in Hesiod (*Th.* 850), but it now becomes a vivid 5-verse-description (*Iliad* 20. 61-5).

What can we deduce from that textual interplay between Homer and Hesiod? Homer himself might well have sung Titanomachies in verses very similar to those known to us from Hesiod, and he was seemingly able to adapt conventional elements to his poetic purpose. An anonymous literary critic in Rome, a contemporary of Augustus, or perhaps slightly younger, was very impressed by Homer's lines. He thought they were an example of the 'sublime' in poetry, a term henceforth established in European literary criticism (*On the Sublime* 9. 6): "You see, friend", he wrote, "how the earth is split to its foundations, hell itself laid bare, the whole universe sundered and turned upside down; and meanwhile everything, heaven and hell, mortal and immortal alike, shares in the conflict and danger of that battle."

The spine of Hesiod's *Theogony* (i.e. the generation of the gods, the genealogies of the deities) is a succession myth – how Zeus overcame his father Kronos, who wanted to stop his son with the help of the Titans. In order to explain the whole process, and in order to put it in perspective, Hesiod's *Theogony* depicts many genealogies. As it happens, succession myths are quite often depicted in near-eastern poetry, with which Hesiod might have been familiar. Hesiod's succession myth is closely paralleled by myths known to the Phoenicians, the Babylonians, the Hurrians, and the Hittites. In the case of the last three peoples, it can be shown that these myths were current in the second millennium BC (M.L. West, *Hesiod, Theogony*, Oxford 1966, 28): "The obvious and inescapable conclusion is that the Succession Myth came to Greece from the East."

The Hittite texts we are concerned with are in cuneiform, i.e. they are wedge-shaped or arrow-headed, thick at one end and having a thin edge at the other. The texts come from Boghazkale, formerly Boghazköy, in Turkey, which in ancient times was the city of Hattusa. The myths related in these texts are not Hittite in origin, but were adopted from the Hurrian. The Hurrians were a people of south-east Asia Minor, a region extending from northern Syria to northern Mesopotamia. Their civilization flourished in the sixteenth and fifteenth centuries, after which they were annexed by the Hittites, who inherited Hurrian names, Hurrian cults, and Hurrian myths.

The text that concerns us most is a story of kingship in heaven. One king – Kumarbi, after whom a corpus of texts has been named – castrates his father and swallows his son, which Kronos, who castrated his father and swallowed his son Zeus, also did. The next god in Kumarbi's line is called Weather-God, the chief god, which corresponds to the Greek god Zeus. He survives Kumarbi's attempt to destroy him, and, again like Zeus, he is threatened by a prodigious monster, and defeats him – as Zeus defeated the Titans and their leader Typhoeus.

Hesiod certainly used elements from near-eastern poetry, though he was probably not the only (and not necessarily the first) one to do so, as the example of Homer's lines, which may well also come from a Titanomachy, or at least would do very well in a similar context, prove (M.L. West, *Hesiod, Theogony*, Oxford 1966, 30sq.): "As it was, the great civilizations lay in the East, and from the first, Greece's face was turned towards the Sun. Greece is part of Asia; Greek literature is a Near Eastern literature. (...) What most strikes the modern traveller to Greece is that the country belongs not to Europe, but to Asia. The most palpable signs of this are, of course, the legacy of the Turkish occupation. And yet, in a certain measure, it has always been so. 'The land divides, the sea unites.'"

III.

After this prelude to the Theomachy in book 20, the direct conflict between the gods is left suspended. In the meantime, Achilles clashes with Aineias, skirmishes with Hector, and kills other Trojans. The Theomachy is then resumed at 21. 328-518, when a series of actions between opposing deities takes place. The earlier part of book 21 leads up to this through a succession of climactic scenes which form an ascending series, centred on the theme of the battle in and around the river Skamandros.

Half of the Trojans are trapped and slaughtered in the river, which angers Skamandros. He appeals to Achilles to desist, and then begins to attack him directly. Achilles, about to be overwhelmed, prays to Zeus; Skamandros, in turn, calls upon Simoeis for support, and begins to overpower his opponent. This dramatic episode leads into the first major scene of the Theomachy, the clash of Skamandros and Hephaistos, water and fire. The ensuing battles of the major Olympian deities may seem trivial in comparison, but they have their functions within the design of the *Iliad*: they give a cosmic dimension to Achilles' *aristeia*. Skamandros is defeated by Hephaistos, and the city is doomed on account of Paris' treachery. The only god who preserves his dignity on the Trojan side is Apollo. He sets the Trojan fighter Agenor against Achilles. Achilles is cheated by Apollo, who takes Agenor's shape and leads Achilles away from Troy in a fruitless chase, during which the rest of the Trojans pour into their city, and **book 22** begins (1-4): "They panicked like deer and spread through the city. (...) they dried their sweat from their bodies (...) and meanwhile the Achaeans came up closer to the wall, sloping their shields against their shoulders."

Earlier, however, Apollo did not want to fight against his uncle Poseidon (who is on the Achaean side) 'for the sake of mortals', addressing him with the words 'you would not say that I was in my right mind if I did battle with you for the sake of wretched mortals'. Apollo's statement may also be considered as a kind of 'noblesse oblige', this time, however, meaning that nobility obliges him to do nothing, to remain on the fence, and to continue observing how others are killed. Then Apollo compares mortals to leaves: 'for a time they flourish in a blaze of glory, (...) and then again they fade lifeless' (21. 464-6). That the mortals are not worth being fought for we already know from Hephaistos' words to Hera (right at the beginning, in 1. 573-6). Later on, in another famous dialogue, Glaukos also used the image of the leaves when he addressed Diomedes during their famous encounter (in 6. 146-9): now Apollo combines both, and it is natural to do so.

One scene - the episode at the beginning, when Achilles kills Lykaon, son of Priam (which precedes the killing of Asteropeios) - should be consid-

ered in more detail, for again it sheds light on Achilles' frame of mind, his mental gaze, his outlook on the world.

Lykaon, one of Priam's sons, struggles to climb out of the river Skamandros (21. 34-138); he has lost his weapons or discarded them in order not to drown. Achilles is waiting for him, he has already raised his long spear for the thrust. Lykaon, however, runs below the spear and grasps Achilles' knees. The spear passes over his back and remains fixed in the earth. Lykaon begins to beg for mercy, he becomes a suppliant, and Achilles is no longer allowed to kill him. It would be a religious crime, a sacrilege, to kill a person who is a suppliant, a profanation of something held sacred. Achilles, of course, could not care less, and he is about to commit a heinous crime, becoming infamous, odious, and wicked. He deigns, however, to speak to Lykaon - or he feigns to speak to Lykaon, because he speaks to himself, having lost contact with other beings. Achilles begins (99) by calling Lykaon a fool (that sounds familiar) and rejects the money offered by Lykaon (whom he had captured earlier, but then released for money). Before Patroclus' death, Achilles continues (100-5), "then perhaps it was more my mind's liking to spare Trojans, and there were many I took alive and sold elsewhere. But now" - and we are often reminded how much he suffered from his friend's death, weeping for him alone on the sea-shore (23. 61), wandering alone, sleepless, thinking of his dead friend (24. 11sq.) - "but now there is no-one who will escape death when god puts him into my hands in front of Ilios, none among all the Trojans, and above all none of the sons of Priam."

Imagine him there for a moment, the lord of death in all his might: "No, friend," - he really says friend (*philos* 23. 106), as Gatsby used to say 'old sport' - "no, friend, you die too - why all this moaning? Patroclus died also, a far better man than you." Achilles has already referred to the fact that not even Herakles, dearest of men to Zeus, escaped death, when he spoke of his own impending fate (at 18. 115-21). Now it is Patroclus who figures prominently in his juxtaposition of friendship and death, which makes it a bitter contrast. Achilles continues by introducing himself (21. 108-14): "Do you not see how fine a man I am, and how huge? And I am the son of a great father, and a goddess was the mother who bore me. And yet I tell you death and strong fate are there for me also: there will be a dawn, or an evening, or a noonday, when some man will take my life too in the fighting with a cast of his spear or an arrow from the string." A madman's message it may be, yet it is delivered by a man still able to take a decision; as Heathcliff, first humiliated and bullied, then passionate and ferocious; sent on his mission,

unable to stop himself, as Orestes later appears in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, or, more fully developed, in Euripides' *Orestes*.

After having killed Lykaon and thrown his body into the river, Achilles speaks triumphantly (21. 122-35): "Now lie there among the fish. They will lick the blood from your wound (...). Your mother will not lament for you. (...) And fish (...) will eat the white fat of Lykaon. Death take you all (...). No, (...) you will die a vile death, until all of you have paid for the killing of Patroclus and the ravage of the Achaeans you slaughtered (...) when I was not with them."

'When I was away' Achilles says. There are moments in life one regrets very much, not because one did something but because one failed to do so. It can never ever be put right again; only the pain remains, the remorse, the immense sorrow. A memory that will not go away, a trauma, a psychic injury caused by emotional shock, the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed. Such a trauma may result in a behavioural disorder, and Achilles certainly shows signs of such. Achilles cannot accept Patroclus' death because it was his, Achilles', fault. Instead Achilles cries for Patroclus as a father does for his son, we are told at 23. 222-5, and takes revenge as a father does for the killing of his son. "But even Achilles will not give effect to all that he says - he will achieve part, and part will be thwarted in mid-course" (tr. Hammond), or as it is put in another translation (tr. Rieu): "Achilles won't do all he says. He may succeed up to a point, but there he will stop short" as Hector already remarked (20. 369sq.). Hector is proven right, and it was not Achilles who conquered Troy, although he could have done it. Hector, however, will not live to see how right he was.

IV.

Achilles has been tricked by Apollo, who made a fool of him by taking the form of a Trojan fighter (Agenor). Recognizing this, Achilles quickly runs back to Troy. Achilles' movement is so swift that he is compared to a star; in Homer's words, Achilles rushes on "glittering like a star that comes in late summer and its light is seen the clearest among the many stars in the darkness of the night: (...) it is the brightest of stars, yet a sign of evil" (22. 26-30, tr. Hammond). The first to spot Achilles is Priam, whose son Hector Achilles is soon to kill. We have already seen Priam watching anxiously from the wall in the preceding book (at 21. 526-36). This scene recalls book 3, where he and the other Trojan elders watched the fighting with Helen. There, however, he returned to Troy because he could not bear to watch the fight

(3. 305-7), whereas here he is present throughout the whole conflict. Now that the battle has come closer, Priam can hardly leave; then, the danger wasn't as great as now. The relationship between book 3 and 22 appears to create structural balance, or rather, structural contrast. There is more of this to come, a fact that may prove that Aristotle was right in assuming that the poem is the work of one author.

Although Priam implores his son Hector to come inside the city, Hector stays outside, in front of the Skaian gates. His fatal decision, like many other major events in the *Iliad*, is again doubly determined: divine and human causation work in parallel. On the one hand, we hear (22. 5) that Hector's "cruel fate shackled him to stay there outside", and Hector is depicted as if he were chained or fixed by something. On the other hand, it is his own decision 'to stick it out'. He feels ashamed because he refused to take the Trojans back into their city for the previous night, and he thinks that he has destroyed his people through his own folly (22. 104-7): "Now that I have destroyed my people through my own arrant folly, I feel shame (...) that some man (...) will say: 'Hector (...) destroyed his people.'" Hector is aware that this man is "a worse man than I", but he cannot help but feel ashamed. His situation is so awkward that he even considers returning Helen to Achilles, which of course he will not do: "But what need for this debate in my heart? I fear that if I go up to him he will not show me any pity or regard for my appeal, but will simply kill me like an unarmed woman (...)." Having stated that, Hector becomes very clear (22. 126-9): "There can be no sweet murmuring with him now, like boy and girl, when they meet at a tree or rock, the way boy and girl murmur sweetly together. Better to close and fight as soon as can be."

Apparently, any attempt at exchanging words of friendship with Achilles is a waste of time. The chosen image or simile (like a boy and girl, etc.) evokes or conjures up a pastoral scene of a lover's meeting in the countryside. The effect is moving, as we see Hector's mind reverting to peacetime. The idea of friendship between Achilles and Hector is echoed some hundred and fifty lines later (261-7) in an elaborate simile by which Achilles expresses the impossibility of any such agreement (tr. Hammond): "Hector, do not talk to me of agreements, you madman. There are no treaties of trust between lions and men: wolves and lambs share no unity of heart, but are fixed in hatred of each other for all time - so there can be no friendship for you and me (...)."

Priam implores his son not to fight. Hekabe, Hector's mother, does the same, baring her breast in appeal to her son. Neither, however, can sway him. Again we may observe a structural balance and/or structural contrast between two books of the *Iliad*: whereas, in book 9, Achilles' closest friends

urge him to fight, here Hector's own parents urge Hector not to fight. But there is another balance and/or contrast – this time between this scene and book 24: Priam cannot dissuade his own son Hector from fighting, but in book 24, he will be able to dissuade the man who will have killed him, Achilles.

Hector, in turn, is faced with a familiar situation. In book 6, he was asked not to fight. At 6. 407-39, Andromache begged Hector to take pity on her and her son, and to fight for Troy from within the fortifications. Now, once more, as in book 6, Hector is inexorable. He refuses to give in, and again he uses the term *aidōs* in order to describe himself (D.L. Cairns, *Aidōs: The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature*, Oxford 1993, 81sq.): “This time, however, his *aidōs* is not directed at the implication of cowardice, but at the charge that he has failed in his duty to protect Troy and its people.” He cannot return, he claims, because he will be disgraced for having taken a false decision (Cairns 82): “There are two important points here. First, Hector regards it as normal that he should be condemned for failing in his duty to others; that disgrace should be the punishment for such failure shows that the requirement to protect is regarded as a demand of personal honour. Secondly, Hector is clearly aware that he has done something reprehensible. (...) in giving the reason for his *aidōs* in line 104 he clearly expresses his awareness of his own culpability, and awareness of one's misdeed is a prerequisite of conscience, a word which, in its Latin and Greek forms, *conscientia* and *suneidēsis*, refers explicitly to the idea of ‘awareness’. Hector knows he is culpable (...); he does not have to wait the actual disapproval of the Trojans. (...) Hector's awareness of his misdeed coexists with his prospective fear of disapproval.”

From this one may conclude that Hector interiorised values, to which he compares his reality, which in turn implies that he is by no means a brute who doesn't understand his wife's or his parent's arguments.

As Achilles approaches, Hector loses his nerve and runs. Achilles pursues him three times round the walls of Troy, under the eyes of his parents and friends, past the landmarks of Troy and the reminders of peacetime (22. 149-66). Achilles and Hector pass two fountains of lovely water where the river Skamander has its origin: “one spring runs with warm water, and steam rises all round it as if a fire were burning there. But the other even in summer flows out cold as hail, or frozen snow, or water turned to ice. There close beside these springs are the fine broad washing-troughs, basins made of stone, where the Trojans' wives and their lovely daughters used to wash their bright clothes, in earlier times, in peace, before the sons of the Achaeans came. The two men ran past here, one in flight, the other chasing him. A brave man was running in front, but a far greater man was in

pursuit, and they ran at speed (...) circling the city of Priam three times with all the speed of their legs, and all the gods looked on."

One of the onlookers is Zeus, who tells his fellow Olympians that he is considering whether "we shall save him from death", but Athena informs him that "we other gods will not approve you." Zeus immediately backs out - a corporatist reflex, as if Zeus were an organization man, declaring that he did not speak "with my heart in full earnest" (22. 183sq.). "My intention to you", he continues, "is kind." Once more again the Olympian gods turn out to be frivolous and uncaring.

Zeus lets Hector be killed, as he had done with Sarpedon and Patroclus, whose fate he had also pondered earlier. This is a further link between these three deaths. In 22. 209-13 Zeus takes out his golden scales, golden pans attached to a balance, as before in 8. 69-72 (both times at a decisive point in the action: in 8. 69-72, one pan was for the 'horse-taming Trojans' and another for the 'bronze-clad Achaeans'). Hector's pan sinks down, his fate is sealed.

Achilles is now 'swift-footed' in earnest. His traditional epithet has entered the narrative - or to put it the other way round: we witness a traditional formula in the making, *in statu nascendi*. From the evidence of this scene alone, wherein Achilles chases Hector at high speed, one may conclude that other so-called traditional epithets in Homer may also stem from highly characteristic scenes, or items, belonging to the historical-mythological narrative of heroes and gods, or heroines and goddesses. Other epithets are of course self-explanatory (when we hear of Troy and its avenues, for instance). Other epithets may well remain totally obscure to us, i.e. names hinting at places which no longer exist, or words garbled by tradition, or simply misunderstood in later times. But at least some of the epithets may well have been parts of impressively outstanding scenes such as this one, wherein the swift-footed Achilles chases the doomed Hector.

Athena presents herself to Hector in the guise of Deiphobos, Hector's brother. She pretends to have come to help him, and tricks him into fighting. The duel begins, and Hector realises that the gods have called him to his death: 'now the gods have called me to my death' Hector shouts. The half-line 22. 297 is uttered by him and only one other man: Patroclus (at 16. 693), and the fate of both men is thus linked. They become a strange couple, Patroclus, Achilles' most loved friend, and Hector, his most hated enemy; moreover, it is because Hector has killed Patroclus that he is now about to be killed by Achilles.

At this point in the narrative the image of the threatening star returns (22. 317-21, tr. Hammond): "Like the Evening Star on its path among the stars in the darkness of the night, the loveliest star set in the sky, such was the light gleaming from the point of the sharp spear Achilles held quivering in his right hand." Killing Hector, Achilles gloats over him: "Hector, (...) as

you killed Patroclus you thought you would be safe, and you had no fear of me, as I was far away." The words 'being far away' are now turned against Hector. "You fool, behind him (sc. Patroclus) there was I left to avenge him, a far greater man than he."

A crude dialogue follows: Achilles promises Hector that dogs will eat his corpse. Hector beseeches Achilles not to let the dogs eat him. Achilles replies (22. 346sq.): "I wish I could eat you myself." He repeats this, and explains: "I wish that the fury in my heart would drive me to cut you in pieces and eat your flesh raw, for all you have done to me." Achilles does not call Hector by his name, instead he calls him 'dog' (22. 345). Achilles' passionate outburst calls to mind the image of a serial killer, cannibalising his victims.

The following four lines are identical with four lines which appeared earlier in Homer's *Iliad*. Here, these lines describe Hector's death (22. 361-4); earlier, the same four lines (16. 855-9) described Patroclus' death. At the end of book 16, it was Hector who heard from dying Patroclus that he was soon to die; now it is Achilles who is told by dying Hector that he won't live to see the Greeks' victory over the Trojans (tr. Hammond): "Your heart is like iron in your breast. But take care now, (...) Paris and Phoibos Apollo will destroy you at the Skaian gates", where Hector is now dying. Achilles cannot stop himself: Hector is already dead, but Achilles still orders him to die (22. 364-6): "Then godlike Achilles spoke to him, dead though he was: 'Die! I shall take my death at whatever time Zeus and the other immortal gods wish to bring it on me.'" Achilles knows that he must die soon, and is willing to accept his fate. He wastes few words in saying so. Hector, however, did not accept that Patroclus' prophecy would necessarily come true. He replied to dying Patroclus (16. 859-61): "Patroclus, why make me this prophecy of grim death? Who knows if Achilles, son of lovely-haired Thetis, might be struck by my spear first, and lose his life before me?" Now, in book 22, Achilles strips off Hector's armour, and the other Greeks stab his corpse. Singing a victory-song with his men (22. 391), Achilles fastens the body to his chariot and sets off, dragging it behind (22. 401-3): "As Hector was dragged behind, a cloud of dust arose from him, his dark hair streamed out round him, and all that once handsome head was sunk in the dust." In the prelude to Patroclus' death (16. 793-800) it was Achilles' helmet that was knocked from Patroclus' head, a symbolic decapitation. Now Hector is literally decapitated, and again a structural balance or contrast is established: the prelude and the aftermath, the overture and the climax.

The death and defilement of Hector, the violating and desecrating of his corpse, is witnessed by his parents. The sound of their lamentations reaches Andromache. She sits at home and prepares hot water for Hector's bath on his return from battle: "poor child", says Homer (22. 445sq.), "she did not

know that far away from any baths (...) Athena had brought him down at the hands of Achilles." Fearful for Hector, she rushes to the wall. When she sees him, she faints. Recovering, she laments his death, her own loss, and the helplessness of their son Astyanax. A cruel change awaits him, now that he is fatherless.

Much in this scene relates to the scene between Hector and Andromache in book 6, and "realises the tragedy there foreshadowed" (M. Hammond, *Homer, The Iliad*, London 1987, xlviiii). The scene is the last in the narrative of Hector's death, and it takes us back to the scene in book 6 where the poet showed us Hector, Andromache and Astyanax together (6. 370-502). Andromache had warned Hector of what could happen to him, and of the fate that awaited his wife and son (6. 407-13, 6. 429-32). Now that Hector is dead, she foresees this fate in vivid detail (22. 482-507). In the earlier scene, we were told why their son was called Astyanax ('he who defends the city'), and we are reminded of this here, although now the name has lost its meaning (6. 402sq. corresponding to 22. 506sq.). In book 6, Hector foresaw the fall of Troy, and wished that he might die rather than see Andromache taken captive (6. 447-65): his wish has now come true, and Troy's fall is near.

There is another cruel echo: in book 6, we saw the timid child who clung to his nurse, afraid of his father's nodding helmet-plume, and the family scene was touchingly natural (6. 466-84). Here Andromache contrasts Astyanax' gentle nursing with the rudeness that he will encounter as an orphan, causing him to run in tears to his widowed mother (22. 490-504).

And a final one: book 6 closed with Hector telling his wife to go back to her domestic work, while he returned to the war. Now, we find Andromache again at her domestic work, and the book closes with her lament about his death. Her last words describe the clothes which the maids have woven for Hector, which will now be useless to him, and which she will burn (510-4). Andromache's lament is echoed in her final speech in book 24 (22. 482-5 corresponding to 24. 725-7); the two speeches complement each other: in the first, she imagines what would happen if Astyanax escaped death or captivity, whereas in the second she is more realistic and faces the truth, which is that Troy will fall and Astyanax will be enslaved or killed. Homer's juxtaposing a person's death with the scene at his home was imitated in later literature.

Another motif, 'ignorance of friend's fate', was to great effect in book 17 of the *Iliad*, where Achilles did not know of the death of Patroclus (17. 401): "But this time his mother had not told him of the disaster that had now happened, the death of his most loved companion." Homer aroused sympathy in this way, by depicting those who are suffering great disasters as unaware of their misfortunes.

V.

As in the previous book, a structural balance or contrast can be observed in **book 23**. Lamentation for Hector is immediately followed by lamentation for Patroclus, and this is to be expected. The treatment of the two bodies, however, is set in the starkest contrast: while Achilles supervises the most elaborate and honorific funeral for Patroclus – Patroclus’ body is placed on a movable stand on which a corpse was traditionally carried to the grave, or to the pyre – Hector is flung face-down in the dirt.

Book 23 is divided into two parts: the first part, comprising one third of the text (23. 1-257a) describes the funeral, while the games in Patroclus’ honour comprise the remaining two thirds. Of these 640 lines, however, more than half (262-652) are taken up by the chariot-race. This forms the central panel of the book’s structure, and the chariot-race certainly was the most prestigious contest known in antiquity. Seven other contests follow, of which the first three (boxing, wrestling and running) are clearly important, and occupy 145 lines in all, whereas the last four (armed duel, weight-throwing, archery and javelin) are dealt with more briefly, in only 100 verses (N. Richardson, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume VI: Books 21-24*, Cambridge 1993, 164): “first the great sequence of scenes of the funeral itself, followed by the chariot-race with all its excitement and the complexity of its subordinate episodes, and then a series of ever-shorter scenes, with a progressive relaxation of tension.” In terms of both emotion and conduct, however, the funeral games build suspense.

In the architecture of the *Iliad* as a whole, book 23 balances book 2: both consist not only of two parts – the Greek assembly and the Catalogues (of Ships and of Trojan fighters), and the Funeral and the Games respectively – but these two parts also show common characteristics: the Greeks are assembled at the beginning of book 2, and they listen to Agamemnon’s near-disastrous attempt to test his troops’ morale; at the beginning of book 23, they are again united, and take part in the funeral rites for Patroclus. The games themselves are presented in catalogue-form in the second part of book 23, as were the Greek (and to a lesser degree, the Trojan) forces displayed in the second half of book 2.

Book 2 paints a picture of a potentially demoralized and disorderly army, an ominous prelude to the disasters to come. In book 23, these disasters have mostly come to pass, and order has been restored, and is maintained in the games by the firm hand of Achilles. Achilles himself does not take part in the games, as the other competitors would be no match for him. The games show Achilles in a new light – mature, dignified, and generous of nature – and thus prepare us for the Achilles of the final book. Achilles is perfectly in

control during the great excitement; he even laughs at times. There is tension as well. Arguments break out among spectators and contestants during the chariot-race; but here, in contrast to the opening of the *Iliad*, they are resolved, and Achilles ensures that this is so.

The inciting incidents in books 2 and 23 occur in dream scenes, linking the two books. In book 2, it was the deceptive Dream sent by Zeus to Agamemnon (2. 1-36). In book 23, it is the dream of Achilles in which Patroclus' ghost tells him to bury his body as soon as possible. This dream also speaks of Achilles' own imminent death (23. 62-108). These are the only extended dream scenes in the *Iliad*, and their rarity strengthens the case for seeing a parallelism between them.

There is also a minor coincidence which links books 2 and 23: in the extremely long Catalogue of Ships, the best horses are singled out, those of Eumelos (2. 763-7); both Eumelos and his horses reappear only once, in the chariot-race (23. 288sqq.). If this short mention of Eumelos were to be considered as an anticipation of the Games (N. Richardson, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume VI: Books 21-24*, Cambridge 1993, 8 n. 8), then it would also be appropriate, in the following passage, for Homer to describe how Achilles' Myrmidons console their inactivity with athletic exercises (2. 773-5).

The extravagance and excess of the funeral is very striking. The exceptional scale suits the grandeur of the *Iliad* as a whole, but is also a reflection of Achilles' immense grief for his beloved companion.

The book closes with Achilles awarding Agamemnon the prize for the javelin, but without allowing him to compete, because he is 'supreme in power' (891). Achilles' gesture seals their reconciliation. This gesture shows Achilles conforming to accepted standards of behaviour. It prepares us for his change of heart, when he receives Priam's supplication in the next book. Achilles gives a prize to the king Agamemnon of his own free will, in friendship. The games for Patroclus conclude on this quiet and dignified note.

The chariot race scene in book 23 (23. 262-652) illustrates Homer's narrative technique. The list of contestants is interrupted (at 301-50) by Nestor's speech to his son Antilochus, signalling that Antilochus will play a prominent part in the race (which will be won by Diomedes). In fact, he receives the slowest horses, and Nestor speaks to him about the skill, or cunning intelligence, that Antilochus will need to use in order to win. He recommends that Antilochus lean a little to the left of the horses as he drives them around the turning point. He also recommends giving rein to the horse on the right (the outer one), while making the horse on the left cut in close to the turning post (the inner one). In other words: Nestor advises Antilochus to steer as close as possible to the turn, leaning a little to the left, and urging on the

right-hand horse: the left-hand horse should just clear the turn, almost touching it with the nave of the wheel, but avoiding a crash.

During the race, Antilochus overtakes Menelaus where the track is narrow (362-447). Menelaus complains that Antilochus is driving recklessly, and later he accuses Antilochus of cheating. Finally, there is reconciliation, and a simile is used to express the mental impression: the 'spirit is warmed, just like the early-morning dew on the ripening corn is warmed and evaporated by the increasing force of the sun.' Menelaus – who is right – gives in, moved by a deep impulse of sympathetic generosity, and his speech reminds one of Phoenix' speech to Achilles on the virtues of giving in when being upset, of yielding to entreaty when one is angry at injustice (9. 496-605). At that point, Achilles was the protagonist in the dispute, whereas now he acts as mediator (490-8, 555-62, 618-23). Honour is satisfied in the games; the risk of further conflict is avoided. Achilles is now compared to a father lamenting his dead son (23. 222-5), a fact that explains the intensity of his sorrow but also shows how Achilles has matured during the course of the *Iliad*.

The new image of Achilles highlights some of the strengths and weaknesses of character. In this sense, the games can be described as ethical, and in some ways more closely resemble later comedy than tragedy. The games portray the heroes in different light, quarrelling about petty issues, abusively contradicting each other (448-98) and vying for prizes (499-652) – which by no means contradicts their heroic attitude.

VI.

As book 23 balanced book 2 in the architecture of the *Iliad* as a whole, the last book of the *Iliad* resembles the opening book as regards their clearly-defined themes and structures. The opening book's theme was Achilles' anger and its consequences, while **book 24** is wholly concerned with the fate of Hector's body. As the poem began with Achilles (1. 1), so it ends with Hector (24. 804): two pillars which support the whole work.

The major action of the book is Priam's visit to Achilles, together with his journey to and from the Greek camp (322-718). Two main movements precede this visit – the complex sequence of divine preparations (1-187) and those on the human level (188-321). After Priam's visit, Hector is brought home and laid on a bed. His widow Andromache begins the lament, followed by his mother Hekabe and Helen (until 776). Priam orders the Trojans to collect wood for the pyre, and on the tenth day Hector's body is burnt. The day after, the pyre is extinguished, the body is buried, and the people hold the funeral feast (777-804): "Such was the burial they gave to Hector,

tamer of horses" is the last line of the *Iliad*, which began with the wrath of Achilles.

After the ending of the games – during which Achilles' normality and composure were emphasized – there is a clear break. For one book we saw Achilles maintain his composure – he was calm and collected. Now, the opening passage of book 24 (1-21) returns to the earlier motifs of Achilles' grief, his deep sorrow, his mistreatment of Hector's body, and Apollo's protection of it. The army is asleep (and the motif is repeated at 24. 677-81), as it was at the beginning of book 23, when Achilles grieved until sleep overtook him, but this time Achilles is not overtaken by sleep: at dawn, he yokes his chariot, drags Hector three times round Patroclus' tomb, and leaves him stretched out face downward in the dust. Apollo, however, protects the corpse from harm, covering it with his shield, his aegis.

The gods take pity on Hector's corpse, introducing a crucial new development. The debate that ensues provides a vivid picture (the last one) of the clash between pro-Greek and pro-Trojan deities. Apollo stands out as a god concerned with fundamental ethical principles – a corpse should be protected against desecration. Zeus supports Apollo in this respect, but nevertheless Achilles deserves honour. Thetis is summoned so that she can tell Achilles to accept Priam's ransom for his dead son's corpse.

In book 1, Thetis came to demand honour for Achilles; now she is sent to bring it about: Thetis is sent to tell Achilles of the gods' anger, and to request that he releases the body for ransom. In a parallel movement, Iris goes to Priam and tells him to bring ransom to Achilles. Ransom increases social standing (24. 592-5) – Agamemnon's gift would have done so in *Iliad* 9. Iris briefly describes Achilles' character (24. 186sq.): "he is not foolish or blind or godless, but will show a suppliant all kindness and spare him." Achilles must have changed indeed, since the opening of book 21, where he did not spare Lykaon, who came as a suppliant to him.

Priam goes to the ships, despite his wife's fierce opposition. He drives all the Trojan bystanders away, and rails at his other sons, those who have survived (unlike Hector, his 'only' son). Priam is escorted to Achilles' hut by Hermes, the gods' messenger. This is the most extensive meeting between god and man in the *Iliad*. It exhibits the rare divine pity which motivates this final act, and which works in parallel with human pity to bring a resolution; again one notes that an action is doubly motivated.

Without a word, Priam kneels before Achilles, clasps his knees, and kisses his hands, "those terrible, murderous hands, which had killed many of his sons" (24. 479). He reminds Achilles that he too has a father (24. 486-92), just as Odysseus and Phoinix did in book 9. Achilles is moved to pity. He indirectly compares Hector's fate to his own by comparing his

father to Priam: both reached the heights of human greatness, but misery came to both when they lost their 'only' sons. Achilles can no more protect Peleus in his old age than Hector can Priam. Achilles mentions the gods who have no sorrows – suffering and death are the fate of mortals; lamentation cannot change that.

Achilles, however, is still dangerous. He stares down aggressively to Priam (at 559sq.), and, more remarkably, he commands his serving-women to carry Hector's body to another room before they wash it. He does this for two reasons (582-6, tr. Hammond): "Priam should not see his son – in case in his anguish of heart he might not control his anger on seeing his son, and then Achilles might have his own heart stirred to violence, and kill him, and so offend Zeus' command." Achilles' anger is brought under control by self-knowledge. He lifts Hector's body onto the bier with his own hands, agreeing to keep the Achaeans from hostilities for the time that Priam wants for Hector's burial.

Hermes wakes Priam and escorts him out of the Achaean camp. As the new day breaks, Priam brings Hector's body to the gates of Troy. Achilles who has hurled many souls of heroes down to Hades and whose accursed anger has indeed brought immeasurable anguish – as was announced in the *Iliad's* opening – was not allowed to feed Hector's body to the dogs and birds. He was prevented from doing so by Zeus' command.

Finally, Achilles gives in, but only under duress: on the brink of madness, driven by emotions he can barely restrain, heavily dependent on his mother, who, fortunately enough, is a goddess, here is a man surrounded by fellow heroes who are not his friends, desperately seeking a companion with whom he has shared, or at least believes he has shared, happier moments, a man who bristles at the comment of people who are not worth listening to, unsure whom he can trust and rely on, a fool, fooled by Agamemnon, and by Apollo, suffering from a cycle of self-inflicted wounds and self-inflicted healing, a man consumed with guilt because he sent his friend alone to die in a pointless battle, a maniac, a maverick, an eccentric.

Vorlesungen über griechische Dichtung

Zusammenfassung

Die erste Hälfte des Buches besteht aus neun Teilen. Der erste Teil beginnt mit einer Skizze der frühgriechischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte. Zu Beginn wird ein Beispiel gewählt, anhand dessen sich der Interessenkonflikt darstellen läßt, der diejenigen, die sich für ästhetische Interpretationen interessieren, trennt von denen, die auf einer historischen Perspektive insistieren: es ist dies die Diskussion der grundlegenden Arbeiten von Milman Parry zur Oralität der frühgriechischen Dichtung. Parry's Studien mögen Homer in neuem Lichte erscheinen lassen, gleichzeitig jedoch helfen sie überhaupt nicht, Homer und seine poetische Leistung zu würdigen. Eine Übersicht über Ilias und Odyssee, die im zweiten Teil folgt, versucht diese poetische Leistung darzustellen. Hesiod, das Thema des dritten Teils, galt vielen als Zeitgenosse Homers, eine These, die sich nicht beweisen läßt. Wie dem auch sei, auch Hesiods epische Texte sind beeinflusst von nahöstlichen poetischen Texten (wie Teile im Œuvre Homers auch). Nachdem der frühgriechischen epischen Dichtung drei Kapitel gewidmet waren, behandelt die Vorlesung nun die lyrische Dichtung. Sie wird gewöhnlich (aber dies ist nicht unumstritten) eingeteilt in monodische Dichtung und solche, die von einem Chor vorgetragen wurde. Das Genre ist in der Tat facettenreich und zeigt ständige Wandlung; trotzdem versuchen die folgenden Kapitel 4 und 5 grundlegende Eigenheiten zu beschreiben, die Autoren wie Pindar und Bakchylides aber auch wie Sappho und Alkaios gemeinsam haben. Die folgenden drei Kapitel gelten einer dritten Gruppe poetischer Texte, der Attischen Tragödie, dem bedeutendsten poetischen Genre der klassischen Epoche. Sie überstrahlte andere Formen der Dichtung; unglücklicherweise, und ungerechterweise, hat dies dazu geführt, daß das Werk anderer als der kanonischen Autoren immer weniger interessant wurde für die folgenden Generationen von Lesern. Die Charakteristika der drei großen Tragödiendichter stehen im Zentrum von Kapitel 6 bis 8. Aeschylus wird vorgestellt, dessen Stücke von den Persern (472) bis zur Orestie (458) geprägt sind von einem theologisierenden Gestus; Sophokles' Helden und Heldinnen werden porträtiert, jeder und jede konfrontiert mit einem überwältigenden emotionalen Eindruck, dessen Wucht sie gewissermaßen übermenschliche Entscheidungen treffen läßt; und Euripides' überraschend moderner Stil wird vorgestellt, seine eigenartige Art, ernste Dinge in leichte Form zu bringen. Diese erste Buchhälfte schließt mit einer Art Ringkomposition. Wie das erste Kapitel, so versucht auch das letzte einen Überblick über ein methodologisches Problem zu geben. Angesichts der

Tatsache, daß die nachklassische, d.h. frühhellenistische Dichtung eine solch heterogene und auch unzusammenhängende Dichtung hervorbringt – wie soll man da Literaturgeschichte schreiben? Macht es Sinn, von Kategorien wie ‘alt’ und ‘neu’ zu sprechen – oder ist das nur eine Art Notbehelf, mangels etwas Besserem: so wie ein Ertrinkender sich an vorbeitreibende Strohhalme klammert.

Die zweite Buchhälfte bietet eine Einführung in Homers Ilias. Für diesen Zweck sind die ausgewählten Passagen im einzelnen kommentiert. Die Übersetzung stammt von Martin Hammond; sie ist weithin anerkannt als eine praktische Wiedergabe des auf den ersten Blick ungewöhnlich steifen und recht formalisierten homerischen Diskurses in modernes Englisch. Die wesentlichen Etappen der Geschichte Achills, des Protagonisten der Ilias, werden in fünf Kapiteln vorgestellt. Wie Agamemnon und Achill sich streiten, und Achill sich vom Kampf zurückzieht (Buch 1); wie Agamemnon versucht, ihn umzustimmen und eine Gesandtschaft schickt zu Achill, der beleidigt in seinem Zelt sitzt und seinem Freund Patroklos literarische Texte vorträgt (Buch 9); wie Patroklos in Achills Rüstung kämpft, von Apollo betäubt und von Euphorbus verwundet wird, um schließlich von Hektor getötet zu werden (Buch 16); wie sich Agamemnon und Achill versöhnen, und Achill in den Kampf zieht (Buch 19); schließlich, wie Achill mit Hektor kämpft, ihn tötet und seinen Leichnam mißhandelt (Buch 22). Mehrere Beispiele aus der gesamten Ilias werden herangezogen um zu beschreiben, wie das Werk zusammenhängt, warum es zusammengehört. Dieser Vorgang ist begleitet von Einzelinterpretationen klassischer Passagen, wie etwa der vom Waffentausch zwischen Glaukos und Diomedes. Im Zentrum steht allerdings immer Achills Charakter, seine geistigen Veränderungen, seine gewissermaßen Hamletische Persönlichkeit auf der einen Seite, wohingegen auf der anderen Seite seine emotionale Abhängigkeit immer wieder deutlich ist, sei es von freundschaftlichen Gefühlen wie im Falle von Patroklos, sei es von Liebe zu und von seiner Mutter, mit der er viele eindruckliche Augenblicke verbringt. Einflüsse aus der nahöstlichen Poesie sind unverkennbar in Homers Achill-Geschichte, die deutlich auf Gilgamesch und Enkidu verweist. Dieser Punkt ist charakteristisch für die Ilias, ebenso wie die doppelte Motivation menschlichen Handelns, das nie unabhängig vom göttlichen Willen erfolgen kann; ebenso charakteristisch ist die homerische Sprache, erfunden um der künstlichen Illusion willen; typisch sind die stereotypen Formeln, die für bestimmte Versstellen passen und den Text nicht nur leichter verständlich machen, sondern es dem Hörer auch erlauben, auf das aufmerksam zu werden, was der Text sagen will; nicht zuletzt ist es die Distanziertheit Homers, seine kühle Beschreibung, die fasziniert. All dies ist vereint zu einem höheren poetischen Zweck: nützlich zu sein in ethischen Kontexten und zugleich schön anzuhören.

Lectures on Greek poetry

Summary

The first half of the book consists of nine parts, the first of which begins by outlining the literary and cultural history of the early Greeks. At its very beginning, an example is chosen to illustrate the conflicting interests of those focussing on aesthetic values and those highlighting historical information: it is the debate that followed Milman Parry's seminal studies in oral epic poetry. They may shed light on Homer, yet at the same time, they do not help to understand Homer at all. Providing a survey on Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the second part continues this line of argument. Hesiod, the subject of the third part, was considered by some to be contemporary to Homer, which cannot be proven. However, his early epic texts provide another example of Eastern influence (as do some parts in Homer). Having discussed early epic poetry in three parts, the lectures now move on to lyric poetry. Commonly but not undisputedly divided into monodic and choral lyric poetry, the genre is multifaceted and continually variable. Nevertheless, chapters 4 and 5 try to fix some elementary issues, common to authors like Pindar and Bacchylides as well as to Sappho and Alcaeus. The ensuing three chapters focus on a third group of Greek poetic texts: Attic tragedy became the main poetic genre during the classical period. It outshone many another poetic genre, and unluckily as well as unjustly, the work of the three canonical authors made the poetic output of their fellow poets less interesting for the following generations of readers. The characteristics of these three great tragedians are at the centre of chapters 6 to 8. Aeschylus' theologising manner is discussed, that pervades his plays from the *Persians* (472) to the *Oresteia* (458), Sophocles' heroes and heroines are portrayed, confronted with an over-whelming emotional turmoil that makes them take some super-human decisions, and Euripides' surprisingly modern style is presented, his curious way of treating lightly matters serious. This first half of the book closes by a kind of ring-composition. As the first chapter, also the last tries to give a survey on a methodological problem: given the fact that the post-classical, i.e. pre-Hellenistic period provides such a heterogeneous and somehow incongruous output, how to write literary history? Does it make sense to use categories like 'old' and 'new' - or is that way of speaking only a kind of emergency exit, for lack of something more coherent: as a drowning man clutches at the floating straws.

The book's second half introduces to Homer's *Iliad*. This time the passages selected are discussed in more detail. The translation used is that by Martin Ham-

mond, widely acclaimed as a practical rendering into modern English of the, at first sight, unusually stilted and highly formalised Homeric language. The main units of the story of Achilles, the *Iliad's* protagonist, are presented in five chapters. How Agamemnon and Achilles fell out, and Achilles withdrew himself from battle (book 1); how Agamemnon, trying to appease him, sent an embassy to angry Achilles, sulking in his tent and playing music to his friend Patroclus, and how Achilles denied Agamemnon (book 9); how Achilles' friend Patroclus fought in Achilles' armour, but was dazed and bewildered by Apollo, wounded by Euphorbos, and slain at last by Hector (book 16); how Agamemnon and Achilles were reconciled, and how Achilles went forth to battle (book 19); finally, how Achilles fought with Hector, killed him, and savagely maimed his corpse (book 22). Many more examples from all the *Iliad's* books are chosen in order to illustrate how the work may be considered to be a whole, and why. This process is accompanied by a thorough interpretation of classical passages, such as the exchange of armour between Glaucus and Diomedes. Yet, it is always Achilles' character that stands at the centre of the argument, his mental voyage, his soul's Hamletish posture on the one hand, while on the other, there is his emotional dependency, be it on friendship as in the case of Patroclus, be it on love by his mother, with whom he shares many an intense moment. The orientalisising influences on Homer are highly relevant to the story of Achilles, which obviously reflects and condenses the story of Gilgamesh and Enkidu. This issue is discussed among others that characterise the *Iliad*: its constant alluding to double motivation, i.e. the fact that gods and goddesses are of considerable influence while human beings think that they alone take a decision; its poetic language, especially created to provide the illusion of artificiality; its pattern poetry, which helps the listener not only to follow easily but also to grasp what is at stake; and its distant coolness, all combined to achieve a major poetic aim: to be of use in matters moral, while at the same time being pleasant to hear.



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This monograph consists of two main parts. Part One is a series of lectures surveying epic, lyric, and tragic poetry from Homer to Euripides and Timotheus. It begins with a chapter on literary and cultural history, which serves as an introduction to some of the main problems related to archaic Greek poetry, and ends with a chapter on notions of 'old' and 'new' at the end of the classical age. In Part Two, a second series of lectures outlines the story of Achilles and may serve as an introduction to Homer's *Iliad*. All original texts are provided in translation.



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