

***Homer and the Epic Cycle:
Dialogue and Challenge***

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I, Ioannis Lambrou, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Thesis Abstract

In this thesis, we revisit a longstanding problem, the relationship between Homer and the fragmentarily preserved post-Homeric narrative poems of the so-called Epic Cycle. The approach adopted has affinities with the school of criticism known as Neoanalysis, which, originating in continental Europe as an alternative to the Parry-Lord oral-formulaic theory, sought to explain irregularities found in the Homeric text by assuming re-contextualisation of motifs taken from pre-Homeric epics which were often identified with either written versions or the oral predecessors of the Cyclic epics. Rather than *Quellenforschung*, however, our emphasis is on Homer's interactive engagement with the mythopoetic traditions which were eventually crystallised in the Epic Cycle. And where scholars have so far tended to focus on the inadequacies of the Cyclic epics in the form in which we have them or to consider the complexity that the poems exhibit in presenting Achilles and Odysseus to be later development, our interest is less in the epics themselves, either as aesthetic or as cultural phenomena, than in the poetic strategy through which the Homeric poet, in seeking to position himself within a competitive context of an oral performance culture, engages with this traditional complexity creatively, both synergistically and agonistically.

CHAPTER ONE sets the scene by exploring what one may call *circumstantial* or *situational* rivalry between epic poets and, on the basis of a review of the evidence, both ancient and comparative, proposes that the circumstances of an early singer-poet were such that they encouraged the emergence of a high degree of competitive interaction among known individuals with a strong interest in personal fame. CHAPTERS TWO and THREE, shifting their focus from *context* to *texture*, explore how complex and manifold mythopoetic traditions about Achilles and Odysseus find their way into the narrative fabric of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, respectively, through a sophisticated and self-reflexive type of poetic interaction that includes both compliance and contestation with the wider epic tradition.

The competitive dimension of early epic storytelling has in the recent past been either overemphasised or seriously underestimated. This thesis argues that early epic competition, though much less pronounced than often assumed, is reflected in the artistically ambitious refining and distillation process that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* develop in adjusting divergent mythological and poetic traditions to their own idiosyncratic presentation of Achilles and Odysseus. A close intra-generic reading of the Homeric text and the fragments of the Epic Cycle in the light of suggestive evidence we have for the phenomenon of epic competitiveness can ultimately contribute to a critical understanding of the dynamics of the early Greek epic performance and of Homer's position within it.

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IOANNIS LAMBROU

London, September 2014

List of Abbreviations

All quotations and translations of the Homeric poems are based on the Loeb Classical Library edition. All quotations and translations of the Cyclic fragments and the *Chrestomatheia* of Proclus are by M. L. WEST 2003a (citations are also based on the edition of A. BERNABÉ 1987), of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (referred to as *H. Ap.*) by M. L. WEST 2003b, of Hesiod by G. W. MOST 2006-7, and of the *Posthomeric* of Quintus Smyrnaeus by A. JAMES 2004. The term “cyclic” with a lower case refers to oral mythopoetic traditions behind the Homeric epics and the Cyclic poems; with an upper case it refers to the specific poems of the Epic Cycle and their oral predecessors or performance traditions. Commentaries are referred to by the author’s name and date (e.g., KIRK 1985 on *Il.* 1.1). For Greek proper names, traditional, Latinised spellings are usually employed. Abbreviations for Greek and Latin authors usually follow those in the Liddell-Scott-Jones *Greek-English Lexicon* (LSJ) and the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (OLD), respectively. All electronic sources were last accessed on 29 September 2014.

- Bernabé BERNABÉ, A., ed. (1987) *Poetarum Epicorum Graecorum Testimonia et Fragmenta*, vol. 1. Leipzig
- Davies DAVIES, M., ed. (1991) *Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, vol. 1. Oxford
- Dindorf DINDORF, G., ed. (1855) *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Odysseam*, vol 1. Oxford (repr., Amsterdam, 1962)
- Gerber GERBER, D. E., ed. and trans. (1999) *Greek Elegiac Poetry: From the Seventh to the Fifth centuries B.C.* Cambridge, MA and London
- LIMC ACKERMANN, H. C. and GISLER, J. R., edd. (1981-99) *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*. Zürich

- LSJ LIDDELL, H. G., SCOTT, R., and JONES, H. S., et al., edd. (2011) *A Greek-English Lexicon, online version*, accessed through the online *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (original edn 1843)
[\[http://www.tlg.uci.edu/lsg/about.php\]](http://www.tlg.uci.edu/lsg/about.php)
- Most MOST, G. W., ed. and trans. (2006-7) *Hesiod*. 2 vols. Cambridge, MA and London
- M-W MERKELBACH, R. and WEST, M. L., edd. (1967) *Fragmenta Hesiodica*. Oxford
- PMG PAGE, D. L., ed. (1962) *Poetae Melici Graeci*. Oxford
- Pontani PONTANI, F., ed. (2007) *Scholia Graeca in Odysseam, vol. 1: Scholia ad Libros α-β*. Rome
- Radt RADT, S. L., ed. (1985) *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta, vol. 3: Aeschylus*. Göttingen
- SLG PAGE, D.L., ed. (1974) *Supplementum Lyricis Graecis*. Oxford
- Snell SNELL, B., ed. (1971) *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta, vol 1: Didascaliae Tragicae Catalogi Tragicorum et Tragoediarum, Testimonia et Fragmenta Tragicorum Minorum*. Göttingen
- West WEST, M. L., ed. and trans. (2003) *Greek Epic Fragments: From the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC*. Cambridge, MA and London

Introduction

One of the most famous poems that mark the beginning of T.S. Eliot's illustrious career, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", is first published in the June 1915 issue of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. The first stanza reads as follows:

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question...
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

An echo of "Prufrock" can be heard in Robert Frost's "A Time to Talk", which was written either in 1915 or early 1916, immediately after the first publication of Eliot's poem.¹ Frost's ten-line poem reads as follows:

When a friend calls to me from the road
And slows his horse to a meaning walk,
I don't stand still and look around
On all the hills I haven't hoed,
And shout from where I am, What is it?
No, not as there is time to talk.
I thrust my hoe in the mellow ground,

¹ Cf. P. GILBERT, 'Poetic Rivalry', Vermont Public Radio, 29 September 2014 [<http://www.vpr.net/episode/44029/poetic-rivalry/>]: "The American poet Ezra Pound had urged the magazine's founder to publish Eliot's poetry. Pound was the magazine's man in London, where Frost met him. Just two years earlier, Pound had favorably reviewed Frost's first book in the magazine, helping to launch Frost's career as well as Eliot's. And so, Frost would have kept a keen eye on *Poetry Magazine*. Frost scholar Mark Richardson tells me that if Frost hadn't seen Eliot's poem earlier, he most likely would have seen it in September 1915 when he traveled from his home in Franconia, New Hampshire to New York City on literary business."

Blade-end up and five feet tall,
And plod: I go up to the stone wall
For a friendly visit.

Peter GILBERT, executive director of the *Vermont Humanities Council*, observes:

I find it hard to imagine that Frost would have been able to write a poem that concludes, in short, “I don't ... shout ... What is it? ... I go / For a friendly visit” and do so wholly innocent of the echo with Eliot’s memorable lines, “Oh, do not ask, “What is it?” / Let us go and make our visit.” Did Frost do so with a wink and a grin? I can’t help but wonder whether the well-adjusted, sociable, hearty farmer in Frost’s poem is using his hoe to make a little dig at Eliot, with his earnest, effete Prufrock, so neurotic and self-conscious. We can’t know for certain, but perhaps very early on, Frost set forth here the contrast in style and temperament between Eliot and himself, two great poets destined to be literary rivals.²

Poetic rivalry in modern literature is not an uncommon phenomenon.³ The “dialogue” between Frost and Eliot suggestively loaded with implications of antagonism is simply one notable case in point. More tangible forms of literary rivalry are the institutionalised poetic competitions, such as the UK National Poetry Competition, where nowadays both established and emerging poets seek to impress critics and readers for prestigious prizes. Formal poetic competition is not a phenomenon of our time, of course. Notable examples from the ancient Greek world are the Athenian dramatic festivals and competitions from the sixth century BC onwards and the competitive context of rhapsodic re-performances of the Homeric poems in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. But there is good reason to believe that rivalry was also a basic condition of epic production in early Archaic Greece too. This thesis argues that the Homeric epics originally developed (were composed, performed, and re-performed) in an environment that encouraged a high degree of competition between peers, which is now reflected in the high level of sophisticated artistry that the two poems demonstrate.

² P. GILBERT, ‘Poetic Rivalry’, *Vermont Public Radio*, 29 September 2014 [<http://www.vpr.net/episode/44029/poetic-rivalry/>].

³ See BRADFORD 2014.

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, both monumental Trojan War epics composed probably around 700 BC⁴ and traditionally ascribed to Homer,⁵ are the earliest extant European literary compositions, which have never ceased to exert great popular and literary influence. Whatever poetry existed before Homer has vanished. However, monumental poems of this sort (large scale, sophisticated structure, and overarching unity) did not spring into existence with a big bang. In fact, the two poems abound with fossilized remains of pre-Homeric mythopoetic traditions.⁶ Other stories about Heracles, Theseus, the Theban Wars, the Argonauts, the Calydonian boar hunt, to mention but a few examples of other traditions, are still visible on the surface of the Homeric epics and have long been recognised,⁷ while some, like the Argonautic tale, appear to have had a profound influence on the shaping of the Homeric text.⁸ Where it becomes more elusive, however, is when one looks for remains of pre-Homeric Trojan epic, since it does not advertise itself so overtly.

The larger mythopoetic traditions that surrounded and influenced the composition of the Homeric epics also survive in meagre fragments and summaries of other early Greek epics that also dealt with the Trojan War.⁹ However, whereas the Homeric

⁴ A notable example among the few scholars who would now dispute that the Homeric epics were composed around 700 BC is WEST (see now 2012: 224-41), who dates the *Iliad* to the mid-seventh century and the *Odyssey* to the latter part of the same century.

⁵ The terms “Homer” and “poet” are used interchangeably in this thesis to refer to the author of the Homeric epics. Though it is almost universally agreed that the two poems are the product of an oral culture, the extent to which they are unified and achieve a recognisable type of sophisticated intertextuality (on the nature of this intertextuality, see discussion below, pp. 17-18) allows us to entertain the possibility of authorial intention of a single monumental poet. For a comprehensive overview of the Homeric question, see FOWLER 2004: 220-32. For an overview of recent trends in the Homeric question, see MONTANARI 2012: 1-10.

⁶ The Homeric tradition has been aptly described by TSAGALIS 2008: xi as an oral palimpsest in that “during a long process of shaping, [it] has absorbed, altered, disguised, and reappropriated mythical, dictional, and thematic material of various sorts and from different sources.”

⁷ Cf. FOWLER 2004: 227-28.

⁸ On the *Odyssey*'s familiarity with the Argonautic tale, see WEST 2005: 39-64 (for further bibliography, see WEST 2005: 39 n. 1).

⁹ Authorship and exact date of these epics remain uncertain. Ancient testimonies date some of the poems as early as the eighth century, whereas the language of the surviving fragments points to the sixth century. There is, however, good reason to believe that the Cyclic poems developed in performance traditions during the Archaic Age and acquired their written form by the end of this

epics represent only a fraction of the mythological tradition of the Trojan War, these poems collectively provided the larger story. The *Cypria* narrated the origins of the Trojan War and its first events, the *Aethiopis* important events during the tenth year of the war, the *Little Iliad* the events leading up to the fall of Troy, the *Sack of Troy* the capture of the city, the *Returns* the return home of the Greek heroes after the end of the Trojan War, and the *Telegony* the final events after the return of Odysseus to Ithaca up to his death.¹⁰ In and after the Classical period these epics were referred to as autonomous poems. But their thematic convergence induced later readers to think of them collectively as a single entity. This is reflected in references to the so-called “Epic Cycle”; it is not clear whether this was a late Classical/Hellenistic reading list forming the basis of a prose summary of the Trojan War poems (WEST) or a Hellenistic compilation created by combining the individual poems in whole or in part (BURGESS),¹¹ including perhaps the cosmogonic *Titanomachy* and a series of Theban epics.¹²

period. For a comprehensive discussion, see BURGESS 2001: 8-12. For a recent reappraisal of the available evidence, see WEST 2013: 26-40.

¹⁰ WEST’s recent edition-translation and commentary (2003a and 2013, respectively) have made the surviving fragments and summaries more easily accessible. Also very useful, however, are the editions of BERNABÉ 1987 and DAVIES 1988. In this thesis, all citations are based on the edition of WEST and BERNABÉ.

¹¹ The term *epikós kúklos* is not attested before the second century AD (Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 7.277e), but suggestive evidence for its existence dates back to the late Classical Age. Until the Roman Empire, however, most verse quotations refer to individual Cyclic poems, which suggestively points to the fact that at least some Cyclic poems continued to exist autonomously even after the formation of the Epic Cycle. The stages in the evolution of the Epic Cycle have been the subject of much discussion, and the evolutionary models often proposed exhibit both convergences and divergences. For the Epic Cycle and its evolution, see WEST 2013: 16-26 and BURGESS 2001: 7-33 (for a concise overview, see BURGESS 2005: 346-48). For a comprehensive overview of the studies that revolved around the Epic Cycle, see FANTUZZI-TSAGALIS 2015: 10-37 (forthcoming).

¹² Photius (*Bibl.* 319a21 = Epic Cycle test. 13 Bernabé) indicates a broader scope for the Epic Cycle, from the union of Uranos and Ge, i.e., the beginning of the cosmos, to the inadvertent death of Odysseus at the hand of Telegonus. On the poems that were possibly included in the Epic Cycle apart from the Trojan War epics, see WEST 2013: 2-4.

The starting point for reconstructing the Trojan War poems of the Epic Cycle (a hypothetical “Trojan Cycle”)¹³ is a prose summary preserved in the medieval manuscript tradition of the *Iliad*. The summaries of the *Aethiopis*, the *Little Iliad*, the *Sack of Troy*, the *Returns*, and the *Telegony*, are contained in the 10th-century Venetus A manuscript, whereas the summary of the *Cypria* in other manuscripts. Evidence from the *Bibliotheca* of Photius, the ninth-century AD scholar and clergyman, offers good ground to believe that the summaries were copied from an account of the Epic Cycle that belonged to someone named Proclus, either a second-century AD grammarian or the famous fifth-century AD Neoplatonist of the same name,¹⁴ and that they were originally contained in a four-book systematic review of Greek literature titled Χρηστομαθείας γραμματικῆς ἐκλογαί (“Readings in useful literary knowledge”).¹⁵ Proclus’ summary of the Trojan War Cyclic poems represents the latest and most enlightening manifestation of the Epic Cycle.

The question whether Proclus based his epitome on an earlier summary tradition or epitomised the poems themselves has been much debated. The striking similarities of his summary (mainly in content and, sometimes, wording) with the account of the Trojan War provided in the mythological handbook of Ps.-Apollodorus (*Bibliotheca* and its *Epitome*), generally dated to the first or second centuries AD, might lead to the conclusion that these two works depend on each other. The fact, however, that each of them contains information that is not known to the other encourages us to believe that, if indeed Proclus derived his account from an earlier prose compendium of the Cyclic poems, then both he and Ps.-Apollodorus based their accounts on an earlier summary tradition independently.¹⁶

On the other hand, we cannot entirely exclude the possibility that Proclus had first-hand knowledge of the Cyclic poems. According to Photius, Proclus says that “the poems of the Epic Cycle *are preserved and studied* by most people not so much

¹³ We do not know that the term “Trojan Cycle” was used in antiquity, but see WEST 2013: 4 n. 9. As WEST 2013: 4 points out, “the coherence of theme and the relative abundance of evidence (thanks to Proclus) justify treating [the Trojan War poems] together and apart from the rest of the Cycle.”

¹⁴ Our evidence for the identity and date of Proclus remains largely inconclusive. See discussion in HOLMBERG 1998: 458, HUXLEY 1969: 123-24, SEVERYNS 1928: 245, and more recently WEST 2013: 1 and 7-11, who argues for an early-date Proclus.

¹⁵ For a good discussion on the content of this work, see WEST 2013: 1-2, 4-7.

¹⁶ Cf. FANTUZZI-TSAGALIS 2015: 33 (forthcoming).

on account of their quality as of the continuity of the matter in it”¹⁷ (trans. West 2013: 25), which suggests that the scholar presumably had direct access to the poems of the Trojan Cycle. In the sixth century AD, Joannes Philoponus claimed in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Analytica Posteriora* 77b32 (= Epic Cycle test. 28 Bernabé) that the Cyclic poems fell into disuse after the third-century AD Peisander of Laranda composed a verse compendium of myth, but this does not rule out the possibility that copies of the Cyclic poems, though rare, could still be found even until the time of a fifth-century Proclus. Unlike Ps.-Apollodorus who offers a comprehensive repertory on mythology, Proclus provides a more or less detailed plot summary of the Cyclic poems, also indicating their author (name and homeland), their length (number of books), their sequence (e.g., “this is succeeded by”, “next is”, “after this is”), and the positions of the Homeric poems in this sequence (“the aforesaid material [the contents of the *Cypria*] is followed by Homer’s *Iliad*”, “after this [the contents of the *Returns*] comes Homer’s *Odyssey*”). Therefore, even if we entertain the possibility that Proclus did not have access to manuscripts of the Cyclic poems, there is good reason to believe that he still had access to a –perhaps late Classical– comprehensive prose epitome that retained the Cyclic poems’ bibliographical details (or to a summary tradition that derived from that primary text)¹⁸ rather than to “a verse narration of the Trojan War (of late classical or early

¹⁷ Phot., *Bibl.* 319a30 (= Epic Cycle test. 22 Bernabé): λέγει δὲ [ὁ Πρόκλος] ὡς τοῦ ἐπικοῦ κύκλου τὰ ποιήματα διασώζεται καὶ σπουδάζεται τοῖς πολλοῖς οὐχ οὕτω διὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν ὡς διὰ τὴν ἀκολουθίαν τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ πραγμάτων.

¹⁸ Cf. WEST 2013: 24. On the basis of suggestive evidence (Arist., *Rhetorica* 1417a12), WEST 2013: 21-24 argues that at some point during the late Classical Age a certain author (perhaps named Phayllos) published a protocol containing a reading list of the non-Homeric Trojan War poems. This protocol also presumably indicated the author and the length of each poem and explained that “this was the Epic Cycle, made up of poems which, if read in the prescribed sequence, would provide a comprehensive account of the mythical age as represented by the oldest poets.” (WEST 2013: 22) Access, of course, to all the texts would be difficult, and, even if there was such a possibility, their total scale would discourage someone from reading the whole sequence from the beginning to the end. Possibly this, together with the fact that, according to Proclus, as we have seen, what people found interesting in the Cyclic epics was not their poetry but their substance, led to the creation of a comprehensive prose summary of the Cyclic epics, “probably in Peripatetic circles” (WEST 2003a: 3; cf. 2013: 23), perhaps by the same author, which would also retain their bibliographical details, that is, the title, the author’s name, and the length.

Hellenistic date) that was created from extensive excerpts (perhaps books) of the Cycle poems.”¹⁹

One must, however, be cautious in dealing with the Proclan summary. For, though it provides us with a comprehensive account of the narrative of the Trojan Cycle poems, thus making a significant addition to the meagre information preserved in the surviving fragments and testimonies, there is some degree of inconsistency with the surviving fragments as to the content, scope, and division of the poems.²⁰ It is, of course, possible that Proclus in the interest of neatness tidied up the tradition,²¹ but it may also be the case that Proclus’ text was modified or abridged when it was appropriated to surround the *Iliad* in the manuscript tradition, or the poems themselves could have been shortened when they (if, in fact, they ever) became part of a poetry compilation.²² So, with all these possibilities in mind, some degree of inconsistency is understandable. This, however, entails that a comprehensive and integrative reconstruction of the Trojan Cycle poems should draw upon all the available evidence, including but not limited to Proclus.

The historical and literary interconnections between Homer and (especially the Trojan War section of) the Epic Cycle have sparked years of ongoing and intense debate. Already in antiquity, the Cyclic poems were largely designated as secondary to Homer. They were often attributed to later authors and considered to be aesthetically decadent than the Homeric epics. Aristotle was the first to discredit

¹⁹ BURGESS 2015: 50 (forthcoming); cf. BURGESS 2001: 16, 33. See, also, n. 22 below.

²⁰ See BURGESS 2001: 18-33. Also, see below, p. 150 n. 43 and p. 155.

²¹ It is also entirely understandable that Proclus perhaps selected the most striking elements to include in his epitome, inevitably a subjective process, and, since he was interested in the main narrative elements, he was bound to omit some details and shorter or pass incidents and themes. See discussion below, pp. 70 and 122.

²² BURGESS’ assumption that “[b]ooks or sections of the individual poems were used in the manufacturing of the Epic Cycle, which created a generally continuous narrative” (2001: 33, followed by FANTUZZI-TSAGALIS 2015: 11 (forthcoming)) cannot be dismissed out of hand. For a discussion of the suggestive evidence we have for Hellenistic editorial manipulation, see BURGESS 2001: 16 (contrast WEST 2013: 22). The problem, however, with seeing the Epic Cycle as a poetry compilation is that it is very doubtful that a continuous verse narrative created from books and sections would be unified and comprehensive enough to reflect the whole set of mythological traditions that the Cyclic epics originally contained in order to serve the purpose it was presumably designed for, i.e., to ease access to the Trojan myth in its entirety.

their aesthetic value (*Poetics* 1459b), and therein he was succeeded by the influential Hellenistic scholars, who invariably designated anything “Cyclic” as Homer-derived and qualitatively inferior.²³ However, during the second half of the twentieth century, Neoanalysis, a type of *Quellenforschung*, challenged the already widespread dogma that the Cyclic epics were simply by-products based ultimately on the Homeric poems. In reaction to the 19th-century Analysts who saw the Homeric poems as a hodge-podge of interpolations, Neoanalysts searched for the sources of the *Iliad* and explained many of the irregularities in the Homeric narrative by assuming that Homer –the monumental poet– re-contextualised motifs taken from pre-Homeric epics that were often identified with the written texts of the Cyclic epics.²⁴ The most famous example is the death of Patroclus in the *Iliad*, which was assumed to have been modelled upon the death of Achilles in (a pre-Homeric version of) the Cyclic *Aethiopis*. Neoanalysts, however, soon recognised that the often postulated “textification” is not possible in the predominantly oral culture of the early Archaic Age, and so this version of Neoanalysis progressively gave way to a revised model of Oral Neoanalysis²⁵ that reconceived the pre-Homeric sources of the *Iliad* as the oral but “textualised” (i.e., fixed) predecessors of the Cyclic poems.²⁶

The supposition of Neoanalysts that the Cyclic poems had more or less fixed oral prototypes is, unquestionably, consistent with the principles of Oral Theory, according to which “each individual poem that we know of as part of the Epic Cycle would have been continually re-created and eventually crystallized in performance

²³ For an overview of the derogatory attitude towards the Epic Cycle in antiquity, see HOLMBERG 1998: 459-60. For the most systematic modern undervaluation of the Epic Cycle, see GRIFFIN 1977: 39-53. Although GRIFFIN does not discuss the date of the Epic Cycle in any detail, he repeatedly suggests that the Epic Cycle betrays its lateness in its bad taste (see discussion in BURGESS 2001: 158). Cf., e.g., DAVIES 1989: vi: “Why, for instance, publish literal translations of those tiny portions of confessedly second-rate epics that happened to have survived?”

²⁴ We make only brief mention of the immense bibliography that has arisen around Neoanalysis: PESTALOZZI 1945; KAKRIDIS 1949, 1971; KULLMANN 1960; SCHADEWALDT 1965, 1966; SCHOECK 1961. Good summary of this line of argument is provided by WILLCOCK 1997: 174-189.

²⁵ For an overview of the discussion developed around the compatibility between Neoanalysis and Oral Theory, see MONTANARI 2012: 1-10.

²⁶ I borrow the terms “textification” (“the act or process of rendering as text by means of putting into writing”) and “textualisation” (oral text’s fixity) from TSAGALIS 2011: 211. On the fixity of early Greek oral epics, see DOWDEN 1996: 47-61, TSAGALIS 2011: 209-44, and CURRIE 2012: 543-80.

traditions of the Archaic Age.”²⁷ It would, however, be misleading to attribute any connections among the *extant epics* to direct dependence, as the Hellenistic Alexandrian scholars did. The engagement of the Homeric poems with the epic traditions as we have them in the surviving epics, and vice versa, is, though not impossible, unlikely. The fragmentarily extant Cyclic poems are presumably “happenstance recordings” among many other –now irretrievably lost– epics, and so, as has been correctly noted, “[t]he assumption that a few epics influenced one another at an early date in the Archaic Age is anachronistic.”²⁸ In other words, the perceived connections and correspondence between the Homeric poems and the extant Cyclic epics are presumably nothing more than a pseudo-familiarity deriving from the fact that they are both influenced by the same mythological traditions than result of direct influence. It is, therefore, more accurate to speak about *cyclic myth*, i.e., pre-Homeric mythological traditions, which found their way into numerous *cyclic epics* (the term “cyclic” uncapitalised) but ultimately came to crystallise in the *Homeric epics* and the surviving *Cyclic epics* (the term “Cyclic” capitalised), i.e., the specific post-Homeric poems of the Epic Cycle and their oral predecessors.²⁹ As has been rightly argued, “[p]oems of the Epic Cycle are epic versions of cyclic myth; Homeric epic developed a self-conscious extension of cyclic myth and epic.”³⁰ This study aims to explore the dynamics developed between cyclic myth / epic and the Homeric epics. The cyclic mythopoetic traditions, of course, cannot be recovered in their entirety for the reason that most of the cyclic epic narrative has been irreparably lost. Yet, they are still partly retrievable through the Cyclic epics, which, albeit post-Homeric, provide us with “a more comprehensive sense of the mythological range and narrative strategies of the genre”³¹ than the Homeric epics.

Viewed through a Neoanalyst’s lens, Homer put new wine in old wineskins. Drawing upon an epic reservoir, he re-contextualised pre-existing motifs, while many irregularities in the Homeric narrative can be accounted for as limitations

²⁷ See BURGESS 2001: 172, who follows NAGY’s similar assumption about the Homeric epics (1989: 31-38, 1990: 36-47, 1992: 33-52, 1996: 109-11).

²⁸ BURGESS 2009: 4.

²⁹ For the terms “cyclic myth”, “cyclic epic”, “Cyclic epic”, and “Homeric epic”, see BURGESS 2009: 4.

³⁰ BURGESS 2009: 4.

³¹ BURGESS 2005: 344.

“traditionally” imposed on the poet by the motif transference. In other words, the composition of the Homeric epics is perceived as a linear-genetic process. Though it succeeded in casting doubt on the already widespread Homer-centric view of the Epic Cycle, this classic Neoanalytic source-and-recipient model³² focused on the extent to which Homer made use of earlier poetic material about the Trojan War but, failing to embed the Homeric epics into their original performance setting, overlooked the fact that early epic storytelling was a communication process with another key element, the *receiver*. The *receiver* is an audience immersed in the living mythological traditions, so specific “incongruous moments” or “contextual inappropriateness” in the Homeric narrative is presumably “not unskillful composition but rather a trigger toward recognition of another narrative.”³³ As has been rightly argued, the collective knowledge of mythological traditions opened a certain “horizon of expectations”³⁴ for the audience, and so “motif transference would trigger significant recognition of mythological information known collectively by the audience.”³⁵ In the death of Patroclus in the *Iliad*, for example, the use of certain phraseology, incongruous with its Iliadic context, functions as an allusion and foreshadows the scene of Achilles’ death, where such phraseology is more appropriate.³⁶

The motif-transference’s allusive potential implies a type of sophisticated (textless) intertextuality between Homer and the wider epic tradition, in which, over the last few decades, there has been an increasing interest, especially in the intertextual links between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.³⁷ Though in general terms it employs an “intertextual model”, the present study entertains a more theoretical conception of “intertextuality”, as it does not propose arguments that involve specific epic phraseology transferred from one context to another.³⁸ Instead, building

³² For the term “classic Neoanalysis”, see BURGESS 2009: 64.

³³ BURGESS 2009: 66. Cf. SCODEL 2002: 4-5.

³⁴ BURGESS 2009: 69.

³⁵ BURGESS 2009: 69.

³⁶ See, e.g., BURGESS 2009: 64 and SCODEL 2002: 4-5.

³⁷ The bibliography for Homeric intertextuality is massive. See, e.g., PUCCI 1987, TSAGALIS 2008, CURRIE 2012, and BURGESS 2009, 2012.

³⁸ This type of intertextuality (epic quotation) is criticised in BURGESS 2009, but it is re-examined more optimistically in BURGESS 2012: 168-83 (see esp. p. 168 n. 1).

on works which have stressed the significance of the implied mythological traditions in the construction of full meaning in the Homeric epics,³⁹ this thesis explores how Homer, through meta-mythopoetic allusive constructions,⁴⁰ together with the selective engagement with the tradition and the unitary force of the narrative,⁴¹ invites the comparison of his own distinctive conceptualisation of Achilles and Odysseus *with and against* the characterisation of these two heroes in the wider mythopoetic tradition.

Connections and correspondence, of course, between the Homeric epics and the non-Homeric tradition may be intended as well as unintended. For this reason, in order to distinguish specific intertextual gestures from the vast casual or coincidental reflections among poetic traditions, we employ the term “allusion”,⁴² provided that the allusions put forward in this work satisfy certain criteria, that is, they are (1) *obtrusive* (i.e., they “disturb” the consistency in the Iliadic and Odyssean characterisation of Achilles and Odysseus, respectively) and (2) *significant* (i.e., they are sufficiently significant to suggest more than mere coincidental correspondence).⁴³ Allusive significance, as we shall see, can take on several forms: indirect and covert reference, elusive resonance and connotation, subtle mirroring / doubling and comparison, nuanced opposition, conspicuous silence. Of course, the reception of allusive meaning depends much on the capabilities of the individual audience member (knowledgeability and interpretative skills).⁴⁴ As has been rightly

³⁹ See, e.g., SLATKIN 1992, DANEK 1998, TSAGALIS 2008, and BURGESS 2009.

⁴⁰ These allusive constructions are “meta-mythopoetic” in that they rely on the wider mythopoetic tradition in order to produce the full extent of their meaning. BURGESS 2009: 4 and TSAGALIS 2008: xii use the terms “meta-cyclic” and “meta-epic”, respectively.

⁴¹ The expressions “selective engagement” and “unitary force” refer to the Homeric poems’ strategic exclusion of “the themes, the tones, the shades that would obscure or corrupt the fundamental coherence of their poetic effect and significance” (PUCCI 2008: ix).

⁴² Cf. PUCCI 1987: 29 n. 30: “Intertextuality’ [...] imparts a less forceful idea of authorial intentionality and of referentiality than does “allusion.” The problem with “intertextuality” is that in its Barthian meaning it evokes the complete network of references that lies behind all the expressions of a text and consequently points to a utopian research.”

⁴³ Cf. CURRIE 2012: 547-48, 579.

⁴⁴ Many appear to take for granted a very high level of hermeneutic competence on the part of the original audiences; but common sense suggests that in this as in any other cultural system perspectives and skills of individual audience members would vary significantly. For an overview of

noted, “some, rather than inspired to seek out allusion, might have accepted the presented narrative unquestioningly.”⁴⁵

The aim of this thesis is to trace the evolutionary process through which the Iliadic “Achilles” and the Odyssean “Odysseus” acquired their individual character within the Homeric epics by embedding the two poems into their original performance context, which is, as we shall see in CHAPTER ONE, one of constant competition between poets/performers. On the grounds that Greek culture was profoundly agonistic, several scholars accepted early epic competition as fact without further inquiry,⁴⁶ while others raked through the Homeric poems, looking for polemic gestures towards rivals.⁴⁷ In a relatively recent study, however, SCODEL 2004: 1-19 has argued that, though rivalry must have been an important dimension of poetic creation,⁴⁸ the Homeric epics engage with other epic traditions “respectfully rather than competitively” in that “[i]n many passages, the poet almost announces the inferiority of his own subjects relative to others by having his characters admit their inferiority relative to earlier heroes, even though they also see themselves as worthy of epic memory.”⁴⁹ The argument as framed is not fully

the discussion and a similar more moderate approach, see SCODEL 2002: 6-10, who notes (p. 10) that “[t]here is no *a priori* reason to assume that all members of Homer’s audience needed to be sophisticated critics, and the comparative evidence does not support such an assumption, though it certainly suggests that some people may well have been such.”

⁴⁵ BURGESS 2009: 70.

⁴⁶ EDWARDS 1990: 314, for example, argues that “competitiveness was so endemic in Greek life that we would hardly doubt that it existed among epic poets”. Cf. GRIFFITH 1990: 188 and FINKELBERG 2003: 75 (“[T]he *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were intended to supersede the other traditional epics.”).

⁴⁷ For an overview, see SCODEL 2004: 2. More recent examples are BARKER-CHRISTENSEN 2008: 1-30, KELLY 2008: 177-203, and TSAGALIS 2008. In TSAGALIS, see, e.g., pp. 42-43 (“[T]he *Odyssey* is able to emphatically express its qualitative superiority over its epic counterparts. [...] This line of interpretation is in agreement with the high probability that epic singing was competitive.”) and p. 110 (“Achilles and Helen cannot coexist in the *Iliad* because their meeting appears to be linked inseparably with the content and viewpoint of another epic tradition reflected in the post-Homeric *Cypria* one that the monumental composition of the *Iliad* is trying to surpass.” (emphasis added))

⁴⁸ See SCODEL 2004: 2. She bases her argument for the existence of poetic rivalry mainly on the well known proverb of Hesiod, “beggar begrudges beggar, and bard, bard” (*W&D* 26), which will be discussed below, pp. 31-32.

⁴⁹ SCODEL 2004: 1. BURGESS 2009: 58, responding to SCODEL, adds that, if the purpose of the Homeric epics was to surpass other mythological traditions, then this “would have undercut, not

convincing. It suffices, here, to say that the openings of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* lay too much emphasis on the greatness of their themes.⁵⁰ But this study, by repeatedly stressing that the relationship between Homer and the wider epic tradition cannot be reduced to simple model of competition, has successfully drawn attention to the fact that Homer's engagement is much more subtle and much less overt than often assumed. This thesis accepts the more nuanced model offered by SCODEL, yet it suggests that, though the Homeric narrative cannot be explained by naive models of competition, Homer's desire to outperform his rivals is nevertheless reflected in his artistic ambition, manifest –as we shall see in CHAPTERS TWO and THREE– in the highly sophisticated selectivity and unifying force of the Homeric narratives in constructing the idiosyncratic characterisation of Achilles and Odysseus.

Revisiting the agonistic dynamics of early epic poetry, CHAPTER ONE brings into focus the *extra-performative* –or, for the modern reader, *extra-textual*– realities of epic storytelling (i.e., plausible epic performance contexts, poetic itinerancy, and the practice of performance on request) in Proto-Geometric, Geometric, and Early Archaic Greece (c. 1100-650 BC) and points out their implications for competitiveness among singer-poets, what one might call *situational* or *circumstantial poetic rivalry*.⁵¹ The agonistic poetics of oral epic performance in the

maximised, their poetic significance”, as their potential meaning is essentially based on these traditions.

⁵⁰ The *Iliad* proem signals from the start the scale of the devastation caused by the wrath of Achilles (1.2-5), while the *Odyssey* proem places great emphasis on Odysseus' unusual intellectual capacity and on the large scale of his travels and suffering (1.1-4). SCODEL 2004: 4 overstates when she notes that the two proems are “remarkable for their absence of hyperbole.” Her argument is that “[t]he poet in no way suggests that no other hero ever had an anger so devastating, or that no one wandered and suffered as much as Odysseus”, but a hyperbole may also be stated absolutely without using the explicit language of comparison. SCODEL 2004: 4 argues that “Homer is hyperbolic about the magnitude of his subject only in the *recusatio* of the proem of the *Catalogue of Ships* (2.484-93); the number of Achaeans is beyond speech, and the poet will therefore not attempt it.” But there is no reason to tackle this as an exclusive statement.

⁵¹ We choose to focus on this long period, because, although a reassuring consensus has been reached on the dating of the Homeric epics to the latter part of the eighth century –the *Odyssey* perhaps a little later, in the early seventh century– (see above p. 10 together with n. 4), nowadays modern Homeric scholarship unanimously considers the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to be the culmination of a long-standing oral tradition, whose origins can be traced, on the basis of both linguistic and archaeological evidence, back to the late Bronze Age. Hence, strictly speaking, it makes sense to speak about “the

so-called “Age of Homer” (c. 700 BC) and earlier, albeit often thought of as self-evident, has received no systematic attention. It is, of course, true that in the absence of substantial evidence reconstruction of the early epic performance context is difficult and controversial. But it is still an issue that needs to be explored. And we do have evidence, both direct and comparative. Homeric scholarship has traditionally focused on the *creative process of composition* and its *reception* but not on *context*. Context, however, is another key element that early epic storytelling, as a communication process, inescapably includes. So, by trying to comprehend the dynamics of performance context in the Archaic Greece, especially its competitive dimension, we will have a better sense of Homeric composition and reception.

An erotic Achilles or a villainous Odysseus would appear to have nothing to do with Homer. The Iliadic Achilles and the Odyssean Odysseus essentially represent the epitome of martial prowess and ingenious resourcefulness, respectively. One might even say that their overall characterisation is consistent to such an extent that we could substitute the titles “Achilles: the relentless pursuer of heroic honour” and “Odysseus: the resourceful sufferer of unjustified hardship” for the more elliptical headings “Iliad” and “Odyssey”. However, the mythopoetic traditions about Achilles and Odysseus in the Archaic Greece, from which the Homeric epics arguably derived, appear to be manifold and complex. So, what both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* do offer is the perfect distillation of a particular heroic archetype. This poetic distillation is created through a process of refining that includes, of course, concentration primarily on a particular hero but, most importantly, careful narrative selection and exclusion.

CHAPTERS TWO and THREE both shift focus from the *context* of epic storytelling to its *texture*. Pulling together all the surviving evidence from various media (mainly epic but also lyric, drama, and pictorial representations), they explore the narrative dynamics woven within the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and argue that their distinctiveness as individual instantiations of the “Story of Achilles” and the “Story of Odysseus”, respectively, results, in part, from the fact that the broader mythological and epic tradition finds its way into the texture of the Homeric epics through both dialogical *and* competitive interaction. Through a sophisticated and self-reflexive type of

societies in which the epic tradition [is] shaped” (OSBORNE 2004: 206). On the origins of the Greek epic tradition, see DOWDEN 2004: 189-93.

intertextuality, the Homeric epics not only generate continuity with the complexity of the wider mythological and epic tradition about Achilles and Odysseus but also sub-textually repudiate less favourable aspects of their characterisation in that tradition. By drawing attention to Homer's systematic preoccupation with self-reflexive poetic strategy in relation to the cyclic tradition, this thesis develops a critical understanding of the larger synchronic dialogue between the Homeric epics and the cyclic tradition, by implication, of the broad set of synergistic and agonistic dynamics developed between Homer and other obscurer poets. The *context* in which oral performance took place in all likelihood was, as we shall see in the first chapter, a highly competitive performance arena, in which, one might argue, divergent mythological and epic traditions were recreated by ambitious rival singer-poets competing with a view to individual *kleos*. The extent to which each Homeric poem represents an extreme of artistic ambition allows us to argue that the externally imposed poetic rivalry inextricably permeated and thoroughly pervaded performance *per se*, or, to put it differently, that artistic ambition was fuelled and heightened by the competitive circumstances in which early epic storytellers performed.

CHAPTER 1

The Competitive Dynamics of Epic Performance

1.1 Circumstantial / Situational Epic Rivalry

1.1.1 Epic Rivalry and Performance Contexts

The most informative account of the circumstances and nature of an early singer-poet's bardic activity is the description of the performance of Phemius and Demodocus in the *Odyssey*. Any other direct evidence for the early Greek epic performance practice is meagre and almost non-existent. Due to the paucity of external evidence, inevitably we have to interrogate the Homer text itself. This is, of course, potentially misleading. This is creative literature,¹ and, tempted as we might be to regard the performance framework of the Homeric court bard as a reality typical of an early epic singer's professional horizon, caution is necessary. Do the performances of Phemius and Demodocus reflect the real dynamics of oral compositional process as experienced in Geometric Greece (900-700 BC)? Much debate has swirled around the historicity of the Homeric world.² Yet, a compelling case can be made for the view that, though in the *Odyssey* as in any other creative work looking to the past there are elements of fictionalisation, the performance of the Homeric court bard is rooted in Homer's extra-textual reality. But this, of course, would still raise the question whether this is the only performance reality.

A good starting point for reconstructing the spectrum of an early epic-singer's potential performance settings is aristocratic feasts. In the *Odyssey*, Phemius and Demodocus are mainly –but not exclusively, as we shall see below– table-entertainers in the Ithacan and Phaeacian palaces, respectively, and a Hesiodic fragment suggests that it was common for people “in the feast and blooming banquet

¹ This term is not meant to imply the use of writing in the compositional process.

² It has long been observed that Homer's world is a historical amalgam that embodies elements from the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, and the eighth century, the so-called Greek Renaissance. For a comprehensive summary of the larger dispute that has revolved around Homer's affinity with history, see RAAFLAUB 1997: 625-28, who argues that “the social background of Heroic poetry [is] modern enough to be understandable, but archaic enough to be believable” to its listeners. For a relatively recent reinvestigation of Homer's historicity and further bibliography, see OSBORNE 2004: 206-32.

to take pleasure in stories, when they [had] their fill of the feast.”³ Also, Alcinous in the *Odyssey* calls the lyre “the companion of the rich feast” (*Od.* 8.99), and Odysseus claims that “there is no greater fulfillment of delight than when joy possesses a whole people, and banqueters in the halls listen to a minstrel as they sit side by side”, which “seems to [his] mind a thing surpassingly lovely” (*Od.* 9.5-11). In the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* (74-94), to the question from Hesiod, “what is the best thing for mortals?”, Homer replies in the same words that Odysseus uses in the *Odyssey*, with the narrator adding that “when these verses were spoken, they say the lines were so intensely admired by the Greeks that they were dubbed “golden”, and even today everyone invokes them at public sacrifices before the feasting and libations.” (trans. West 2003b: 324-27) Although the historic authenticity of the *Contest* is highly debatable, the narrator’s comment points suggestively to the fact that after-dinner table was –one of– the most common occasions for a bard’s performance. The practice of poetic performance in the after-dinner table of the aristocracy survived in the later tradition of *skolia* and sympotic poetry (not only the usual aristocratic amateur performances but also professional performances by skilled poets invited to perform at elite courts),⁴ as well as in later oral traditions, such as the Teutonic and the Anglo-Saxon,⁵ and bears some similarity to after-dinner table singing that persists in modern Crete and Cyprus, for example. From Crete we know *τα τραγούδια της τάβλας*, “the songs of the table”,⁶ and in Cyprus, in the tradition of the lyric *skolia*, “symposiasts” exchange “capping verses”, the so-called *τσιαττιστά*, in a rather competitive atmosphere after formal lunch or dinner.⁷ Our evidence, therefore, both ancient and comparative, makes after-dinner table one of the most prominent traditional settings for oral performance.

³ Hes., *Melampodeia* fr. 209 Most = fr. 274 M-W: ἐν δαιτὶ καὶ εἰλαπίνῃ τεθαλυῖν / τέρπεσθαι μύθοισιν, ἐπὶ δαιτὸς κορέσονται. Cf. Xenophanes of Colophon fr. 1 (Gerber).

⁴ For *skolia* and early Greek sympotic performance, see COLLINS 2004: 63-163 and WECOWSKI 2014, respectively. On performance upon invitation, see below, pp. 33-37.

⁵ See KIRK 1965: 193.

⁶ See NOTOPOULOS 1964: 16.

⁷ Many derive the Cypriote *τσιαττίζω* from the medieval *τσιριάζω*, “I match”, “I adapt”, which may be accepted given the fact that competitors manipulate (reorder, build up, pun) each other’s contribution to their own profit. However, given the degree of competitiveness that permeates such occasions, *τσιαττίζω* can also be associated with the Turkish *çatışma*, which means “skirmish”.

It is very possible that bardic performance tradition in the after-dinner table of the aristocracy derives from at least the Mycenaean age. The fact that Mycenaean iconography abounds with shapes associated with drinking indicates that social life in Mycenaean times primarily revolved around feasting.⁸ In such a context, the presence of a bard with his lyre, “the companion of the rich feast”, as Alcinous calls it, would presumably be a *sine-qua-non* condition. Mycenaean Greece was organised in nucleated settlements, which operated as close-knit palatial societies with complex administration under powerful monarchs,⁹ so, as has been rightly assumed, “association with heroic achievement, and entertainment at lavish dinners, could magnify the status of a palace-based *wanax*.”¹⁰ Moreover, although our evidence appears to be non-existent, the extent to which the great Mycenaean *megaron* was the centre of the state, the focus of political, economic, and social practice,¹¹ suggests that at least some of the early epic singers were resident performers attached to the palace of the *wanax* as permanent members of his retinue. In addition, of course, to palatial feasts of the powerful Mycenaean *wanax*, aristocratic feasts of the warrior nobility should also be expected to provide an environment conducive to oral performance by (perhaps also resident) singer-poets.¹²

Based on suggestive evidence, we can also reasonably suppose that, even after the collapse of the Mycenaean palatial societies around 1200 BC, bards continued to perform before “kings” and aristocratic audiences. The Greek world, of course, underwent rapid social, political, and economic changes, most of the palaces became villages in ruins, and government of great Mycenaean monarchs devolved into authority being held by minor officials. It is precisely because of the cultural contrast with the Mycenaean Age that the subsequent period from 1100 to 800 BC is often characterised as the “Dark Age”. Archaeological evidence, however, indicates that, notwithstanding the cultural change, “Dark Age” Greece may not have been quite as poor and isolated as often supposed¹³ and that some areas especially in central

⁸ OSBORNE 2004: 208. Cf. WRIGHT 2006: 39-40.

⁹ On the Mycenaean palatial administration, see SHELMEARDINE 2006.

¹⁰ DOWDEN 2004: 191. Cf. NAKASSIS 2012: 1-30.

¹¹ See WRIGHT 2006: 37-41.

¹² On the Mycenaean origins of Greek mythology and epic, see DOWDEN 2004: 190-91.

¹³ Cf. MURRAY 1934: 71ff.; PAGE 1955: 145 (“rude and stagnant poverty”).

Greece continued to thrive.¹⁴ Excavations on Toumba Hill in Lefkandi, for example, have brought to light one of the most exciting archaeological discoveries of recent years, a tenth-century monumental building (situated on the edge of a cemetery), in which there were found elaborate burials of a man and a woman with weapons, jewellery, exotic goods, and the remains of four horses. All these are prestige goods and status symbols which point suggestively to high-standing individuals. As has been observed, the building in Lefkandi “testifies to the ability of someone within that community to command enormous labour resources, as well as the incomparable wealth represented by the grave goods.”¹⁵ Moreover, the imported goods that were found in the Toumba graves and elsewhere (especially in ninth-century graves)¹⁶ suggest that at least some of the communities in the “Dark Age” were particularly wealthy as well as part of a wider exchange network. It is, therefore, a reasonable assumption that high-status individuals could afford to hold large-scale feasts, all the more so since a large number of animal bones is occasionally found around the central hearth (and among long stone benches) in the spacious room of a ruler’s dwelling, which does indicate practice of large feasts.¹⁷ There is, after all, more than suggestive evidence to include –even small-scale– aristocratic feasts into the range of potential performative settings of a bard, supposing that, at least in some areas, the performance of heroic poetry might continue to exist uninterruptedly as a favourite pastime amongst the nobility, from the Late Bronze Age down to the eighth century BC and the rise of the Greek city-state, *polis*. One might reasonably argue, of course, that the resident bard became less common than the itinerant one,¹⁸ since it is doubtful that local chiefs in villages and cities could afford sustaining the

¹⁴ Cf. OSBORNE 2004: 209-10, DOWDEN 2004: 192.

¹⁵ OSBORNE 2004: 210. On the Protogeometric building at Toumba, see also CATLING and LEMOS 1990; POPHAM, CALLIGAS, and SACKETT 1992. It has also been suggested that those buried in the cemetery probably belong to the same kin group (or *oikos*) as the man and the woman inside the building: see LEMOS, I. S. ‘The Protogeometric Building and the Cemetery of Toumba’, *Lefkandi*, 29 September 2014 [<http://lefkandi.classics.ox.ac.uk/Toumba.html>]. For further bibliography on Toumba Hill in Lefkandi, see LEMOS, I. S. ‘Publications’, *Lefkandi*, 29 September 2014 [<http://lefkandi.classics.ox.ac.uk/publications.html>].

¹⁶ See OSBORNE 2004: 209.

¹⁷ Cf. MAZARAKIS-AINIAN 2006: 185.

¹⁸ The practice of poetic itinerancy will be discussed below, pp. 33-46.

permanent residency of bards.¹⁹ But, though the fall of the Mycenaeans may have marked a turning point for the bardic profession, there still remains the most likely possibility that at least some aristocratic quasi-courts among the elite provided semi-permanent or itinerant bards with a potential setting for epic performance and that bards retained a keen interest in the aristocracy, whose larger gifts were presumably always most welcome.

Thus, what the poet of the *Odyssey* describes as a model for poetic performance at an aristocratic court has definitely a kernel of plausibility.²⁰ This is not to say, however, that in the Homeric description of bardic performance either the performance practice or the range of circumstantial performance contexts of early singer-poets is represented faithfully. For, first, in the fictive world of the *Odyssey* the portrait of the singer inevitably involves some degree of idealisation,²¹ and, second, as we shall now see, aristocratic courts is not likely to have been the only setting of the early Greek epic performance practice.

After aristocratic feast, another plausible context for epic performance is poetry contests. The *Iliad* poet shows some awareness of competitive practice, as the legendary poet Thamyris challenges the Muses to a singing contest (*Il.* 2.597-98), but some of the most convincing evidence for poetry competitions comes from Hesiod (*W&D* 654-59), who declares that he won a tripod in a singing contest at the funeral games of Amphidamas at Chalcis (see esp. 656f.: μέ φημι / ὕμῳ νικήσαντα φέρειν τρίποδ' ὠπώντα).²² This in itself proves no more than the availability of the high-status funeral as a venue for competition. But it did not take place in a vacuum; it presupposes other contexts in which those who competed could develop their skills.

It is also very probable that poetic competitions were common at the large religious festivals that were taking hold during the period that the Homeric epics

¹⁹ Cf. KIRK 1965: 193.

²⁰ Later on, this will allow us to gain some insight into aspects of an oral bard's performative nature: see below, pp. 47-64.

²¹ See below, p. 51.

²² According to a variant given in a scholium on *W&D* 657, Hesiod's competitor is Homer: ὕμῳ νικήσαντ' ἐν Χαλκίδι θεῖον Ὅμηρον. See discussion in BASSINO 2013: 12-13, who argues that the later story of the contest between Homer and Hesiod originated from Hesiod, but at a subsequent stage it "influenced and penetrated the textual tradition of *Works and Days*."

were composed and performed, for example, the Delia at Delos in honour of Apollo and the Panionia at Mycale in Ionia in honour of Poseidon.²³ We can gain some insight into what happened at such gatherings from the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, esp. lines 146-50, which Thucydides (3.104.3-4), referring to the Athenians' revival of the Delian festival probably in 426 BC, also quotes (with some variants) as evidence that a festival on Delos existed from earlier times:

ἀλλὰ σὺν Δήλῳ, Φοῖβε, μάλιστ' ἐπιτέρπει ἦτορ,
 ἔνθα τοι ἔλκεχίτωνες Ἴάονες ἠγερέθονται
 αὐτοῖς σὺν παίδεσσι γυναιξίν τε καὶ σὴν ἐς ἄγυιαν·
 οἱ δέ σε πυγμαχίῃ τε καὶ ὀρχηστῷ καὶ ἀοιδῇ
 μνησάμενοι τέρπουσιν, ὅταν καθέσωσιν ἄγῶνα. 150

But it is in Delos, Phoibos, that your heart most delights,
 where the Ionians with trailing robes assemble
 with their children and wives on your avenue,
 and when they have seated the gathering [for games]²⁴ they think of you
 and entertain you with boxing, dancing, and singing.

The Ionians used to gather in honour of Apollo at the god's sanctuary in Delos along with their children and wives (cf. 148), for several days perhaps, as far as we can judge from the wide variety of activities held there. Apart from customary religious rituals, participants were watching athletics and celebrating with music, dance, and poetry (cf. 149). Based on the text (150: ὅταν καθέσωσιν ἄγῶνα), we can also infer that not only athletes and dancers but also the participant poets were competing with each other –perhaps formally, as the religious context suggests– in order to gratify the god.²⁵ That poets were taking part in singing contests is also suggested, as

²³ There is some suggestive evidence to believe that Homer presupposes the two festivals: see *Od.* 6.162 and *Il.* 20.404-5, together with S. WEST 1988 on *Od.* 6.162 and EDWARDS 1991 on *Il.* 20.404-5. Cf. WADE-GERY 1952: 2-6 and TAPLIN 1992: 39-41. Especially for the antiquity of the Delian festival, see RICHARDSON 2010 on *H. Ap.* 146-72.

²⁴ RICHARDSON 2010 on *H. Ap.* 150 rightly suggests that “ἄγών has its basic sense here of a gathering, and especially one for games, as in *Il.* 23.258 etc.”

²⁵ Cf. the pseudo-Hesiodic fr. 297 Most = fr. 357 M-W, according to which Homer and Hesiod sang together in Delos in honour of Apollo. The reference to Delos and Apollo invites us to suppose that the setting was the religious festival of the Delia and that their singing was competitive. We do not have to assume, of course, that the two singers actually competed (for an overview of the discussion

Thucydides (3.104.5) also believes, by the fact that the poet of the hymn asks the maidens of Apollo who their favourite singer is and who they enjoy most, inviting them to declare that his songs will remain supreme afterwards (see ll. 169-73).²⁶ There are, therefore, good grounds to believe that, in addition to funeral games, such as those held in honour of Amphidamas, festival settings, such as the Delia, which were able to assemble large audiences that devoted time to pleasure and relaxation, provided bards with an environment conducive to public (more or less formal) competitions for the pleasure of people who attended.²⁷ And, given the variety of activities in the course of these festivals, one might reasonably argue that singer-poets were more likely to compete with small-scale performances rather than lengthy poems, such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.²⁸

around the origins of this passage, see BASSINO 2013: 14-15), but the incident would still suggest that competition was a natural way to think about epic performance in such religious festivals. One might draw a parallel between these poetic contests and the competitive rhapsodic reperformances of the Homeric epic at religious festivals, such as the Panathenaea, on which see GRAZIOSI 2002: 21-49.

²⁶ The authorship of the *Hymn to Apollo* is a complicated case, as in ancient sources the hymn is usually assigned to Homer but sometimes to a later rhapsode (Cynaethus of Chios, according to a scholiast on Pindar, *Nemean* 2.1). Equally complex is the dating of the hymn, which has been dated variously between the eighth and late sixth centuries. For a relatively recent overview of the discussion revolved around the hymn's author and date, see RICHARDSON 2010: 13-15, who links the poem with the early sixth century but allows for the possibility that it "grew out of an earlier composition in praise of Apollo's birth and his Delian festival" (2010: 15). In the present discussion, however, neither the identity of the historical author nor the date presents a serious problem, since the hymn is used primarily as evidence for the cultural context of early performance poetry (see, also, discussion below, pp. 42-44). As RICHARDSON 2010: 109 on *H. Ap.* 165-76 points out, "if what [the author] says of himself is actually true, then he is our best piece of early evidence for a so-called 'oral' poet."

²⁷ Cf. KIRK 1965: 193-94 and WHITMAN 1958: 77.

²⁸ Cf. WEBSTER 1958: 273-74 and LORD 1960: 153. Although the normal practice for a hymn was to serve as a prelude to an epic song (see RICHARDSON 2010: 2-3 and DOWDEN 2004: 194-95), a prolonged epic performance should not be expected after an extensive prelude like the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (546 lines in total). Cf. KIRK 1965: 193. In this case, the hymn may have expanded from prelude to autonomous composition. Also, if we allow (see below, p. 31 n. 36) that monumental epics, such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, were not the rule, then we do not have to suppose, as TAPLIN 1992: 40, that Homer performed only "at non-competitive or pre-competitive festivals, or festivals where athletics were competitive but poetry and music were not."

Apart from religious or funeral settings and after-table aristocratic feasts, epic performances must have also been very popular among the common people. Comparative study of oral (both heroic and non-heroic) poetry in modern societies is able to show two things, first, that public poetic presentations often take place when people occasionally gather in the course of everyday community life, mostly in the market, houses, or even pubs,²⁹ and, second, that open presentations often take the form of public competition.³⁰ Such less formal, but often competitive, public settings, which would be suitable for small-scale oral presentations, given the heterogeneous and unstable composition of popular audiences,³¹ perhaps provided, too, one of the most plausible opportunities for early epic performance.³² Our earliest evidence that early oral performance was open to popular audiences comes from the *Odyssey*, where Demodocus performs publicly in the agora the “Song of Ares and Aphrodite” (see *Od.* 8.109: βὰν δ’ ἴμεν εἰς ἀγορῆν; cf. *Od.* 8.266ff.), but one might also suggest that early public performance still reverberates in the singer-poet’s popular affiliations.³³ First of all, Demodocus is said to be *laoîsi tetiménos*, “honoured by the people”, by implication, “the people’s favourite” (*Od.* 8.472), which is also implied in his very name. Δημόδοκος “is (well-)received / accepted (*dékhomai*) by the people / the community (the *dêmos*)”, in which he presumably wanders (see discussion below). It is, after all, not surprising that Eumaeus includes singer-poets in the class of the *dēmioergoí* (*Od.* 17.383ff.), “those who work for the

²⁹ See FINNEGAN 1977: 229: “This sort of occasion occurs all over the world, from the ‘singing pubs’ or fireside literary circles of Ireland [...] to home gatherings in the Yugoslav countryside where men come from the various families around to hear an epic singer perform, or the coffee houses in Yugoslav towns where the minstrel must please his audience with exciting and well-sung heroic tales so as to reap reward from listeners who have come into town for the market [...]”

³⁰ See FINNEGAN 1977: 157-58: “[T]here is (...) the not uncommon situation where oral poems are delivered in the context of a public duel or competition. (...) [For example,] two hostile singers work off grudges and disputes (...) through both traditional and specially composed songs which ridicule their opponents. (...) The same goes for the widely held poetic competition where emphasis is (in varying degrees) on display and poetic accomplishment ...” Cf. CHADWICKS and ZHIRMUNSKY 1969: 329.

³¹ A comparative study suggests that “[t]he singer has to content with an audience that is coming and going, greeting newcomers, saying farewells to early leavers; a newcomer with special news or gossip may interrupt the singing for some time, perhaps even stopping it entirely.” (LORD 1960: 14)

³² Cf. KIRK 1965: 195, WHITMAN 1958: 77, and SCHADEWALDT 1942.

³³ Cf. MURRAY 1983: 9, SCHADEWALDT 1965: 67-68, and KIRK 1965: 195-96.

community". Singer-poets, like other practitioners of some public art, are connected with the community as a whole.³⁴

Our evidence so far suggests that small-scale epic performance took place in diverse gatherings, both private and public.³⁵ It is, as we have seen, probable that, apart from royal and aristocratic courts, other potential settings also belong to the wide range of an early singer-poet's performance occasions, for example, festival and funeral gatherings, which foster (perhaps institutionalised) poetic competitions, as well as perhaps less formal often competitive public settings, such as, the agora.³⁶ An open market of this sort and a singer-poet's occasional opportunity in any or all of these settings would arguably create scope for vigorous rivalry among peers. In the *Contest*, Homer competes with Hesiod, and, according to Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 1.131.6), Arctinus competed with Lesches:³⁷ διημιλλῆσθαι δὲ τὸν Λέσχην Ἀρκτίῳ καὶ νενικηκέναι.³⁸ Even if we cannot take the two incidents too literally, these testimonies do bespeak the embeddedness of competition in the performative tradition.³⁹ Some evidence suggestive of early inter-peer competitiveness comes from Hesiod.

The admonition of Hesiod to Perses in the *Works and Days* begins with a description of the two types of Eris (Strife), the bad and the good (*W&D* 11-26). The bad Eris emanates from the immortals and is cruel, because it nurtures evil war and

³⁴ On singer-poets as *dēmioergoi*, see discussion below, pp. 33-34.

³⁵ Cf. the variety of occasion for the performance of South Slavic poetry, on which see LORD 1960: 14-16.

³⁶ None of these three types of small scale epic performance could under ordinary conditions be eligible for Homer's own performative setting towards the composition of the monumental *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. One of the most popular assumptions about the Homeric epics is that, in order to be fully appreciated and understood, they should be performed and perceived by the poet and his audience, respectively, in their entirety and in an uninterrupted presentation (see, e.g., WEBSTER 1958: 268), and it has often been reasonably argued that the minimum time requirement for the performance of the *Iliad* is three days and for the *Odyssey* two days (see, e.g., TAPLIN 1992: 40 and NOTOPOULOS 1964: 12-13). Homer, however, might well have performed occasionally in each and every setting. We do not need to suppose that he always and only recited monumental poems or these monumental poems, as he had to learn his trade somehow.

³⁷ Arctinus and Lesches were both early Greek epic poets, who composed the *Little Iliad* and the *Sack of Troy*, respectively. On the authorship and date of the Cyclic epics, see pp. 10-11 n. 9 above.

³⁸ Cf. the musical contests between Apollo and Pan, Marsyas, and Cinyras.

³⁹ See pp. 28-29 n. 25 above.

conflict. Hence, it is undesirable and blameworthy. The good Eris, by contrast, is praiseworthy, because (*W&D* 19-26):

ἀνδράσι πολλὸν ἀμείνω·
ἢ τε καὶ ἀπάλαμόν περ ὁμῶς ἐπὶ ἔργον ἔγειρεν. 20
εἰς ἕτερον γάρ τις τε ἰδὼν ἔργοιο χατίζων
πλούσιον, ὃς σπεύδει μὲν ἀρώμεναι ἠδὲ φυτεύειν
οἶκόν τ' εὖ θέσθαι, ζηλοῖ δέ τε γείτονα γείτων
εἰς ἄφενος σπεύδοντ'· ἀγαθὴ δ' Ἔρις ἦδε βροτοῖσιν.
καὶ κεραμεὺς κεραμεῖ κοτέει καὶ τέκτωνι τέκτων, 25
καὶ πτωχὸς πτωχῷ φθονέει καὶ ἀοιδὸς ἀοιδῷ.

it is much better for men.
It rouses even the helpless man to work.
For a man who is not working but who looks at some other man,
a rich one who is hastening to plow and plant and set his
house in order, he envies him, one neighbour who is
hastening towards wealth: and this Strife is good for mortals.
And potter is angry with potter, and builder with builder, and
beggar begrudges beggar, and poet poet.

The good competition among men, Hesiod argues, is wholesome (24: ἀγαθή), as it functions as a catalyst for self-evaluation, self-change, and self-improvement. In other words, the good Eris can be understood as an individual's desire, effort, and ambition, to equal or even surpass others. The poor man who emulates another rich man is, according to Hesiod, a case in point (21-24). What is more important for our investigation, however, is that Hesiod detects good competition among individuals in the same profession, including poets among those professionals who, in what is presented as the norm (note the generalising and didactic tone of the passage), contend with each other for the same market (25-26). Hesiod's account, in other words, becomes our earliest testimony for legitimate professional rivalry among early singer-poets. Therefore, all the evidence so far gathered points suggestively to the conclusion that early epic singer-poets perform in an environment that encourages competition between peers, either explicitly or implicitly.

1.1.2 Epic Rivalry and Poetic Itinerancy

Poetic Itinerancy and Performance on Request

The suggestive evidence we have gleaned so far regarding the diversity of private and public settings in which early Greek epic performance takes place agrees with our next assumption that early epic singers, including the poet(s) of the Homeric epics, are itinerant performers, who have occasional opportunities in any or all of these gatherings. In later sources, such as the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* and the pseudo-Herodotean *Life of Homer*, both Homer and Hesiod are depicted as travelling poets.¹ Although one might argue that in many ways the stories preserved in these sources abhor the vacuum,² the portrayal of Homer and Hesiod as wandering bards is not merely a retrojection of later practice into early epic, as evidence from their work suggests that they are, in fact, well aware of the practice of itinerancy. According to the *Iliad* (2.594-96), Thamyris, the Thracian singer, met the Muses at Dorium, as he was journeying from Oechalia, from the house of Eurytos. Also, as we have seen, Hesiod travelled from Aulis to Euboea to participate in funeral celebrations for Amphidamas, a noble of Chalcis (*W&D* 650-55). Another example, of course, is the poet of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, who promises the maidens of the god at Delos diffusion of their *kleos*, “reputation”, wherever he travels among well-ordered cities of men (*H. Ap.* 174-75). Our most convincing evidence, however, that early Greek singer-poets are mobile professional performers who actively seek opportunities in a variety of settings comes from the *Odyssey*.

As we have seen above, Hesiod distinguishes between bad and good competition and detects the existence of the latter among the members of several groups, such as potters, builders, beggars, and singer-poets. In doing so, he implies that singer-poets are practitioners who form a distinct professional group. The place of this group within the society can be inferred from *Od.* 17.382-87, where the swineherd Eumaeus gives an account of the class of the *dēmioergoi*:

τίς γὰρ δὴ ξεῖνον καλεῖ ἄλλοθεν αὐτὸς ἐπελθὼν
ἄλλον γ', εἰ μὴ τῶν οἱ δημοεργοὶ ἔασι,
μάντιν ἢ ἰητῆρα κακῶν ἢ τέκτονα δούρων,

¹ See BASSINO 2013: 152-53 on *Contest* 56.

² See HUNTER and RUTHERFORD 2009: 7.

ἢ καὶ θέσπιν ἀοιδόν, ὃ κεν τέρπησιν ἀείδων; 385
οὔτοι γὰρ κλητοὶ γε βροτῶν ἐπ’ ἀπείρονα γαῖαν·
πτωχὸν δ’ οὐκ ἄν τις καλέοι τρύζοντα ἔαυτόν.

Who, pray, of himself ever seeks out and invites a stranger from abroad,
unless it is one of those that are masters of some public craft,
a prophet, or a healer of ills, or a carpenter,
or perhaps a divine minstrel, who gives delight with his song?
For these men are invited all over the boundless earth.
Yet a beggar would no man invite to be a burden to himself.

When Odysseus arrives at his palace in the guise of a beggar, and the suitors wonder who he is and where he has come from, Melanthius, the evil goatherd, maliciously tells them that it was Eumaeus who invited the stranger in the palace, thus instigating the suitor Antinous against the swineherd (*Od.* 17.367-79). It is at this moment that Eumaeus defends himself by reminding the suitors that no one would invite a stranger / beggar (382 and 387) in the palace, unless the guest was a *dēmioergós*, that is, a prophet, a healer, a craftsman, or a singer-poet. So, based on this passage, we can infer that singer-poets, along with other practitioners of a recognised skill, form the social class of the *dēmioergoí*, that is, professionals who do “work(s) for/among the people” (*démia érga*), by implication, public –in the sense of itinerant–practitioners.³ Unlike beggars (387), as Eumaeus clearly points out, the *dēmioergoí* are *klētoí* (386), namely, they are likely to be invited from abroad as guests (cf. 382: ξεῖνον καλεῖ ἄλλοθεν). This *klētoí* is what alerts us to the most immediate implication that singer-poets are not domestic servants in a palace but mobile professionals, that is, specialists, who are invited and whose services are engaged on occasional or semi-permanent basis.

The movement of poets from one place to another, deeply-rooted in the Near Eastern societies,⁴ is a phenomenon that traverses Greek antiquity markedly. Only recently, however, has poetic mobility become the focus of serious research,⁵ from which it has emerged that travelling perhaps after an invitation, issued either by a powerful ruler or city, is one of the commonest forms of poetic itinerancy throughout

³ Cf. *Od.* 19.135, where Penelope also refers to the *dēmioergoí* invited in the palace.

⁴ See BACHVAROVA 2009: 23-45.

⁵ See HUNTER and RUTHERFORD 2009. Cf. MONTIGLIO 2005, SCHLESIER and ZELLMANN 2004, and GENTILI 1985: 155-78.

antiquity, from the seventh-century poet Thaletas, through Anacreon, Simonides of Ceos, Aeschylus, Pindar, Bacchylides, and Euripides, down to Aratus.⁶ So, what Eumaeus implies about invited poetic performance merely epitomises a critical and persistent aspect of ancient culture, while, as we shall now see, Demodocus and Phemius, the two Odyssean singer-poets, essentially typify itinerant performers.

Alcinous sends for (invites) Demodocus in order to participate in the feast that the king is preparing in honour of Odysseus (*Od.* 8.43-45 and 8.62):

“[...] καλέσασθε δὲ θεῖον ἀοιδόν,
 Δημόδοκον· τῷ γάρ ῥα θεὸς πέρι δῶκεν ἀοιδὴν
 τέρπειν, ὅππῃ θυμὸς ἐποτρύνῃσιν ἀεΐδειν.” 45
 [...] 62
 κῆρυξ δ’ ἐγγύθεν ἦλθεν ἄγων ἐρίηρον ἀοιδόν.

“[...] And summon the divine minstrel,
 Demodocus; for to him above all others has the god granted skill in
 song, / to give delight in whatever way his spirit prompts him to sing.”
 [...] 62
 Then the herald approached leading the good minstrel.

Demodocus is not invited to the palace of Alcinous to perform from abroad as a guest, but a herald summons him from somewhere within Alcinous’ kingdom, throughout which he presumably performs as a wandering singer-poet. It is obvious that Demodocus enjoys a good reputation in the palace. Alcinous sends specifically for Demodocus, as he has already experienced his divinely inspired performance (44-45), which clearly suggests that this particular singer-poet has been invited in the palace on a regular basis. Although the singer-poet does not live in, he seems to be semi-permanently attached to, the palace; if not a semi-permanent member of the king’s retinue, he is surely the king’s first preference, that is, the singer-poet most frequently invited and called to the palace. As a singer-poet, however, who belongs to the special class of the *dēmioergoí*, the mobile professionals that do works for / among the people, Demodocus should be expected to perform in both private and public settings, which is confirmed by the fact that one of his three episodic performances in Book 8 takes place publicly in the agora (cf. *Od.* 8.109ff. and 266-

⁶ See HUNTER and RUTHERFORD 2009: 11-13.

supposition, it is also quite logical to assume that, in a primarily oral culture (until the eighth-seventh centuries BC, at least), the practice of poetic itinerancy is the *sine qua non* medium for poetry dissemination and, subsequently, for lore transmission and presumably also constitutes the essential means whereby early singer-poets display their composition and performance skills and value, acquire personal fame and recognition,⁹ and ultimately earn their livelihood. In this light, therefore, poetic itinerancy appears to be a prominent feature of early Greek epic performance, but the implications that it has for competitive play among bards have so far received no systematic attention.

Poetic Itinerancy and Bard's Individual Kleos

Epic poetry often places emphasis on a poet's dependence on the divine, the Muses, as his ultimate source of knowledge. The *locus classicus* is the famous opening of the *Catalogue of Ships* in *Il.* 2.484-93,¹⁰ where it is said that the Muses, who are omniscient themselves,¹¹ provide the ignorant poet with access to knowledge whatsoever (see esp. *Il.* 2.485-86: ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαί ἐστε πάρεστε τε ἴστε τε πάντα, / ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν).¹² Very much in the same vein, the beginning and the ending of the *Odyssey* proem are defined by a twofold invocation of the Muse (*Od.* 1.1-10):

ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ
 πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσεν·
 [...] 10
 τῶν ἀμόθεν γε, θεά, θύγατερ Διός, εἰπὲ καὶ ἡμῖν.

Tell me, Muse, of the man of many devices, driven far astray after he
 had sacked the sacred citadel of Troy.
 [...] 10
 Of these things, goddess, daughter of Zeus, tell us in our turn.

⁹ Cf. THALMANN 1984: 132; MONTIGLIO 2005: 98-99; HUNTER and RUTHERFORD 2009: 7.

¹⁰ Cf. *Il.* 11.218, 14.508, and 16.112.

¹¹ The Muses are the daughters of Memory in Hes., *Th.* 54. Note the verb *mi-mnē-skō* ("I remind") in *Il.* 2.492.

¹² On this function of the Muses, see NAGY 1999: 17 (Ch. 1, §3, together with nn. 1-2).

In the first line, the poet says μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, “tell me, Muse”, whereas in line 10 he says εἰπέ καὶ ἡμῖν, “tell us too”, asking the Muse in a straightforward manner to communicate knowledge to him, by implication, to his audience.¹³ On the face of it, the phrase εἰπέ καὶ ἡμῖν means “tell us, Muse, as you yourself know it”, i.e., “Muse, share your knowledge with us”, as, normally, sharing of knowledge transpires between the Muse *and* all her “hearers”, the poet as her immediate perceiver and intermediary and the latter’s audience as her ultimate receiver.¹⁴ In this sense, the *Odyssey* poet asks the Muse to sing to him and to his audience the woeful return of Odysseus from Troy in what looks like a standardised opening.

The καί in the phrase εἰπέ καὶ ἡμῖν has often been considered by commentators, both ancient and modern, to be superfluous.¹⁵ However, it is not at all uncommon for the Homeric diction to combine καί (not as a copulative conjunction but as an emphasising particle) and a pronoun (either personal or intensive) in a manner that invites comparison of this pronoun with an implied “others”.¹⁶ In *Il.* 3.439-40, for example, Paris says to Helen that Menelaus has beaten him with Athena’s aid, but another time he will beat him, for πάρα (...) θεοὶ εἰσι καὶ ἡμῖν, “on *our* side too [i.e.,

¹³ The plural pronoun ἡμῖν in line 10 is open enough to suppose that it refers both to the poet and to his audience. For the most detailed discussion on the singular and plural sense of ἡμεῖς and ἡμέτερος in Homer, see FLOYD 1969: 116-37, esp. pp. 135-36, who argues that ἡμῖν in *Od.* 1.10 refers to “the poet and the audience together” and that, apart from *Od.* 16.44-45 and 2.60-62, “all other first person plural forms have a properly plural sense.” S. WEST 1988, STANFORD 1947, and VAN LEEUWEN 1912-17 *ad loc.*, as well as CHANTRAINE 1963: 34, all take ἡμῖν in its plural sense. Contrast Ps.-Plut., *De Hom.* 56 (KEANY and LAMBERTON 1996: 124-25).

¹⁴ See Σ *Od.* 1.10: (a) ὧν σὺ οἶδας, ἵνα καὶ ἡμεῖς γνῶμεν. (Dindorf), (b) ὡς σὺ οἶδας, ἵνα καὶ ἡμεῖς γνῶμεν. (Pontani), (c) οἱ μὲν ἀπολύτως περισσὸν ἡγοῦνται τὸν “καί”, οἱ δὲ πρὸς τὴν Μοῦσαν ἀντιδιαστέλλουσιν, “ἃ σὺ οἶσθα ὃ Μοῦσα καὶ ἡμῖν εἰπέ”. ἢ καὶ ὡς γεγονότων πρὸ αὐτοῦ ποιητῶν τινῶν, οἳ δι’ Ὀμηρον ἄσημοι γεγόνασιν. (Pontani). Cf. DAWE 1993 and S. WEST 1988 on *Od.* 1.10.

¹⁵ See Σ *Od.* 1.10 (see n. 14(c) above); Eustathius *ad loc.*: τὸ δὲ καὶ ἡμῖν, ἢ παρέλκον ἔχει τὸ καὶ καθὰ πολλαχοῦ γίνεται, ἢ διὰ τὸ μέλλον εἴρηται. ὡς εἰκὸς ὄν, πολλοὺς μεθ’ Ὀμηρον ἐγχειρήσειν τοιοῦτῳ ἔργῳ. ἴσως δὲ καὶ διὰ τὸ παρωχημένον, εἴ τις ἀναπολεῖ τὴν προεκτεθειμένην ἱστορίαν, ὅτι δηλαδὴ Αἰγυπτόθεν ἢ λαβὴ τῆς ποιήσεως τῷ Ὀμήρῳ ὡς πρὸ ὀλίγου ἐγράφη. ἵνα λέγη ὅτι ὡς ἑτέροις φθάσασα εἴπας, εἰπέ καὶ ἡμῖν; schol. on Theocritus 4.54: ἅδε καὶ αὐτά: περισσὸς ὁ καί, ὡς περ καὶ παρ’ Ὀμήρῳ (*Od.* 1.10). See, also, AMEIS 1865 *ad loc.* (toneless “also”). Cf. Σ *Od.* 1.33 (Dindorf).

¹⁶ See MONRO 1891: 300, §330.2.

as on the Greek side] there are gods.”¹⁷ Hence, it is also possible that the phrase εἰπὲ καὶ ἡμῖν in *Od.* 1.10 means “tell us, Muse, *as you have told others*”, i.e., “tell us, Muse, *in our turn*”, and thus bears some analogy with what Odysseus says to the isolated Phaeacians in *Od.* 9.16-17: νῦν δ’ ὄνομα πρῶτον μυθήσομαι, ὄφρα καὶ ὑμεῖς / εἴδεται[ε] (“First now will I tell my name, that you all also may know of it.”). In this case, it is evident that ὄφρα καὶ ὑμεῖς εἴδεται[ε] evokes those “others” who indeed have heard of Odysseus, since the hero immediately afterwards declares that εἴμ’ Ὀδυσσεὺς Λαερτιάδης, ὃς πᾶσι δόλοισιν / ἀνθρώποισι μέλω, καί μευ κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει (*Od.* 9.19-20: “I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, known to all men for my stratagems, and my fame reaches the heavens.”). There is, therefore, good reason to believe that, through εἰπὲ καὶ ἡμῖν in *Od.* 1.10, the *Odyssey* poet not only asks the Muse to sing to him the return of Odysseus, just as we expect in a standardised epic prelude, but also glances at an implied “others”; in context this must by implication suggest preceding or contemporary poets and their audiences, summoning up implicitly the whole of pre-Homeric or contemporary epic treatments of “the return of Odysseus”.¹⁸

If the supposition above is correct, then two important implications can be derived from the *Odyssey* proem. The first is the poet’s programmatic concession that his poem will be –in terms of content– similar to the work of other poets, for he is about to sing relying, as other poets do, on past knowledge about “the return of Odysseus”, which is made available to him through the agency of the Muses. The poet essentially says that “what you are about to hear is not a poem *ex nihilo* but a poem based on knowledge that has already found its particular way into the texture of different poems.” In a society where tradition conveys authority, it is important that the essential tale is not new.¹⁹ The second important implication is that the *Odyssey*

¹⁷ Cf. *Il.* 8.31-32, 8.142-43, 8.463, 11.527-28, 13.84, 18.88-90, 23.457-58, and 24.239-40; *Od.* 7.305-7, 8.174-77, 8.244-45, 21.305-6, and 24.28-29.

¹⁸ See Σ *Od.* 1.10 (see n. 14(c) above) and Eustathius *ad loc.* (see n. 15 above). Cf., also, STANFORD 1947, VAN LEEUWEN 1912-17, MERRY 1899, MERRY-LIDDEL 1886, and AMEIS-HENTZE 1884, *ad loc.* Contrast DAWE 1993 and S. WEST 1988 *ad loc.*, who reject the view that καὶ ἡμῖν implies other poets who have also sung of the story of Odysseus.

¹⁹ Similarly, the Serbo-Croatian poets tend to stress that they sing the song exactly as they heard it. They cannot mean that in the literal sense, but to them, as LORD 1960: 28 notes, “‘word for word and line for line’ are simply an emphatic way of saying ‘like’.” The singer’s insistence on the fact of

poet draws attention to the fact that, though not unique, he is an individual composer-performer. The merging of this instantiation of the story with others evidently does not project him as a uniquely inspired individual genius in the manner of later archaic lyric. To put it differently, since the poet admits that, in order to sing his story, he relies on collective knowledge shared by many poets, the notion of uniqueness of the *persona loquens* is questionable. The insistence on *this* moment through εἰπὲ καὶ ἡμῖν primarily draws attention to the fact that this is the latest instantiation of a unique story. The subtle insistence, however, on *this* poet and on *this* audience through, as we have seen, an indirect reference to other poets and audiences points suggestively to *this* individual singer as *one* out of (presumably many) other poets who ever sang the same (or a similar) song for Odysseus, which, in turn, demarcates, albeit sub-textually, *this* singer's personal identity. After all, the phrase εἰπὲ καὶ ἡμῖν foregrounds not merely the uniqueness of the story being told but also an early singer-poet's own poetic activity within oral song tradition.

For much of the last century, the most common way to think about the early Greek epic singer-poets was to regard them as anonymous. This was mainly for two reasons. First, because before the seventh century BC nothing or little was handed down to next generations except by word of mouth; there were songs but no names were preserved, as, before Homer and Hesiod, we are told the names only of mythical singers, for example, Linus and Thamyris. Second, because much of the subject matter of oral poetry bears a similarity to the romantic idea of *Volkgeist*, that is, the total amount of poetic conceptions, beliefs and ideas, about mankind, for example, gods, war, and peace, which are possessed collectively by, and spread anonymously among, the members of a specific culture. Yet, as has been pointed out, “when the oral poetry reaches a certain kind of sophistication (that means a plot focusing on a chain of events tied together by a unity of characters, time and place), the conception of *Volkgeist* has to be abandoned and we have to think of individual poets.”²⁰ And, in fact, a comparative investigation of oral poetry is able to corroborate this assumption. FINNEGAN 1977: 201-2 observes that:

exactness foregrounds his role as “the defender of the historic truth of what is being sung; for if the singer changes what he has heard in its essence, he falsifies truth. It is not the artist but the historian who speaks at this moment.” (LORD 1960: 28).

²⁰ VISSER 2006: 429.

[w]here oral poetry involves simultaneous performance and composition –as it often does– it is clearly *not* all produced anonymously and ‘communally’. The poet, the author of the poem at that particular performance, is, by definition, a known individual, enunciating his poem in his own person before an audience. [...] In cases when the author *is* apparently unknown, this is sometimes a mere function of *our* ignorance (rather than that of the people themselves) or of the theoretical assumptions of researchers who felt it inappropriate with oral art to enquire about the names of the poets.²¹

So, the apparently “anonymous” author is, in fact, an individual that is *known* in his *own* communicative setting, and this is true particularly when oral performance involves creative composition and poetic sophistication. These observations serve to remind us that, although it is only in the late archaic period that the concept of individual ownership of specific texts starts to come to the fore,²² we should not think of early epic singers as anonymous in *their* cultural context, as they inevitably are to us. On the contrary, an early Greek epic singer is presumably a known individual with a personal claim to fame, reputation for superlative composition and performance. The example of Demodocus, who in the *Odyssey* is commemorated as individual and lionised as a legend of poetic competence, is very suggestive.

Demodocus, as we have seen, is summoned (i.e., invited) to the palace of Alcinous, where, at the beginning, he performs the “Conflict between Achilles and Odysseus” (*Od.* 8.73-75), and, later on, he sings the “Song of Ares and Aphrodite” publicly in the agora in the presence of Alcinous (*Od.* 8.254-55). When they return to the palace, Odysseus praises the singer-poet for his ability to sing *katà kósmōn*, “properly” (*Od.* 8.489),²³ and “re-invites” him to sing the “Story of the Wooden Horse” (*Od.* 8.492-98):

ἀλλ’ ἄγε δὴ μετάβηθι καὶ ἵππου κόσμον ἄεισον
 δουρατέου, τὸν Ἐπειὸς ἐποίησεν σὺν Ἀθήνῃ,
 ὃν ποτ’ ἐξ ἀκρόπολιν δόλον ἤγαγε δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
 ἀνδρῶν ἐμπλήσας οἳ ῥ’ Ἴλιον ἐξάλαπαξαν. 495
 αἶ κεν δὴ μοι ταῦτα κατὰ μοῖραν καταλέξῃς,

²¹ Cf. LORD 1960: 101.

²² On the emergence of poetic individuality in the archaic period, see GOLDHILL 1991: Ch. 2, esp. 108-166 and FOWLER 2004: 226-27.

²³ On the meaning of the phrase *katà kósmōn*, see discussion below, pp. 49-50.

αὐτίκα ἐγὼ πᾶσιν μυθήσομαι ἀνθρώποισιν,
ὥς ἄρα τοι πρόφρων θεὸς ὤπασε θέσπιν ἁοιδῆν.

But come now, change your theme, and sing of the building
of the horse of wood, which Epeius made with Athene's help,
the horse which once Odysseus led up into the citadel as a thing of
guile, / when he had filled it with the men who sacked Ilium.
If you indeed tell me this take rightly,
I will declare to all mankind
that the god has with a ready heart granted you the gift of divine song.

Odysseus promises that he will disseminate the fame of Demodocus (497) as long as the singer-poet sings the “Story of the Wooden Horse” *katà moîran* (496), literally “in due measure”, by implication, “as it should have been done”.²⁴ In other words, Demodocus is promised dissemination of his reputation upon a new *appropriate* performance, which reinforces the idea that a singer-poet can build, develop, and establish his *personal reputation*.²⁵ Therefore, the most important implication in this passage is that, in his own performative context, Demodocus is a known individual, who can also achieve legendary fame among the generations to come over his superlative and divinely-inspired poetic competence. Useful parallels would be the legendary Serbo-Croatian *guslar* Cor Huso²⁶ or performers of music hall in the United Kingdom or vaudeville in the United States in the age before film and television, when both contemporaries and subsequent generations could attest their fame, but only their contemporaries would have experienced the performance.

The poet of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*²⁷ likewise presents himself as an acknowledged individual with a claim to territorially wide-spread reputation and perpetuity (*H. Ap.* 166-75):

ἐμεῖο δὲ καὶ μετόπισθεν
μνήσασθ', ὅπποτε κέν τις ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων

²⁴ Cf. *Il.* 1.286, 9.59, 15.206, 16.367, 19.256; *Od.* 2.251, 3.331, 3.457, 8.496, 15.170, 17.580. See, also, *Il.* 19.186 and *Od.* 22.54. Contrast *parà moîran* in *Od.* 14.509, which means “unduly”. The prepositional expression *katà moîran* (8.496) has essentially the same meaning as *katà kósmōn* in *Od.* 8.489, on which see discussion below, pp. 49-50.

²⁵ Songs, of course, can also have their own *kleos* (renown). See, e.g., *Od.* 1.351, 8.74.

²⁶ See LORD 1960: 19.

²⁷ On the hymn's authorship and date, see above, p. 29 n. 26.

ἐνθάδ' ἀνείρηται ξεῖνος ταλαπεῖριος ἐλθών·
 “ὦ κοῦραι, τίς δ' ὑμῖν ἀνὴρ ἠδιστος ἀοιδῶν
 ἐνθάδε πωλεῖται, καὶ τέφ' ἔρπεσθε μάλιστα;” 170
 ὑμεῖς δ' εὖ μάλα πᾶσαι ὑποκρίνασθαι ἀφήμως·
 “τυφλὸς ἀνὴρ, οἰκεῖ δὲ Χίῳ ἔνι παιπαλοέσση
 τοῦ πᾶσαι μετόπισθεν ἀριστεύουσιν ἀοιδαί.”
 ἡμεῖς δ' ὑμέτερον κλέος οἴσομεν, ὅσσον ἐπ' αἶαν
 ἀνθρώπων στρεφόμεσθα πόλεις εὖ ναιεταώσας. 175

Think of me in future,
 if ever some long-suffering
 stranger comes here and asks,
 “O Maidens, which is your favourite singer
 who visits here, and who do you enjoy most?”
 Then you must all answer with one voice,
 “It is a blind man, and he lives in rocky Chios;
 all of his songs remain supreme afterwards.”
 And we will carry your reputation wherever we go
 as we roam the well-ordered cities of men.

Even if *H. Ap.* 146-50 did not suggest, as we have seen, that the poet performs his poetry in a more or less formal competition-setting context,²⁸ still there would seem to be very little doubt that he expects his performance to be evaluated through comparison with the public presentation of other fellow singer-poets who are present at the Delian festival. The poet asks the Maidens of Apollo to commemorate him (166-67) and to designate him to the generations to come as the sweetest and their most favourite singer (169-70), whose songs will remain evermore the greatest (173: μετόπισθεν ἀριστεύουσιν).²⁹

The fact that the poet uses the traditional diction of hexameter poetry to describe the supremacy of his poetry perhaps has its own significance. He prompts the maidens to say that his songs “will remain supreme”, *metó pisthen aristeúousin*, using the verb *aristeúein*, which in heroic poetry is primarily employed, together with the adjective *áristos*, to denote heroic preeminence. This *sphragis* functions as a mechanism of self-characterisation, whereby the poet himself, in invoking the

²⁸ See above, p. 28.

²⁹ RICHARDSON 2010 on *H. Ap.* 173 notes that “[t]he present tense with μετόπισθεν seems illogical, but what [the poet] is claiming is presumably that his songs are now the best, and will continue to be in future.”

collective and authoritative voice of the tradition, essentially puts his name down for a championship competition.

The poet's request to the Maidens of the god can be seen as a plea for victory in the present context. At the same time, however, the poet is an individual with a strong personal claim to eternal fame, as it is clear that he tells the Maidens what to utter with an eye to his future reputation (note the use of *metó pisthen* in ll. 166 and 173, *mnésasth[e]* in l. 167 and the potential Optative of *kén ... aneirētai* in ll. 167-68). As has been rightly pointed out, “[h]e claims to be the sweetest and best of singers, not only now, but in time to come [...], a grand boast indeed.”³⁰ In fact, his preoccupation with his post-performance reputation evokes a hero's relentless preoccupation with future reputation and unfailing interest in what the others will say about him. Like the poet, the maidens of Apollo are, too, skilful performers of poetry (cf. *H. Ap.* 158-64), and the poet assures them that the *kleos* (renown) of their unique poetic competence shall never perish (cf. *H. Ap.* 156: ὄου κλέος οὔ ποτ' ὀλεῖται), while his own contribution is that he promises to carry it as far as he roams among all men he travels (174-75). So, both the poet of the hymn and the maidens of Apollo as singers can achieve perpetual fame, which is “the kind of glory that we usually think of as the special reward of the epic hero.”³¹ Is there any special significance in the fact that the *kleos*-orientated poet of the hymn is an itinerant performer (cf. 170, 174-75)? A travelling poet's preoccupation with his post-performance reputation must definitely be correlated with his future movements and future performance prospects.

Our evidence, as we have seen, suggests that an early singer-poet is a *klētós dēmioergós*, that is, a mobile professional who offers his services upon request. It is quite logical to assume that a singer-poet who is invited to participate in a particular occasion –formal or semi-formal, public or private– is selected after being compared against less renowned, by implication, against less competent singer-poets, or that a singer-poet is more easily allowed to enter a formal competition, if he has already developed a widespread reputation. So, the reception of a singer-poet is arguably highly dependent upon his reputation for excellence in composition and

³⁰ RICHARDSON 2010 on *H. Ap.* 165-76.

³¹ THALMANN 1984: 132. As THALMANN 1984: 132 notes, “[i]t may be a reflex of this conception of the singer's fame that [...] ancient biographies of poets depict their subjects as though they were heroes of cult [...] or of epic [...].”

performance. To put it differently, his reputation –*kleos*– functions as an activator of his itinerancy.³² Only a singer-poet with claims to wide spread *kleos* would have an edge over those professional singers who ambitiously aspire to a place in an aristocratic court or the agora. It may thus be said that a singer-poet’s *kleos* is reflected in present and past movements and performance opportunities. This, in turn, makes each and every bardic show, in which a singer-poet takes particular care to prove his compositional and performative capacity, an object of explicit or implicit evaluation. A performer is presumably always judged by an audience, either consciously (especially on occasions where there are rewards) or unconsciously, not only as to his ability to sing for *here-and-now* purposes but also as to whether he is competent enough so as to be regarded as potentially eligible for *future* performances. In other words, the “present performance” determines the possibility for “future performance(s)” by the same performer, which entails that the competency of an individual *aoidos* is evaluated, established, and re-evaluated during his individual performances over the course of his entire career. In this light, the vital function of reputation –*kleos*– as the motivating force and highest ambition for a travelling poet’s eternal itinerancy becomes self-evident.

The example of Demodocus may be found, *mutatis mutandis*, instructive on this point. The singer-poet is, first, invited to the palace of Alcinous, where he sings the “Conflict between Achilles and Odysseus”, and, then, he sings publicly in the agora the “Song of Ares and Aphrodite”. These two appearances, however, seem not to be the debut of Demodocus in either setting, as his status is similar to that of an established singer-poet. Yet, notwithstanding the wide popularity and acceptance he enjoys, which certainly seems to be his passport to the salon of Alcinous, his competence must now be re-evaluated, as his audience includes among its old members a stranger, Odysseus. After he listens to the two episodic performances of the *aoidos*, Odysseus praises him lavishly for his ability to sing “properly” (*katà kósmon*). Then, as a very promising singer, previously unknown to Odysseus, Demodocus is “re-invited” by the hero to sing the “Story of the Wooden Horse” and

³² A useful parallel would be what LORD 1960: 14 records in the former Yugoslavia. Before the festival of Ramazan, “most Moslem kafanas engage a singer several months in advance to entertain their guests, and if there is more than one such kafana in the town, there may be rivalry in obtaining the services of a well-known and popular singer who is likely to bring considerable business to the establishment.”

to produce a new, successful performance, upon which he is also promised dissemination of his reputation. The example of Demodocus, therefore, shows on a smaller scale how through episodic epic performances an *aoidos* becomes able to establish his professional presence and to secure the dissemination of his fame, upon which his future career prospects are ultimately dependent.

The fact that a successful “present performance” determines the possibility for “future performance(s)” by the same performer automatically increases competition among bards who vitally seek future performance opportunities and expect to acquire further commissions from those present. The thoroughly sophisticated manner whereby the Homeric audience in *Od.* 1.10 is almost identified with the *Odyssey* poet (the plural pronoun ἡμῖν in the phrase εἰπέ καὶ ἡμῖν is very suggestive) indicates that the listeners are in fact embraced in this competitive play. The poet’s nuanced identification with the audience is significant, as it becomes part of the mechanism through which the latter seeks to ingratiate himself with his listeners, thus securing favourable attention towards his poem, which, in turn, draws attention to the fact that the final word on his performance belongs to them.

1.2 Bardic Performance and Evaluation Criteria

We have seen that the *Odyssey* poet does not depict himself as a uniquely inspired genius in the manner of (at least some) lyric poetry, but he does sub-textually draw attention on his personal identity (cf. *Od.* 1.10: εἰπέ καὶ ἡμῖν: “tell us [Muse] as you have told others”). And also the examples of Demodocus and the poet of the *Hymn to Apollo* clearly suggest that an individual singer-poet can achieve his *own* reputation, which, as we have argued, presumably plays a vital role in a travelling poet’s itinerancy. Now that we have seen how important it is for an individual bard to establish a good and widespread reputation, the next step is to examine the criteria by which one becomes a reputed and distinguished bard. The example of Demodocus in the *Odyssey* may again be found instructive on this matter.

After Demodocus’ public performance of the “Song of Ares and Aphrodite” on Scheria, Odysseus heaps lavish praise on the singer-poet (*Od.* 8.487-91):

Δημόδοκ’, ἔξοχα δὴ σε βροτῶν αἰνίζομ’ ἀπάντων.
ἢ σέ γε Μοῦσ’ ἐδίδαξε, Διὸς πάϊς, ἢ σέ γ’ Ἀπόλλων·
λίην γὰρ κατὰ κόσμον Ἀχαιῶν οἴτον ἀεΐδεις,
ὅσσ’ ἔρξαν τ’ ἔπαθόν τε καὶ ὅσσ’ ἐμόγησαν Ἀχαιοί, 490
ὥς τέ που ἢ αὐτὸς παρεὼν ἢ ἄλλου ἀκούσας.

Demodocus, truly above all mortal men do I praise you,
whether it was the Muse, daughter of Zeus, that taught you, or Apollo;
for well and truly do you sing of the fate of the Achaeans,
all that they did and suffered, and all the toils they endured, as if
perhaps you had yourself been present, or had heard the tale from
another.

Odysseus declares that he admires Demodocus “above all mortal men” (487: ἔξοχα δὴ σε βροτῶν αἰνίζομ’ ἀπάντων), while the γὰρ-clause in lines 489ff. expands on the singer-poet’s preeminence. Odysseus admires Demodocus “above all mortal men”, *because* he has the ability to sing “properly” (489: κατὰ κόσμον ... ἀεΐδεις), which suggests to the hero that the singer-poet’s performance is divinely inspired (488). Who are these mortal men that Demodocus is compared with? Though we are not explicitly told, we can reasonably assume that βροτῶν ... ἀπάντων comprises all those singer-poets who did not manage to convince Odysseus that their performative composition *was* divinely inspired. So, Odysseus’ appreciation of the here-and-now

performance of Demodocus is twofold, first, with respect to its inherent nature (489), and, second, in comparison with the rest of the singer-poets (887). To put it differently, Demodocus is ranked highest (ἔξοχα) among his peers according to the special characteristics of his poetic and performative nature.¹

Any invocation of the Muse, usually but not exclusively at the beginning of an epic poem, conspicuously draws attention to the fact that what follows in the performance is based on preexisting knowledge made available to an individual singer-poet through the agency of the Muse. The need, however, felt by Odysseus to praise the exceptional performance of Demodocus is highly significant, for it indicates that the singer-poet is commended for a *quality* (489: κατὰ κόσμον ... ἀείδειν = “to sing properly”) that is *variable*. The fact that, as we have seen, Odysseus tells Demodocus that, if he is indeed able to prove that he can sing the “Wooden Horse” *katà moîran* (“properly”), then he will declare to all mankind that a god has granted him the gift of divine song (*Od.* 8.492-98), moreover suggests that the degree to which this quality is attained by the singer-poet is at the same time one of the evaluation criteria for his competency and for the dissemination of his reputation.

Therefore, the example of Demodocus puts a spotlight on two things: first, on the fact that the very same knowledge can manifest itself in different ways in the structure and tone of different poems, depending on the degree to which each bard is able to hearken to the Muses (that is, more prosaically, to apprentice himself to his predecessors and learn the technical aspects as well as the raw material of his craft); and, second, on the fact that a bard’s performance is always implicitly or explicitly (as in the case of Demodocus) measured against the standard of competence of the rest of the bards by an audience that (consciously or not) acts as a judge. It would, of course, be natural to suppose that an audience subjects bardic performance to implicit evaluation on the basis of certain criteria, even if we did not have some evidence. But, in fact, read with care,² the *Odyssey* through its self-reflexive interest in the poetics of bardic performance does offer us a core text to explore an

¹ This is not the first time that Demodocus wins praise. In *Od.* 8.44-45, Alcinous says that the divine gift of singing that the god has granted to Demodocus deviates widely from the norm. As we shall see below (pp. 56-57), Alcinous’ praise for the bard is framed in a context that invites us to assume that a singer-poet’s individuality also derives from the flexibility that he can show in choosing a theme.

² See below, p. 51 together with n. 10.

audience's established evaluation criteria for a bard's competency and subsequent dissemination of his reputation.

The Criterion of Enargeia (vividness)

After he acknowledges the gods' contribution to Demodocus' singing (*Od.* 8.488), Odysseus, as we have seen, goes on to praise the singer's ability to sing of the fate of the Achaeans *katà kósmon* (*Od.* 8.489), which we have hitherto translated as "properly". *Kósmos* is a noun derivative of the verb *kosméō*, which in Homer means "I set in order" ("I draw up", "I array", "I marshal"),³ or "I prepare".⁴ Hence, *kósmos* is the "arrangement of things in a (meaningful) unit". So, in *Od.* 8.492 Odysseus asks from Demodocus to sing *híppou kósmon*, that is, the "construction of the Wooden Horse", by implication, the "stratagem of the Wooden Horse". If the "arrangement of things" is well-ordered and thus beautiful, then *kósmos* can be rendered as "adornment". In *Il.* 14.187, for example, Hera "decked her body with all adornment [*kósmon*]", which comprises "an ambrosial robe which Athene had worked and smoothed for her, and had set on it many embroideries", "brooches of gold", "a belt set with one hundred tassels", "earrings with three clustering drops", "a veil fair and bright, all glistening, [...] white as the sun", and "fair sandals" (*Il.* 14.178-86). Similarly, in *Il.* 4.145 a cheek-piece made of stained ivory is "ornament [*kósmos*] for a horse". Moreover, *kósmos* can denote "order", that is, the "condition of regular or proper *physical arrangement*". For example, the Phaeacian youths who escort Odysseus "sat down on the benches, each in order [*hékastoi kósmōi*]" (*Od.* 13.76-77), and, although Hector is about to make an attack against the Achaean wall, Polydamas because of an omen suggests that the Trojans go back "in disarray [*ou kósmōi*]" (*Il.* 12.225). Sometimes, the prepositional expression *katà kósmon* denotes "physical ordering" too. For example, the battle gear of the Thracian warriors "lay by them on the ground, all in good order [*eū katà kósmon*], in three rows" (*Il.*

³ See, e.g., *Il.* 2.553-54: τῷ δ' οὐ πῶ τις ὁμοῖος ἐπιχθόνιος γένητ' ἀνήρ / κοσμήσαι ἵππους τε καὶ ἀνέρας ἀσπιδιώτας. ("No other man on the face of the earth was like him in marshaling chariots and warriors that carry shields.") Cf. *Il.* 2.655, 2.704, 2.724, 2.806 (in the middle voice), 3.1, 11.51, 12.87, 14.379, and 14.387. Accordingly, κοσμήτωρ is the "marshaller of men", the "commander" or "chief". See *Il.* 1.16 (= 375), 3.236; *Od.* 18.152.

⁴ See *Od.* 7.13.

10.472).⁵ There are instances, however, where (*eû/ou*) *katà kósmōn* indicates whether or not an action is carried out “as it should have been done”. For example, Achilles’ comrades “flayed [a white fleeced sheep] and made it ready well and in good order [*eû katà kósmōn*]” (*Il.* 24.621), i.e., as one should have done, whilst Zeus ponders that Hector has “improperly [*ou katà kósmōn*]” stripped the armour from Patroclus’ head and shoulders (*Il.* 17.205).⁶ So, the noun *kósmos* has inherent connotations of “construction” (together with “aesthetic beauty”), “physical ordering”, and “properness”. There is, therefore, good ground to suggest that, through his *katà kósmōn* performance, Demodocus satisfied to an exceptional degree the expectations of Odysseus, by implication, the expectations of the whole audience, in that “he sang a well-structured story beautifully, as it should have been done”, best encapsulated in the expression “Demodocus sang properly”. In what terms, however, does Odysseus declare that Demodocus performed “properly”?

It is very common for epic poetry to associate closely singer-poets with the Muse to such an extent that their relationship often seems to take the form of ultimate dependence. As mentioned earlier, the *locus classicus* is *Il.* 2.484-87:

Ἔσπετε νῦν μοι, Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ’ ἔχουσαι-
 ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστε, πάρεστε τε ἴστε τε πάντα, 485
 ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν-
 οἳ τινες ἠγεμόνες Δαναῶν καὶ κοίρανοι ἦσαν.

Tell me know, you Muses who have dwellings on Olympus
 –for you are goddesses and are present and know all things,
 but we hear only a rumour and know nothing–
 who were the leaders and lords of the Danaans.

The Muses are goddesses and hence omniscient. They attend all things and know all things (485), whereas singer-poets have *no direct knowledge* and can only hear the *kleos* (report) of things (486). Through the agency of the Muses, however, the bard is enabled to access knowledge and to narrate events as though he is an eyewitness,

⁵ Cf. *Il.* 11.48 (=12.85).

⁶ Cf. *Il.* 2.214, 5.759, 8.12, and 17.205; *Od.* 3.138, 8.179, 14.363, and 20.181. Cf., also, *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 433.

though he is not himself present at the events he narrates.⁷ Odysseus concludes from the *katà kósmōn* performance of Demodocus that “the Muse or Apollo⁸ must have been [his] teacher” (*Od.* 8.488-89). So, we can reasonably assume that Odysseus’ sense that Demodocus is a divinely-inspired bard is produced by the *right amount of knowledge* that the singer inscribed in his song, which is also confirmed by the fact that, as the hero notes, Demodocus sang of the fate of the Achaeans incorporating “*all* that they did and suffered, and *all* the toils they endured, as if perhaps [he] had [himself] been present” (*Od.* 8.490-91). Odysseus praises Demodocus for having sung the fate of the Achaeans accurately *by including everything that could ideally be expected*, nothing more and nothing less.⁹ Odysseus, of course, can testify to the truth of what the bard sings, but it is reasonable to assume that the rest of Demodocus’ audience should also have the impression that the *full*, and thus the *true*, story is told.¹⁰

Demodocus is praised by Odysseus for giving the impression to him, by implication, to the whole audience, that he has sung the fate of the Achaeans “as though he had been present or had heard the story from someone else” (*Od.* 8.491), that is, for giving them the impression that his singing is an eyewitness testimony. What does this essentially mean? The account given by the rhapsode Ion can be to some extent instructive (Plato, *Ion* 535b-e). To the question from Socrates, “does your soul in an ecstasy suppose herself to be among the scenes you are describing, whether they be in Ithaca, or in Troy, or as the poems may chance to place them?”,

⁷ In the invocation of the Muse, we can detect the so-called *double motivation* (what DODDS 1951 calls “over-determination”), an underlying feature of Greek thought according to which a single event is determined by two causes, one divine and one human (see also below, p. 59 n. 28). Cf., e.g., MURRAY 1981: 96-97. The Muse and the poet working in conjunction can be seen as the divine and human “causes”, respectively, of the poetic event. The Muse gives inspiration to the poet and bestows the quality of genuineness and authenticity upon a poem. On the close association between “oral poetry” and the notion of “received truth”, see, e.g., THALMANN 1984: 116, and, for a comparative study, see BOWRA 1961: 508-36 and LORD 1960: 28-29. Cf. pp. 39-40 n. 19 above.

⁸ In antiquity, Apollo was considered to be *Mousagētēs*, “Leader of the Muses”. See LANATA 1963: 12.

⁹ Cf. Σ (bT) *Il.* 21.34, where the scholiast notes that, by saying all the details, the *Iliad* poet makes the story of Lycaon vividly graphic and hence realistic and truthful (πάντα δὲ λέγων ἀληθοποιεῖται τὸν λόγον). Cf., also, Σ (bT) *Il.* 21.68-72.

¹⁰ It is, however, important to note that Demodocus is the ideal model to which performers aspire.

Ion replies, “when I relate a tale of woe, my eyes are filled with tears; and when it is of fear or awe, my hair stands on end with terror, and my heart leaps.” And, when Socrates asks him, “are you aware that you rhapsodes produce these same effects on most of the spectators also?”, Ion says, “yes, very fully aware: for I look down upon them from the platform and see them at such moments crying and turning awestruck eyes upon me and yielding to the amazement of my tale.”¹¹ Ion has the feeling that he is among the scenes he is describing and succeeds in making his audience feel exactly the same way. So, he creates in them the impression of a convincingly *vivid picture* and hence the sense that the past is accurately present before them. This sense cannot be understood merely in aesthetic terms. It is perhaps better to see it as a psychological effect which can be experienced by the hearers of the performance and can enable them to feel the satisfaction of the so-called *enargeia*,¹² an extremely exciting mixture of vividness, visualisation (*Vergegenwärtigung*),¹³ and participation. This profound psychological effect of *enargeia* is presumably what pervades Demodocus’ singing, in that it creates in the audience the sense that the past –which, though recent for Odysseus, is still unknown to the audience, is convincingly present before them.

Apart from the praise that Demodocus wins in the *Odyssey* for his exceptionally vivid and accurate performance, the comparative evidence of the South Slavic tradition of epic in Eastern Europe also offers good ground to believe that the ability of singer-poets to create the *enargeia* effect is one of the parameters of bardic performance that varies significantly from singer to singer. The dialogue between Đemail Zogić and Nikola Vujnović, Milman PARRY’s assistant, is very instructive:

Đemail: [...] There are some people who add and ornament a song and say: “This is the way it was,” but it would be better [...] if he were to sing it as he heard it and as things happen ... *You can find plenty of people [...] who know these songs but who don’t*

¹¹ Trans. Lamb 1925: 424-27.

¹² Early Greek literary criticism employed the Homeric adjective *enargēs* to refer to literature which can enable audiences to experience the narrated incidents as though they are happening vividly before them. See Aristotle, *Poetics* 17.1455a22-26 and 24.1462a14-17. Later on, this psychological effect of vividness was called *enargeia* (the feminine noun derivative of *enargēs*). For a recent and extensive treatment of the topic of *enargeia*, see PLETT 2012.

¹³ See FORD 1992: 53-54.

know how to sing them clearly, just as things happened, just as Bosnian heroes did their deeds. [...] There are some men who shout and have a fine voice, but they do not know how to tell the stories of the songs exactly. [...]

Nikola: And then what happens? The listeners open the door, and one after another they say “good night.” Is that it?

Đemail: Yes, that is just it.¹⁴

What it means to sing things exactly as they happened finds its utmost expression in the most famous Serbo-Croatian *guslar*, Avdo Mededović, who was best known for his ability to elaborate and ornament a song. As LORD records, Avdo “told [him] once that he ‘saw in his mind every piece of trapping which he put on a horse.’ He visualised the scene or the action, and from that mental image he formed a verbal reflection in his song.”¹⁵ Such a unique richness of visualisation in the song of Demodocus must have been what created in Odysseus the sense of an exceptionally vivid picture (even greater achievement if one takes into account the fact that Odysseus was present at the actual events that the singer narrated) and provided the hero a reason for heaping lavish praise on the bard. Demodocus can, therefore, hold a reasonable claim to fame, which definitely has a great impact on his ability to gain a competitive edge in an intensely agonistic market, as one would expect that the competitive dynamics between Avdo and other less competent singers were presumably being increasingly heightened,¹⁶ as the reputation of Avdo as “the last of the truly great epic singers of the Balkan Slavic tradition”¹⁷ was progressively becoming greater and greater.

The Criterion of Flexibility in Thematic Choice

Alcinous, noticing the overwhelming grief of Odysseus in response to the song on the “Story of the Wooden Horse” which he had requested, puts a stop to the bard’s performance (*Od.* 8.536-43), as comparative evidence clearly shows that under less than ideal conditions the attentiveness and receptivity of an audience in an oral

¹⁴ PARRY-LORD 1954: 239 (emphasis added).

¹⁵ In PARRY-LORD-BYNUM 1974: 10.

¹⁶ See PARRY-LORD-BYNUM 1974: 58-61, where Avdo describes his intense competition with his fellow Kasum Rebronjia.

¹⁷ LORD in PARRY-LORD-BYNUM 1974: 12.

“ἀλλ’ ἄγε δὴ μετάβηθι καὶ ἵππου κόσμον ἄεισον
 δουρατέου, τὸν Ἐπειὸς ἐποίησεν σὺν Ἀθήνῃ,
 ὃν ποτ’ ἐς ἀκρόπολιν δόλον ἤγαγε δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
 ἀνδρῶν ἐμπλήσας οἱ Ἴλιον ἐξαλάπαξαν. 495
 αἶ κεν δὴ μοι ταῦτα κατὰ μοῖραν καταλέξῃς,
 αὐτίκα ἐγὼ πᾶσιν μυθήσομαι ἀνθρώποισιν,
 ὡς ἄρα τοι πρόφρων θεὸς ὤπασε θέσπιν ἀοιδήν.”
 ὦς φάθ’, ὁ δ’ ὀρμηθεὶς θεοῦ ἤρχετο, φαῖνε δ’ ἀοιδήν,
 ἔνθεν ἐλών ὡς οἱ μὲν εὖσσέλμων ἐπὶ νηῶν 500
 βάντες ἀπέπλειον, πῦρ ἐν κλισίῃσι βαλόντες.

But come now, change your theme, and sing of
 the building of the horse of wood, which Epeius made with Athene’s
 help, / the horse which once Odysseus led up into the citadel as a thing
 of guile, / when he had filled it with the men who sacked Ilium.
 If you indeed tell me this tale rightly,
 I will declare to all mankind
 that the god has with a ready heart granted the gift of divine song. So he
 spoke, and the minstrel, moved by the god, began, and let his song be
 heard, / taking up the tale where the Argives had embarked on their
 benched ships / and were sailing away, after throwing fire on their huts.

Odysseus requests a specific song, and Demodocus responds to his request by
 “taking up the story from that sequence point when”²⁰ (500: ἔνθεν ἐλών) the Greeks
 were sailing away after they had set fire to their huts (499-501). Based on the text,
 we can infer that Demodocus, who is apparently familiar with the Trojan saga as a
 whole, is able to pick out an episode on request, he can elaborate upon it, and he can
 create a proper song out of it.²¹ Moreover, although “apparently the lay [of the
 Trojan war] was already in a well known form so that one would begin at any
 episode and assume that the hearers would know its antecedents”,²² the singer-poet
 shows ability to figure out a suitable starting point that operates as a good transition
 to the body of his song. In the *Odyssey* proem, likewise, after the poet draws
 attention to the main theme of the poem, the woeful return of Odysseus, he asks the
 assistance of the Muse in choosing the appropriate beginning to his song (*Od.*

²⁰ HAINSWORTH 1988 on *Od.* 8.500.

²¹ Cf. JONES 1988 on *Od.* 8.500.

²² STANFORD 1947 on *Od.* 8.500.

1.10):²³ “from some / from any point [*hamóthen*],²⁴ goddess, daughter of Zeus, tell us in our turn”. If we accept that Odysseus will evaluate not only the *enargeia* of Demodocus’ singing but also the *flexibility* that the bard will show in responding to his specific request for a *particular* song, then we can reasonably infer that the bard’s ability, first, to sing a prescribed theme taken out of a larger whole and, second, to choose an appropriate starting point within the prescribed episode, varies significantly from singer to singer, too.

This is not the only mode of singer-audience interaction. There are also instances in the *Odyssey* where bards are left to make their own choice of song. An example can be seen in *Od.* 8.73-75:

Μοῦσ’ ἄρ’ ἀοιδὸν ἀνῆκεν ἀειδέμεναι κλέα ἀνδρῶν,
οἴμης τῆς τότε ἄρα κλέος οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἴκανε,
νεῖκος Ὀδυσσεύου καὶ Πηλεΐδου Ἀχιλλεύου. 75

The Muse moved the minstrel to sing of the glorious deeds of men,
from that lay of which the fame had then reached broad heaven,
the quarrel of Odysseus and Achilles, son of Peleus.

Demodocus chooses spontaneously (73: “the Muse moved the minstrel”) to sing the “Conflict between Odysseus and Achilles”, which the bard probably picks out of a larger *oímē*, “path-song”, of wide popularity.²⁵ In fact, Alcinous calls on the leaders and counselors of the Phaeacians to summon Demodocus to crown his feast precisely because (*Od.* 8.44-45):

τῷ [...] ῥα θεὸς περὶ δῶκεν ἀοιδίην
τέρπειν, ὅππῃ θυμὸς ἐποτρύνῃσιν ἀείδειν. 45

²³ Cf. JONES 1988 on *Od.* 1.10.

²⁴ The *hamóthen* has often been suspected to be an Atticism: see S. WEST 1988 on *Od.* 1.10. However, the practice of selecting an appropriate starting point is confirmed in *Od.* 8.500 (see DAWE 1993 on *Od.* 1.10). Cf., also, *Il.* 1.6 together with KIRK 1985 *ad loc.*

²⁵ The genitive *oímēs* in *Od.* 8.74 has been explained variously as partitive genitive (“of the path”), as local genitive (“on the path”), or as an instance of *tractio inversa*, where the initial οἴμην takes on the case of the following relative pronoun τῆς (for an overview of the discussion, see THALMANN 1984: 223-24 n. 40). These observations, however, do not affect the issue here, since the passage is used primarily as evidence for a bard’s spontaneous selection of theme.

to him above all others has the god granted skill in song,
to give delight in whatever way his spirit prompts him to sing.

This passage suggests that Demodocus' uniqueness (cf. 44: θεὸς περὶ δῶκεν ἀοιδῆν) results, in part, from his superior ability –compared to all other inspired singers– to sing “in whatever way / direction his spirit prompts him to sing” (45), namely, as his spirit moves him in order to give pleasure to his audience. That a bard is sometimes left to make his own spontaneous choice of theme can also be inferred from *Od.* 1.346-47:

μη̄τερ ἐμή, τί τ' ἄρα φθονέεις ἐρίηρον ἀοιδὸν
τέρπειν ὅππῃ οἱ νόος ὄρνυται;

My mother, why do you begrudge the good minstrel
to give pleasure in whatever way his heart is moved?

Penelope asks Phemius to proceed with a different song rather than that which had the “Return of the Achaeans” as its subject-matter (*Od.* 1.340-42), and Telemachus rails against her on the grounds that a bard can give pleasure “in whatever way his heart is moved” (347). The ὅππῃ-clause in the previous two examples may be seen as an apt metaphor for a bard's “spontaneous selection” of a “path-song” (*oímē*). Since these three passages suggest that a bard is often expected to perform a song of his choice, they cohere nicely with the incident in which Odysseus *requests* the “Story of the Wooden Horse”. The former shows us how the singer operates when he is left to make his own choice, while the latter shows how the singer responds to an audience request –the bard in control. Between them they neatly map out the possibilities for choice of theme.

So far our evidence suggests two things: first, that an audience appreciates particularly a bard's flexibility to respond to specific song requests; and, second, that a bard enjoys a certain degree of freedom either in choosing his theme altogether, or in choosing an appropriate starting point within the requested episodes in order to provide a well-ordered and understandable story pattern. There is, moreover, good reason to believe that a flexible singer-poet capitalises on the freedom of choice that he is often given in order to improve the psychological and emotional impact of his performance on the audience. We see, for example, that Demodocus chooses to sing

lays of all sorts, and worthy am I to sing to you
as to a god.

Odysseus is about to slay Phemius on the grounds that the bard allowed himself in the service of the suitors, while the latter is trying to persuade his master to spare his life by drawing attention to his worthiness. Phemius gives an account of his mastery in a concise and dense manner: “Of myself I have the skill to make a song (347: αὐτοδίδακτος δ’ εἰμί), and my knowledge is divinely inspired (347-48: θεὸς δέ μοι ἐν φρεσὶν οἴμας / παντοίας ἐνέφυσεν),²⁸ and (so) I think myself worthy to sing to you as though you were a god (348-49: ἔοικα δέ τοι παραεῖδειν / ὥς τε θεῶ).”²⁹ Phemius, in other words, claims that his song emanates from his innate capacity to make the innumerable stories that he knows (given through the οἴμας παντοίας-metaphor) conform to the demands of a pleasurable performance in favour of Odysseus,³⁰ which can make his master seem like a god, presumably by singing his heroic deeds. So, either the bard reminds Odysseus of his gratifying service in the past, or, more probably, he stresses his potential effectiveness as constructor and propagator of the hero’s *kleos* in the future.³¹ We recall that Demodocus on Scheria sings in praise of the glorious deeds of Odysseus (*Od.* 8.499-520), and now Phemius at least boasts that he is able to do so. After all, killing the divinely inspired bard may not be so

²⁸ The meaning of *Od.* 22.347-48 (αὐτοδίδακτος δ’ εἰμί, θεὸς δέ μοι ἐν φρεσὶν οἴμας / παντοίας ἐνέφυσεν) has been the subject of much discussion. Some scholars saw a distinction between *form* (technical skill, mastery, craft) and *content* (the knowledge of stories, subject-matter), while others interpreted αὐτοδίδακτος as the poet’s claim to originality (for an overview, see THALMANN 1984: 126-27). However, THALMANN 1984: 126-27 convincingly argues that αὐτοδίδακτος and θεὸς δέ μοι ἐν φρεσὶν οἴμας / παντοίας ἐνέφυσεν probably reflect two aspects of a song’s cause, a bard’s innate ability and his extra-personal inspiration/divine agency. This assumption tallies with the Homeric concept of the so-called “double motivation”, according to which “the same event [...] has both a divine and a human cause” (KEARNS 2004: 59 n. 2). See also above, p. 51 n. 7.

²⁹ *LSJ* s.v. ἔοικα: “I seem to sing [i.e., methinks I sing] to you as to a god.” Cf. FERNÁNDEZ-GALIANO 1992 on *Od.* 22.348-49: “I seem to sing by your side as if by the side of a god”; STANFORD 1948 on *Od.* 22.348-49 (following MONRO 1901 *ad loc.*): “I am fit to sing before you..., I am the right person to be your poet (if you spare me therefore you ought not to kill me).”

³⁰ Cf. FERNÁNDEZ-GALIANO 1992 on *Od.* 22.347-49.

³¹ Cf. GOLDHILL 1991: 59: “[Phemius] defends himself on the grounds of his privileged role in the presentation and construction of the reputation of men through song. Odysseus, as he completes the revenge which finds his *kleos*, is faced by –and spares– the bard, preserver and constructor of fame.”

wise a choice on the part of Odysseus, as it can deprive his palace of a useful courtier.

Therefore, the composition of each audience proves decisive for the selection of this or that lay to be performed by a singer-poet who, in turn, takes credit for his flexibility to respond to the challenges of the here-and-now performance, as the example of Demodocus on Scheria suggests. On the other hand, professional bards, like Phemius and Demodocus, who in all likelihood strive continuously to gain an edge over their ambitious rivals in order to secure a place in both private and public settings, arguably cannot but benefit from the freedom they are often given to choose a theme that would be appropriate to its performance context and that would allow them to ingratiate themselves into the favour of their audience, the ultimate judge of their singing.³² Phemius' potential flexibility, for example, is what saves the bard from certain death in the hands of Odysseus. So, it seems that a competent bard can either spontaneously or upon request set out his performance by singling out a particular episode out of a larger whole (by choosing, perhaps, an appropriate starting point within this episode), as if all of the individual stories and episodes of the epic material constitute a hypothetical coherent whole, out of which segments can be treated by the bard separately.³³ Epic tradition appears to exist as a virtual entity, a large *fabula* (as the narratologists would say), which can form the basis of a potentially infinite set of stories –telling and the instantiations of each telling.

The Criterion of (Presentational) Originality

In Book 1 of the *Odyssey*, Phemius sings among the suitors the “woeful *Return of the Achaeans*” (*Od.* 1.326-27: Ἀχαιῶν λυγρόν νόστον), but Penelope suddenly interrupts him. She tearfully asks him to cease from his “sad song” (*Od.* 1.340-41: λυγρὴ ἀοιδή), “which always harrows the heart in [her] chest” (*Od.* 1.341-42), and to choose one of the many “enchancing songs” –θελκτήρια– that he knows (*Od.* 1.337-39). It is evident that the reason why she asks Phemius to stop singing his song is not her objection to the bard's ability to sing it well, as she acknowledges his ability to

³² In her comparative study of oral poetry, FINNEGAN 1977: 231 points out that “there are [...] cases [...] when the presence of certain individuals or groups leads a poet to gear his presentation of, say, events or genealogies to please them.” Cf. FINNEGAN 1977: 54-55.

³³ Cf. THALMANN 1984: 123 and HAINSWORTH 1988 on *Od.* 8.500.

sing “many enchanting songs”, but the mere fact that, every time she listens to this particular song, she is reminded of her (absent) husband. As we have seen, however, Telemachus immediately intervenes to defend the bard’s “right” to sing “in whatever way his heart is moved” (*Od.* 1.346-47), but what is even more interesting is his line of reasoning.

As Telemachus’ argument goes, the fact that Phemius chose to sing the tragic fate of the Danaans is “no cause for reproach” (*Od.* 1.350), “for men praise that song the most which comes *the newest* to their ears” (*Od.* 1.351-52):

τὴν γὰρ ἀοιδὴν μᾶλλον ἐπικλείουσ’ ἄνθρωποι,
ἢ τις ἀϊόντεσσι νεωτάτη ἀμφιπέληται.

In what sense is Phemius’ song “the newest”? Is it a “new song that *creates anew an old story*” or a “new song that *tells a new story*”? The contextual frame invites us to believe that Phemius’ song is the newest, not because it is an original presentation of an already existing song, but because it narrates a *new theme*. It is “the newest” song for the internal audience (i.e., for the suitors, Penelope, and Telemachus), for, in dealing with the νόστος Ἀχαιῶν, it comprises the most recent news that reaches the Ithacans from the far-away Troy. The song of Phemius is, in other words, “the newest”, because it refers to the latest, nearly contemporary events after the sack of Ilium, as the song of Demodocus on the Trojan Horse refers to the most recent heroic deeds at Troy, thus distressing Odysseus. It is for this reason that the νόστος Ἀχαιῶν has a powerful effect on both the suitors and Penelope,³⁴ because they are both emotionally involved in one way or another with the nearly contemporary story that Phemius narrates.

On the other hand, Telemachus’ reference to the much-appreciated newness of song might take on a different dynamic within the *Odyssey*’s metapoetic discourse. As has been rightly pointed out, “[w]hen [Telemachus] justifies the song as newest, he judges it not as it affects a particular audience, whether Penelope or the suitors, but more generally, in terms of what “people” like.”³⁵ In other words, the Homeric text phrases people’s preference for the newest song in a way which gets the external

³⁴ See *Od.* 1.325-26 (οἱ δὲ σιωπῆ / εἶτα’ ἀκούοντες), 1.336 (δακρύσασα), and 1.341-42 (ἦ τέ μοι αἰεὶ ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλον κῆρ / τείρει), respectively.

³⁵ SCODEL 2002: 85.

audience of the *Odyssey* involved. For the Homeric audience, “the newest” song can also be, in a metapoetic way, the song whose weaving is still in progress, that is, the *Odyssey* itself. This, however, raises the question, in what sense can the *Odyssey* be understood as “the newest”?

Thematic novelty is, as far as we can judge from Telemachus’ suggestive statement, a key desideratum in a bard’s song. However, this kind of newness (theme change) would make more sense as part of the fictive world of the *Odyssey*, where heroic deeds are still being accomplished,³⁶ than as part of a backward-looking narrative tradition to which the *Odyssey* itself belongs. So, we have to accept the possibility that, if indeed Telemachus’ statement carries with it some metapoetic nuance, then the *Odyssey* poet suggestively draws attention to “the newest”, in the sense of “original”, instantiation of the story of Odysseus, and so, from the external audience’s perspective, Telemachus may be seen, as has been pointed out, as “the poet’s spokesman in his plea for artistic freedom and his emphasis on the importance of novelty.”³⁷ Yet, how far can we take the idea of originality?

In *Od.* 1.10 (εἰπέ καὶ ἡμῖν), as we have seen, the poet draws attention to the fact that his song is the latest instantiation of a unique story. Here by implication he makes a bolder claim. As in *Od.* 1.10, there is no assertion that this poet is a unique genius, but, by saying that men praise the latest song, he does suggest that the latest instantiation of a unique story can also be distinctively new, namely, original in a *visibly* and *identifiably* distinctive manner, and implicitly (on the model of audience evaluation which we have been developing) invites the audience to apply this criterion to the song they are hearing. One should bear in mind that we are in a genre in which individual epic singers submerge their songs in tradition. As we have seen, the Serbo-Croatian poets as preservers of historic truth emphasise that they sing an

³⁶ In its origins, epic poetry presumably assimilated new events, insofar as they were notable enough to be inscribed in song along with the great deeds of past generations, worthy to be contextualised into human history and reserved for the generations to come. However, the artistic freedom of a bard would not be without limitations imposed by the generic oral-formulaic character of song (typical verses, motifs, even entire scenes). As THALMANN 1984: 125 points out, “novelty of subject is prized but not necessarily –or even probably– originality of treatment. A good singer would be one who can assimilate new stories to the traditional techniques, who can break them down into component themes, and, on the level of line-by-line composition, retell them in the formulaic diction.”

³⁷ S. WEST 1988 on *Od.* 1.346ff. Cf. STANFORD 1947 and DAWE 1993 on *Od.* 1.351-52.

already existing song exactly as they heard it, just as the heroes did their deeds. It is felt that, if they change a song in its essence, then they become distorters of history.³⁸ As LORD 1960: 99 notes, however, a singer-poet's "idea of stability, to which he is deeply devoted, does not include the wording, which to him has never been fixed, nor the unessential parts of the story." So, singer-poets do change songs, provided that they preserve the story's broad plot lines. The example of Avdo Mededović who produces unique songs by elaborating and ornamenting preexisting songs without changing them in their essence is very suggestive.³⁹ Therefore, though it is impossible to say exactly to what extent and in which ways the *Odyssey*, as we now have it, is an original instantiation, the poet's self-reflexive claim that his presentation of the story of Odysseus is distinctively original cannot be readily overlooked in a text which foregrounds poetics as firmly as this one. And there is, as we shall see, good reason to believe that originality in presentations of known stories is a characteristic of compositional process that is much appreciated by the audience and hence highly desirable in a bard's song.

Telemachus, as we have seen, demurs at Penelope's tearful reaction in support of the bard's spontaneous selection of subject. The scene cannot be decontextualised, of course. Immediately afterwards, the Ithacan prince orders Penelope to go to her chamber and to busy herself with her own tasks, the loom and the distaff (*Od.* 1.356-58). And he finishes by saying that "[tale-telling] shall be men's care, for all, but most of all for [him]; since [his] is the authority in this house" (*Od.* 1.358-59). Over and above the 'normal' power dynamics between male and female, there is a tension created between Penelope and a Telemachus who begins to assert his authority as the head of the household. However, it is not entirely true to claim that Telemachus'

³⁸ See above, pp. 39-40 n. 19.

³⁹ LORD 1960: 105 points out: "We have seen changes stemming from addition of details and description, expansion by ornamentation, changes in action [...] that seem to stem from the tension of essentials preserving certain conglomerates or configurations of themes, changes in the order of appearance of the *dramatis personae*, shifting of themes from one place to another, forming new balances and patterns. Yet the story has remained essentially the same; the changes have not been of the kind that distort[s] the tale. If anything, they have enhanced it."

rebuke to Penelope is simply “an assertion of his (incipient) male, adult role.”⁴⁰ The reason why Telemachus asks his mother to let her heart and soul endure the hearing of the sad song (*Od.* 1.353: σοί δ’ ἐπιτολμάτω κραδίη καὶ θυμὸς ἀκούειν) is not just because she must not interfere at all with the tale-telling, which is man’s business, as Telemachus goes on to say, but also because, as he expressly says in the first place, people applaud most the song that comes the newest to them (*Od.* 1.351-52). In the world of the *Odyssey*, Phemius, being left to make his selection of theme, chooses to sing the return of the Achaeans, which, as we have seen, would be pleasing to the suitors’ ears. In the metapoetic discourse of the *Odyssey*, however, when Telemachus says that people celebrate more the song which comes latest to the listeners, the poet directs attention to his presentational originality, inviting his audience to appreciate it. For our investigation, therefore, Telemachus offers good grounds to suggest that, together with the *enargeia* effect that a bard can create in his singing and the flexibility that he can show in choosing a theme, originality in presentation, which is on a metapoetic level suggestively shown as an audience’s criterion for good songs, is another dimension of early epic performance for which a singer-poet can gain extra bonus on his reputation-*kleos*.

* * *

On the basis of suggestive evidence from the description of bardic performance in the *Odyssey* and elsewhere, CHAPTER ONE suggests that what creates, preserves and intensifies agonistic interactions among early Greek epic singer-poets can be derived from two significant aspects of oral song culture, poetic itinerancy and performance upon invitation, in conjunction with the existence of agreed *evaluation criteria* –the criteria of *enargeia* (vividness), flexibility in thematic choice, and presentational originality– used by an audience to judge a bard’s successful performance, upon which subsequent dissemination of his reputation is ultimately based.

⁴⁰ GOLDHILL 1991: 61. For a good discussion on Telemachus’ gradual maturation, see CLARKE 1967: 30-44. On Telemachus’ strained relationship with Penelope throughout the *Odyssey*, see DE JONG 2001: 37-38 on *Od.* 1.345-59.

It is, of course, as noted above, only in the late archaic period that the full notion of the individually gifted poet (for example, Sappho), whose name is attached to a particular fixed composition, emerges. This does not mean, however, that early epic singers were anonymous in *their* performance context, as they inevitably are to us. On the contrary, they presumably were known individuals, who were able to achieve their own (often widespread) *kleos*. The role of individual fame as the motivating force and highest ambition for a travelling poet's itinerancy is so vital that competitive interactions among oral bards could be interpreted as competition in *kleos*. Only those bards who could succeed within such an openly and highly competitive framework would see their prestige increasing and thus their fame disseminating. Conversely, only those bards who could hold a reasonable claim to fame could gain a competitive edge in an intensely agonistic market; this spread of reputation probably was their passport both to aristocratic circles and to a wide range of public occasions and, also, what ultimately lured both private and public audiences into listening to them with the sort of unfailing attention idealised in the *Odyssey*. The high level of sophisticated self-reflexive artistry that, as we shall see in CHAPTERS TWO and THREE, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* demonstrate in presenting the stories of Achilles and Odysseus, respectively, precisely reflects the high degree of rivalry that existed among early Greek epic singers.

CHAPTER 2

The Iliadic Conceptualisation of Achilles and the Epic Tradition

The most common way to think about the Iliadic Achilles is to regard him as a man of anger, who is so much preoccupied with his personal honour that he withdraws from the battle in order to establish memorably his position within a fluid and thus highly problematic hierarchical system, not surprisingly perhaps since –as it is often emphasised throughout the poem– the hero will die prematurely and appears to be fully aware of his ineluctable mortality (see, e.g., *Il.* 1.352). When Agamemnon threatens to take Briseis –Achilles’ own prize– as compensation for the return of Chryseis to her father Chryses, the priest of Apollo, Achilles becomes passionately enraged. His complaint is not merely that by taking Briseis Agamemnon deprives him of a personal spoil of victory, his *gêras*, but also that his reward is always far smaller, though he is a better warrior than Agamemnon (*Il.* 1.163-68).¹ He even comes close to killing Agamemnon for an affront to his honour (*Il.* 1.188-94), but Athena restrains him, though she clearly considers the behaviour of Agamemnon to be arrogant (*Il.* 1.214: *húbris*). So, Achilles comes to the disappointing realisation that virtue is not always in direct proportion to its reward and becomes determined to dissociate himself from the rest of the Achaeans (*Il.* 1.240-44; cf. 1.169) and to seek his individual honour from Zeus through the agency of his goddess-mother Thetis (*Il.* 1.407-12).² Thetis advises him to withdraw from the battle (*Il.* 1.420-21) and, on her son’s prompt, herself undertakes to persuade Zeus to honour the hero by granting such success to the Trojans as will make Agamemnon realise his folly in depriving the “best of the Achaeans” of the *timê* due to him (*Il.* 1.503-10).

Achilles’ withdrawal is clearly necessitated by a need to secure individual honour. Besides, the notion of *timê* recurs to the hero’s mind, for example, when Agamemnon sends an embassy to placate him (*Il.* 9.648), or just before he fatally

¹ Cf. *Il.* 9.331-33. See, also, *Il.* 1.280-81, where Nestor endeavours to reconcile this hierarchical antinomy.

² Cf. *Il.* 1.353-54 and 9.607ff.

concedes to Patroclus' appeal to allow him to participate in the War (*Il.* 16.59).³ In either case, Achilles complains that Agamemnon treated him as though he were some *atímētos metanástēs*, "migrant devoid of honour", thus again drawing attention to the hierarchical antinomy upon which the foundations of his anger have been laid: although he is by far "the best of the Achaeans", he remains *átimos/atímētos* by virtue of Agamemnon's obstinacy to assert himself at the expense of the greatest of the Greeks. If the essence of the heroic outlook is the pursuit of honour (*timē*) that engenders "fame" (*kléos*), whereby great warriors defeat inescapable death,⁴ then the Iliadic Achilles represents the epitome of the heroic ideal.⁵

In contrast to the Homeric "Story of Achilles", which inescapably revolves around the hero's preoccupation with his personal honour, the "Achilles" outside the *Iliad* is evidently less narrowly conceived. Specific episodes in the wider epic tradition –in the form in which we now have them– point suggestively to less "Homeric" –often contradictory– dimensions of Achilles' character, such as his susceptibility to erotic emotion and female beauty, his capability of showing mercy to the enemy, and his primitive and indiscriminate brutality, which all stand in stark contrast to the limpidity of his pure honour-oriented heroism in the *Iliad*. In that regard, the Iliadic conceptualisation of Achilles is the odd one out. As we shall see, however, the *Iliad* achieves something more than a perfect distillation of the good hero. While it clearly reduces, or even tacitly undermines, the traditional complexity in order to give prominence to its own Achilles, it still acknowledges, either implicitly or explicitly, less standardised aspects of Achilles' traditional characterisation. CHAPTER TWO sets out to explore the *Iliad*'s idiosyncratic coalescence of the Achilles of the tradition with the Achilles of the individual poet.

³ Cf. *Il.* 1.171 and 1.244.

⁴ Also, as KAHANE 2012: 100 puts it, "[w]ithout the symbols of status, a hero would not be singled out among his peers and he may thus also not become the subject of song. Without song, the mortal hero's fame would be lost in time after his death, and the hero himself would be condemned to remain one of the 'wretched mortals'."

⁵ The Odyssean Achilles, by contrast, is less stringently conceived. In his famous reply to Odysseus when they meet in the underworld, the ghost of Achilles claims to prefer life on any terms, even an inglorious life (see *Od.* 11.489-91). On the idea that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* can be seen as manifestations of two different heroic ideals, the glory of early death and the glory of homecoming and mortal life, respectively, see RUTHERFORD 1992: 20 and 23-27.

2.1 Achilles and *Eros*

One aspect of the complex characterisation of Achilles in the wider epic tradition is the hero's erotic susceptibility to women, which arises from recognition of their physical attractiveness (Helen and Penthesileia). In modern scholarship, this erotic dimension has been dismissed out of hand as an incongruous addition to the Homeric portrait. It has been argued, for example, that “the romantic [...] exceeded in the Cycle the austere measures to which the *Iliad* confines [it]”, for “it [was] inevitable that Achilles, the most glamorous of heroes, should be given a *sex-life* richer than the Homeric epics allow him.”¹ As we shall see, however, the Iliadic conceptualisation of Achilles is, in fact, much more nuanced than usually thought, since the assumed dichotomy between an Iliadic Achilles isolated and obsessed with individual honour and a non-Iliadic Achilles less emotionally impassive simply does not exist on the sub-textual level of the *Iliad*, where the two extremes merge into an intricate sub-texture.

Achilles' “Erotic” Rendezvous with Helen

A good starting point for our discussion of the erotic Achilles outside Homer is a “rendezvous” that the hero has with Helen in the *Cypria*. Our only source of information about this –otherwise unattested–² “meeting” between Achilles and Helen at Troy is the summary of Proclus:

ἔπειτα ἀποβαίνοντας αὐτοὺς εἰς Ἴλιον εἴργουσιν οἱ Τρῶες, καὶ θνήσκει Πρωτεσίλαος ὑφ’ Ἐκτορος. ἔπειτα Ἀχιλλεὺς αὐτοὺς τρέπεται ἀνελῶν Κύκνον τὸν Ποσειδῶνος. καὶ τοὺς νεκροὺς ἀναιροῦνται. καὶ διαπρεσβεύονται πρὸς τοὺς Τρῶας, τὴν Ἑλένην καὶ τὰ κτήματα ἀπαιτοῦντες· ὡς δὲ οὐχ ὑπήκουσαν ἐκεῖνοι, ἐνταῦθα δὴ τειχομαχοῦσιν. ἔπειτα τὴν χώραν ἐπεξελθόντες πορθοῦσι καὶ τὰς περιοίκους πόλεις. καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα Ἀχιλλεὺς Ἑλένην ἐπιθυμεῖ θεάσασθαι, καὶ συνήγαγεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ Ἀφροδίτη καὶ Θέτις. εἶτα ἀπονοστεῖν ὠρμημένους τοὺς Ἀχαιοὺς Ἀχιλλεὺς κατέχει.

¹ GRIFFIN 1977: 43. GRIFFIN 1977: 43-44 also speaks about “the proliferation of intrigues and episodes of romance” and “the romantic creators of the Cycle”. Also, see above, p. 15 n. 23.

² GRIFFIN 1977: 44 n. 33 defends this episode on the grounds that “it is by no means the only romantic story in the Cycle”. Cf. TSAGALIS 2008: 93-96.

κάπειτα ἀπελαύνει τὰς Αἰνείου βοῦς, καὶ Λυρνησσὸν καὶ Πήδασον πορθεῖ καὶ συχνὰς τῶν περιοικίδων πόλεων, καὶ Τρωΐλον φονεύει. Λυκάονά τε Πάτροκλος εἰς Λῆμνον ἀγαγὼν ἀπεμπολεῖ.³

Then [the Greeks] disembark at Ilion and the Trojans try to repel them, and Protesilaus is killed by Hector. But then Achilles turns them back by killing Cynus, son of Poseidon. And they take back their dead. And they send negotiators to the Trojans to demand the return of Helen and the property. When they did not agree to the demands, then they began a siege. Next they go out over the country and destroy the surrounding settlements. After this Achilles has a desire to look upon Helen, and Aphrodite and Thetis bring the two of them together. Then when the Achaeans are eager to return home, Achilles holds them back. And then he drives off Aeneas' cattle. And he sacks Lyrnessus and Pedasus and many of the surrounding settlements, and he slays Troilus. And Patroclus takes Lycaon to Lemnos and sells him into slavery.

The encounter between Achilles and Helen takes place relatively shortly after the Greeks disembark at Troy. At first, the Trojans retain their courage and strive to ward off the Greeks. Those of the Trojans, however, who survive the terrible stampede, flee in terror back behind the city walls, as they are horrified at the killing of Cynus, son of Poseidon, at the hands of Achilles, while the plain before the city becomes covered with corpses. Then, the Trojans, though they are given the chance to negotiate with the Greeks, reject the latter's demand for the return of Helen and the property, and Troy becomes a city under siege, while the surrounding settlements are destroyed by the Greek army. At some point in this context, Achilles becomes desirous of seeing Helen and finally "meets" with her after the divine intervention of Thetis and Aphrodite. Sometime later, the hero restrains the Achaeans from fleeing to the ships and seizes the cattle of Aeneas, sacks Pedasos and Lyrnessos (among other Trojan cities), slays Troilus (presumably in ambush, as we shall see),⁴ and captures Lycaon, whom he sells as a slave through Patroclus. It would, therefore, seem to be the case that, at a time when the horrified Trojans are not willing to

³ Procl., *Chr.* 42-43.53-64 Bernabé = *Cypria* arg. 10-11 West.

⁴ See discussion below, pp. 132-37.

pursue armed hostilities with the Greeks⁵ and before he sets about to ambush the enemy, Achilles expresses his desire “to see” (*theásasthai*) Helen. But, again, it may be wise to remember that Proclus is telescoping events, so that things that seem closely related in his account may not have been so obviously related in the original narrative of the *Cypria*.

It is likely that the “meeting”-scene was much more elaborate than the sketchy outline that Proclus included in his condensed narrative. One cannot always be sure that Proclus reflected the emphases of the original, as he evidently picked on the things that struck him or his sources, which may not always have reflected the length of a given incident. In the present case, a meeting between two of the most important figures of Greek epic must have been a substantial incident, as Achilles asks for something that is not realisable within human terms, and so there is good reason to believe that the *Cypria* shares with the *Iliad* the same narrative pattern. As in *Iliad* 1 Achilles seeks his individual honour from Zeus through the agency of his goddess-mother Thetis (*Il.* 1.365-410; cf. 1.352-56), he would presumably express to her his desire “to see” Helen in the *Cypria* and would likewise ask her to intervene in order to make his desire possible. Thetis, then, would liaise either directly with Aphrodite or indirectly with Zeus and would ask for his intervention.⁶ The meeting, as Proclus tells us, is made possible with Aphrodite and Thetis eventually conveying Helen and Achilles, respectively,⁷ at the same place.⁸

It is a fact that the *Iliad* nowhere mentions, either briefly or allusively, that such a “meeting” ever took place or that Achilles ever had the desire to see Helen. To be sure, the *Iliad* makes *no* direct association between the two figures, and, even when Achilles acknowledges her, he suggestively refers to her as the root cause of the War

⁵ Cf. [Apollod.], *Epit.* 3.32 (μη θαρρούντων δὲ τῶν βαρβάρων). On Ps.-Apollodorus and his mythological handbook, see above, pp. 12-13.

⁶ On the latter possibility, see TSAGALIS 2008: 101, who points out that Zeus “owed [Thetis] a favor because she saved him from a plot that had been engineered against him by Hera, Poseidon, and Athena” (cf. *Il.* 1.396-406). However, deities in the *Iliad* (e.g., Hera and Aphrodite, Hera and Athene) often collaborate without involving Zeus.

⁷ On Aphrodite as “a traditional narrative means of making the meeting possible”, see TSAGALIS 2008: 97-106.

⁸ According to WEST 2013: 119, “[i]t seems easier to imagine that Aphrodite smuggled Helen through to Achilles’ hut, as Hermes does with Priam in *Iliad* 24, than that Achilles was smuggled into Troy. She may have concealed her in mist and carried her through the air, as she does Paris in *Il.* 3.380-2.”

against the Trojans. In his reply to Odysseus in *Il.* 9.337-39, Achilles wonders, “why must the Argives wage war against the Trojans? [...] Was it not for fair-haired Helen?” By asking this question, he simply points out the wrath over Helen as a valid precedent for his demand of Briseis. Moreover, while he laments for the death of Patroclus, he calls her “hateful” (*Il.* 19.325): εἵνεκα ῥιγεδανῆς Ἑλένης Τρωσὶν πολεμίζω (“for the sake of abhorred Helen I am warring with the men of Troy”). On any reading, therefore, the Iliadic Achilles is not enamoured of Helen and clearly shows no admiration for her and her prodigious beauty.

The *Iliad* suggests that its own “Achilles” has never seen Helen in person and that he has no personal motivation to fight the war for her sake. What the hero says to Agamemnon in *Il.* 1.152-69 is very suggestive:

οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ Τρώων ἔνεκ' ἦλυθον αἰχμητῶν	152
δεῦρο μαχησόμενος, ἐπεὶ οὐ τί μοι αἰτιοί εἰσιν.	
[...]	
ἀλλὰ σοὶ, ὦ μέγ' ἀναιδὲς, ἅμ' ἐσπόμεθ', ὄφρα σὺ χαίρης,	
τιμὴν ἀρνύμενοι Μενελάῳ σοὶ τε, κυνῶπα,	
πρὸς Τρώων· τῶν οὐ τι μετατρέπη οὐδ' ἀλεγίζεις·	160
καὶ δὴ μοι γέρας αὐτὸς ἀφαιρήσεσθαι ἀπειλεῖς.	
[...]	
νῦν δ' εἴμι Φθίηνδ[ε] [...].	169

I did not come here to fight because of the spearmen of Troy,
since they are in no way at fault toward me.

[...]

But you, shameless one, we followed here in order to please you,
seeking to win recompense for Menelaus and for you, dogface,
from the Trojans. This you do not regard or take thought of;
and you even threaten that you will yourself take from me the prize.

[...]

Now I will go to Phthia [...].

In a state of extreme anger and agitation, Achilles complains that he fights to win back the honour of Agamemnon and Menelaus (*Il.* 159-60), though he himself has no personal involvement in the story: “to *me* the Trojans have done nothing” (*Il.* 153).⁹

⁹ Cf. Σ (bT) *Il.* 1.153b: ἅμα μὲν δηλοῖ ὅτι οὐκ οἰκείαν πρόφασιν τῆς †στρατιᾶς† ἔχει (ἄλλως γὰρ ἂν προβάσῃς αἰτίας εὐλόγου ἐστράτευσεν, ἢ διὰ βοῦς ἐλαθείσας ἢ διὰ δηουμένην γῆν, οὐχὶ δ' ὡς οἱ Ἀτρεΐδαι διὰ πεπορνευκὸς γύναιον), ἅμα δέ γε παρεμφαίνει ὡς βιασθεὶς πρὸς Ἴλιον ἔπλευσεν.

This coheres well with the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 155.76-93 Most = fr. 204.38-55 M-W), according to which all the suitors of Helen sworn an oath to Tyndareos, her father, that they would all protect the rights of her legal husband and would fight for her sake in case she was abducted.¹⁰ Achilles is clearly *not* included among Helen's suitors, which entails that he is *not* bound by the oath of Tyndareos (fr. 155.87-92 Most = fr. 204.49-54 M-W):

Χείρων δ' ἐν Πηλίοι ὑλήεντι
 Πηλείδην ἐκόμιζε πόδας ταχύν, ἔξοχον ἀνδρῶν,
 παῖδ' ἔτ' ἐόν[τ'] οὐ γάρ μιν ἀρηΐφιλος Μενέλαος
 νίκησ' οὐδέ τις ἄλλος ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων
 μνηστεύων Ἑλένην, εἴ μιν κίχε παρθένον οὔσαν
 οἴκαδε νοστήσας ἐκ Πηλίου ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς.

90

Chiron on wooden Pelion
 was taking care of Peleus' swift-footed son, greatest of men,
 who was still a boy; for neither warlike Menelaus
 nor any other human on the earth would have defeated him
 in wooing Helen, if swift Achilles had found her still a virgin
 when he came back home from Pelion.

The *Catalogue* makes it explicit that, during the time when Helen was being wooed by the aspiring suitors, Achilles was still a *páis* (89); otherwise, no one –neither Menelaus nor anyone else– would have a chance of getting married with her apart from Achilles (89-92).¹¹

The oath receives no explicit mention in Homer, yet the *Iliad* seems to presuppose it.¹² It suggestively gives Achilles no compulsion to fight the war against the Trojans by having him emphatically saying that the Trojans have done nothing *to him* personally (*Il.* 1.153), and so it implicitly distinguishes him from those leaders and

¹⁰ See esp. Hes., *Cat.* fr. 155.78-83 Most = fr. 204.40-45 M-W. Cf. Eur., *Iph. Aul.* 57ff., Thuc. 1.9, Paus. 3.20.9, Σ (D) *Il.* 2.339, and Tz. on Lyc., *Alex.* 204.

¹¹ It is not inconceivable, of course, that there were epic versions of the tradition that made Achilles older and placed him among the suitors, just as Euripides refers to Achilles as Helen's suitor (*Hel.* 98-99). If there ever were, however, they were never the dominant versions. It is very suggestive that none of the other surviving catalogues includes Achilles in the list of the suitors of Helen. See [Apollod.], *Bibl.* 3.8, and Hyg., *Fab.* 81.

¹² So does the *Odyssey*: see below, p. 174 n. 5.

heroes who *were* bound to fight, presumably by the oath.¹³ If Achilles were bound by an oath to fight at Troy, he and his interlocutors could not view his withdrawal from the fighting and willingness to leave Troy altogether as a matter of personal choice. He threatens to withdraw from battle and to take his people, the Myrmidons, back home to Phthia (*Il.* 1.169-71), while Agamemnon tells him that he can leave, if he wants (*Il.* 1.173-81). So, there is no compulsion and no personal motivation for Achilles, who sees himself as free and simply fights for honour out of solidarity. The hero stresses the fact that he followed Agamemnon in order to win recompense for both Menelaus and Agamemnon from the Trojans (*Il.* 1.158-59), while Agamemnon replies that he is not begging him to stay for his sake, saying that there are others that will honour him (*Il.* 1.173-75). There is, therefore, good reason to believe that, although the oath receives no mention, the *Iliad* presupposes its existence, as well as the fact that Achilles is not bound by the oath, which, in turn, suggests that the hero has no personal experience of Helen and thus no personal reason to participate.

In the *Cypria*, on the other hand, there is probably something that instills in Achilles the desire to see Helen. A request such as this, which brings into play not one but two goddesses to effect it, is unlikely to have gone unmotivated in the narrative. Helen's reputation for unrivalled beauty is the obvious motive, possibly (though this is less certain) discussion of Helen's beauty among the Argives,¹⁴ perhaps even debate about the adequacy of Helen as a *casus belli*. This question is raised by the old men sitting around Priam in *Iliad* 3, when they see Helen approaching the wall of Troy,¹⁵ which indicates that such a debate is not inconceivable elsewhere in epic. Seen from this angle, it is not surprising that at some point Achilles, curious perhaps about Helen and her exceptional beauty,¹⁶ expresses a desire "to see" or "to look upon" (*theásasthai*) her. It is, then, not

¹³ Cf. KULLMANN 1960: 138 n. 1. Besides, though age relationships in the *Iliad* are not explicit, the other major heroes (Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Odysseus) are married already, a sign of full maturity, while Achilles is unmarried and not a ruler in his own right. So, the *Iliad* makes Achilles unambiguously younger and therefore not a candidate to marry Helen.

¹⁴ What Agamemnon says to Nestor in *Il.* 9.138-40 (=280-82) is suggestive: "[I]f hereafter the gods grant us to lay waste the great city of Priam, let [Achilles] then enter in [...] and himself choose twenty Trojan women who are fairest after Argive Helen."

¹⁵ See *Il.* 3.156-58: "Small blame that Trojans and well-greaved Achaeans should for such a woman long suffer woes; she is dreadfully like immortal goddesses to look on."

¹⁶ Cf. SEVERYNS 1928: 596.

difficult to see how an encounter with Helen would work on the hero. It presumably engages Achilles personally, providing him with an understanding why Greeks fight,¹⁷ as well as a personal motivation to fight against the Trojans. Although a personal motivation is not necessarily needed in a world in which warriors compete for honour, it stills helps, as it is a useful way of motivating Achilles, if one considers the fact that he has never experienced Helen's beauty so far. Moreover, it enhances the plausibility of the vigorous passion with which Achilles fights the war against the Trojans and kills on a large scale.

The nature of the encounter of Achilles with Helen is not entirely clear.¹⁸ On the one hand, there is good reason to suggest that their rendezvous is an erotic one, for the verb *συνάγειν* in the phrase *συνήγαγεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ Ἀφροδίτη καὶ Θέτις* is again used by Proclus in his description of the "union" between Helen and Paris in Sparta:

ἐν τούτῳ δὲ Ἀφροδίτη συνάγει τὴν Ἑλένην τῷ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ. καὶ μετὰ τὴν μίξιν τὰ πλεῖστα κτήματα ἐνθέμενοι νυκτὸς ἀποπλέουσι.¹⁹

Then Aphrodite brings Helen together with Alexander, and after making love they put most of Menelaus' property on board and sail away in the night.

In the case of Helen and Paris, as has been noted, "[t]he verb *συνάγειν* together with the noun *μίξις* and the intervention of Aphrodite overtly designate an erotic context. Is it possible to argue that the erotic element is latent in the meeting between Achilles and Helen, given that two of the three aforementioned features (*συνάγειν* and Aphrodite) are also present?"²⁰ The answer is perhaps yes. The scene may be ripe with erotic potential and may well include an element of sexual desire, certainly the potential for a sexual encounter. On the other hand, however, our evidence, such as it is, does not allow us to assume that Achilles and Helen have a sexual encounter

¹⁷ Cf. WEST 2013: 119 and TSAGALIS 2008: 96.

¹⁸ Cf. BURGESS 2001: 169.

¹⁹ Procl., *Chr.* 42-43.53-64 Bernabé = *Cypria* arg. 2 West.

²⁰ TSAGALIS 2008: 102.

in a physical sense.²¹ Proclus' silence and the absence of anything like *míxis* with reference to Achilles and Helen are both very suggestive.

The probability that Achilles and Helen had a rendezvous with erotic overtones may be strengthened by other sources, mostly later in date. First of all, the clarification in the *Catalogue of Women* that, if Achilles was a suitor of Helen, then he would be the one who would have married her,²² perhaps suggests that archaic epos was not unaware of an erotic link between Helen and the hero.²³ Second, there are sources, for example, Pausanias (3.19.11-3.20.1), which show Achilles and Helen as lovers in the afterlife.²⁴ Third, Lycophron makes Achilles a husband of Helen and associates the two in a dream with erotic implications. In the *Alexandra*, Cassandra predicts that Helen will have five husbands, including Achilles, together with Theseus, Menelaus, Paris, and Deiphobos (142-46). Then, she prophesies that Achilles, Helen's fifth husband, being distracted by Helen, whom he sees in a dream, will thrash around in his sleep (171-74). Tzetzes gives two versions, either that Helen's vision makes Achilles toss and turn and wears him out as though he has sexual intercourse with her or that Achilles sees Helen on the city wall, and then Thetis intervenes, on her son's prompt, so that he makes love to Helen in a dream (on Lyc., Alex. 172 and 174, respectively). Finally, according to the Σ (b) *Il.* 3.140, "Achilles was married to Helen in a dream". All these accounts present Achilles and Helen in associations where the erotic element is strong, even as husband and wife.

²¹ Cf. WEST 2013: 119. Contrast DAVIES 1989: 46.

²² See above, p. 72.

²³ Cf. TSAGALIS 2008: 102.

²⁴ Cf. Ptolemaeus Chennus *apud* Phot., *Bibl.* 149a19; Philostr., *Her.* 54.8-13. Also, there are pictorial representations from the first century BC which, though the figures are not identified, may show Achilles and Helen on the Isles of the Blessed. For a discussion and further bibliography, see TSAGALIS 2008: 105-6. According to Pausanias, Leonymus, a general from Croton in Southern Italy, visits Leuke (the White Island), where he finds Achilles residing with Helen. Helen bids Leonymus to tell the poet Stesichorus that his blindness was caused by her wrath, so in response to her message Stesichorus composes the *Palinode*, an encomium that exculpates Helen from blame for the Trojan War. For the view that Pausanias' account of Stesichorus and Helen in 3.19 does not derive from his reading of Stesichorus but is based upon the first-century BC mythographer Conon, see SIDER 1989: 425-26 n. 11. There is a question as to whether the story is rooted in an earlier tradition, or it is a late invention constructed to provide the background for the story of Stesichorus' blindness: see BEECROFT 2010: 162 together with n. 39.

We have seen, however, that, as far as can be inferred from Proclus, the *Cypria* was much more restrained.

In the Proclan narrative of the *Cypria*, as we have seen, there is a scene where the Achaeans rush towards their ships to leave Troy,²⁵ but Achilles intervenes against their embarkation. As we now have it, Achilles' restraining of the Achaeans follows sequentially and possibly consequentially²⁶ immediately after his "meeting" with Helen. This, of course, may be misleading, but we may still argue that the encounter with Helen does exert –sooner or later– a significant influence on the hero's willingness to support and commit to the continuation of the war against the Trojans for the sake of Helen,²⁷ especially if we consider the fact that Achilles is under no personal compulsion until the meeting. In his admiration for Helen's unique beauty, Achilles now probably has a good reason to fight the Trojans. This compulsion is of a sort we would not get in Homer but one which is perfectly at home in the Epic Cycle, in which the erotic element is strong, as has been well argued.²⁸ Yet, Achilles' experience of Helen's beauty in the *Cypria* need not be erotic in the literal way in which eroticism was developed in later sources between Achilles and Helen. It is more likely that the poem opens a potential plot development which is suggested but never realised in the narrative we are given. The nearest parallel for an erotic episode "almost" of this sort would perhaps be the encounter between Nausicaa and Odysseus in *Odyssey* 6. Scenes charged with sexual implications, but latent sexuality which does not turn into a relationship, and a play with the audience's expectations:

²⁵ The army is presumably broken, worn out, and short of supplies, such as food (KULLMANN 1955: 260 suggests that Thucydides (1.11.1-2) knows of the strains of the Trojan War directly or indirectly from the *Cypria*). This is presumably the reason why Agamemnon sends for the daughters of Anios, the Oinotropoi, who were granted by Dionysus the power of producing oil, corn, and wine from the earth (cf. *Cypria* fr. 29 Bernabé = 26 West (= Tz. on Lyc., *Alex.* 570); for a reconstruction of the episode, see WEST 2013: 123-25.). Perhaps, we can also relate the army's worrisome supply shortages with the following seizure of Aeneias' cattle and the pillaging of Lyrnessos, Pedasos, and other surrounding cities, by Achilles.

²⁶ The adverb εἴτα that in Proclus' text connects the two scenes allows for both meanings.

²⁷ Cf. KULLMANN 1955: 260, GANTZ 1993: 596, TSAGALIS 2008: 95 n. 8, and WEST 2013: 119.

²⁸ See GRIFFIN 1977: 43-45.

Nausicaa has to be susceptible to Odysseus in order to rescue him, but Odysseus cannot fall in love with her.²⁹

Two approaches have been put forward by scholars so far, either that the “meeting” between Achilles and Helen in the *Cypria*, pre-Homeric in origin, has been suppressed in the *Iliad* tradition for stylistic and thematic reasons,³⁰ or that it constitutes a post-Homeric accretion to the *Iliad*, which reflects the aesthetic perceptions of a new era.³¹

With regards to the first approach, that the “meeting” between Achilles and Helen in the *Cypria* is pre-Homeric in origin, there is only one thing we can be sure of, that we definitely cannot prove that Homer knew of this incident. One might argue that the *Iliad* shows some extent of familiarity with the stories that ultimately took on textual form in the *Cypria*, as there are some analogies between episodes in the *Iliad* and episodes in the *Cypria* that precede and follow the “meeting” of Achilles with Helen. In the *Cypria*, Greek negotiators demand the return of Helen and the property, the Trojans say no, and the war resumes, as in *Iliad* 3. Also, the Achaeans rush to their ships, but Achilles holds them back, as in *Iliad* 2 Odysseus together

²⁹ A useful analogy (though the interpersonal dynamics are different) is the battling encounters in the *Iliad*. In a narrative when the outcome seems inevitable, the *Iliad* teases its audience when it sets up the impossible. A good example is the duel between Paris and Menelaus in *Iliad* 3. Although the audience presumably knows that Paris will be mortally wounded by Philoctetes (cf. Procl., *Chr.* 74.8 Bernabé = *Little Iliad* arg. 2 West), Menelaus comes close to finishing their duel, when Aphrodite eventually spirits Paris away and sets him down in his bedroom. Similarly, although Aeneias is destined to become king of the Trojan people (*Il.* 20.307-8), he has a nearly fatal encounter with Diomedes and Achilles in *Iliad* 5 and 20, respectively, and is eventually rescued by Aphrodite, Apollo, and Poseidon. Thus, the *Iliad* always plays with the audience’s frustrated and satisfied expectations. For further bibliography, see RUTHERFORD 2013: 52 n. 24.

³⁰ See TSAGALIS 2008: 111: “Helen [...] acquires a meta-traditional function, as she emblemizes an oral tradition that is incompatible with the tragic notion of the heroic world thematized by Iliadic Achilles. In the *Iliad* Achilles ‘erases’ his admiration for Helen as reflected in the *Cypria*. When the listeners hear the son of Thetis say εἵνεκα ῥιγεδανῆς Ἑλένης Τρωσὶν πολεμίζω (*Iliad* XIX 325), they are invited to recall the meeting scene between the most beautiful woman in the world and the best of the Achaeans and to realize that the erotic framework of the *Cypria* tradition has been turned into a lament scene in the Iliadic tradition. Beautiful Helen is now coined ‘accursed’ (ῥιγεδανή), whereas infatuated Achilles has become a mourner. He no longer desires to see Helen, but wishes simply to lament.”

³¹ See, e.g., GRIFFIN 1977: 43-45. For further bibliography, see TSAGALIS 2008: 93 n. 3.

with Nestor assumes a similar role. But, given the presence of recurrent motifs in the tradition, the problem with such passages is that they do not point unambiguously to the priority of the *Cypria* tradition over the *Iliad*, or vice versa.³² It is true, however, that the *Iliad* knows of specific episodes that in the *Cypria* precede and follow the “meeting”. In *Il.* 3.205ff., Antenor recalls an earlier embassy that was led by Odysseus and Menelaus, and there are allusions to episodes that in the *Cypria* follow upon the “meeting”; for example, Achilles seizes the cattle of Aeneas (*Il.* 20.90-93 and 188-94), sacks Pedasos and Lyrnessos (*Il.* 2.688-693 and 19.295-96), slays Troilus presumably in ambush (*Il.* 24.257?), and captures Lycaon whom he sells as a slave through Patroclus (*Il.* 21.34-44 and 23.746-47).³³ But again, though the *Iliad* does show some familiarity with the tradition that we meet in the *Cypria*, we still cannot prove that the poem knows specifically of a “meeting” of Achilles with Helen, much less one that infuses into the hero an overwhelming eagerness to fight for her sake. In the first place, the Iliadic Achilles never meets with Helen and never has the desire to do so. Second, his decision to withdraw from battle makes it, as we have seen, explicit that he considers his *timē* (personal honour) to be more important than the goal of the War,³⁴ which is to win Helen back and to restore Menelaus’ kingly honour. He appears to have no personal involvement in the situation, unlike the *Cypria*, where the fact that he restrains the Achaeans from fleeing suggests that his experience with Helen and her extraordinary beauty probably renders him a fervent proponent of the resumption of the War.

If Achilles’ “meeting” with Helen is already in circulation and Homer knows it, then one could argue that the *Iliad* remains silent on an episode which does not square with the conceptualisation of the Iliadic Achilles. However, unlike the death of Iphigeneia or the death of Achilles, for example, which do not appear in Homer

³² GRIFFIN 1977: 44 assumes that the mutiny-scene in the *Cypria* was modelled upon the *Iliad* (cf. SEVERYNS 1928: 304), arguing that “we have the reusing and transformation of an Iliadic motif: The mutiny of *Iliad* 2 and its suppression has been given a romantic and un-Homeric motivation; the army must stay at Troy because Achilles has seen the beauty of Helen.” This is, of course, a biased perception based on the misleading assumption that anything “romantic” was an inelegant addition to the Homeric portrait. On the other hand, KULLMANN’s supposition (1955: 253-73) about the priority of the *Cypria* over the *Iliad* and the modeling of the one scene upon the other is likewise tendentious.

³³ On the last two episodes, see discussion below, pp. 132-37 and 121-22, respectively.

³⁴ Cf. GANTZ 1993: 596.

but which are so much part of the tradition that we can reasonably be sure that he knew it,³⁵ the meeting between Achilles and Helen is not a central incident in the tradition. Therefore, given that, apart from the *Cypria*, nowhere else in the Archaic and Classical tradition is such a “meeting” picked up, we can perhaps conclude that the incident probably postdates the monumental composition of the *Iliad*. The absence of direct association between Achilles and Helen, the best of the Achaeans and the most beautiful woman in the world, would arguably leave a conspicuous gap in the story of the Trojan War. The *Cypria*, as we now have it, by bringing the two figures together, perhaps capitalised on the available room, thus exploiting an opportunity that the tradition itself virtually opened.³⁶

With that being said, however, a compelling case can still be made for the possibility that, though the “meeting” between Achilles and Helen is unlikely to be traditional in itself, the characterisation of Achilles on which this encounter is based is, in fact, traditional. In the epic tradition outside the *Iliad*, as we shall see in subsequent sections, the hero is not exclusively focused on his preoccupation with *timē*, and his emotions, rather than merely being driven by the heroic code of excellence, have a noticeably wider range. Achilles is certainly more magnanimous towards the enemy in the tradition of the *Cypria*, where he spares the life of Lycaon, and, more to the point, he is more susceptible to gentler emotions and female beauty in the tradition of the *Aethiopis*, where he grieves deeply over the death of the Amazon queen Penthesileia. The erotic encounter between Achilles and Helen, closer to ordinary human experience as it is, could be seen as reflecting the degeneration of the tradition after the emergence of the individual conceptualisation of the Homeric Achilles. But, rather than assuming a simple chronological and linear evolution or degeneration, we should accept the possibility that, in fact, the *Cypria*, so far from adding a decadent detail to Homer’s presentation, returns to the more traditional conceptualisation of Achilles beyond Homer and that the intertextual

³⁵ The sacrifice of Iphigeneia does not appear in Homer, but he presumably knows it, especially as in *Il.* 1.106-8 Agamemnon accuses Calchas of never predicting anything good for him. Cf. WEST 2013: 110-11 and DOWDEN 1996: 53. The judgement of Paris, which is briefly alluded to only once and late in the narrative of the *Iliad* (*Il.* 24.25-30), is another piece of evidence that Homer can omit features which are central to the tradition, i.e., that silence does not guarantee ignorance.

³⁶ See GRIFFIN 1977: 44: “[A] link between Achilles and Helen was naturally too tempting not to be forged.” Cf. WEST 2013: 118-19 and SEVERYNS 1928: 304.

connection between the *Iliad* and the *Cypria* may be one in which the latter reacts to the more austere Achilles of the former. The *Cypria*, on the one hand, associates Achilles and Helen, a creation *ex nihilo*, but, on the other hand, it restates and gestures creatively towards a less prominent strand of the characterisation of Achilles that we meet in the tradition outside Homer. So, Achilles’ “rendezvous” with Helen does not simply fill in gaps; rather the *Cypria*, by adding this encounter, possibly responds creatively to both the Homeric and the non-Homeric tradition. On this reading, the purpose of the *Cypria* is something more than throwing some more sexual love into the epic mix, as it does not simply generate, but, in what we may call “restorative reception” of Homer, it restores a more covert –as we shall see below– aspect of the idiosyncratic characterisation of the Iliadic Achilles.

To judge by the synopsis of Proclus and the notices we have, the *Cypria* in its final textual form was not great poetry. It lacked the organic quality of the *Iliad*, as already noted in antiquity by Aristotle (*Poetics* 1459a36-b7). Also, it ended with a very awkward cliff-hanger, which seems designed to link it directly to the beginning of the *Iliad* in something like the form in which we have it, Zeus’ plan to relieve the Trojans by removing Achilles from the Greek alliance and the catalogue of the Trojans’ allies. Nonetheless, the *Cypria* –and non-Homeric early Greek epic poetry in general– can still contribute not only to a better understanding of the poem’s early creative engagement with the larger epic reservoir, as we have seen, but also to a more sophisticated comprehension of Homer’s dynamics, both dialogical and competitive, with the wider epic tradition. For, as we shall now see, the *Iliad*, though it does not seem to know of any “rendezvous” of Achilles with Helen and seemingly elides the dimension of *érōs* from *its* conceptualisation of Achilles, still both acknowledges and simultaneously by acknowledging downplays with great subtlety the traditional characterisation of Achilles upon which the encounter in the *Cypria* is based. The way that Homer presents the relationship of Achilles with Briseis is very instructive.

The reply of Achilles to Odysseus in the embassy scene of *Iliad* 9 is a good starting point to examine the reasoning behind the hero’s decision to assert his claim of Briseis in the extreme (*Il.* 9.335-45):

ἐμεῦ [...] ἀπὸ μόνου Ἀχαιῶν
εἴλετ’, ἔχει δ’ ἄλοχον θυμαρέα. τῆ παριαύων

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τερπέσθω. τί δὲ δεῖ πολεμιζέμεναι Τρώεσσι
 Ἀργείους; τί δὲ λαὸν ἀνήγαγεν ἐνθάδ' ἀγείρας
 Ἀτρείδης; ἢ οὐχ Ἑλένης ἔνεκ' ἠυκόμοιο;
 ἢ μοῦνοι φιλέουσ' ἀλόχους μερόπων ἀνθρώπων 340
 Ἀτρείδαι; ἐπεὶ ὅς τις ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς καὶ ἐχέφρων
 τὴν αὐτοῦ φιλέει καὶ κήδετα, ὡς καὶ ἐγὼ τὴν
ἐκ θυμοῦ φίλεον, δουρικτητὴν περ ἐοῦσαν.
 νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ ἐκ χειρῶν γέρας εἴλετο καὶ μ' ἀπάτησε,
 μή μεν πειράτω ἐν εἰδότος· οὐδέ με πείσει.

From me alone of the Achaeans
 he has taken and keeps [the bride] of my heart. Let him lie by her side
 and take his joy. But why must the Argives wage war against the
 Trojans? Why has he gathered and led here an army, this son of Atreus?
 Was it not for fair-haired Helen's sake?
 Do they then alone of mortal men love their wives, these sons of
 Atreus? Whoever is a true man, and sound of mind,
 loves his own and cherishes her, just as I too loved her
with all my heart, though she was but the captive of my spear. / But
 now, since he has taken from my hands my prize, and has deceived me,
 let him not tempt me who know him well; he will not persuade me.

Achilles very suggestively claims that, by taking possession of Briseis, Agamemnon
 robbed him of “the bride of his heart” (336: *álokhon thumaréa*).³⁷ The love of
 Achilles for Briseis subtly –and deliberately, perhaps– evokes the powerful love that
 Odysseus has for Penelope, as the phrase *álokhon thumaréa* is used only one other
 time in Homer and only of Penelope, when tearful Odysseus eventually gives her a
 loving embrace in *Od.* 23.232. As has been rightly argued, “the use of familiar
 language would have been a nice way for Achilles to persuade Odysseus of the
 intensity of his own feelings for Briseis.”³⁸

In the same passage, moreover, Achilles very emphatically draws attention to the
 analogy between his rupture with Agamemnon and the Trojan War, by posing some
 crucial questions: why are the Achaeans fighting the Trojans? Is it not the case that

³⁷ The reference of Achilles to Briseis as his *álokhos* has troubled some editors, who proposed a new
 punctuation (some punctuate 336 with a period after εἴλετ'), so that Achilles would be referring to the
álokhos of Agamemnon (see discussion in FANTUZZI 2012: 108). However, FANTUZZI 2012: 109
 rightly points out, among others, that “it would still be strange for [Agamemnon], no less than for
 Achilles, to view a concubine as his ἄλοχος.”

³⁸ FANTUZZI 2012: 108.

the Trojan War was waged against the city of Troy by the Achaeans over the taking of Helen (337-39), or is it that only the sons of Atreas “love their wives” (*philéous’ alókhous*)? (340) In this analogy, Achilles claims that he loves Briseis no less than Agamemnon and Menelaus love Clytemnestra and Helen, respectively. To put it differently, Briseis is made by implication equivalent of both Helen and Clytemnestra on an emotional level. This coheres well with Achilles’ next sentimental statement.

Although in line 344 Achilles clearly states that, in taking Briseis, Agamemnon deprived him of a “prize” (*gérās*), which points unambiguously to a competitive Achilles focused primarily on his own honour, the hero does explicitly declare his intense emotional attachment to Briseis in the preceding triplet (341-43), where he says that, though Briseis was a war captive (*douriktētēn per eoúsan*), he “loved her from [his] heart” (*tēn ek thumou phileon*), as any virtuous and prudent man loves her who is his own (*tēn autoú*) and cares for her.³⁹ Here, as has been rightly pointed out, Achilles “precisely [makes] the point that his feelings go deeper than the “official” *φιλία* (*philia*) which any right-minded man should feel for τὴν αὐτοῦ (his own woman).”⁴⁰ A comparison between Briseis and Chryseis is highly instructive.

In stark contrast with the affective relationship between Achilles and Briseis, Chryseis seems to have only systemic value for Agamemnon (*Il.* 1.113-20):

καὶ γὰρ ῥα Κλυταιμνήστρης προβέβουλα
 κουριδίης ἀλόχου, ἐπεὶ οὐ ἔθεν ἐστὶ χερείων,
 οὐ δέμας οὐδὲ φυήν, οὔτ’ ἄρ φρένας οὔτε τι ἔργα. 115
 ἀλλὰ καὶ ὣς ἐθέλω δόμεναι πάλιν, εἰ τό γ’ ἄμεινον·
 βούλομ’ ἐγὼ λαὸν σόον ἔμμεναι ἢ ἀπολέσθαι.
 αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ γέρας αὐτίχ’ ἐτοιμάσατ’, ὄφρα μὴ οἶος
 Ἀργείων ἀγέραςτος ἔω, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ ἔοικε·
 λεύσσετε γὰρ τό γε πάντες, ὃ μοι γέρας ἔρχεται ἄλλη. 120

For in fact I prefer [Chryseis] to Clytemnestra,
 my wedded wife, since she is in no way inferior to her,
 either in form or in stature, or in mind, or in handiwork.
 But even so I am minded to give her back if that is better;
 I would rather have the army safe than perishing.

³⁹ The fact that the phrase *ek thumou phileon* is used only one other time (*Il.* 9.486) by Phoenix of his devotion to Achilles is also very suggestive.

⁴⁰ TAPLIN 1992: 215.

But for me make ready a prize at once, so that I may not be the only one of the Argives without a prize, since that is not right; for you all see this, that my prize goes from me elsewhere.

Agamemnon admits that he prefers Chryseis to Clytemnestra, “the wife of his marriage” (*kouridiēs alókhōu*), since she is in no way inferior in body or stature, or good sense or the craft of her hands (113-15). As has been pointed out, however, Agamemnon “appears able and willing to replace Chryseis with Briseis without much ado, for either woman would satisfy his need for a signifier of prestige” (116-20).⁴¹ That is not the case with Achilles and Briseis, who is assigned not only *systemic* but also *emotional* value as both signifier of glamour (*gēras*) and object of affection (*álokhos thumarēs*), respectively.⁴² By stressing that his relationship with Briseis is no mere master-and-slave business,⁴³ Achilles clearly shows himself to be “sensitive to the pull of affection between a man and his woman.”⁴⁴ The emotional turbulence of Achilles due to Agamemnon’s taking of Briseis can perhaps be better explained in the light of this double (both *systemic* and *affective*) relationship with the girl.

Now, how realistic is Achilles’ claim that Agamemnon robbed him of “the bride of his heart” (336: *álokhon thumaréa*)? In her lament for Patroclus, Briseis recalls that, on the very first moment of her capture, Patroclus nurtured hopes to her that Achilles would marry her and that she could become his lawful wife, *kouridiē álokhos* (*Il.* 19.295-99). It has been argued that “Briseis, a captive slave, could not become the *kouridiē álokhos* of Achilles” and that “Patroclus has been trying to console her.”⁴⁵ This, however, is to oversimplify the sexual and personal relationships between master and slave in the epic world. Briseis is, indeed, a war captive from Lyrnessos and is only one among other women who were captured by Achilles (cf. *Il.* 2.688-94 and 20.191-94). In the *Iliad*, captive women are treated either collectively or individually. For example, Achilles offers a crowd of captured

⁴¹ SUZUKI 1989: 24.

⁴² Cf. SUZUKI 1989: 24.

⁴³ Cf. TAPLIN 1992: 215 and FANTUZZI 2012: 108, who points out that “Achilles, who is not married, goes beyond even Agamemnon, who in dialogue with Achilles in book 1 had compared Chryseis to his wife Clytemnestra”.

⁴⁴ ZANKER 1994: 75.

⁴⁵ WILLCOCK 1984 on *Il.* 19.297-98.

women in the Funeral Games for Patroclus (*Il.* 23.257-61). On the other hand, captive women can be named individuals, for example, sex slaves. In *Il.* 9.663-68, we see that Achilles sleeps with Diomedes and Patroclus with Iphis. However, far from being only a mere possession or no more than a means of obtaining sexual gratification, some of these captured women are appreciated and singled out for other qualities that they may have, such as their beauty, good sense, or craft. A case in point is Hecamede, who is captured by Achilles and assigned to Nestor as a special gift for his supremacy over all in the giving of advice (cf. *Il.* 11.624ff. and 14.5-7).⁴⁶ Therefore, Patroclus' consoling promise suggests that the upgrade of a concubine to *kouridiē álokhos* (*Il.* 19.298) was not a fundamentally unthinkable possibility.⁴⁷ Besides, one thing which makes the promise of Patroclus more plausible is the status of these females, including Briseis. In the idealising epic world, these captive females are always women of high status before they are enslaved. Achilles, therefore, does not seem to make an unrealistic claim when, comparing Briseis to Helen and Clytemnestra, he invites Odysseus to see her as the bride of his heart.

One might argue, of course, that Achilles "invents" his love for Briseis purely for political purposes, that is, that he thinks it advantageous to appear to love Briseis, embodying Menelaus' love for Helen in his case against Agamemnon.⁴⁸ We have no reason, however, to suspect Achilles of lying, especially as, just a minute ago, Achilles said that "hateful in [his] eyes as the gates of Hades is that man who hides

⁴⁶ As TAPLIN 1992: 214 n.17 points out, "[Hecamede] takes good care of Nestor and his guest, skillfully mixing a brew and providing *mezes*". Another example is Chryseis: see *Il.* 1.113-15 and discussion in the preceding paragraph.

⁴⁷ DUÉ 2002: 67 has argued that "Briseis can be a *kouridiē álokhos* because, as a widow [cf. *Il.* 19.287-300], she reverts to her father's household and becomes a *kourē* again." Cf. DUÉ 2002: 49-65. This is, however, a rather legalistic way of looking at it. The epic does not have such a precise sense of jurisprudence.

⁴⁸ For a thorough discussion of the scholia which unanimously consider Achilles' statements to be an exaggeration (cf. GRIFFIN 1995: 114-15), see FANTUZZI 2012: 109-11. As FANTUZZI 2012: 128 points out, "[t]he text of the *Iliad* does not provide much detail about sentimental feeling, and still less about the erotic feelings of Achilles. But in order to shore up Achilles' ethos as solidly, impeccably "heroic", the ancient scholiasts minimized this romantic dimension to the Iliadic Achilles yet further, almost to the point of effacing it entirely."

one thing in his mind and says another” (*Il.* 9.312-13).⁴⁹ Moreover, the fact that just a little later Achilles looks determined to marry a woman among the many Achaean women across Hellas and Phthia (*Il.* 9.393-400) is not fundamentally incompatible with his claim that Briseis is a woman whom she loves from the depths of his heart. For he does not say that he prefers other women to Briseis. With Briseis remaining in Agamemnon’s hands,⁵⁰ he prefers other women from Hellas and Phthia to Agamemnon’s daughter, who is offered by her father in order to induce the disaffected hero to return to active service. Similarly, the fact that, when the emissaries leave, Achilles has sex with Diomedes (*Il.* 9.663-65), one of his concubines, does not really undermine his earlier claim that Briseis has a personal value for him, as there is no suggestion in the text that she replaces Briseis as the centre of his affections; indeed, there is no indication whatever of Achilles’ feelings toward her. What this demonstrates instead is that in the Homeric world as in Greece of the historical period sex can be approached in a purely functional manner.⁵¹ Therefore, there can be very little doubt that Achilles’ intimate feelings for Briseis are real and valid.

On the face of it, however, it seems that Achilles dismissively scapegoats Briseis so as to effect reconciliation with Agamemnon (*Il.* 19.56-62):

Ἀτρείδη, ἧ ἄρ τι τόδ’ ἀμφοτέροισιν ἄρειον
 ἔπλετο, σοὶ καὶ ἐμοί, ὃ τε νῶϊ περ ἀχλυμένω κῆρ
 θυμοβόρω ἔριδι μενεήναμεν εἵνεκα κούρης;
τὴν ὄφελ’ ἐν νήεσσι κατακτάμεν Ἄρτεμις ἰῶ,
ἧματι τῷ ὅτ’ ἐγὼν ἐλόμην Λυρνησσὸν ὀλέσσας; 60
 τὼ κ’ οὐ τόσσοι Ἀχαιοὶ ὀδαξ ἔλον ἄσπετον οὐδας
 δυσμενέων ὑπὸ χερσίν, ἐμεῦ ἀπομηνίσαντος.

Son of Atreus, was this then better for us both,
 for you and for me, that then with grief at heart
 we raged in soul-devouring strife for the sake of a girl?

⁴⁹ Cf. TAPLIN 1992: 215.

⁵⁰ Achilles, blind with anger, disregards the fact that Agamemnon does offer Briseis back (see *Il.* 9.365-69). For the hero it is as if Odysseus has never spoken the lines at *Il.* 9.273-75.

⁵¹ See, also, TAPLIN 1992: 215: “The main point is that, while Achilles has a good time, Agamemnon has no joy of his abduction – it is emphasised that he never has sex with Briseis (9.132-34, 274-76; 19.175-77, 187-88, and finally 19.258-65).”

I wish that among the ships Artemis had slain her with an arrow on the day when I chose her after I had sacked Lyrnessus!

Then not so many Achaeans would have bitten the vast earth with their teeth at the hands of the foe because of the fierceness of my wrath.

Achilles, referring anonymously to Briseis as *kourē* (58: “a girl” or “the girl”), expresses the wish that Artemis had killed her before she occasioned his quarrel with Agamemnon (56-60), which, as it is implied, engendered his wrath that led to the loss of so many Achaeans (61-62). In and of itself, of course, the fact points to an awareness that Briseis was part of the cause of his quarrel with Agamemnon. Yet, Achilles clearly also accepts *personal responsibility* when he says that it was because of *his* wrath that so many Achaeans lost their lives at the hands of the Trojans (61-62). So, rather than considering this speech to be *la fin* in the affective relationship between the hero and his woman,⁵² we should perhaps accept the possibility that the hyperbolic statement is part of the rhetoric that Achilles uses to admit *his* mistake at having quarreled with Agamemnon and to express his regret for the loss of so many Achaeans *and* Patroclus. As the scholiast notes (bT on *Il.* 19.59-60), Achilles δεινοποιεῖ (=amplifies) [...] διὰ τὴν τελευτὴν Πατρόκλου. One should not conclude from his hyperbolic statement of regret that his feelings for Briseis are fundamentally changed. What the statement demonstrates, instead, is that Patroclus – and, in hindsight, the safety of the Greeks – is much more important than the hero’s feelings about her. As has been correctly argued, “[Achilles] would rather [Briseis] were dead than have regained her at this price.”⁵³

One must, nevertheless, note the dynamic indecisiveness of *Iliad* 9, which clearly invites us to see Briseis as *both* an object of affection and chattel. For, although Achilles suggestively allows that he loves Briseis, his sentimental statements for the girl are framed in a context which overall significantly understates them. In line 344, as we have seen, Achilles, immediately after his powerful analogy of the abduction of Briseis with the abduction of Helen, says that Agamemnon “has taken from [his] hands [his] *prize*, and has deceived [him]”, while in *Il.* 9.636-39 Ajax stresses the fact that Achilles became enraged for one girl only but now refuses to accept seven

⁵² See, e.g., SUZUKI 1989: 25-26: “[O]nce Agamemnon and Achilles effect a reconciliation, Briseis’ importance –as either wife or signifier– suddenly pales.”

⁵³ TAPLIN 1992: 216.

girls as compensation. Achilles' behaviour appears incomprehensible to him. As has been rightly noted, "[f]or Ajax it was as if Achilles had never spoken the lines at 9.334-45."⁵⁴

In *Iliad* 1, too, Briseis is assigned a status and significance that is suggestively double as both a love object and prize of honour. As soon as Briseis follows "reluctantly" (*aékousa*) the heralds of Agamemnon,⁵⁵ the hero breaks in tears and draws away from his companions (*Il.* 1.348-49 and 428-30).⁵⁶ Once more, however, the text remains elusive whether Achilles' distress is erotic or not. On the one hand, the hero has a deeply emotional reaction to the girl's removal, which is consistent with the sentimental dimension of her deprivation that underlies the hero's reply to Odysseus in *Iliad* 9.⁵⁷ As in *Iliad* 9, on the other hand, the context understates the erotic aspect of the motivation for Achilles' anger. In a heated exchange, Achilles claims that, by taking Briseis, "the prize [*gérās*] for which [he] toiled much" (*Il.* 1.161-62), Agamemnon deprived him of honour, *timé*, and made him "honour-less", *á-timos* (*Il.* 1.171).⁵⁸ Similarly, both his appeal to his mother and the latter's subsequent appeal to Zeus focus exclusively on the hero's slighted honour (*Il.* 1.352-56 and 503-10, respectively).⁵⁹ Therefore, though it allows Achilles' tender feelings for Briseis to register as a factor in his responses, the *Iliad* pointedly invites us to see the girl as a symbol of the hero's personal honour, as a signifier of his prestige.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ FANTUZZI 2012: 113.

⁵⁵ Together with her lament for Patroclus and her matrimonial wishes (see discussion above), the reluctance of Briseis has consistently been considered by the ancient commentators to be indicative of the girl's loving feelings for Achilles. For a thorough discussion, see FANTUZZI 2012: 116-21. As FANTUZZI 2012: 117 argues, however, "an unbiased reader would have no small amount of trouble finding a single passage of the *Iliad* that might serve as sure evidence of Briseis' love for Achilles."

⁵⁶ Cf. *Il.* 2.689 and 694 (Homeric narrator) and 18.446 (Thetis to Hephaestus), which both point to the grief (*ἄχος*) of Achilles over the taking of Briseis.

⁵⁷ The hero's emotional reaction in *Iliad* 1 is the only case where the Homeric scholia are comfortable with the idea of Achilles in love with Briseis. See Σ (bT) *Il.* 1.346. Cf. discussion in FANTUZZI 2012: 104.

⁵⁸ See above, pp. 66-67.

⁵⁹ Cf. Thetis' appeal to Hephaestus in *Il.* 18.444-45.

⁶⁰ Cf. SUZUKI 1989: 24. At least at this moment, as FANTUZZI 2012: 102 notes, "the person of Briseis is not what makes Achilles' revenge unavoidable, but what she represents as a unit of currency in the Homeric economy of honour."

Achilles' instructions to Patroclus in *Iliad* 16, where he eventually allows Patroclus –wearing *his* armor– to lead the Myrmidons into battle to the aid of the Achaeans, is likewise ambiguous (*Il.* 16.83-90):

πείθεο δ' ὥς τοι ἐγὼ μύθου τέλος ἐν φρεσὶ θεῖω,
 ὥς ἄν μοι τιμὴν μεγάλην καὶ κῦδος ἄρῃαι
 πρὸς πάντων Δαναῶν, ἀτὰρ οἱ περικαλλέα κούρην 85
 ἄψ ἀπονάσσωσιν, ποτὶ δ' ἀγλαὰ δῶρα πόρωσιν.
 ἐκ νηῶν ἐλάσας ἰέναι πάλιν· εἰ δέ κεν αὖ τοι
 δῶη κῦδος ἀρέσθαι ἐρίγδουπος πόσις Ἥρης,
 μὴ σὺ γ' ἄνευθεν ἐμεῖο λιλαίεσθαι πολεμίζειν
 Τρωσὶ φιλοπολέμοισιν· ἀτιμότερον δέ με θήσεις. 90

But obey, as I put in your mind the sum of my counsel,
 so that you may win me great recompense and glory at the hands
 of all the Danaans, and that they send back the beauteous girl,
 and in addition give glorious gifts.
 When you have driven [the Trojans] from the ships, come back, and if
 the loud-thundering lord of Hera grants you to win glory,
 be not eager apart from me to war
 against the war-loving Trojans: you will lessen my honour.

Here, the fact that Achilles distinguishes between the “glorious gifts”, which, if successful, his surrogate Patroclus will be granted by the Greeks, and Briseis, whom Achilles meaningfully considers to be “very beautiful” (*perikallés*),⁶¹ pointedly suggests that Briseis holds some special value for Achilles. But, again, the context in which Achilles places his hint of love for her asserts *timé* as the primary motivation for his wrath. If Patroclus wards off the immediate danger that threatens the Greeks, then he will contribute to the honour of Achilles, as he will act on his behalf (84). Otherwise, if Patroclus eliminates the danger altogether, he will thus make Achilles *atimóteron*, i.e., “less honoured”, as he will eliminate the Greeks’ compulsion to plead with him to return to active service and to win him over with gifts (89-90).⁶² Therefore, although both *Iliad* 1 and 16 tacitly acknowledge the erotic potential in the feelings of Achilles for Briseis, the contextual frame suggestively downplays the

⁶¹ The scholia (bT on *Il.* 16.83-96) again downplay the erotic sincerity of the epithet. For a thorough discussion on the matter, see FANTUZZI 2012: 114-16.

⁶² Cf. FANTUZZI 2012: 115 n. 38.

sentimental aspect of their relationship and emphatically foregrounds *timé* as the primary motivation for the hero's resentment, very much in the same vein as *Iliad* 9.

The narrative space given by the *Iliad* to the erotic life of Achilles is no doubt narrow. The hero's focus is, as we have seen, on his personal honour, while the *Iliad* is a poem about war and the absolute heroic past. In such a context, the erotic element is, as has been rightly noted, not only far too close to human experience but also largely irrelevant to the poem's predominant concerns.⁶³ Here, it suffices to mention Zeus' reminder to Aphrodite in *Il.* 5.428-30 for the small part that she can play in war: "Not to you, my child, are given works of war; but attend to the lovely works of marriage, and all these things shall be the business of swift Ares and Athene." However, though modern scholarship sees a large gulf between the Iliadic Achilles and the erotic Achilles that we meet in the Epic Cycle,⁶⁴ one cannot overlook the undertones implicated in the text of the *Iliad* for Achilles' strong emotional attachment to Briseis. Their special relationship partly infuses his powerful wrath over a seeming spoil of victory, signifier of his prestige, thus creating a sub-textual link with the Achilles of the *Cypria* (and the tradition more generally),⁶⁵ where the fact that he becomes enamoured of Helen arguably exerts a significant impact on his willingness to commit to the continuation of the war against the Trojans for her sake. On the other hand, however, the *Iliad* remains

⁶³ See FANTUZZI 2012: 3: "Sexual life, or the experience of love, would perhaps have represented something far too human and commonplace, to be integrated into the Iliadic poetics of the "absolute past", and besides –from the viewpoint of the "absolute past"– something not relevant enough to the specific values and concern prevailing in the *Iliad* (war, and war-won glory). In other words, love was not distant enough from the shared and common humanity of everyday life and it thus undermined the superior detachment of the heroes of epic; it threatened to devalue their achievements and to contribute to an undue "novelization" or "familiarization" of epos." See, also, FANTUZZI 2012: 193 and 267. Cf. SILK 1987: 84 and 104.

⁶⁴ See GRIFFIN 1977: 43, who argues that "in the *Iliad* Achilles is always an isolated figure" and that "[t]he only woman important to him is his goddess mother. As for poor Briseis, [...] she is a possession among others [...]." See, also, above, p. 68 together with n. 1.

⁶⁵ The emotional distress of Achilles over the taking of Briseis also parallels to some extent his sorrow over the death of Penthesileia in the tradition that is reflected in the (lost) *Aethiopsis*, echoes of which, as we shall see in the next section, still resonate to some degree in the *Iliad*.

fascinatingly elusive on the nature of the relationship between Achilles and Briseis.⁶⁶ Though there is some suggestive evidence to suppose that the abduction of Briseis constitutes not only a material deprivation, detrimental to Achilles' honour, but also a source of profound distress with an erotic dimension, this potential, as we have seen, invariably hides behind the camouflage of the *timé* motivation. The evaluation of the relationship between Achilles and Briseis ultimately contributes to a better understanding of the dialogical and competitive dynamics between the *Iliad* and the wider epic tradition. Not only does the *Iliad* subtly acknowledge the intrinsic intricacy of the tradition developed around an erotic Achilles, but it also distances itself from that tradition, implicitly downplaying it as an aspect which is irreconcilable with the poem's consistent conceptualisation of an honour-oriented hero. In the following section, an investigation of the Thersites scene in *Iliad* 2 yields a similar conclusion.

Achilles' "Erotic" Grief over Penthesileia's Death

The first book of the *Iliad* is dominated by the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles, which culminates in the latter's withdrawal from active participation. In the *Diapira* or "Testing" episode of *Iliad* 2, however, Agamemnon's problems are compounded by his disastrous decision to test the resolve of the Greek army, when the flight to the ships is only prevented by the intervention of Odysseus. It is at this moment that the ambivalent figure of Thersites enters the narrative in a markedly unusual scene full of conspicuous ambiguity and pronounced complexities that have long drawn scholarly interest. As has been beautifully said, "[e]veryone's task, whether in the ranks at Troy or in academia, would be easier if Thersites had never opened his mouth."⁶⁷

⁶⁶ The presence or absence of an erotic element in the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus is similarly elusive: for a thorough discussion on the matter, see FANTUZZI 2012: 187-265. Given that Achilles' homosexuality and especially the erotic link between Achilles and Patroclus is not attested for the early epic tradition outside Homer (see below our discussion on Troilus, pp. 135-37), the question of the relationship between them remains outside the scope of our discussion on the *Iliad*'s engagement with the wider tradition.

⁶⁷ LOWRY 1991: 3. For a relatively recent overview of the ongoing discussion and bibliography, see MARKS 2005: 1-6.

Thersites, “the unanticipated result of Agamemnon’s stratagem”,⁶⁸ is noticeably the only Achaean who refuses to submit to Odysseus’ command (*Il.* 2.211-24):

Ἄλλοι μὲν ῥ’ ἔζοντο, ἐρήτυθεν δὲ καθ’ ἔδρας·
 Θερσίτης δ’ ἔτι μῶνος ἀμετροεπῆς ἐκολῶα,
 ὃς ἔπεα φρεσὶ ἦσιν ἄκοσμά τε πολλά τε ἦδη,
 μάψ, ἀτὰρ οὐ κατὰ κόσμον, ἐριζέμεναι βασιλεῦσιν,
 ἀλλ’ ὅ τι οἱ εἴσαιτο γελοῖον Ἀργείοισιν 215
 ἔμμεναι. αἰσχιστος δὲ ἀνὴρ ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἦλθε·
 φολκὸς ἔην, χωλὸς δ’ ἕτερον πόδα· τῷ δέ οἱ ὤμω
 κυρτῷ, ἐπὶ στῆθος συνοχωκότε· αὐτὰρ ὑπερθε
 φοξὸς ἔην κεφαλὴν, ψεδνή δ’ ἐπενήνοθε λάχνη.
 ἔχθιστος δ’ Ἀχιλῆϊ μάλιστ’ ἦν ἠδ’ Ὀδυσῆϊ· 220
τῷ γὰρ νεικεῖσκε· τότε αὐτ’ Ἀγαμέμνονι δίω
 ὄξεα κεκλήγων λέγ’ ὀνειδέα. τῷ δ’ ἄρ’ Ἀχαιοὶ
 ἐκπάγλως κοτέοντο νεμέσσηθέν τ’ ἐνὶ θυμῷ.
 αὐτὰρ ὁ μακρὰ βοῶν Ἀγαμέμνονα νεῖκεε μύθω.

Now the others sat down and were restrained in their places,
 only there still kept chattering on Thersites of measureless speech,
 whose mind was full of great store of disorderly words,
 with which to revile the kings, recklessly and in no due order,
 but whatever he thought would raise a laugh among the Argives.

Ugly was he beyond all men who came to Ilion:

he was bandy-legged and lame in one foot, and his shoulders
 were rounded, hunching together over his chest, and above them
 his head was pointed, and a scant stubble grew on it.

Hateful was he to Achilles above all, and to Odysseus,

for those two he was in the habit of reviling; but now with shrill cries he
 uttered abuse against noble Agamemnon. With him were the Argives
 exceedingly angry, and indignant in their hearts.

But shouting loudly he reviled Agamemnon.

Thersites’ delightful cameo role owes much to the perceived mismatch between his stature and the grandiose epic in which he appears. Deprived of patronymic and homeland (212), he is labeled as the basest/ugliest (*aískhistos*) of those of the Achaeans who came to Troy (216) and the most unwelcome (220-23). In fact, he is said to be “the most hateful” (220: *ékthistos*) to Achilles –especially Achilles– and Odysseus, both of whom “he was in the habit of reviling” (221: *neikeíeske*). In the

⁶⁸ THALMANN 1988: 9.

present context, Odysseus' hatred does not necessarily require further explanation. Yet, where does Achilles' enmity originate from? In addition, the narrator describes Thersites unfavourably, drawing attention both to his poor rhetorical competence (212-214)⁶⁹ and to his ugly outward appearance (217-219). In other words, Thersites is beforehand depicted as being "everything a hero is not".⁷⁰

It is, however, true that the contemptuous reception given to Thersites from the Homeric narrator is in direct conflict with Thersites' ensuing speech (*Il.* 2.225-42):⁷¹

Ἄτρεΐδη, τέο δὴ αὐτ' ἐπιμέμφεαι ἠδὲ χατίζεις;	225
πλεῖαί τοι χαλκοῦ κλισίαι, πολλαὶ δὲ γυναῖκες	
εἰσὶν ἐνὶ κλισίῃς ἐξαίρετοι, ἅς τοι Ἀχαιοὶ	
πρωτίστῳ δίδομεν, εὖτ' ἂν πτολίεθρον ἔλωμεν.	
ἢ ἔτι καὶ χρυσοῦ ἐπιδεύεαι, ὃν κέ τις οἴσει	
Τρώων ἵπποδάμων ἐξ Ἴλίου υἱὸς ἄποινα,	230
ὃν κεν ἐγὼ δῆσας ἀγάγω ἢ ἄλλος Ἀχαιῶν,	
ἠὲ γυναῖκα νέην ἵνα μίσγεται ἐν φιλότῃ,	
ἦν τ' αὐτὸς ἀπονόσφι κατίσχει; οὐ μὲν ἔοικεν	
ἀρχὸν ἐόντα κακῶν ἐπιβασκόμεν υἱᾶς Ἀχαιῶν.	
ὦ πέπνες, κάκ' ἐλέγχε', Ἀχαιῖδες, οὐκέτ' Ἀχαιοὶ,	235
οἴκαδ' ἐπερ σὺν νηυσὶ νεώμεθα, τόνδε δ' ἐῶμεν	
αὐτοῦ ἐνὶ Τροίῃ γέρα πεσσέμεν, ὄφρα ἴδηται	
ἢ ῥά τί οἱ χῆμεῖς προσαμύνομεν, ἦε καὶ οὐκί·	
ὄς καὶ νῦν Ἀχιλῆα, ἔο μέγ' ἀμείνονα φῶτα,	
ἠτίμησεν· ἐλὼν γὰρ ἔχει γέρας, αὐτὸς ἀπούρας.	240
ἀλλὰ μάλ' οὐκ Ἀχιλῆι χόλος φρεσίν, ἀλλὰ μεθῆμων·	
ἢ γὰρ ἂν, Ἄτρεΐδη, νῦν ὕστατα λωβήσαιο.	

Son of Atreus, what are you unhappy about this time, or what do you lack? / Your huts are filled with bronze, and there are many women in your huts, chosen spoils that we Achaeans give you first of all, whenever we take a city. Or do you still want gold also, which one of the horse-taming Trojans will / bring you out of Ilion as a ransom for his son, whom I perhaps have bound and led away or some other of the Achaeans? / Or is it some young girl for you to know in love,

⁶⁹ The οὐ κατὰ κόσμον speech of Thersites in *Il.* 2.214 (cf. ἄκοσμά in line 213) makes a strong and interesting contrast with the κατὰ κόσμον performance of the good singer in the *Odyssey*, for which see above, pp. 49-50.

⁷⁰ POSTLETHWAITE 1988: 125. Cf. ZIELINSKI 2004: 213.

⁷¹ Cf. KOUKLANAKIS 1992: 35 and 38.

whom you will keep apart for yourself? It is not right
for one who is their leader to bring the sons of the Achaeans harm.
Soft fools! Base things of shame, you women of Achaea, men no more,
homeward let us go with our ships, and leave this fellow here
in the land of Troy to digest his prizes, so that he may learn
whether we, too, aid him in any way or not –
he who has now done dishonour to Achilles, a man far better than he;
for he has taken away and keeps his prize by his arrogant act.
But surely there is no wrath in the heart of Achilles, but he is
complacent; / for otherwise, son of Atreus, you would now be
committing your last act of insolence.

The unfavourable introductory portrayal of Thersites, no doubt, prepares the audience for a nonsense talk. As has been rightly pointed out, however, “Thersites is given some telling points to make against the army’s royal leadership, even if his speech is ridiculed, and even if in its policy and composition it did not reach standards of parliament eloquence.”⁷² In fact, the most salient point of his speech is the moment when he reiterates Achilles’ critical argument, that Agamemnon receives the majority of the available *timé*, though he is inferior as a warrior (239-42).⁷³ The expressed sympathy of Thersites towards Achilles is obtrusively striking, as it evidently contradicts the narrator’s reference to continuous enmity between the two (see *Il.* 2.220-21 above), but our evidence, as we shall see, does offer good ground to argue that Homer puts this most prominent discrepancy to good use.

Equally enigmatic is the fact that, throughout the Thersites scene, it remains unclear whether in the person of Thersites Odysseus slaps down a person of equal rank (peer)⁷⁴ or a commoner. The speech of Thersites is a political harangue highly judgmental of both Agamemnon and the Achaeans who tolerate his greediness.⁷⁵ He begins by posing some tough questions to the Achaean general (*Il.* 2.225-233): “What do you lack? Your huts are filled with bronze, and there are many women in your huts, chosen spoils that *we Achaeans give [didomen]* you first of all, *whenever*

⁷² RANKIN 1972: 39. Cf. KOUKLANAKIS 1992: 42; KAHANE 2012: 102.

⁷³ Cf. *Il.* 1.163-168. The correspondences between the two speeches are examined thoroughly by POSTLETHWAITE 1988: 123-36.

⁷⁴ For a discussion of the Aetolian lineage of Thersites in sources outside the *Iliad*, see below, pp. 110-12.

⁷⁵ See *Il.* 2.225-34 and 242 and *Il.* 2.234-41, respectively.

*we take [hélōmen] a city. Or do you still want gold also, which one of the horse-taming Trojans will bring you out of Ilion as a ransom for his son, whom I [egō] perhaps have bound and led away [désas agágō] or some other of the Achaeans [i.e., while you never leave the camp]?” Thersites very emphatically –note egō désas agágō in *Il.* 2.231– claims that he has himself taken Trojan prisoners for ransom, which very suggestively points to his high status as an individual warrior.⁷⁶ It has been argued, of course, that evidence is not enough to conclude that Thersites makes this claim as an *áristos* on the grounds that “nowhere else in the ancient Greek epic is a character denied the opportunity to engage in these activities because of low ranking.”⁷⁷ The emphatic use, however, of the first person pronoun –egō– is very suggestive,⁷⁸ for it undeniably draws attention to Thersites as a distinguished warrior, while in the *Iliad* no other common soldier ever performs any heroic deed as an individual. As has been rightly pointed out, moreover, capture for ransom in the *Iliad* is “a feat for the ‘front fighter’ or (named) nobility”,⁷⁹ as the poem mainly foregrounds the practice as Achilles’ pre-Iliadic preoccupation.⁸⁰ Therefore, Thersites, by drawing attention to the fact that he has himself captured Trojan prisoners for ransom, very suggestively invites us to see him as a warrior of the first rank.*

On the other hand, however, the punishment of Thersites invites us to see him as a commoner, for the treatment of the Achaeans by Odysseus is suggestively associated with their status. When Agamemnon holds a council of the great-hearted chiefs, where he makes known his intention to put the morale of the army to the test, he asks from the leaders and lords to restrain the Achaeans from fleeing to the ships “with words/orders”, *epéessin* (*Il.* 2.53ff., esp. 73-75). Then, he addresses all the Achaeans and proposes they go home (*Il.* 2.110-41). The Achaeans all rush to their ships to return home and leave Troy (*Il.* 2.142-54), when, at Hera’s prompting (*Il.* 2.155-165), Athena finds Odysseus and asks him to use “gentle words” (*aganoís epéessin*) in order to hold the Achaeans back one by one (*Il.* 2.167-81, esp. 180; cf. 164).

⁷⁶ Cf. KIRK 1985 on *Il.* 2.212.

⁷⁷ MARKS 2005: 2 n. 2.

⁷⁸ Note, also, the first person of *didomen* and *hélōmen* in *Il.* 2.228.

⁷⁹ KIRK 1985 on *Il.* 2.212.

⁸⁰ See discussion below, pp. 121-23.

Thereupon, Odysseus takes the sceptre of Agamemnon (*Il.* 2.185-86) and sets out to check the flight of the Achaeans (*Il.* 2.188-206):

ὄν τινα μὲν βασιλῆα καὶ ἔξοχον ἄνδρα κιχείη,
τὸν δ' ἀγανοῖς ἐπέεσσιν ἐρητύσασκε παραστάς·
“δαιμόνι', οὗ σε ἔοικε κακὸν ὧς δειδίσεισθαι,
190
ἀλλ' αὐτός τε κάθησο καὶ ἄλλους ἴδρυε λαούς.
οὐ γάρ πω σάφα οἶσθ' οἷος νόος Ἀτρείωνος·
νῦν μὲν πειρᾶται, τάχα δ' ἵψεται υἷας Ἀχαιῶν.
ἐν βουλῇ δ' οὐ πάντες ἀκούσαμεν οἶον ἔειπε;
μή τι χολωσάμενος ῥέξιη κακὸν υἷας Ἀχαιῶν·
195
θυμὸς δὲ μέγας ἐστὶ διοτρεφέων βασιλῆων,
τιμὴ δ' ἐκ Διός ἐστι, φιλεῖ δὲ ἐμητίετα Ζεὺς.”
ὄν δ' αὖ δῆμου τ' ἄνδρα ἴδοι βοόωντά τ' ἐφεύροι,
τὸν σκῆπτρῳ ἐλάσασκεν ὁμοκλήσασκέ τε μύθῳ·
“δαιμόνι', ἀτρέμας ἦσο καὶ ἄλλων μῦθον ἄκουε,
200
οἷ σέο φέρτεροί εἰσι, σὺ δ' ἀπτόλεμος καὶ ἀναλκις,
οὔτέ ποτ' ἐν πολέμῳ ἐναρίθμιος οὔτ' ἐνὶ βουλῇ.
οὐ μὲν πῶς πάντες βασιλεύσομεν ἐνθάδ' Ἀχαιοί·
οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκοιρανίη· εἷς κοίρανος ἔστω,
εἷς βασιλεύς, ᾧ δῶκε Κρόνου πάϊς ἀγκυλομήτεω
205
σκῆπτρόν τ' ἠδὲ θέμιστας, ἵνά σφισι βασιλεύῃσι.”

Whatever king or man of note he met,
to his side he would come and with gentle words seek to restrain him,
saying, “It is not right, man, to try to frighten you as if you were a
coward, / but sit down yourself, and make the rest of your people sit.
For you do not yet know clearly what is the mind of the son of Atreus;
now he is making trial, but soon he will strike the sons of the Achaeans.
Did we not all hear what he said in the council?
Take care that in his anger he not harm the sons of the Achaeans.
Proud is the heart of kings, nurtured by Zeus;
for their honour is from Zeus, and Zeus, god of counsel, loves them.”
But whenever man of the people he saw, and found brawling,
him he would drive on with his staff, and rebuke with words, saying:
“Sit still, man, and listen to the words of others who are better than you;
you are unwarlike and lacking in valour,
to be counted neither in war nor in counsel.
In no way will we Achaeans all be kings here.
No good thing is a multitude of lords; let there be one lord,
one king, to whom the son of crooked-counseling Cronos has given the
sceptre and judgments, so that he may take counsel for his people.”

Odysseus attempts to restrain the Achaeans by addressing two different speeches, one to kings (*basileis*) and people of consequence (*éksokhoi ándres*) (188-97) and one to commoners (*démou ándres*) (198-206). He begins his first speech by saying that it would not be appropriate for him to intimidate men of equal rank as though they were *kakoi*, “inferior” (base, of low rank, or coward) (190). Then, by reminding them that they were present when Agamemnon announced his plan to test the morale of his army (194), he prompts them to take their seat and hold the rest of the Achaeans back. On the other hand, the commoners are treated differently. Odysseus strikes them with the sceptre and rebukes them (199). Then, he orders them to take their seats and obey their superiors, as it befits a coward (*aptólemos* and *ánalkis*) of no account either in war or in counsel (200-2).

The way that Thersites receives his punishment is very suggestive (*Il.* 2.265-75):

Ἦς ἄρ' ἔφη, σκῆπτρῳ δὲ μετάφρενον ἠδὲ καὶ ὤμῳ	265
πλήξεν· ὃ δ' ἰδνώθη, θαλερὸν δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε δάκρυ·	
σμάδιξ δ' αἱματόεσσα μεταφρένου ἐξυπανέστη	
σκῆπτρου ὑπο χρυσεύου. ὃ δ' ἄρ' ἔζετο τάρβησέν τε,	
ἀλγήσας δ', ἀχρεῖον ἰδὼν, ἀπομόρξατο δάκρυ.	
οἱ δὲ καὶ ἀχλύμενοί περ ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἠδὸν γέλασσαν.	270

So spoke Odysseus, and with the staff struck his back and shoulders;
and Thersites cowered down, and a big tear fell from him,
and a bloody welt rose up on his back
from the staff of gold. Then he sat down, and fear came on him and,
stung by pain, he wiped the tear away with a helpless look.
But the Achaeans, though they were troubled at heart, broke into merry
laughter at him.

In Homer, such a lengthy and detailed public ridicule and humiliation through physical punishment is reserved only for Thersites. The only comparable figure is the lesser Ajax (see esp. *Il.* 23.774-77), but again Ajax is not denounced in these terms. It is perhaps not without significance, in light of the distinction that Odysseus makes above, that the Ithacan king strikes Thersites with the sceptre (265-66). The fact, in and of itself, does strongly suggest that Thersites is treated by Odysseus as a commoner, as a man of the people (*dêmos*). In other respects, of course, the beating of Thersites cannot in itself be taken to firmly demonstrate that Thersites is of low rank, as fierce quarrels among men with the same rank are a not so uncommon

If I find you again playing the fool, as you are doing now,
 then may the head of Odysseus rest no more on his shoulders,
 and may I no more be called the father of Telemachus,
 if I do not take you and strip off your clothes,
 your cloak and tunic, that cover your nakedness,
 and send you yourself wailing to the swift ships,
 driven out of the place of assembly with shameful blows.

Odysseus warns Thersites that, if he exhibits such foolishness once again, he will strip him off his clothing and whip him naked and blubbering down to the ships. One could hardly see in the place of Thersites a king or a man of importance, all the more so since Odysseus himself earlier asserts that it would not be appropriate for him to threaten men of equal rank (cf. *Il.* 2.190).

On the other hand, however, the reaction of the crowds (*hē plēthús*) to the punishment of Thersites suggests that he is also highly unpopular with the mass of the Achaeans (*Il.* 2.270-78):

οἱ δὲ καὶ ἀχνύμενοί περ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ἠδὺ γέλασαν· 270
 ὧδε δέ τις εἶπεσκεν ἰδὼν ἐς πλησίον ἄλλον·
 “ὦ πόποι, ἦ δὴ μυρὶ Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐσθλὰ ἔοργε
 βουλὰς τ’ ἐξάρχων ἀγαθὰς πόλεμόν τε κορύσσων·
 νῦν δὲ τόδε μέγ’ ἄριστον ἐν Ἀργείοισιν ἔρεξεν,
 ὃς τὸν λωβητῆρα ἐπεσβόλον ἔσχ’ ἀγοράων. 275
 οὐ θὴν μιν πάλιν αὖτις ἀνήσει θυμὸς ἀγῆνωρ
 νεικείειν βασιλῆας ὀνειδείους ἐπέεσσιν.”
 ὧς φάσαν ἠ πλῆθύς.

But the Achaeans, though they were troubled at heart, broke into merry laughter at him, and one would turn to his neighbour and say:
 “Well, now! Surely Odysseus has before this performed good deeds without / number as leader in good counsel and setting battle in array, but now is this deed far the best that he has performed among the Argives, since he has made this scurrilous babbler cease from his harangues. / Never, again, I think, will his proud spirit set him on to rail at kings with reviling words.”
 So spoke the mass of men.

For all their disaffection (270: *akhnúmenoi*), the soldiers in the army laugh happily at the debasement of Thersites (270: *ep’ autōi*). The fact, of course, in itself cannot be

taken as positive proof of his low rank. For example, all laugh happily at the lesser Ajax, whose mouth and nostrils are filled with cow-dung, when Athena fouls him in the foot-race (*Il.* 23.784: οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἠδὺ γέλασαν). Also, unquenchable laughter at Hephaestus, the only disfigured and cripple among the gods, displaces the quarrel that erupted between Zeus and Hera on account of his meeting with Thetis (*Il.* 1.599-600: ἄσβεστος δ' ἄρ' ἐνῶρτο γέλωσ μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν, / ὡς ἴδον Ἥφαιστον διὰ δώματα ποιπνύοντα).⁸⁵ Similarly, Zeus laughs gently when Artemis beaten by Hera resorts to her father (*Il.* 21.507-8: τὴν δὲ προτὶ οἴ / εἶλε πατὴρ Κρονίδης, καὶ ἀνείρετο ἠδὺ γελάσσας; cf. *Il.* 21.408).⁸⁶ So, it may, likewise, be the case that the laughter at Thersites' punishment virtually discharges the tension at a critical point of emotional turbulence, that, in other words, the *stasis* in the Greek army is succeeded by reconciliation at the hands of Thersites, who might, therefore, be seen as the third party that “offers an outlet in pleasant laughter for the divisive tensions in this dangerously polarized situation.”⁸⁷ The fact remains, of course, that the crowd's laughter *per se* is in no way indicative of Thersites' status. However, there can be little doubt that, whether noble or commoner, Thersites is regarded with disfavour by the mass of the Achaeans, too. Although he passionately advocates departure from Troy, he obviously does not find favour with the army, which finds his debasement amusing (hence their laughter) and readily approves of his humiliating chastisement at the hands of Odysseus (272-77). As has been aptly pointed out, “[Thersites] is represented as intending to speak ostensibly on behalf of the army, but as being rejected by his peers in the army.”⁸⁸

The question whether Thersites is a member of the elite or a commoner has been much debated.⁸⁹ All the assumptions offered, however, in seeking to provide one single answer to this question, fail to appreciate the one undeniable fact, that throughout the episode, Thersites' status, in fact, remains, as our discussion above

⁸⁵ LINCOLN 1994: 30-32 draws a comparison between the two figures. Cf., also, THALMANN 1988: 24.

⁸⁶ For a comprehensive study of laughter in the *Iliad*, see BELL 2007: 96-116 and HALLIWELL 2008: 51-99.

⁸⁷ THALMANN 1988: 18. Cf. KOUKLANAKIS 1992: 38-39.

⁸⁸ RANKIN 1972: 43.

⁸⁹ For a comprehensive summary of the discussion that revolves around the application of a “class conflict model” or an “elite competition model” to the Iliadic Thersites scene, see MARKS 2005: 2 n. 1.

has shown, not only unstated but also conspicuously ambiguous. Homer indicates different status at different points.

The discussion so far has designated the salient complexities embedded in the episode as a whole. Thersites, though he is said to be the most hateful to Achilles, appears noticeably to be his most fervent supporter among the Achaeans, while his status turns out to be markedly elusive. What is more, though he speaks the language of truth, everyone in the army rejects him, even the Homeric narrator. Is there, in fact, a good way to explain these complexities in their entirety? The wider epic tradition, as we shall see, does seem to be able to provide us with a good answer.

The only one other known epic episode outside Homer that involves the trio Thersites, Achilles, and Odysseus, forms part of the tradition that is now reflected in the lost *Aethiopsis*. A bare outline of the story is given in the *Chrestomatheia* of Proclus:

Ἀμαζῶν Πενθεσίλεια παραγίνεται Τρωσὶ συμμαχήσουσα, Ἄρεως μὲν θυγάτηρ, Θραῖσση δὲ τὸ γένος, καὶ κτείνει αὐτὴν ἀριστεύουσαν Ἀχιλλεύς, οἱ δὲ Τρῶες αὐτὴν θάπτουσι. καὶ Ἀχιλλεύς Θερσίτην ἀναιρεῖ λαιδορηθεὶς πρὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ ὀνειδισθεὶς τὸν ἐπὶ τῇ Πενθεσίλειαι λεγόμενον ἔρωτα. καὶ ἐκ τούτου στάσις γίνεται τοῖς Ἀχαιοῖς περὶ τοῦ Θερσίτου φόνου. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα Ἀχιλλεύς εἰς Λέσβον πλεῖ, καὶ θύσας Ἀπόλλωνι καὶ Ἀρτέμιδι καὶ Λητοῖ καθαίρεται τοῦ φόνου ὑπ' Ὀδυσσέως.⁹⁰

The Amazon Penthesileia arrives to fight with the Trojans, a daughter of the War god, of Thracian stock. She dominates the battlefield, but Achilles kills her and the Trojans bury her. And Achilles kills Thersites after being abused by him and insulted over his alleged love for Penthesileia. This results in a dispute among the Achaeans about the killing of Thersites. Achilles then sails to Lesbos, and after sacrificing to Apollo, Artemis, and Leto, he is purified from the killing by Odysseus.

As Proclus tells us, Thersites provokes Achilles to kill him when he reviles and sneers at the hero's "love" (*érōta*)⁹¹ towards the dead Penthesileia, the Amazon queen and ally of the Trojans. The murder of Thersites results in a (presumably

⁹⁰ Procl., *Chr.* 67-68.4-10 Bernabé = *Aethiopsis* arg. 1 West. Cf. [Apollod.], *Epit.* 5.1.

⁹¹ The exact wording in Proclus is "*legómenon érōta*". See discussion below, pp. 105-6.

violent) dispute (*stásis*) among the Greeks, which is probably what compels the hero to flee to Lesbos, where Odysseus purifies him after sacrifice to the gods. The summary clearly indicates that at some point in the narrative of the *Aethiopsis* Achilles and Thersites come into fatal conflict over Penthesileia, but the text is so dense that it prevents us –to some extent– from fully understanding the essence of the story, namely, whether or not Achilles really becomes emotionally involved with Penthesileia, as well as why the hero’s *érōs* for Penthesileia is regarded as blameworthy enough so as to provoke mockery on the part of Thersites. We can perhaps understand better the story if we take a look at a full account of the episode that Quintus Smyrnaeus, a fourth-century AD (?) epic poet,⁹² provides in his *Posthomerica*, a fourteen-book hexameter poem that covers the events between the death of Hector and the fall of Troy.

In Quintus, as in the *Aethiopsis*, Achilles kills the Amazon queen Penthesileia, when she comes to the aid of the Trojans (1.619-20). When the hero removes her helmet, the Greeks all marvel at the woman and the brilliance of her divine beauty (1.657-65),⁹³ while Achilles also gets to recognise her attractive qualities (1.666-74):

αὐτὴ γάρ μιν ἔτευξε καὶ ἐν φθιμένοισιν ἀγητὴν
Κύπρις εὐστέφανος κρατεροῦ παράκοιτις Ἴαρος,
ὄφρα τι καὶ Πηλῆος ἀμύμονος υἱ’ ἀκαχήση.
πολλοὶ δ’ εὐχετόωντο κατ’ οἰκία νοστήσαντες
τοίης ἧς ἀλόχοιο τὰρὰ λεχέεσσιν ἰαῦσαι. 670
καὶ δ’ Ἀχιλεὺς ἀλίσστον ἐῶ ἐνετείρετο θυμῷ,
οὔνεκά μιν κατέπεφνε καὶ οὐκ ἄγε δῖαν ἄκοιτιν
Φθίην εἰς εὐπωλον, ἐπεὶ μέγεθός τε καὶ εἶδος
ἔπλετ’ ἀμώμητός τε καὶ ἀθανάτησιν ὁμοίη.

This beauty even among the dead was the personal work
of the fair-crowned Cyprian goddess, the mighty war-god’s spouse,

⁹² Many would bring this date down. For a useful summary of the discussion around Quintus’ date, see BOYTEN 2010: 11-12.

⁹³ See esp. 1.660-61: “The Argives gathering round marveled to see how like the blessed immortals she was.” JAMES 2004: 273 on 1.657-61 points out that “[t]he revelation of Penthesileia’s beauty by the removal of her helmet is singled out in Propertius’ brief mention of the episode (3.11.15-16), which suggests that it was a traditional feature of the story.” WEST 2013: 141 supposes that in the *Aethiopsis* “when Penthesileia fell, the Trojans will have fled to safety and the Achaeans will have gathered round to admire the body, as they do in *Il.* 22.369 when Hector falls.”

to inflict some suffering also on noble Peleus' son.
 Many there were who prayed that when they returned to their homes
 they might share the bed of a wife as lovely as her.
 Even Achilles' heart felt unremitting remorse
 for killing her instead of bringing her as his bride
 to Phthia the land of horses, because in height and beauty
 she was as flawless as an immortal goddess.

While the Greeks are praying that, when they go back home, they may bring with them a bride similarly beautiful (669-70), Achilles regrets deeply that, by killing Penthesileia, he lost the opportunity to return to Phthia with *her* as his bride (671-73). A “D” scholium on *Il.* 2.119 describes the reaction of Achilles to the death of Penthesileia in Quintus as love at first sight: ἰδὼν τὸ σῶμα αὐτῆς εὐπρεπὲς πάνυ, εἰς ἔρωτα ἦλθε τῆς [Πενθεσιλείας], βαρέως τε ἔφερεν ἐπὶ τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτῆς. Is there, in fact, anything erotic in the reaction of Achilles? Of course, there can be little doubt that Penthesileia was sexually desirable. The fact that her beauty was the work of Aphrodite (666-67; cf. 673-74) is very suggestive. Quintus says that it was as though Aphrodite had created Penthesileia's beauty in order to cause suffering to Achilles (668). Based on this passage, therefore, we can infer that Achilles does become aware of her erotic appeal. Although the text does not explicitly say this, the extent to which it describes the Aphrodite-made beauty of Penthesileia and the emotional turbulence of Achilles as a cause-and-effect relationship suggests that the hero does become strongly aware of her sexual attraction and regrets that he missed the erotic opportunity.

In Quintus, at least, Achilles' (thwarted) sexual desire is finally transformed into a profound feeling of human affection for the Amazon. The exposure to her death leads him to intense emotional response (1.716-21):

Καὶ τότε ἄρήιοι υἱεὶς εὖσθενέων Ἀργείων
 σύλεον ἐσσυμένως βεβρωτώμενα τεύχεα νεκρῶν
 πάντη ἐπεσσύμενοι· μέγα δ' ἄχλυτο Πηλέος υἱὸς
 κούρης εἰσορόων ἔρατὸν σθένος ἐν κονίησι·
 τοῦνεκά οἱ κραδίην ὄλοαι κατέδαπτον ἀνῖαι
 ὀππόσον ἀμφ' ἐτάριοιο πάρος Πατρόκλοιο δαμέντος. 720

Thereupon the mighty warrior sons of Argos
 hurried in all directions to strip the blood-stained armor

from the corpses, but Peleus' son was greatly grieved
to see that maiden's strength and beauty in the dust.
No less deadly pangs of grief consumed his heart
than previously from the killing of Patroclus his friend.

While the Achaeans eagerly despoil the corpses strewn around, Achilles sets himself apart and grieves deeply over Penthesileia's body (718-20). He sees the Amazon laid dead in the dust, and this generates a strong feeling of grief over her lost beauty (718-19). His heart is wrung. It is her *loss* that becomes a source of deep anguish. The comparison of Achilles' distress to his poignant sorrow caused by the loss of Patroclus is very suggestive (721). As the scholiast (D on *Il.* 2.119) points out, the death of Penthesileia in Quintus inflicts grievous mental suffering on Achilles: βαρέως τε ἔφερον ἐπὶ τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτῆς.

It is at this moment of overwhelming grief that Thersites speaks out against Achilles (1.722-40):

ὃ Ἀχιλεῦ φρένας αἰνέ, τίη νύ σευ ἦπαφε δαίμων θυμὸν ἐνὶ στέρνοισιν Ἀμαζόνος εἵνεκα λυγρῆς, ἢ νῶϊν κακὰ πολλὰ λιλαίετο μητίσασθαι;	725
τῆς τοι ἐνὶ φρεσὶ σῆσι γυναιμανές ἦτορ ἔχοντι μέμβλεται ὡς ἀλόχοιο πολύφρονος, ἦν τ' ἐπὶ ἔδνοις κουριδίην μνήστευσας ἐελδόμενος γαμέεσθαι. ὥς σ' ὄφελον κατὰ δῆριν ὑποφθαμένη βάλε δουρί, οὔνεκα θηλυτέρησιν ἄδην ἐπιτέρπει ἦτορ,	730
οὐδέ νύ σοί τι μέμηλεν ἐνὶ φρεσὶν οὐλομένησιν ἀμφ' ἀρετῆς κλυτὸν ἔργου, ἐπὶν ἐσίδησθα γυναῖκα. σχέτλιε, ποῦ νύ τοί ἐστιν ἐὺ σθένος ἠδὲ νόημα; πῆ δὲ βίη βασιλῆος ἀμύμονος; οὐδέ τι οἶαθα ὅσσον ἄχος Τρώεσσι γυναιμανέουσι τέτυκται;	735
οὐ γὰρ τερπῶλης ὀλοώτερον ἄλλο βροτοῖσιν ἐς λέχος ἰεμένης, ἢ τ' ἄφρονα φῶτα τίθησι καὶ πινυτόν περ ἐόντα· πόνῳ δ' ἄρα κῦδος ὀπηδεῖ· ἀνδρὶ γὰρ αἰχμητῆϊ νίκης κλέος ἔργα τ' Ἄρης τερπνά· φυγοπτολέμῳ δὲ γυναικῶν εὐαδεν εὐνή.	740

Achilles, [dreadful] man, what power has beguiled
your spirit for the sake of a wretched Amazon,
whose only desire for us was every conceivable evil?
The heart within you lusts so madly for women
that you care for her as for a prudent wife

courted by you with gifts to be your lawful spouse.
She should have been first to strike you with her spear in the battle,
since your heart takes such delight in females
and your accursed mind has no concern at all
for glorious deeds of valor once you catch sight of a woman.
Scoundrel, where now is your strength of body and mind?
Where is the might of the noble king? Surely you know
how great has been the cost to Troy of lust for women.
Nothing is more pernicious to mortal men
than pleasure in a woman's bed. It makes a fool
of even the wisest; only toil produces glory.
The deeds of war and victory's fame are a fighting man's
delight; the coward's pleasure is bedding with women.

Thersites, wondering at the way Achilles becomes dismayed at the loss of Penthesileia (723-724), builds a logical argument. First, Achilles mourns over the death of a female foe who purposed nothing but ill to the Greeks (725). Second, he is such a “womaniser” (cf. 726: *gunaimanés êtor*) that he grieves for Penthesileia, as though she were some prudent lady that he could take home as a spouse (726-28; cf. 671-73). And, third, he has become so infatuated with her that he has no mind for heroic deeds (731-32; cf. 740), which is the only way for him to gain glory (*kléos*) on the battlefield, a warrior's unremitting goal (739-40). Thersites is an external observer, and from an external observer's perspective Achilles slackens because of a frivolous caprice that can become seriously detrimental to his future glory.

Achilles does not defeat Thersites by any compelling argument but by the fatal application of physical force and rejoices over his success (1.757-58):

κεῖσό νυν ἐν κονίησι λελασμένος ἀφροσυνάων·
οὐ γὰρ ἀμείνονι φωτὶ χρεῶν κακὸν ἀντί' ἐρίζειν.

Lie there in the dust, your follies all forgotten.
It's not for men of the baser kind to challenge their betters.

Thersites has some telling points to make against Achilles regarding his temporary erotic weakness, but Achilles does not bother to explain that his feelings over the death of Penthesileia are profoundly humane, that he does not simply regret that he missed the erotic opportunity, as Thersites believes. Achilles merely restores emphatically the disturbed hierarchical balance. Thersites is brutally punished,

because he dared to challenge Achilles, who is a hero much better than him (758). The insults, however, that Thersites utters against the hero remain unanswered, and thus his accusations are left reverberating.⁹⁴ And indeed, though grossly inappropriate in expression, Thersites' accusation of Achilles' self-indulgence in succumbing to *eros* on the battlefield is not entirely unfounded; Achilles is, as we have seen, depicted as being genuinely susceptible to both Penthesileia's female sensuality and human affection, which temporarily halt his participation in the fighting. Unlike the text of Quintus, however, the wording in Proclus is such that we cannot conclude with certainty whether or not Achilles in the *Aethiopsis* really falls in love with Penthesileia.

Proclus tells us that Thersites reviles the *legómenon érōta* of Achilles for the dead Penthesileia. The participle *legómenon* (< *légō*) may modify the genuineness of the feeling expressed in the noun *érōta*. Either there is a rumour flying among the Greeks that Achilles fell in love with Penthesileia (*legómenon érōta* would mean "rumoured love"), or the hero is accused of erotic interest in the Amazon queen that is conceived of as such only by Thersites (*legómenon érōta* would mean "alleged love"). In addition, the participial phrase *legómenon érōta* can alternatively be rendered as "a *feeling* which, according to the summariser's (Proclus') understanding, is misconceived by the intra-textual characters as *érōs*" (*legómenon érōta* would be "the so-called love").⁹⁵ The first two interpretations allow for the possibility that in reality Achilles did not fall in love with Penthesileia, that his "love" for the Amazon is either an unfounded rumour or a flimsy allegation. According to the third interpretation, however, through the participial phrase Proclus may simply dissociate himself from what Thersites, the intra-textual speaker, says. To put it differently, the summariser perhaps employs the term *érōs*, because *érōs* is *implied* in the speech of Thersites (in the text of the *Aethiopsis*), but he himself believes that Thersites misrepresents Achilles' emotional response to the death of

⁹⁴ That is also the case in the *Iliad*. See discussion below, p. 114.

⁹⁵ Proclus employs the participle *legómena* only one other time, in the beginning of his summary of the *Cypria*, to cast doubt on the spelling of the title "Cypria" with proparoxytone accent. See Procl., *Chr.* 38.1-2 Bernabé = *Cypria* arg. 1 West: "There follows the so-called [*legómena*] *Cypria*; we will discuss the spelling of the title later." Cf. Phot., *Bibl.* 319a34 (= *Cypria* test. 7 Bernabé): "[Proclus] also speaks of some poetry called *Cypria* [...]. [...] [H]e says the poem's title is not *Cypria* with proparoxytone accent." (trans. West 2003a: 66-67)

Penthesileia.⁹⁶ To the summariser’s understanding, in other words, the “love” of Achilles in the *Aethiopis* is perhaps not as Thersites says. As has been rightly noted, of course, Achilles “must have shown some emotional reaction sufficient to provoke Thersites’ taunts.”⁹⁷ Based on our evidence from Quintus, however, we can reasonably assume that some emotional response of Achilles to the sight of the dead Penthesileia, transformed from sensitivity to her extraordinary beauty⁹⁸ to grief over lost opportunity and finally poignant sorrow for human loss,⁹⁹ is exaggerated or misunderstood by Thersites as *lustful infatuation* and is considered to be in contravention of established heroic values or, at least, contrary to the collective interest of the Greek army.¹⁰⁰ In using the expression *legómenon érōta*, Proclus probably points out the exaggeration and distortion on the part of Thersites.

According to Proclus, as we have seen, the murder of Thersites results in a “dispute” (*stásis*) among the Achaeans about the killing. If the Aetolian lineage of Thersites dates back to the epic tradition,¹⁰¹ then it is possible that Diomedes as Thersites’ closest kinsman relentlessly demands an explanation for his murder, which, as in Quintus (1.767-81), brings about direct confrontation with Achilles:

Τυδείδης δ’ ἄρα μούνοσ ἐν Ἀργείοισι Ἀχιλῆϊ

⁹⁶ Cf. FANTUZZI 2012: 275: “The phrase probably means that Thersites called it *ἔρωσ*, but Achilles’ actions could not be plainly defined as *ἔρωσ* by everyone.”

⁹⁷ WEST 2013: 141.

⁹⁸ WEST 2013: 143 draws attention to a similar erotic element in the *Little Iliad*: “When [Penthesileia’s] face is uncovered, the sight of it melts Achilles and turns his hostile thoughts aside, and when Helen uncovers her bosom in the *Little Iliad* (F 28) the sight of it melts Menelaus and makes him drop his sword.”

⁹⁹ Cf. FANTUZZI 2012: 275: “Achilles might have revealed his instantaneous love simply through the passion of his gaze or his unusually humane handling of the body. Or he might have mourned for her.” Between the sixth century and the first half of the fourth century BC, pictorial representations that show an intense exchange of glances between Achilles and Penthesileia at the very moment of her death may reflect the version of the *Aethiopis*. For a useful discussion, see FANTUZZI 2012: 270-71.

¹⁰⁰ Although there is a large chronological (and not only) gap between the *Posthomeric* and the early epic tradition, old and recent discussions have shown that Quintus is, in fact, in a constant dialogue with both Homer and the early epic tradition. Cf. BOYTEN 2010; BAUMBACH-BÄR 2007, JAMES 2004: 267-68, and KAKRIDIS 1962: 8-10.

¹⁰¹ See below, pp. 110-12.

χώετο Θερσίταο δεδουπότος, ούνεκ' ἄρ' αὐτοῦ
 εὔχετ' ἀφ' αἵματος εἶναι, ἐπεὶ πέλεν ὃς μὲν ἀγαυοῦ
 Τυδέος ὄβριμος υἱός, ὁ δ' Ἀγρίου ἰσοθέοιο, 770
 Ἀγρίου, ὃς τ' Οἰνήος ἀδελφεὸς ἔπλετο δίου·
 Οἰνεὺς δ' υἰέα γείνατ' ἀρήιον ἐν Δαναοῖσι
 Τυδέα· τοῦ δ' ἐτέτυκτο πάϊς σθεναρὸς Διομήδης.
 τοῦνεκα Θερσίταο περὶ κταμένοιο χαλέφθη.
 Καὶ νύ κε Πηλείωνος ἐναντίον ἦρατο χεῖρας, 775
 εἰ μὴ μιν κατέρυξαν Ἀχαιῶν φέρτατοι υἴες,
 πολλὰ παρηγορέοντες ὁμιλαδόν· ὧς δὲ καὶ αὐτὸν
 Πηλείδην ἐτέρωθεν ἐρήτυον· ἦ γὰρ ἔμελλον
 ἦδη καὶ ζιφέεσσιν ἐριδμαίνειν οἱ ἄριστοι
 Ἀργείων· τοὺς γὰρ ῥα κακὸς χόλος ὀτρύνεσκεν. 780
 ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν πεπίθοντο παραιφασίησιν ἐταίρων.

Among the Argives only Diomedes was angry
 with Achilles for Thersites' death, as he claimed
 to share a common stock – himself the mighty son
 of noble Tydeus, the other glorious Agrios' son.
 Now Agrios was the brother of noble Oineus,
 and the son of Oineus was the Danaan warrior
 Tydeus, and his son was the mighty Diomedes.
 And so the killing of Thersites angered him.
 He would have raised his hands against the son of Peleus
 had not the best of Achaia's sons together restrained him
 with many persuasive words, while on the other side
 they stopped the son of Peleus. They were on the point of
 actually fighting it out with swords, the best of all
 the Argives, stung as they were by bitter anger.
 But they heeded the persuasion of their comrades.

Diomedes, outraged at the murder of Thersites, draws his sword on Achilles, whilst
 the other Achaean leaders interpose at the last gasp (776ff.).¹⁰² Such a conflict might
 well account for the *stásis*-scene in the *Aethiopsis*. It is, however, important to note
 that the noun *stásis* is employed only one other time in the entire corpus of Proclus
 and, interestingly enough, reappears in the summary of the *Aethiopsis* to describe the
 quarrel between Ajax and Odysseus over the armour of Achilles: καὶ περὶ τῶν

¹⁰² The wrath of Diomedes over the killing of Thersites is also reported in the scholia to Lycophron,
 where he is said to throw the dead body of Penthesileia in the river Scamander, while seeking
 revenge against Achilles (Tz. on Lyc., *Alex.* 999). Also, see below, pp. 110-12.

Ἀχιλλέως ὄπλων Ὀδυσσεῖ καὶ Αἴαντι στάσις ἐμπίπτει (“and a quarrel arises between Odysseus and Ajax over the arms of Achilles”).¹⁰³ This is not the way the Proclan text phrases the discord in the Thersites episode: καὶ ἐκ τούτου στάσις γίνεται τοῖς Ἀχαιοῖς περὶ τοῦ Θερσίτου φόνου (“this results in a dispute among the Achaeans about the killing of Thersites”). There can be no doubt, of course, that the *stásis* is provoked over the killing of Thersites (cf. καὶ ἐκ τούτου ... περὶ τοῦ Θερσίτου φόνου). However, the inclusive plural *toῖs Akhaioῖs* –without naming any particular heroes– strongly suggests that a large-scale dispute arises among the Achaeans. A variation on this approach would be to see “the Achaeans” as reflections of their various noble leaders rather than as a group of autonomous and anonymous individuals, and then it would, of course, be possible for Diomedes to assume command of a faction in the dispute as Thersites’ closest kinsman.

Such a large dispute perhaps originates in a quarrel among the Achaeans about whether Thersites deserved the brutal punishment he received, which would suggest, in turn, that Thersites and some of the Achaeans share, in fact, the same point of view.¹⁰⁴ It is very suggestive that the heroic ideal, which the *Iliad* so eloquently presents, so often sanctions boasts over a dead foe, whose death would benefit all the Achaeans, but rigorously avoids grief for the enemy dead. Besides, the hero’s emotional involvement in the death of Penthesileia and his subsequent inactive participation probably endangers not only Achilles’ personal glory but also the safety of his comrades. However, it is also possible that the controversy revolves around the appropriate punishment for Achilles, since, according to Proclus, the hero is banished from the army for the killing of Thersites and returns to the battlefield only when he is freed from the defilement through purification. The need for purification prevents Achilles even further from participating actively in the war, especially at this very critical point when Memnon, the Aethiopian king, comes to the aid of the Trojans.¹⁰⁵ It becomes, after all, evident that, in this specific episode of the *Aethiopsis*, the status of Achilles as the “best of the Achaeans” does suffer a serious blow. Homer makes no reference to the incident. Yet, as we shall see, the puzzling mixture of all the contradictory elements that he so intricately combines in the

¹⁰³ Procl., *Chr.* 69.23-24 Bernabé = *Aethiopsis* arg. 4 West.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. FANTUZZI 2012: 273.

¹⁰⁵ Procl., *Chr.* 68.9-11 Bernabé = *Aethiopsis* arg. 2 West: “Achilles then sails to Lesbos, and (...) he is purified from the killing by Odysseus. Memnon (...) arrives to assist the Trojans.”

portrayal of Thersites can, arguably, be better understood in light of the role that Thersites plays there.

If someone reads between the lines of *Iliad* 2, then he or she may begin to suspect that the story of the fatal conflict between Achilles and Thersites is suggestively present on a sub-textual level. According to the Homeric narrator, Thersites' mind "was full of disorderly words, with which to revile the kings, recklessly and [improperly] [*ou katà kósmōn*]" (212-14), and "he was hateful [*ékthistos*] to Achilles, above all, and to Odysseus, for those two he was in the habit of reviling [*neikeíeske*]" (*Il.* 2.220-21). The hatred between Odysseus and Thersites perhaps needs no further clarification in the present context. The reference, however, to conflict between Achilles and Thersites is puzzling, to say the least. One could argue that, since Thersites casts blame on Agamemnon and sides with Achilles, the enmity with Achilles is an *ad hoc* invention needed by the narrator to give authority to Thersites' words as unmotivated by any link to Achilles. This is certainly possible. If, however, the episode already existed in mythopoetic traditions known to Homer, which is, as we shall see, what our evidence –such as it is– suggests, then we should equally accept the possibility that the reference to their enmity is an advance allusion which anticipates (in terms of epic chronology) their ensuing conflict that goes beyond the scope of the *Iliad*'s action¹⁰⁶ or, to put it another way, that the *Iliad* retrojects the later quarrel. In that case, Odysseus' promise for further humiliation in case Thersites speaks up again (*Il.* 2.257-64) would also function as proleptic allusion to the Aethiopic Thersites scene, while Thersites' accusations of sexual greediness on the part of Agamemnon (*Il.* 2.232-33) would arguably evoke a similar accusation addressed by Thersites against Achilles in the same incident.¹⁰⁷

One cannot fail to notice that *Iliad* 2 evokes the Aethiopic Thersites scene in more ways than one. First of all, Odysseus chastises Thersites verbally and physically for being abusive of Agamemnon, as, in the *Aethiopsis*, Achilles slays Thersites, after he presumably perceives Thersites' mockery of his grieving over the death of Penthesileia as a threat to his personal honour. Second, in either tradition, the punishment or the murder of Thersites has consequences for the unity of the army. On the one hand, the punishment of Thersites in the *Iliad* is universally sanctioned,

¹⁰⁶ Cf. KULLMANN 1960: 303.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. KULLMANN 1955: 271-72.

as pleasant laughter discharges the tensions, and mutiny in the Greek army is succeeded by reconciliation after the false dream sent by Zeus to Agamemnon and the latter's near-disastrous decision to test the resolve of his army. In the *Aethiopis*, on the other hand, the murder of Thersites provokes large-scale disorder (cf. the *stásis*-scene). Third, in both traditions, the current situation of Achilles forms the background of the speech of Thersites. In the *Iliad*, Thersites capitalises on Agamemnon's great dishonour to Achilles in order to make his case against the king, implying that Achilles was right to withdraw from the battlefield. Achilles, Thersites says, would be justified in killing Agamemnon, if he had fury in his heart. However, he has no fury in his heart; he let things pass and restrained himself from killing Agamemnon (cf. *Il.* 2.239-42). In the *Aethiopis*, allowing himself to engage in a rather anti-heroic grief (whether explicitly erotic or not) over the death of a female foe, Achilles in all likelihood desists briefly from the effort of fighting, while the war is in progress, thereby attracting Thersites' contempt. Finally, Thersites in both the *Iliad* and *Aethiopis* receives punishment, though in reality he does have some telling points to make in criticising the Greek commanders, Agamemnon and Achilles, who are themselves undoubtedly the first to have disrupted or challenged the heroic code because of their behaviour.

So, as should we hope be clear from the above, there certainly seems to be some kind of connection between the *Iliad* and the tradition that is reflected in the Cyclic *Aethiopis*. This, however, raises the question whether the *Iliad* already knows and evokes intentionally a pre-existing –at least in its broad plot outlines– version of the Penthesileia story. There is no way, of course, on text-internal grounds of establishing the priority of the Aethiopic tradition. A sceptic would argue that all the evidence proves that post-Homeric poets draw on the *Iliad* or, to put it another way, that the Iliadic Thersites is a Homeric invention which later poets borrow. For us, therefore, the issue should turn on the question whether there is reason to suppose that Thersites could be fixed within the genealogy of the heroes, which is where our evidence for the Aetolian connection of Thersites comes in.

The Iliadic Thersites, because of the fact that he is depicted as a conspicuously repulsive figure, remarkably deprived of homeland and patronymic, which are as a

rule provided for all the other speaking characters,¹⁰⁸ came to be commonly regarded as a commoner fighting for the ordinary people. Outside Homer, however, significant information from scattered references and pictorial representations credit him with a higher status. The early fifth-century BC logographer Pherecydes makes Thersites a member of the house of Aetolia and participant in the Calydonian boar hunt,¹⁰⁹ but the fullest source for a genealogical stemma is provided by the *Bibliotheca* of Ps.-Apollodorus, where Thersites is placed within the lineage of the Aetolian kings and made, by implication, the cousin of the famous Meleager and Tydeus (their father, Oineus, is the brother of Thersites' father, Agrios) and the uncle of the mighty Diomedes (the son of Tydeus).¹¹⁰ The Aetolian pedigree of Thersites would certainly cohere well with the tradition of the *Aethiopsis*, where, as we have seen, his murder is followed by a large-scale “dispute” (*stásis*), in which, perhaps, as our evidence from Quintus suggests, Diomedes plays a significant role as his closest kinsman. Quintus' version is also presupposed in the pictorial representation on a fourth-century BC Apulian krater (the figures are identified by their names),¹¹¹ where, as has been argued, “[Achilles] has slain Thersites, and Diomedes is hastening to avenge his death, but he is restrained by the Atridae.”¹¹² This representation has been assumed to reflect Chaeremon's play *Ἀχιλλεύς Θερσιτοκτόνος ἢ Θερσίτης* (fourth century BC), of which only fragments survive.¹¹³ Moreover, in accordance with sources that seem to point to Thersites' Aetolian origins, there is some suggestive evidence which makes him a suitor of Helen. On

¹⁰⁸ Along with Thersites, only Adrastus (see *Il.* 6.37-65) and Iros (see *Od.* 18.1-2) are not identified by place of origin or patronymic. However, Adrastus' noble identity can be deduced from the context, as he promises Menelaus treasure from his wealthy father (*Il.* 6.46-50), whereas Iros, whose mother is mentioned but not named (*Od.* 18.5), is only a “public beggar in the city of Ithaca” (*Od.* 18.1-2).

¹⁰⁹ See Σ (bT) *Il.* 2.212. Cf. Σ (D) *Il.* 2.212. On Pherecydes' reference to Thersites, see FOWLER 2013: 139-40.

¹¹⁰ [Apollod.], *Bibl.* 1.7.7-1.8.6. Cf. Lyc., *Alex.* 1000 (together with Tzetzes on Lyc., *Alex.* 999), Quint. Sm. 1.770-773, Σ (bT) *Il.* 2.212, Σ (D) *Il.* 2.212; Eust. on *Il.* 2.212, Tz., *Chil.* 7.151.879-82 and 7.153.919f.

¹¹¹ LIMC, “Thersites”, n. 829.

¹¹² PATON 1908: 412.

¹¹³ For further bibliography on Chaeremon's play and its relation to the Apulian krater, see FANTUZZI 2012: 273 n. 20.

another fourth-century BC krater from Apulia,¹¹⁴ Thersites is portrayed as a young man along with Menelaus, Odysseus, Helen, and Leda (again all the figures are identified by their names). The presence of Aphrodite and Eros, together with the fact that all the unflattering attributes that the *Iliad* heaps upon him are conspicuously absent, allows us to correlate the scene with the wooing of Helen.¹¹⁵ It thus becomes evident that, outside the *Iliad*, Thersites is a much more esteemed high-status Aetolian than the misshapen and incorrigible buffoon that we meet in Homer.

It has often been assumed that the Aetolian Thersites is an elaboration of the unfavourable portrayal of the Iliadic Thersites.¹¹⁶ Yet, such an assumption is in reality no more demonstrable than the view which sees the Aetolian Thersites as belonging to the mythopoetic traditions that predate the *Iliad*. Either hypothesis is equally plausible, of course. But there is still good reason to favour the latter one. It has been rightly argued that:

[L]ooking at the complexity of the story that links Thersites with the ruling house of Aetolia, with Tydeus (a hero of the preceding heroic age and the Troy Cycle), Agrios, the Calydon boar-hunt and Meleager, and the story of Penthesileia, and accepting the notion of a complexity of tradition from which the *Iliad* and other sources draw material, it is very difficult to believe that the poet has not for his own purposes suppressed the familial and other attributes of Thersites rather than that he created this figure de *novo*.¹¹⁷

Therefore, although there is no way of proving that Thersites was not a new arrival in Homer, the pedigree he is given outside the *Iliad* offers good ground to believe that he was an already established figure within the intricate tradition from which Homer derived *his* Thersites. This, in turn, reinforces our assumption that Homer was, in fact, already familiar to some extent with some version of the Penthesileia story and that, as we have seen, he alluded specifically to it.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ LIMC, “Hélène”, n. 301.

¹¹⁵ Cf. KULLMANN 1960: 146-148, esp. 147 n. 2.

¹¹⁶ See, e.g., WILLCOCK 1978 on *Il.* 2.220 and WEBSTER 1958: 251.

¹¹⁷ RANKIN 1972: 48-49.

¹¹⁸ KULLMANN 1955: 270-71, as we shall see below, derives the Iliadic Thersites scene from the initial part of the *Aethiopsis*, whose priority over the *Iliad* is categorically endorsed in his influential

Homer makes no reference to the Penthesileia story. But, if he indeed knows the story, as there are reasonable grounds to believe, and deliberately avoids reference to it, while still acknowledging obliquely its existence by making a fleeting reference to enmity between Achilles and Thersites, then there must be a reason for it.¹¹⁹ In the first place, the suggestively erotic grief of Achilles over the death of Penthesileia in the Aethiopic tradition arguably sits uncomfortably alongside the heroic ideal in Homer, which, as mentioned before, so often sanctions boasts over a dead foe, whose death would benefit all the Achaeans, but rigorously avoids grief, let alone *erotic* grief; *eros*, far too close as it is to human experience and largely irrelevant to the core values of war, is an aspect of human experience which is, for the most part, elided from the Iliadic poetics.¹²⁰ More to the point, however, the Penthesileia story differs significantly from the *Iliad* regarding their respective conceptualisation and portrayal of Achilles. The Aethiopic Achilles, allowing himself to grieve over the death of Penthesileia, temporarily pauses in the fighting and in the process alienates himself from the Greeks in a manner which not only exposes his comrades to danger but also affords him no *timē*, unlike the *Iliad*, where the hero is primarily preoccupied with his personal honour, and his withdrawal is necessitated by a compelling need to defend and secure it.¹²¹ From this point of view, therefore, the

Die Quellen der Ilias (1960, passim; contrast PAGE 1961: 205-9; HUXLEY 1969: 124). WEST 2013: 141, by contrast, suggests that “the *Iliad* poet probably had no knowledge of the Penthesileia story [...]; he will be alluding to some other occasion(s) on which Thersites had barracked Achilles. A plausible occasion (if the episode already existed in poetry known to the *Iliad* poet) would be the assembly at which Achilles, after having seen Helen, persuaded the despondent Achaeans to continue the war (*Cypria* arg. 11b).” Though it is not clearly stated, WEST’s assumption is perhaps based on the fact that in the *Iliad* there is an “absence of any allusion to an encounter of Achilles with an Amazon” (2013: 136), though at the same time he admits that “there is no definite argument” that the *Amazonis* (the piece of composition that was prefixed to the *Memnonis* to form the *Aethiopsis*) is later than the *Iliad* (2013: 133-34). Also, WEST does not explain why he allows for the possibility that the *Iliad* poet knows an early version of the Helen episode (2013: 119), which, as we have argued (see above, pp. 77-79), is improbable.

¹¹⁹ Reference to the incident might be difficult chronologically but not impossible. As has long been noted, the fact that the *Iliad* focuses on the wrath of Achilles does not preclude the poet from incorporating skillfully events which lie outside the poem’s chronological boundaries. On the matter, see, e.g., LATACZ 1996: 89 and 132 and SILK 1987: 41-43.

¹²⁰ See above, pp. 89-90 together with n. 63.

¹²¹ See above, pp. 66-67.

Iliad does have good reason to brush the Aethiopic Achilles away. By refusing direct reference to the story, Homer essentially “disconnects” Achilles, the “best of the Achaeans”, from the un-heroic sorrow that the Aethiopic “Achilles” feels over a dead female foe, that is, from an incident which is in many ways alien to, and, as such, incongruous with, the *Iliad*’s own conceptualisation and characterisation of the hero. But, as we shall see below, there is also good reason to believe that Homer not merely refines away the Penthesileia story but also implicitly undermines the unfavourable characterisation of Achilles embedded in it.

Thersites, as already noted, brings once more the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon to the fore and sympathises remarkably with the former. Achilles’ complaint in *Il.* 1.163-68 (cf. *Il.* 9.331-33) that, though inferior as a warrior, Agamemnon receives the majority of the available *timé* still reverberates in the mouth of Thersites, who criticises Agamemnon for being greedy, urging the Greeks to stop fighting and to set sail home. Questions posed to Agamemnon, such as “what do we owe you? More bronze, women, or gold, work of our painful fighting?” (*Il.* 2.225-233) culminate in his judgmental position that, by taking over his prize of honour, “Agamemnon has dishonoured Achilles, a much better man than he” (*Il.* 2.240-41).¹²² An important point to note here is that, although a negative predisposition towards Thersites is evidently intended by his unfavourable introductory portrait,¹²³ the fact remains that the content of his speech receives neither criticism of substance nor refutation.¹²⁴ So, for the Homeric audience, the injustice inflicted against Achilles, on which Thersites capitalises, is left reverberating. In relation to that, is there any special significance in the fact that, throughout the scene, Thersites’ status remains ambiguous? Possibly yes. On the one hand, Thersites is portrayed in a way which suggests that he is a commoner, and, on

¹²² LATACZ 1996: 124-25 points out that the Thersites episode is one of the six times between *Iliad* 1 and 9 when the wrath of Achilles is foregrounded as part of the *Iliad*’s strategy to emphasise that “Achilles is present even in his absence” and to raise “awareness of the temporary nature of the present situation”. Accordingly, KOUKLANAKIS 1992: 43 argues that “[Thersites’] praise of Achilles (...) has the added function of echoing the theme of *Iliad* 1, and therefore of creating a sense of continuum between Books 1 and 2.”

¹²³ Cf. FANTUZZI 2012: 272.

¹²⁴ Note that Odysseus slaps Thersites down in order to make him cease from his lone attacks on the kings; see *Il.* 2.247: ἴσχεο, μηδ’ ἔθειλ’ οἷος ἐριζέμεναι βασιλεῦσιν. Cf. MARR 2005: 4 and RANKIN 1972: 44.

the other hand, he speaks as a man of consequence so that, as has been correctly argued, he “bears enough similarities to both leaders and soldiers for him to serve as the double of all the rest.”¹²⁵ In this light, Thersites, though he is the first and essentially the only Greek who backs Achilles,¹²⁶ may be seen not merely as a fervent proponent of Achilles in his anger against Agamemnon but, more importantly, as the embodiment of general support.¹²⁷ It is plausible, of course, to argue that the audience needs to be aware of the impact that Achilles’ withdrawal has among the Achaeans and that this is a key function of his speech, yet, as we shall see, it is perhaps also not without significance that it is specifically in the person of Thersites that Achilles finds full support.

There can be little doubt, of course, that there is something inherently political in Thersites’ praise for Achilles, since it is clearly based on and motivated by the man’s self-serving objective to make his case against the leadership of Agamemnon.¹²⁸ If, however, our assumption is correct, that Thersites is an already established figure within a tradition that contains a story about his mortal conflict with Achilles, then his praise for the latter, his soon-to-be murderer (!), would be entirely unanticipated and, as such, would certainly capture the attention of the Homeric audience. To put it simply, the Iliadic Thersites would be seen as retracting what he said in the Penthesileia story. On this reading, the enmity between Achilles and Thersites, which the Homeric narrator mentions in passing, and Thersites’ emphatic sheer physical repulsiveness possibly add a sub-textual dimension to the role of Thersites as inter-traditional tool. The Iliadic Thersites conspicuously takes the hero’s side in his quarrel with Agamemnon and appears to be a fervent proponent of his demand to be honoured as individual, thus recanting what he said in the *Aethiopsis*, while at the same time he is called “the most hateful” to Achilles and is chastised by the Homeric narrator and Odysseus, respectively, both verbally and physically. The fact that he is emphatically depicted as an extremely unpopular and obnoxiously ugly figure can perhaps be understood as part of the process of undermining the –in Iliadic terms– unfavourable connotations of an erotic Achilles in the Penthesileia story. Since there

¹²⁵ THALMANN 1988: 24.

¹²⁶ At the cosmic level, of course, Achilles has the support of Athena, Thetis, and Zeus: see above, p. 66.

¹²⁷ Cf. POSTLETHWAITE 1988: 128 and RANKIN 1972: 53.

¹²⁸ Cf. RANKIN 1972: 51.

are, as we have seen, sources outside the *Iliad* which do *not* delineate Thersites as such, it is entirely possible that Thersites' traditional portrait was adjusted by the *Iliad* poet, not so much to set the audience against Thersites as blame *persona*, as often assumed,¹²⁹ as against the tradition, which, recalled through the agency of Thersites, so indisputably conflicts with the Iliadic heroic ideal. The idiosyncratic portrayal of Thersites, after all, may be seen as the *Iliad*'s emphatic way of refining its individual presentation of a purely honour-oriented Achilles. It is, however, also necessary to relate the Iliadic Thersites scene to its immediate and broader context, with particular focus on how it ultimately contributes, too, to Achilles' glorification.

When Agamemnon decides to put the morale of the army to the test by proposing that they set sail home, the Trojan War nearly comes to an inglorious end, as the army dashes eagerly towards the ships. Ironically, however, Thersites' verbal attack on Agamemnon appears to be a contributing factor to the resumption of the expedition. When Odysseus arises and beats Thersites into silence, the army, as we have seen, expresses delight and full support to the hero (*Il.* 2.270-77). Then, the Ithacan king recalls a prophecy about the fall of Troy (*Il.* 2.284-332), while Nestor reminds the army of the oath that they took to fight until the end (*Il.* 2.337-368). Agamemnon for the first time now appears to explicitly regret that he was the first to grow angry in his quarrel with Achilles (*Il.* 2.377-378), while the army roars its approval ready to renew its attack on Troy for the first time since the arrival of Chryses at the Greek camp (*Il.* 2.394-401). Although not stated clearly, the restored unity and cohesion of the army appears to be due partly to the punishment of Thersites. The way that the Iliadic text moves on *from* the enthusiastic approval that the army gives to Odysseus for the punishment of Thersites *to* Odysseus' exhortation is very suggestive (*Il.* 2.278-79): ὦς φάσαν ἦ πληθύς· ἀνὰ δ' ὁ πτολίπορθος Ὀδυσσεὺς / ἔστη σκῆπτρον ἔχων ("so spoke the mass of men; but up rose Odysseus, sacker of cities, the staff in his hand"). The text invites us to believe that Odysseus

¹²⁹ See MARKS 2005: 8 (following NAGY 1999: 262 (Ch. 14, §13)) and ZIELINSKI 2004: 215, who interpret the repulsive figure of the scurrilous Thersites as the *Iliad*'s means of vociferating against blame poetry. Others see Thersites as Achilles' comic double (see, e.g., WILLCOCK 1976: 20 on *Il.* 2.225-42 and FANTUZZI 2012: 272-73), but, if that were the case, then this would undermine the force of the rightful enagement of Achilles against Agamemnon. What happens, in fact, is the exact opposite. As our discussion has shown, the episode as constructed suggestively provides full support to Achilles *through* Thersites.

capitalises on his recent triumph over Thersites. So, in the broader context of the plague, the quarrel, and the near-disastrous test of the remaining courage of the Achaeans, the Iliadic Thersites scene eventually proves –partly at least– the driving force needed to strengthen the unity of the Greek army. The unity is vital for the continuation of the war and, on a metapoetic level, for the development of the poem which practically confers *kléos* upon Achilles. In the person of Thersites, therefore, Homer not merely emphatically encapsulates the essence of his distinctive portrayal of Achilles but also suggestively presents him as the catalyst that sets into motion the recommencement of the war, the poetic process itself, and, through that, the enactment of the hero’s glorification. What makes this even more impressive, however, is the fact that in a strand of the concurrent epic tradition Thersites possibly features as Achilles’ mortal enemy.

Prior studies which have also accepted the possibility that Homer appropriated a pre-Iliadic Thersites tradition have put forward two models for interaction, a source-and-recipient model and an intertextual model. The first model has been applied by KULLMANN, who has argued that the *Iliad* poet adjusted the Aethiopic Thersites scene to the framework of *Iliad* 2. Thersites addresses his speech against Odysseus, since Achilles is absent from the scene; he upbraids Agamemnon, since an insult against Odysseus would not be so poetically effective, as Odysseus only implements the instructions of Agamemnon; and he rehearses the arguments of Achilles in *Iliad* 1, using some of the words that he uttered against Achilles in the *Aethiopsis*. The reason for this re-contextualisation, KULLMANN suggests, is that the *Iliad* poet did not want to miss the opportunity to use the figure of Thersites in his epic.¹³⁰ So, it is implied that a Thersites congruous with its context in the *Aethiopsis* was almost “transplanted” to the *Iliad*, simply because the *Iliad* poet wished to integrate a very remarkable character –albeit incongruous with the plot requirements– into his composition. Yet, there are limits to how far the idea of a linear-genetic composition can be taken, for usually choices of plot and character by Homer reflect strategic considerations rather than simple capitulation to the tradition.¹³¹ MARKS’ intertextual model, on the other hand, does allow for a dialogical interaction between the *Iliad*

¹³⁰ See KULLMANN 1955: 272.

¹³¹ A notable case in point is the use of images from the death of Achilles in the *Iliad*’s description of the death of Patroclus: see above, p. 17.

and the Aethiopic tradition. Taken together, the Iliadic and the Aethiopic Thersites scenes are seen as inviting comparison with each other, which in turn foregrounds the opposition between the heroics of Odysseus as “the hero of persuasion and stratagem” and the heroics of Achilles as “the hero of force”.¹³² MARKS’ reading, however, though it takes the two Thersites scenes as forming an interacting pair, as we propose, it fails to offer a complete explanation for a number of pronounced complexities, namely, the unusual emphasis that the *Iliad* places on Thersites’ obnoxiousness, his conspicuously ambiguous status, his unanticipated sympathy towards Achilles, the blatant contradiction between this expressed sympathy and the narrator’s brief yet obtrusive reference to ongoing enmity between Achilles and Thersites. In light of these complexities, as we have seen, a compelling case can reasonably be made for the possibility that Homer does gesture creatively towards the Penthesileia story as part of a self-reflexive poetic strategy.

Though for the content of the *Aethiopsis* we are entirely dependent on the prose summary of Proclus, and given the subsequent difficulty of obtaining absolute certainty, there is still good reason to believe that, through the Thersites episode, the *Iliad* implicitly evokes and downplays the un-Homeric erotic grief of Achilles, the “best of the Achaeans”, with the Amazon queen Penthesileia in order to meet its own dramatic purposes. The Iliadic Achilles, obsessed with individual honour, falls victim to political frictions and is –through the person of Thersites, as we have seen– universally acknowledged to be correct to withdraw from the battle. In the Penthesileia story, by contrast, Achilles, being attracted to the dead queen, ceases fighting –temporarily, at least–, thereby failing because of his own weakness to protect his individual honour. The role of Thersites in the Penthesileia story opens the *Iliad*’s overwhelming emphasis on Thersites’ unfavourable portrait to a more nuanced interpretation. Thersites possibly attracts blame, precisely because outside the *Iliad* he inflicts serious damage on the personal integrity of Achilles, the *Iliad*’s paradigmatic hero. On this reading, Thersites functions as a metapoetic device. The emphasis that the *Iliad* places on Thersites as a *persona non grata*, “the worst of the Achaeans”, who is the most hateful to Achilles but, nevertheless, speaks in favour of Achilles can be seen as an intertextual apology and ultimately as part of a self-reflexive strategy. Homer, while sub-textually acknowledging the existence of the

¹³² MARKS 2005: 22-23.

Penthesileia story, emphatically underscores –through the idiosyncratic construction of the Iliadic Thersites episode– the uniqueness of his own Achilles in his single-minded pursuit of honour and glory in battle and pointedly manifests the sharp distinctness of the Homeric Achilles from the much less distinctive Achilles that the Penthesileia story presents.

What makes this passage so powerful is the bold emphasis that Achilles places on the difference between the past and present, between *prîn* and *nûn*. He says that *now* (*nûn*) no Trojan will escape death in his hands. But that was not always the case. As he explains, in the time before Patroclus died (*prîn*), it was more pleasing to him to ransom or sell the Trojans (102). This coheres well with other Iliadic passages. In *Il.* 22.45, while Priam entreats Hector not to face Achilles, he recalls that the hero “has robbed [him] of sons many and mighty, slaying them or *selling* them into distant isles”, and, in *Il.* 24.751-53, Hecuba, while she laments the death of Hector, recalls those of her sons whom Achilles sold to Samos, Imbros, and Lemnos. Similarly, Lycaon was captured, spared, and sold on an earlier occasion. The *Iliad*, also, knows of an earlier encounter of Achilles with two other sons of Priam, Isus and Antiphus, who had the same fate as Lycaon. Before they died at the hands of Agamemnon in *Iliad* 11, the Homeric narrator briefly recounts their story, saying that they had been previously –inescapably outside the *Iliad*– captured and ransomed by Achilles (*Il.* 11.101-21). In this context, as has been pointed out, “*πρίν* carries an unusually heavy emphasis”, because of “the rarity of *πρίν* as a conjunction in this position, i.e. preceding the main clause (cf. *Od.* 14.229), and the unique combination of *πρίν* ... τόφρα.”³ Thus, Achilles pointedly makes a clear distinction between what he used to do *before*, prior to the death of Patroclus, and what he is able to do *now*, after the death of Patroclus.

It is a fact that nowhere in the *Iliad* do we see Achilles take Trojans alive and sell or set them free for ransom. All the evidence we have says that Achilles *used to* spare the Trojans. The encounters with Lycaon, Isus, Antiphus, and the other sons of Priam, chronologically precede the events narrated in the *Iliad*. To put it differently, they do *not* take place within the actual “real time” of the poem. Besides, within the *Iliad* the hero remains inactive altogether up to the death of Patroclus. The question now is, are these encounters traditional, namely, do they predate the *Iliad* (do they belong to the tradition), or are they Homeric inventions?

The encounter with Isus and Antiphus is an otherwise unknown incident. As far as Lycaon is concerned, however, Proclus offers some evidence to suggest that a version of his capture, detention, and ransom formed part of the tradition represented in the *Cypria*:

³ RICHARDSON 1993 on *Il.* 21.100-2. Cf. LEAF 1902 on *Il.* 21.100.

κάπειτα ἀπελάυνει τὰς Αἰνείου βοῦς, καὶ Λυρνησσὸν καὶ Πήδασον πορθεῖ καὶ συχγὰς τῶν περιοικίδων πόλεων, καὶ Τρωΐλον φονεύει. Λυκάονά τε Πάτροκλος εἰς Λῆμνον ἀγαγὼν ἀπεμπολεῖ.⁴

And then [Achilles] drives off Aeneas' cattle. And he sacks Lyrnessus and Pedasus and many of the surrounding settlements, and he slays Troilus. And Patroclus takes Lycaon to Lemnos and sells him into slavery.

Proclus refers only to the selling of Lycaon by Patroclus on the island of Lemnos, but it seems unlikely that only this detail was narrated. The sequence of events in the narrative of Ps.-Apollodorus (*Epit.* 3.32), where the murder of Troilus, which is also mentioned by Proclus, is immediately followed by the capture of Lycaon, is very suggestive. But even without Ps.-Apollodorus' testimony it would still make more sense if the *Cypria* covered the whole incident from which the summariser selected this particular scene to focus on. Here as elsewhere, the rigorously selective précis of Proclus gives only salient details, so it is no surprise that the selling of Lycaon is the only detail narrated. The emphasis on the selling may be inspired by Homer's emphasis on the awful irony of Lycaon's recent return from Lemnos and his second encounter with Achilles. Yet, if Proclus makes reference to Lycaon on the basis of coherence with the *Iliad*, then the episode may not have been an extensive narrative in the original text of the *Cypria*, though inescapably it is in the *Iliad*. As we said before, one can't always be sure that Proclus reflected the emphases of the original, as he appears to pick on the things which fill in the background of the *Iliad*, or on the things which struck *him* or *his sources* as interesting or significant, which may not always have reflected the length of a given incident. However, no matter how extensive the episode in the *Cypria* is, the fact remains that there seems to be a degree of consistency between the two epics. That Lycaon is sold by Patroclus on Lemnos coheres well with the fact that in the *Iliad* Achilles set out as a prize in honour of Patroclus a mixing bowl that Euneos, Jason's son, had given to Patroclus in Lemnos as a ransom for Lycaon (*Il.* 23.746-747).⁵ Of course, the degree of convergence between the *Iliad* and the *Cypria* on this detail does *not* provide reassuring evidence to conclude with certainty that Lycaon's first encounter with

⁴ Procl., *Chr.* 42-43.61-64 Bernabé = *Cypria* arg. 11 West.

⁵ Cf., also, *Il.* 21.40-41, 58, and 78-79.

Achilles belongs to the common repository of oral traditions from which both the *Iliad* poet and the author of the *Cypria* draw their material, as has often been assumed.⁶ A sceptic might argue that the evidence need indicate only that the *Cypria* draws on the *Iliad*, that Lycaon is an Iliadic invention.⁷ But, even if we accept that Lycaon or his prehistory is Homer's invention, his role in the *Iliad* may still reflect a strand in the tradition. It is important that in the *Iliad* the body of evidence suggesting that outside the poem the hero used to spare the enemy is overwhelming. Therefore, taken together with the Proclan summary of the *Cypria*, our evidence from the *Iliad* offers good ground to believe that capture of captives held for ransom was a recurrent feature of the traditional presentation of Achilles outside Homer.

There is, therefore, good reason to suggest that the *Iliad*, when Achilles makes a distinction between the past and present, suggestively draws in the extra-Iliadic Achilles and his mercifulness, comparing them subtly against *its* Achilles and his temporary abnormal ferocity. To put it differently, the hero's powerful emphasis on the opposition between the past and present essentially reflects the gap between the traditional and the Homeric Achilles (or, at least, the Achilles as he has become).

In vengeance for the death of Patroclus and the other slaughtered Achaeans, Achilles kills the Trojan prince in a scene full of pathos. As soon as Achilles finished his speech, Lycaon let his spear go and “sank to the ground with both hands outstretched. [...] Achilles struck him [...] and headlong on the ground [Lycaon] lay outstretched, and the dark blood flowed out and wetted the ground” (*Il.* 21.114-19). Then, Achilles throws his corpse into the river, and makes a contemptuous speech over Lycaon: “Lie there now among the fishes, which will lick the blood from your wound and think nothing of you [...] perish all of you [...] you, too, in the same way will perish by an evil fate till you all pay the price for the slaying of Patroclus and for the destruction of the Achaeans” (*Il.* 21.120-35).

There can be no doubt, of course, that, in marked contrast to their previous encounter, Achilles kills Lycaon without mercy. Very suggestively, however, the hero calls Lycaon “friend” (*Il.* 21.106-13):

ἀλλὰ, φίλος, θάνε καὶ σύ· τί ἤ ὀλοφύρεαι οὕτως;
 κάτθανε καὶ Πάτροκλος, ὃ περ σέο πολλὸν ἀμείνων.

⁶ Cf. KAKRIDIS 1954: 38-39 and KULLMANN 1960: 284ff.

⁷ Cf. TAPLIN 1992: 222 n. 30.

οὐχ ὀράας οἶος καὶ ἐγὼ καλὸς τε μέγας τε;
πατρὸς δ' εἴμ' ἀγαθοῖο, θεὰ δέ με γείνατο μήτηρ·
ἀλλ' ἔπι τοι καὶ ἐμοὶ θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταιή. 110
ἔσσειται ἢ ἠὼς ἢ δειλίη ἢ μέσον ἡμαρ,
ὀππότε τις καὶ ἐμεῖο Ἄρη ἐκ θυμὸν ἔληται,
ἢ ὅ γε δουρὶ βαλὼν ἢ ἀπὸ νευρῆφιν ὀϊστῶ.

No, friend, you too die; why lament you thus?
Patroclus also died, and he was better far than you.
And do you not see what manner of man I am, how fair and how tall?
A good man was my father, and a goddess the mother that bore me;
yet over me too hang death and resistless fate.
There will come a dawn or evening or midday,
when my life too will some man take in battle, whether
he strike me with cast of the spear, or with an arrow from the string.

The fact that Achilles calls Lycaon “friend” (*philos*) takes us back to the supplication of Lycaon, especially to his first argument (*Il.* 21.74-77):

γουνουῖμαι σ', Ἀχιλεῦ· σὺ δέ μ' αἶδεο καὶ μ' ἐλέησον·
ἀντί τοι εἴμ' ἰκέταο, διοτρεφεὺς, αἰδοῖοιο· 75
πὰρ γὰρ σοὶ πρώτῳ πασάμην Δημήτερος ἀκτὴν,
ἡματι τῷ ὅτε μ' εἴλες ἐϋκτιμένη ἐν ἀλωῇ.

I beg you by your knees, Achilles, respect me and have pity on me;
in your eyes, nurtured by Zeus, I am like a respected suppliant,
for at your table first did I eat of the grain of Demeter
on the day when you took me captive in the well-ordered orchard.

The Trojan prince begins his desperate plea for life by asking Achilles to show him pity (*éleos* - *elēēson*) and to count him as a suppliant who is worthy of proper respect (*aidōs* - *aídeo*), since the hero was the first man with whom Lycaon “shared bread” after his capture, that is to say, since Achilles treated him as a guest. To put it differently, Lycaon lays claim to mercy and respect that Achilles would show to those he was linked with by the bond of *xenia*. As the scholiast (bT on *Il.* 21.76) notes, “it would be incongruous to offer food, the source of life, to someone, and then take away his life. And [Lycaon] mentions Demeter to evoke religious scruples.”⁸ The mention of the meal of Demeter, “the compassion and refinement of

⁸ Trans. Richardson 1993 on *Il.* 21.75-76.

civilisation”,⁹ did not make Achilles change his mind, of course.¹⁰ By calling Lycaon “friend”, however, the hero suggestively acknowledges the bond of *xenia* between them and so the earlier merciful treatment of the Trojan prince, by implication, the merciful treatment of the enemy before the death of Patroclus, evidently outside the *Iliad*.

In calling Lycaon “friend”, moreover, Achilles expresses a sense of sympathetic understanding that arises from the fact that both Patroclus and Achilles himself share the same fate as Lycaon. He says that Patroclus is dead, though he was a far better man than the Trojan prince, and he himself, albeit huge and splendid, will not manage to escape death. The reply of Achilles has a philosophical nuance which distinguishes his deliberate brutality from the shallow savagery of Agamemnon, when he refuses to spare Adrastus in *Il.* 6.46ff. or Peisander and Hippolochus in *Il.* 11.131ff. As has been rightly noted, “Agamemnon is ruthless and unreflective; Achilles kills in a passionate revenge, but not in blind ferocity. He sees his action in the perspective of human life and death as a whole, the perspective which puts slayer and slain on a level, so that it is more than a mere colloquialism that he calls Lycaon “friend” as he kills him.”¹¹ It is the sense of common weakness against inevitable death that gives Achilles a reason to call Lycaon *philos*. By accepting the inevitability of his own death and the finiteness of his own life, Achilles gives comfort both to himself *and* Lycaon. Therefore, the straightforward answer of Achilles to the supplication of Lycaon, “No, friend, you die too”, has connotations not only of self-referential resignation but also of compassion, which stands in stark contrast with the impending coldblooded killing of the Trojan prince. As has been pointed out, “[t]his episode presents Achilles’ distinctive combination of ruthlessness grounded in raging fury and compassion springing from an impulse toward human solidarity.”¹² After all, the sense of human solidarity that now enables Achilles to show understanding to Lycaon is the same sense of solidarity that before

⁹ KITTS 1992: 176.

¹⁰ This is part of a larger narrative use of food in the *Iliad*. After the death of Patroclus, Achilles refuses to eat until the moment he shares a meal with Priam and rejoins humanity.

¹¹ GRIFFIN 1980: 55 (also quoted by RICHARDSON 1993 on *Il.* 21.99-103). TAPLIN 1992: 223 similarly argues that “*φίλος*, “friend” [...] is not sarcastic or merely colloquial, it arises from the familial bond of mortality.” Cf. KAKRIDIS 1954: 39-40.

¹² FINKELBERG 2011, s.v. “Lycaon”.

the death of Patroclus enabled the hero to show mercy and spare his victims. The difference lies in the form that this solidarity each time takes. In that regard, the *Iliad* again sub-textually acknowledges the non-Homeric Achilles that it apparently brushes off.

On the sub-textual level of the Lycaon episode, the *Iliad* provides a much more nuanced picture than the monolithic surface depiction of Achilles as a relentless killer. When it has Achilles call Lycaon “friend” moments before he remorselessly slays him, the *Iliad* unambiguously points to a more complex characterisation of a humane Achilles, thus opening up a dynamic dialogical space with the epic tradition outside Homer. More fascinatingly, however, mercifulness towards the enemy is meaningfully acknowledged as a capability of Achilles’ heroic identity that the hero is temporarily unable to exercise due to the current circumstances.

It has been argued that “the past history of Lycaon –how he was caught before by Achilles and his life spared– is given to emphasise the terribleness of Achilles’ present mood.”¹³ There is, however, good reason to also suggest that the Lycaon episode serves two more purposes. First, the strong emphasis that Achilles places on the fact that he no longer shows compassion to the Trojans, as he used to do before the death of Patroclus, undoubtedly increases the pathos of the under-normal-circumstances-avoidable death of Lycaon. Second, and more importantly, as we shall see, the humaneness of Achilles in Book 21 is perhaps calculatedly downplayed with a view to the merciful Achilles of Book 24.

One of the underlying threads of the *Iliad* plot is that Achilles undergoes a gradual process of de-socialisation / de-humanisation and subsequent re-socialisation / re-humanisation. At the opening of the poem, Achilles seems committed to the community, as he calls a council to examine the crisis in order to alleviate the hardship of his fellow warriors caused by the plague that Apollo sends upon the Greeks. When he feels, however, that the abduction of Briseis threatens his own *timē*, he goes so far as to wish that the Achaeans would fall to Trojan ferocity (see esp. *Il.* 1.407-12). Later on, of course, he allows Patroclus –wearing *his* armor– to lead the Myrmidons into battle to the aid of the Achaeans, yet his humane side utterly ceases to exist when his dearest friend receives the fatal spear-thrust from Hector. It is at this moment that Achilles sets out to avenge Patroclus, and his wrath

¹³ OWEN 1946: 208; see, also, OWEN 1946: 208-9.

against Agamemnon and his supporters becomes unfathomable anger towards Hector and the Trojans. In marked contrast with what he used to do in the past, as we have seen, Achilles shows no mercy and refuses to spare the life of his victims for ransom. Moreover, he categorically rejects Hector's plea that his body should be returned for honourable burial, as he once might have done,¹⁴ and treats his dead body barbarically. Achilles returns back to humanity partly when in *Iliad* 23 he institutes the Funeral Games in honour of Patroclus, which achieves a reconciliation with his community, and more fully when in *Iliad* 24, moved to pity and shared lamentation with Priam, he lifts Hector's body onto the bier with his own hands and agrees for a twelve-day truce for his funeral rites.

In the Lycaon episode the humaneness of Achilles is, though subtly acknowledged, pointedly refuted. The ruthless killing of Lycaon thus increases the dramatic function of the cathartic meeting of Achilles with Priam in *Iliad* 24, as in relation to the Achilles of *Iliad* 24 the Achilles of *Iliad* 21 functions as the foil. So here as elsewhere the *Iliad's* creative engagement with the epic tradition consists of two interdependent functions: *refutation* and *dialogue*. The initial contestation of the traditional characterisation of Achilles in the Lycaon episode eventually paves the way for compliance with it in *Iliad* 24. On a deep level, therefore, the *Iliad*, in playing dynamically with the inherent tendencies in the traditional characterisation of Achilles, achieves a felicitous coalescence of the Achilles of the tradition and the Achilles of the moment.

¹⁴ In *Il.* 6.416-20, Homer knows that Achilles killed Andromache's father but buried him with honour.

2.3 Achilles and Brutality: the Case of Troilus

In *Il.* 1.226-28, Achilles builds his case against Agamemnon, arguing that the general of the Greek army avoids facing the enemy altogether:

οὔτε ποτ' ἐς πόλεμον ἄμα λαῶ θωρηθῆναι
οὔτε λόχονδ' ἰέναι σὺν ἀριστήεσσιν Ἀχαιῶν
τέτληκας θυμῶ· τὸ δέ τοι κῆρ εἶδεται εἶναι.

Never have you dared to arm yourself for battle along with your troops,
or to go into an ambush with the chief men of the Achaeans.
That seems to you to be death.

Achilles distinguishes between *pólemos* (battle) that refers to the military tactic in which the attacking force (consisting of *πρόμαχοι* and *λαός*) fights face-to-face on the battlefield, and *lókhos* (ambush) that refers to the military tactic in which the attacking force (consisting of a small number of picked men; cf. 227: *sun aristéessin*) has the endurance (cf. 228: *tétlēkas thumōi*) to go on ambush missions.¹ *Lókhos* differs from *pólemos* in that it uses clandestine tactics, namely, concealment, to debilitate the enemy, and, as a type of *dólos* (guile),² it is based on *mētis* (planning) rather than *krátos* (might) and *biē* (force).³ But, though an alternative type of warfare, *lókhos* is a traditional epic theme, commonly attested in both the Homeric epics⁴ and the wider epic tradition.⁵

Although several Iliadic places evoke *lókhos* (especially the *Doloneia*), either explicitly or implicitly, the *Iliad* deals primarily with *pólemos*. For the most part, both the Greeks and the Trojans try to weaken and ultimately destroy their respective opponent's military force by using mainly battlefield tactics in open confrontation.

¹ *Pólemos* (battle) is the type of warfare which in today's terms can be called "conventional warfare", whereas *lókhos* (ambush) is the type of achieving warfare objectives which in today's terms can be called "unconventional warfare".

² See *Il.* 6.187-89, 18.526; *Od.* 4.437-41, 452-53 and 529.

³ See *Il.* 7.142 and *Od.* 9.408, respectively.

⁴ See *Il.* 6.188 and 13.276; *Od.* 4.278, 8.512, 11.523-32 and 538-40, 14.218, and 15.28. See especially the *Doloneia* and the *Mnesterophonia* in *Iliad* 10 and *Odyssey* 22, respectively.

⁵ For a comprehensive discussion on the poetics of ambush in the epic tradition, see DUÉ-EBBOTT 2010: 31-87.

As is so articulately described by Glaucus in *Il.* 6.206-9, the Iliadic hero fights for *aristeia*, namely, for visible preeminence, which can perhaps explain why *lókhos* is less acknowledged.⁶ The underlying, if unspoken, principle seems to be that the killing of mass numbers in open battle, where the odds are less obviously favourable in the absence of the advantage of surprise and where both exposure and risk for the individual hero are greater, engenders commensurately greater glory.

Within the framework of *pólemos*, the Iliadic Achilles is undeniably a *πρόμαχος*, a stellar spearfighter who excels in conventional battle. The simile in *Il.* 22.26-32, in which the warring Achilles is compared to a bright star, is suggestively one of the most powerful passages of the *Iliad*: “The old man Priam was first to see [Achilles] with his eyes, as he sped all-gleaming over the plain like the star that comes up at harvest time, and brightly do its rays shine among the many stars in the dead night, the star that men call by name the Dog of Orion. Brightest of all is he [...].”⁷

As has been rightly noted, however, “Achilles should not be pigeonholed as solely the hero of *bíē*, for he, too, is an ambusher.”⁸ The *Iliad* knows of both the previous capture of Lycaon (*Il.* 21.34-44 and 23.746-47)⁹ and the seizure of the cattle of Aeneias on an earlier occasion (*Il.* 20.90-93 and 188-94). Although the two incidents are not clearly designated as ambush, there is good reason to believe they are.¹⁰ Since the element of surprise in clandestine tactics is significant, the fact that Achilles attacked Lycaon as “an unlooked-for evil” (cf. *Il.* 21.39: *anóiston kakón*) “at night” (cf. *Il.* 21.37: *ennúkhios*) suggests that the incident was conceived of as ambush.¹¹ The reference to the attack on Aeneias in *Iliad* 20 is likewise suggestive of

⁶ It is, however, important to note that, though less vigorously, the *Iliad* still acknowledges the significance of *lokhos*: see below, p. 167.

⁷ What Aeneias replies to Hector in *Iliad* 20.97-100, after the latter urges him to face Achilles, is also very suggestive: “It is not possible that any warrior can face Achilles in fight [...]. [...] His spear flies straight, and ceases not till it has pierced through the flesh of man.”

⁸ DUÉ–EBBOTT 2010: 43. DUÉ–EBBOTT 2010: 36-43 also point out that other preeminent Iliadic heroes, such as Diomedes, Odysseus, and Meriones, excel, too, in both kinds of warfare.

⁹ See discussion above, pp. 120-27.

¹⁰ As DUÉ–EBBOTT argue 2010: 32, the ambush theme “also includes spying missions, raids on enemy camps, cattle rustling, and other types of epic warfare that happen at night.” On the thematic overlap between such episodes, see DUÉ–EBBOTT 2010: 80ff., esp. pp. 82-83 on cattle raid and horse / sheep rustling.

¹¹ Cf. DUÉ–EBBOTT 2010: 36 and 68.

ambush.¹² Achilles perhaps also alludes to nighttime ambush activity in *Il.* 9.323-27,¹³ where he points out that “[he] used to watch through many a sleepless night and passed bloody days in battle, fighting with warriors for their women’s sake.” It may, thus, be said that Achilles in *Iliad* 1, by pointing out Agamemnon’s nonparticipation in *lókhos*, reminds the Achaean general that he himself used to participate in ambushes.¹⁴ Of course, he does not perform any ambush operations within the *Iliad*, which invariably refers to the hero’s ambush exploits as past events. Accordingly, there is some suggestive evidence that a version of both the seizure of Aeneias’ cattle and the capture of Lycaon was part of the epic tradition represented in the *Cypria*,¹⁵ which, in turn, allows us to assume that in non-Homeric tradition “Achilles” was, in fact, less narrowly conceived. This coheres well with what the ancient commentator (A) on *Il.* 22.188 points out, that μόνος Ὅμηρός φησι μονομαχῆσαι τὸν Ἑκτορα, οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ πάντες ἐνεδρευθῆναι ὑπὸ Ἀχιλλέως. (“Only Homer says that [Achilles] fought Hector in man-to-man combat. All the rest say that he was ambushed by Achilles.”)¹⁶ What this suggests is that outside the *Iliad* there were (perhaps epic) versions in which the confrontation between Achilles and Hector was conceived of as ambush, as in Dictys 3.15, which is in fact the only surviving attestation of the variant. Therefore, our evidence, such as it is, offers good ground to believe that the ambush activity of Achilles, though not given narrative space in the *Iliad*, was part of the traditional characterisation of the hero beyond Homer.

Another commonly-attested ambush of Achilles is concerned with the brutal murder of Troilus, one of the sons of Priam. In art and literature outside Homer, the Trojan prince is, more often than not, depicted as a defenceless *páis*, “young man” or “boy”, slain by Achilles in a cruel ambush outside Troy while on a horseback on

¹² On the seizure of the cattle of Aeneias as ambush, see DUÉ–EBBOTT 2010: 76 n. 72 and 83-84 with n. 81.

¹³ The scholiast (T) on *Il.* 21.37 suggests that Achilles passed those sleepless nights in ambush.

¹⁴ Cf. Σ (AbT) *Il.* 1.227: ἅμα οὖν τῶν ἰδίων κατορθωμάτων ὑπομνήσκει· ὅτι γὰρ καὶ ἐλόχα, δῆλον ἀπὸ Λυκάονος [cf. 21.35-9].

¹⁵ See below, pp. 132-33.

¹⁶ Trans. Dué–Ebbott 2010: 45.

Our evidence, as so often, does not allow us to answer with certainty. There is, however, some suggestive evidence that the ambush of Troilus formed part of the epic tradition that came to crystallise in the *Cypria*. The summary of Proclus runs as follows:

καὶ διαπρεσβεύονται πρὸς τοὺς Τρῶας, τὴν Ἑλένην καὶ τὰ κτήματα ἀπαιτοῦντες· ὡς δὲ οὐχ ὑπήκουσαν ἐκεῖνοι, ἐνταῦθα δὴ τειχομαχοῦσιν. ἔπειτα τὴν χώραν ἐπεξελθόντες πορθοῦσι καὶ τὰς περιοίκους πόλεις. [...] εἶτα ἀπονοστεῖν ὠρμημένους τοὺς Ἀχαιοὺς Ἀχιλλεὺς κατέχει. κάπειτα ἀπελαύνει τὰς Αἰνείου βοῦς, καὶ Λυρνησσὸν καὶ Πήδασον πορθεῖ καὶ συχνὰς τῶν περιοικίδων πόλεων, καὶ Τρωῖλον φονεύει. Λυκάονά τε Πάτροκλος εἰς Λῆμνον ἀγαγὼν ἀπεμπολεῖ.²⁰

And [the Greeks] send negotiators to the Trojans to demand the return of Helen and the property. When they did not agree to the demands, then they began a siege. Next they go out over the country and destroy the surrounding settlements. [...] Then when the Achaeans are eager to return home, Achilles holds them back. And then he drives off Aeneas' cattle. And he sacks Lyrnessus and Pedasus and many of the surrounding settlements, and he slays Troilus. And Patroclus takes Lycaon to Lemnos and sells him into slavery.

Although the Trojans are given the chance to negotiate, they reject the demand of the Greeks to return Helen and the property. It is at this time that Troy becomes a city under siege, and the Greek army destroys the surrounding settlements. Achilles seizes the cattle of Aeneas, sacks Pedasos and Lyrnessos (among other Trojan cities), “slays” (φονεύει) Troilus,²¹ and captures Lycaon, whom he sells as a slave through Patroclus.²² Although not clearly stated, the inclusion of the incident together with a number of narrative incidents which take place off the battlefield and in a context of siege suggests that Achilles ambushes and murders Troilus while the latter is on some non-military business, just as he ambushes both Aeneias and

²⁰ Procl., *Chr.* 42-43.61-64 Bernabé = *Cypria* arg. 10-11 West. This section of the Proclan summary is discussed again with reference to the “meeting” of Achilles with Helen and the capture of Lycaon: see above, pp. 68-70 and 121-23, respectively.

²¹ Cf. [Apollod.], *Epit.* 3.32.

²² According to *Il.* 21.37-38, Lycaon was captured by Achilles while cutting branches in Priam's orchard; cf. *Il.* 21.77.

Lycaon. As already noted,²³ it seems that, while the horrified Trojans are not willing to pursue armed hostilities with the Greeks, Achilles sets about to ambush the enemy.

The scanty reference of Proclus to the murder of Troilus becomes clearer in the light of the ancient scholia to the *Iliad* (A on *Il.* 24.257b):

ἡ διπλῆ ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ εἰρησθαι ἵπποχάρμην τὸν Τρωΐλον οἱ νεώτεροι ἐφ’ ἵππου διωκόμενον αὐτὸν ἐποίησαν. καὶ οἱ μὲν παῖδα αὐτὸν ὑποτίθενται, Ὅμηρος δὲ διὰ τοῦ ἐπιθέτου τέλειον ἄνδρα ἐμφαίνει· οὐ γὰρ ἄλλος ἵππομαχος λέγεται.²⁴

(The critical sign is) because, from Troilus’ being called [*“hippiokhárēmēn”*,] the post-Homeric writers have represented him as being pursued on horseback. And they take him to be a boy, whereas Homer indicates by the epithet that he was grown man, for no one else is called a cavalry warrior.

The scholiast points out that, while in Homer Troilus is grown man, “the post-Homeric writers” (οἱ νεώτεροι), building upon the *Iliad*’s *hippiokhárēmēs* (chariot-fighter), represented Troilus as a *páis* (young man or boy) pursued on horseback.²⁵ Is it possible that the *Cypria* followed the version which has Troilus as a young man or boy pursued on horseback? The answer is perhaps yes. Our earliest extant literary evidence for this version comes from a fragmentary lemma that is contained in an also fragmentarily preserved commentary on the sixth-century BC lyric poet Ibycus,²⁶ yet the earliest pictorial testimony comes from two Protocorinthian aryballoi.

²³ See above, pp. 69-70.

²⁴ *Cypria* fr. (dub.) 41 Bernabé = fr. 25* West.

²⁵ On the ambiguous meaning of *hippiokhárēmēs*, see discussion below.

²⁶ Ibyc. S224 (*SLG* and Davies) = P. Oxy. 2637 fr. 12 (mid-second century AD): παῖδα] θεοῖς ἴκ[ελον τῶ]ν περγάμων / ἔκτοσθεν Ἰλίου[υ κτάνε·]. Although παῖδα] and [υ κτάνε·] are not in the lemma, they can be made out of the scholia with some confidence (see SOMMERSTEIN-FITZPATRICK-TALBOY 2006: 199 n. 12). For a thorough discussion on this fragment, see JENNER 1998: 1-15 and CAVALLINI 1994: 39-52.

On the first vase (early seventh century),²⁷ an unarmed male figure on horseback is followed by another walking male figure in armour (no names), and, on the second vase (middle seventh century),²⁸ Troilus rides away on a horse in haste (something in hand, spear or sword, but not fully armed anyway)²⁹ while pursued by a running (armed?) Achilles (the figures are identified as “Troilus” and, though fragmentarily, “Achilles”). There is, therefore, some suggestive evidence in pictorial representations around the middle of the seventh century BC for the popularity of the version which has the unarmed Troilus being pursued on horseback to say with some confidence that this version dates as early as the late eighth and early seventh century BC at least and belongs to the early epic tradition that is now represented in the *Cypria*.³⁰ The corollary of this is that Homer, too, may be aware of this grimmer version of Troilus’ death. If so, then its absence from the *Iliad* has to be dealt with as a case of deliberate omission by the poet rather than ignorance. The scholiast assigns this version to *oi neōteroi*, “the post-Homeric writers”, but in the present case this may be misleading. The designation of the poets of the Cycle as *oi neōteroi*, which is typical of the scholia tradition (presumably because the scholiasts only had the means to refer to known texts), is usually problematic, for there is very often good reason to believe that stories that ultimately came to crystallise in a post-Homeric written form were derived from earlier and perhaps pre-Homeric oral mythopoetic traditions. For the most part, the Cyclic authors are *neōteroi* only in the sense that the textualisation of the tradition in the form in which our sources have it postdates the monumental composition of the Homeric poems.³¹

At some point of its mythopoetic recreation, the ambush of Troilus, from being a random incident of guerilla warfare, came to acquire some dramatic function in the progression of the story of the Trojan War. According to Plautus’ *Bacchides* 953-55

²⁷ Protocorinthian aryballos: *LIMC*, “Achilles”, n. 332a, early seventh century (GANTZ 1993: 598). Cf. a relief vase fragment: *LIMC*, “Achilles”, n. 280, ca. 680-70 (BURGESS 2001: 184).

²⁸ Protocorinthian aryballos: *LIMC*, “Achilles”, n. 331, ca. 650 (GANTZ 1993: 598) or 650-25 (BURGESS 2001: 184).

²⁹ In the surviving images of the late archaic period, Troilus sometimes holds a spear but, as GANTZ (1993: 599) points out, he is depicted with defensive armour (shield, helmet, and sword) only once on a cup by Olto: *LIMC*, “Achilles”, n. 369, ca. 525-500 (GANTZ 1993: 599).

³⁰ In the editions of both BERNABÉ and WEST, Σ (A) *Il.* 24.257b has been tentatively assigned to the *Cypria* as fr. (dub.) 41 and 25*, respectively.

³¹ See discussion above, pp. 14-16.

(and perhaps Menander's *Δις ἐξασπατῶν*),³² Troilus had to be killed before Troy could be taken, as the stealing of the Palladium was one of the incidents necessary to the fall of Troy.³³ Likewise, the first Vatican Mythographer (1.210) mentions that Troy would not be taken, if Troilus reached the age of twenty. Our evidence, however, allows us to tentatively suppose that the motif was only as old as the sixth century but certainly not earlier.³⁴

Furthermore, there are sources that assign the *eros* of Achilles for Troilus as the motive behind the murder outside a battle context. In Lycophron's *Alexandra* 307-13, a handsome Troilus is killed by Achilles, after he takes refuge on the altar of Apollo, rejecting the latter's opening approaches.³⁵ Lycophron possibly draws on Attic tragedy. Phrynichus, an early tragic poet who won his first victory in 511 BC, seems to have depicted Troilus as *eromenos* (Phryn. Trag., fr. 13 Snell = Ath., *Deipn.* 13.564f): Φρύνιχός τε ἐπὶ τοῦ Τρωΐλου ἔφη “λάμπειν ἐπὶ πορφυραῖς παρῆσι φῶς ἔρωτος”. (“And Phrynichus said about Troilus: ‘The light of love shines on his rosy cheeks.’”) (trans. Olson 2006: 275)³⁶ According to Athenaeus (*Deipn.* 13.603e-604a), this verse was quoted by Sophocles at a symposium in admiration of a boy's beauty. If not a fanciful anecdote, Athenaeus suggestively makes Sophocles familiar

³² See JEBB-HEADLAM-PEARSON 1917: 255 and SOMMERSTEIN-FITZPATRICK-TALBOY 2006: 201 n. 24.

³³ See discussion below, pp. 152-53.

³⁴ SOMMERSTEIN-FITZPATRICK-TALBOY 2006: 202 n. 28 argue that “the presence of Athena as a supporter of Achilles in several archaic presentations of episodes of the Troilus story [...] may indicate that already at that time there was a tradition according to which Troilus' death was a *sine qua non* of Greek victory in the war: in the *Iliad* and the epic tradition generally, Athena's concern is to secure such a victory, rather than to promote the interests or glory of Achilles or any other individual hero (except Odysseus).” See, e.g., the François Krater: *LIMC*, “Achilles”, n. 292, ca. 575 (GANTZ 1993: 598).

³⁵ According to Servius (on Virg., *Aen.* 1.474), Achilles offers doves to Troilus, who tries to take them and dies in the hero's embrace.

³⁶ The motif of Troilus' beauty apparently goes back to the mid-sixth century and to Ibycus, who uses the Trojan prince as an example of utmost beauty. The phrase παῖδα] θεοῖς ἴκ[ελον in S224.7 (*SLG* and Davies) might be taken to refer to Troilus as a “divinely beautiful stripling” and corresponds to another reference in Ibycus' poem in honour of Polycrates (see 282a.40-45 *PMG*), where Troilus' beauty receives emphasis, too (cf. JENNER 1998: 12; GANTZ 1993: 507). Taken together, both references suggest that already in the sixth century Troilus became a type of adolescent beauty. On Troilus' exceptional beauty, see, e.g., Quint. Sm. 4.415 and 430; Strato, *Anth. Pal.* 12.191.

with the legend of Troilus as a handsome stripling with erotic appeal. Some fragments of his *Troilos*, in which, as evidence suggests, Achilles murders Troilus outside battle,³⁷ are indeed indicative of an erotic context,³⁸ and it may also be the case that such is the context in Strattis' *Troilos*, which is assumed to have parodied the former.³⁹

A hint of homosexual desire on the part of Achilles could also be tentatively traced on an early sixth-century bronze shield-band relief, on which a young naked boy is represented on an altar with a cock sitting upon it, while an armed warrior is about to kill him with a sword.⁴⁰ It has been suggested that the presence of the cock, the favourite love gift given from men to their *eromenos* in archaic art, can be considered to be evidence that the love theme was an element of the Troilus story that the artisan was already familiar with.⁴¹ But, although Achilles' *eros* for Troilus could account for the straightforward violence shown in iconographic representations from the first half of the sixth century onwards,⁴² there is no evidence, neither literary nor pictorial, to suppose that the love motive dates from the period before the sixth century. Such as it is, our evidence from Proclus' summary of the *Cypria* and the pictorial representations from the two seventh-century Protocorinthian aryballoi only allows us to suppose that the ambush of Troilus formed part of the early epic repertoire as a random and extremely savage incident of guerilla warfare, granted that, at the time of the ambush, Troilus is still a *páris* (the relatively smaller size of his figure compared to that of Achilles in the two representations is very suggestive), who ventured unarmed (note the absence of

³⁷ See Σ (T) II. 24.257; cf. SOMMERSTEIN-FITZPATRICK-TALBOY 2006: 203-16.

³⁸ See JEBB-HEADLAM-PEARSON 1917: 254; ROBERTSON 1990: 67.

³⁹ See JEBB-HEADLAM-PEARSON 1917: 255.

⁴⁰ Bronze Shield Band (see SCHEFOLD 1966: 86, fig. 34), ca. 600 (Burgess 2001: 184) or ca. 590-580 (SCHEFOLD 1966: 86). On the identification of the two figures with Achilles and Troilus, see GANTZ 1993: 598.

⁴¹ See ROBERTSON 1990: 67; JENNER 1998: 8; SOMMERSTEIN-FITZPATRICK-TALBOY 2006: 201 n. 23.

⁴² Troilus is often depicted as a child put to the sword or decapitated by Achilles on the altar of Apollo. More appallingly, however, in some sixth-century representations of the incident, Troilus himself or a piece of him are depicted as being brandished or thrown towards the Trojans. GANTZ 1993: 560 provides a helpful overview.

defensive armour),⁴³ apparently on some non-military business. As such, the incident shows traits of extreme cruelty and indiscriminate primitive savagery.

The *Iliad*, though it focuses narrowly on Achilles as a πρόμαχος, unquestionably achieves, as we have seen, a degree of consistency with the wider epic tradition, which does know of Achilles as ambusher. Nevertheless, it still makes no reference to the commonly-attested brutal ambush of Troilus. Presumably because, unlike the Lycaon or the Aeneias ambush episodes, which the Homeric tradition largely acknowledges, the Troilus incident remarkably exceeds not only the limits to which the *Iliad* confines *lókhos* in the conceptualisation of its key hero but also the normal run of heroic brutality. It points to an Achilles who would butcher anyone brutally and indiscriminately, whereas, as has been rightly observed, “[Homer’s] Achilles can certainly be brutal, but there are limits to his brutality, and it emerges only under the influence of a grievance, or a grief, that is of properly heroic proportions.”⁴⁴ It is a fact, however, that the *Iliad* does make reference to Troilus, and so it is interesting to see how his story gets filtered through Homer’s lens.

Referring to Troilus, Priam uses the epithet *hippiokhármēs* (*Il.* 24.257),⁴⁵ which, as the scholiast (D on *Il.* 24.257) notes, is open to double interpretation: ἀφ’ ἵππων μαχόμενον ἢ ἵπποις χαίροντα.⁴⁶ If the second element of the compound *hippiokhármēs* is *χάρμη*, which in Homer means either “battle”⁴⁷ or “ardour for the fight”,⁴⁸ then the epithet possibly means “fighting from chariot”, or, as has been suggested, “finding the joy of battle in the clash of chariots”.⁴⁹ So, the use of the specific epithet perhaps invites the audience to think of Troilus as a “chariot-fighter”, which, as we have seen, comports squarely with the context in which the reference to Troilus is framed. However, if the second element of the compound is

⁴³ See above, p. 134 together with n. 29.

⁴⁴ SOMMERSTEIN-FITZPATRICK-TALBOY 2006: 197. In the *Iliad*, indiscriminate and unreflecting brutality is generally not part of the heroic conduct, with the notably unique exception of Agamemnon, who in *Il.* 6.57-59 reminds Menelaus, who is about to spare Adrastus, that not one of Trojans must escape death, “not even the boy whom his mother carries in her womb”.

⁴⁵ This is the only use of the epithet in the *Iliad*.

⁴⁶ Cf., also, *Etym. Magn.* and Pseudo-Zonaras, *Lexicon* s.v. Ἴπποχάρμης.

⁴⁷ See *Il.* 4.509, 5.608, 7.218, 7.285, 12.389, 14.101, 16.823, 17.161, and 17.602.

⁴⁸ See *Il.* 4.222, 8.252, 12.203, 12.393, 14.441, 15.380, 13.82, 13.104, 13.721, 15.477, 17.103, 17.759, 19.148, and *Od.* 22.73.

⁴⁹ HEUBECK 1989 on *Od.* 11.259.

the noun χάριμα, which is related to the verb χαίρω and in Homer means either “joy / delight”⁵⁰ or “source of joy / delight”,⁵¹ then it is also entirely possible that *hippiokharmēs* means “horse lover”, evoking the brutal slaying of the young Trojan prince out of the battlefield, an incident which, as we have seen, indicates an Achilles who would use tactics of indiscriminate violence. In and of itself, therefore, the epithet is inherently equivocal.⁵²

Now, is the polysemic significance of *hippiokharmēs* coincidental and unintended? Possibly yes. Yet, rather than simply assuming this, we can instead make the opposite assumption, that the epithet is, in fact, devised to be understood in both ways. Viewed from one perspective, *hippiokharmēs* hints at the barbarous ambush of the young Troilus, in pointing suggestively to the version that has Troilus being pursued on horseback as a *páris*. From another perspective, it also holds suggestive connotations of military prowess. These connotations, framed in a context which designates pointedly the Trojan prince as an *áristos* killed on the battlefield, become prominent and in the process overshadow any less favourable overtones. On this reading, the epithet *hippiokharmēs* is seen as a *double entendre* through which the *Iliad* sub-textually acknowledges but simultaneously refutes the traditional Troilus incident, thereby setting its own filter restrictions on a strand in the tradition in which we meet the characterisation of Achilles as a brutal guerilla attacker.

It is, however, also true that, in the broader context of the *Iliad*'s tacit refutation of the desultory cruelty in the Troilus incident, there is a constant play with the inherent tendencies in the traditional characterisation of Achilles, by implication, with the audience's expectations about the hero. In *Iliad* 24, Achilles is, for all his pity, still close to uncontrollable anger. When he asks Priam to sit down, and Priam refuses the offer of a seat, Achilles' anger begins to flare again. In a scene which prefigures the killing of the defenceless and unarmed Priam by Neoptolemus, Achilles' progeny, in the *Sack of Troy*,⁵³ the hero bluntly warns Priam not to provoke him (*Il.* 24.560-70): “Do not provoke me further, old sir, [...] stir my heart no more

⁵⁰ See *Od.* 19.471.

⁵¹ See *Il.* 3.51, 6.82, 10.193, 14.325, 17.636, 23.342, 24.706, and *Od.* 6.185.

⁵² The meaning of *hippiokharmēs* in *Od.* 11.259 and Hes., fr. 7.2 Most & M-W is similarly ambiguous. On the matter, see ROBERTSON 1990: 63, JENNER 1998: 4 n. 11, and, more recently, SOMMERSTEIN-FITZPATRICK-TALBOY 2006:197.

⁵³ Procl., *Chr.* 88.13-14 Bernabé = *Sack of Troy* arg. 2 West.

among my sorrows, lest, old sir, I spare not even you inside the huts, my suppliant though you are".⁵⁴ Homer, therefore, largely refines away Achilles' unselective violence, while acknowledging the tradition, very much the same way as he does, as noted above, with other aspects of Achilles, such as his capacity for *eros*.

What the *Iliad* offers is a refined conception of the heroic ideal, in which the indiscriminate violence that Achilles shows in the Troilus incident has no part. Homer carefully refines his Achilles against the background of an Achilles who, among other things, is a raider of the sort we encounter in Nestor's reminiscences (see *Il.* 11.671-83), but, while acknowledging this tradition, his focus is on an Achilles who fights in full battle. He presents an Achilles who is certainly capable of extreme violence but whose violence is always directed against people who meet him as equals on the battlefield in the context of a competitive quest for honour, so eloquently described by Sarpedon (see *Il.* 12.310-28), and not against the weak or inferior. Even Lycaon, for all the pity which the narrative invites for his fate, is after all a warrior on the battlefield. The lexical ambiguity of the epithet *hippiokhármēs* may well be seen as a tool in the purgation of the Achillean heroism into a more heroic and honorific brutality. In the person of Achilles, the *Iliad* repudiates indiscriminate violence and enacts the limpidity of heroism. The result is a narrower conception of what heroism means.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Il.* 24.582-86.

CHAPTER 3

Homer and the Other Odysseus

If there is one word to describe Odysseus in the world of the *Odyssey*, then the word we are looking for is “multiplicity”. As Emily WILSON vividly points out, Odysseus is:

a king like Agamemnon, an adviser like Nestor, a defensive fighter like Ajax and an aggressor, like Achilles. But he is far more than any of these roles. He is also a poet, a beggar, a lover, a husband, a father, a son, a pirate, a sailor, a giant-killer, a military strategist, a hunter, a spy, a politician, a fierce general, a carpenter, a shipwright, a liar, a thief, a polite guest in either a king’s hall or a pigsty, a victim of fortune and its master – to name but a few. Unlike either Achilles (shot in the heel) or Agamemnon (killed in the bath), or Ajax (suicide), he is a survivor.¹

The *Odyssey* places much emphasis on Odysseus as a hero distinct from other more monolithic heroic figures. At the same time, as in the case of the Iliadic Achilles, one of the features that distinguish the poem is the unified conception of its Odysseus as a paradigmatic hero. The Odyssean Odysseus, though multidimensional, features, by and large, as a hero in the conventional sense, namely, as a noble character and as a doer of great deeds in exceptionally physically and mentally demanding conditions.² In sharp contrast, however, what distinguishes the tradition now reflected in the poems of the Epic Cycle is the complexity of its Odysseus (and of Achilles, as we have seen in CHAPTER TWO). The king of Ithaca is, for the most part, an exemplary hero, but, as well as this, he also feigns madness in order to avoid conscription, he murders Palamedes out of revenge, he attempts to kill Diomedes on the night that they steal the Palladium from Troy, he kills the infant Astyanax in what appears to be an incident of cold-blooded and calculated atrocity. A close study of these four

¹ Emily WILSON, ‘The Good Rogue Odysseus’, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 29 September 2014 [<http://www.the-tls.co.uk/tls/public/article1139345.ece>].

² Similarly consistent is, as we shall see below (pp. 161-71), the characterisation of Odysseus as a πρόμαχος in the *Iliad*, on which see, also, COLEMAN-NORTON 1927: 73-78 and FOLZENLOGEN 1965: 33-35.

episodes foregrounds less flattering aspects of Odysseus' Cyclic characterisation, such as deceitfulness, untrustworthiness, manipulativeness, malice, thievery, treachery, and callous savagery. Outside the *Odyssey*, therefore, Odysseus' career is sometimes stained by dishonourable deeds which sully its overall splendour and even to some degree at least almost make him the villain of the Trojan story.

This incongruous merging of heroism and "villainy" within the territory of early Greek epic has often been thought to be a post-Homeric and decadent byproduct.³ Much of this speculation is presumably due to the growing suspicion of the hero's primary qualities that flourishes in subsequent ancient literature.⁴ However, the complex characterisation of Odysseus cannot just be traced to later developments. Even the *Odyssey*, as we shall see, though it shows a clear tendency to purge its Odysseus, standing aloof from the influences of less favourable aspects of the tradition, still tacitly acknowledges and sub-textually adjusts the traditional complexity in order to present a consistent image of its hero. The first part of CHAPTER THREE maps the career of Odysseus in the wider epic tradition as represented in the poems of Epic Cycle, whereas the second part employs the non-Homeric characterisation of Odysseus as the background against which it measures the sophisticated conceptualisation of the hero in Homer, mainly in the *Odyssey*.

³ See, e.g., GRIFFIN 1977: 45-46 together with p. 15 n. 23 above. Note, also, that STANFORD's Chapter 6 in *The Ulysses Theme* (1963) is titled "*Developments in the Epic Cycle*" (emphasis added).

⁴ *The Ulysses theme*, in which STANFORD 1963 traces the growing hostility towards Odysseus in ancient literature outside the epic tradition, remains highly influential in the modern academic study of Odysseus. Relatively recently, however, MONTIGLIO 2011 traced the philosophical response to Odysseus in ancient sources and showed that it was more positive than one might expect.

3.1 In the Footsteps of the non-Homeric Odysseus

The debut of Odysseus in the Epic Cycle –at least, in the form in which we now know it– places him straightaway in the most unfavourable light. The narrative of Proclus’ summary of the *Cypria* reads as follows:

ἔπειτα τοὺς ἡγεμόνας ἀθροίζουσιν ἐπελθόντες τὴν Ἑλλάδα. καὶ μαίνεσθαι προσποιησάμενον Ὀδυσσεῖα ἐπὶ τῷ μὴ θέλειν συστρατεύεσθαι ἐφώρασαν, Παλαμήδους ὑποθεμένου τὸν υἱὸν Τηλέμαχον ἐπὶ κόλασιν ἐξαρπάσαντες.¹

Then they [the Greeks]² travel round Greece assembling the leaders. Odysseus feigned insanity, as he did not want to take part in the expedition, but they found him out by acting on a suggestion of Palamedes; and snatching his son Telemachus for [punishment].

When the Greeks set out to enroll leaders for the expedition against the city of Troy, Odysseus feigns madness in order to avoid conscription,³ and Palamedes, a proverbially ingenious hero,⁴ exposes his stratagem with a ruse: Telemachus, Odysseus’ son, is snatched up with a view to testing the Ithacan king. According to later sources, either Palamedes snatches Telemachus from Penelope’s bosom and draws his sword as if he would kill him,⁵ or he puts the infant Telemachus in front of Odysseus’ plough.⁶ By doing so, Palamedes outfoxes the sly Odysseus. In fear for his son, Odysseus confesses that he pretended to be mad and (presumably reluctantly) goes to the war.⁷

¹ Procl., *Chr.* 40.30-35 Bernabé = *Cypria* arg. 5-6 West.

² Proclus is not clear about the recruiters: see discussion in WEST 2013: 102.

³ Ps.-Apollodorus (*Epit.* 3.7) similarly tells us that Odysseus “not wishing to go to the war, feigned madness” (μὴ βουλόμενος στρατεύεσθαι προσποιεῖται μανίαν). According to later sources, Odysseus yoked an ox and a horse (or an ass) to the plough and sowed salt: see Hyg., *Fab.* 95; Lucian, *De domo* 30; Lyc., *Alex.* 815ff. (together with Tz. *ad loc.*); Philostr., *Her.* 11.2; Eust. on *Od.* 24.118.

⁴ See GANTZ 1993: 604.

⁵ See [Apollod.], *Epit.* 3.7; Lucian, *De domo* 30; Plin., *Nat.* 35.129. The latter describes Euphranor’s famous picture of the scene that was exhibited at Ephesus.

⁶ See Hyg., *Fab.* 95.

⁷ Sophocles dramatised this theme in his play Ὀδυσσεὺς Μαινόμενος. Cf. Soph., *Philoct.* 1025 and Aesch., *Agam.* 832. For other possible allusions to the story, see JEBB-HEADLAM-PEARSON 1917:

Proclus mentions briefly the death of Palamedes near the end of his summary of the *Cypria*: ἔπειτά ἐστι Παλαμήδους θάνατος.⁸ The compressed narrative becomes clearer in the light of Pausanias' account (10.31.2), which suggests that, in the *Cypria*, Odysseus and Diomedes snare Palamedes into going on a fishing trip and then drown him (fr. 30 Bernabé = fr. 27 West):

Παλαμήδην δὲ ἀποπνιγῆναι προελθόντα ἐπὶ ἰχθύων θήραν, Διομήδην δὲ τὸν ἀποκτείναντα εἶναι καὶ Ὀδυσσεά, ἐπιλεξάμενος ἐν ἔπεσιν οἶδα τοῖς Κυπρίοις.

That Palamedes was drowned on a fishing expedition, and that Diomedes was the one who killed him with Odysseus, I know from reading it in the epic *Cypria*.

The connection between Odysseus and Diomedes is traditional, as the two heroes often collaborate throughout the Trojan saga. In *Iliad* 10, for example, they catch and murder Dolon, and, in the *Little Iliad*, as we shall see, together they steal the Palladium.⁹ Fishing, of course, is atypical in the epic tradition,¹⁰ yet there are two Odyssean instances, 4.367-69 and 12.329-32, where the comrades of Menelaus and Odysseus, respectively, resort to fishing, after they run out of resources. And there is good reason to suppose that, in the *Cypria*, the Greeks do run out of resources, for it is presumably a severe shortage of food that, at some point, compels Agamemnon to send for the Oinotropoi, the daughters of Anios, who were given by Dionysus the power to change whatever they wanted into oil, corn, and wine.¹¹ Therefore, although the murder of Palamedes at the hands of Diomedes and Odysseus is otherwise unknown and goes unmentioned in the Homeric epics, we have no reason to regard Pausanias' testimony as erroneous.

115-16. Although some ancient sources claim that the story is post-Homeric elaboration (see Philostr., *Her.* 33.4 and Eust. on *Od.* 24.118; cf. Cic., *Off.* 3.26.97), there is some suggestive evidence to believe that the *Odyssey* presupposes it: see discussion below, pp. 174-75.

⁸ Procl., *Chr.* 43.66 Bernabé = *Cypria* arg. 12 West.

⁹ There is also some evidence that Odysseus together with Diomedes slay Philomelas, king of Lesbos: see Σ *Od.* 4.343.

¹⁰ Cf. BERNABÉ 1987: 60 on *Cypria* fr. 30: "Heroes epici non nisi egestate cibi piscantur."

¹¹ See above, p. 76 n. 25.

What can the motive be, if, indeed, the assassination of Palamedes is already part of the epic tradition? Our evidence, as so often, does not allow us to speak with certainty, but the fact that Proclus makes only a very brief mention of the death of Palamedes without further reference to the motive is very suggestive, as it invites us to see the incident as a direct consequence of Palamedes' exposure of Odysseus' ineptitude, which is very suggestively the only other reference to Palamedes in the summary of the *Cypria*. Odysseus presumably resents the fact that he is found out and coerced into going to the war, which is perhaps exacerbated by resentment at being defeated in an area that he regards as quintessentially his own.¹² According to later accounts,¹³ Odysseus, in revenge for Palamedes' earlier unmasking, exposes the latter as a traitor through a Machiavellian device. He forges a letter from Priam to Palamedes, arranging for Palamedes to betray the Greeks in return for gold, and hides the same amount of gold in Palamedes' tent. Agamemnon reads the letter, finds the gold, and hands Palamedes over to the allies to be stoned as a traitor. We have no conclusive evidence, of course, that the story (or a version of it) derives from the epic tradition. But, as already said, the sequence of events as given by Proclus offers good ground to believe that the revenge motive, at least, goes back to the *Cypria* tradition.¹⁴ In the epic tradition, the murder of Palamedes is presumably already a "murderous act of treachery against a companion in arms" and, as such, a "purely selfish act of revenge"¹⁵ that essentially puts an end to the ongoing hostility that Odysseus feels toward Palamedes since the *mania*-episode and the unmasking of his deception at the beginning of the *Cypria*.¹⁶ If that is the case, then, although no

¹² Resourceful cleverness becomes, as we shall see, a prominent feature in the epic characterisation of Odysseus.

¹³ See [Apollod.], *Epit.* 3.8. For similar and different versions of the story, see FRAZER 1921: 178 n.1.

¹⁴ The letter must be a later addition. The Homeric heroes do not write. We have the one firm reference to writing in the Bellerophon case (*Il.* 6.178: *sémata*), but POWELL 1991: 18-20 and 2004: 11-12, pointing out that the *sémata* in *Il.* 7.181-89 are merely "marks" / "signs" on lots, argues that the *sémata* in the Bellerophon case are not "lexigraphic" but "semasiographic" (contrast MARQUARDT 1993: 154-57, esp. p. 157 n. 5).

¹⁵ STANFORD 1963: 83 and 84, respectively. Cf. DAVIES 1989: 48.

¹⁶ The word order in Pausanias gives pride of place to Diomedes and suggests that Odysseus may have been the plotter and Diomedes the agent. It is, of course, impossible to prove it. The fact that Diomedes conspires with Odysseus against Palamedes, albeit atypical for the hero, does not pose a problem. Diomedes features as one of the most honourable chief Achaean warriors in the Trojan War

moral evaluation of the incident on the part of the *Cypria* poet is recorded in Proclus, the murder of Palamedes stands out as the most ignominious and heinous crime in his epic –and not only– career.

Odysseus' reason for feigning insanity goes unmentioned in the summary of the *Cypria*, presumably because Proclus gives the bare bones of the poem, in which psychology –as well as moral evaluation, as we have seen– can be dispensed with. It could be either lack of courage or deep loyalty to his newborn child and newlywed wife.¹⁷ Of course, the heroic performance of Odysseus in the Epic Cycle as a whole and the *Iliad*, as we shall see, makes cowardice our least likely scenario.¹⁸ The *Odyssey*, on the other hand, repeatedly stresses Odysseus' loyalty to his wife and child, which is an idea that persistently permeates the poem, and constitutes the steadfast moving force behind his superhuman attempt to return home after the Trojan War.¹⁹ Perhaps, as the scholiast on *Od.* 24.119 notes, ἤθελε [...] κρύπτειν ἑαυτὸν ὁ Ὀδυσσεὺς, μὴ βουλόμενος στρατεύεσθαι, οὐ διὰ δειλίαν, ἀλλ' ὡς συνετὸς ἀνὴρ ὁρῶν τὸ μέγεθος τοῦ πολέμου.²⁰ In fact, the Odyssean Odysseus knows beforehand (or, at least, the *Odyssey* makes him seem to know) that his participation in the Trojan War will not be an easy task, and that his return may even be impossible, as can be inferred from his last words before his departure to Troy that Penelope recalls in *Od.* 18.259-66. Possibly, Odysseus has in mind the prophecy of Halitherses, according to which he would return home only after twenty years (Halitherses reiterates his prophecy in *Od.* 2.171-76 at the first assembly since Odysseus went to Troy twenty years ago.).²¹ Even if the prophecy of Halitherses or the conversation between Penelope and Odysseus are the *Odyssey* poet's inventions, they simply pick up an inescapable fact, that the Trojan War would be a hard war

throughout the epic tradition, but we don't have to have a completely consistent "Diomedes". The examples of the cyclic "Odysseus" and "Achilles" are quite instructive.

¹⁷ At the time that Odysseus leaves for Troy, Telemachus is still a newborn baby and Penelope a newlywed bride. This can be inferred, for example, from *Od.* 11.448-50, where Odysseus converses briefly with the ghost of Agamemnon in the Underworld. Cf. *Od.* 4.112 and 144, 18.269-70, and 19.19.

¹⁸ With that being said, however, as STANFORD 1963: 83 points out, "to try to avoid any opportunity of fighting was unheroic in the conventional sense."

¹⁹ See, e.g., *Od.* 5.215-24.

²⁰ Cf. Eustathius on *Od.* 24.118.

²¹ Cf. Hyg., *Fab.* 95.

against a difficult opponent. So, Odysseus, devoted to his family, would naturally make every effort in order to secure his presence on Ithaca. The fact, however, that, after evading the war, he eventually participates in the Trojan expedition suggests that he had to be somehow forced. This brings us to the question of the nature of the pressure on Odysseus.

According to the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 154c.1-8 Most = fr. 198.20-27 M-W), Odysseus took part in the wooing of Helen, which means that he, too, was bound by the “oath of Tyndareus”. The oath, as we have seen,²² was sworn by all of the suitors and entailed that, if Helen was abducted, all of them would have to protect the rights of her legal husband and to fight for her sake. In this light, Odysseus’ forced enrollment in the *Cypria* becomes clearer. The Greeks presumably ask Odysseus to honour the oath he once sworn, but, when they confront his initial reluctance, they have to conscript him perforce.²³ Ps.-Apollodorus is more explicit on the matter than Proclus. He refers specifically to the oath as the background to the conscription of Odysseus, pointing out the causal connection between oath and conscription (*Epit.* 3.6): ὁ δὲ [i.e., Agamemnon] πέμπων κήρυκα πρὸς ἕκαστον τῶν βασιλέων τῶν ὄρκων ὑπεμίμνησκεν ὧν ὤμοσαν [...]. ὄντων δὲ πολλῶν προθύμων στρατεύεσθαι, παραγίνονται καὶ πρὸς Ὀδυσσεά εἰς Ἴθάκην. This, however, invites us to see the *mainómenos* Odysseus in the original narrative of the *Cypria* as an untrustworthy trickster who attempts cunningly to evade the consequences of a sworn oath. But, in relation to that, as we shall see, the *mania*-incident perhaps also foregrounds Odysseus’ skill in influencing and controlling others to his own advantage.

According to the *Catalogue* (fr. 154c.4-6 Most = fr. 198.23-25 M-W), Odysseus, showing intelligent pragmatism, “does not send any gifts for [Helen]; for he knows [inside] that blond Menelaus will win, for he is the best of the Achaeans in wealth.” However, “he keeps sending messages ahead to Lacedaemon” (fr. 154c.7 Most = fr. 198-26 M-W), which suggests that the hero’s participation in the wooing is either merely a matter of aristocratic obligation or, as we shall see, a calculated plan of action (or both, of course). Menelaus wins Helen, but, as evidence suggests, Odysseus does not become a sore loser, as he manipulates the situation in order to

²² See above, p. 72.

²³ Cf. FANTUZZI 2012: 13-14 n. 29.

make the most out of it. According to Ps.-Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 3.10.9), it is Odysseus who conceives the stratagem of the oath. When Tyndareus expresses his fear that the suitors might quarrel, after Helen would make her choice of a husband, Odysseus suggests that he should make all the suitors swear an oath, by means of which they would all be bound to respect Helen's choice and defend her legal husband. But the calculating and resourceful hero has a sneaky plan in his mind. He reveals his stratagem only after he exacts a promise from Tyndareus that he would help him win Penelope in return. Tyndareus, being persuaded by the hero, keeps his promise. Odysseus, on the other hand, though he offers his cunning stratagem, does not live up to the sworn oath as a suitor of Helen, initially at least. If Odysseus' involvement in the design of the stratagem of the oath goes back to the *Catalogue*,²⁴ and if, as there is good reason to believe, the *Cypria* tradition presupposes the oath, then, by feigning madness in order to avoid conscription, the hero technically breaks an oath which he himself suggested and by which he himself is bound. It is, however, significant that he does not seem to break it. When the Greeks arrive in Ithaca, Odysseus does not say "I am not going to fight" or "what oath are you talking about?" and *ostensibly* does not break the oath.²⁵ On the face of it, he does not fail to perform his sworn duties on purpose. He simply plays the fool. In other words, he *does not refuse* to honour the oath, but he makes the Greeks believe that he is unworthy of conscription.²⁶ He manipulates Tyndareus in order to secure the oath and, through this, his marriage with Penelope, and, then, he attempts to wriggle out of his sworn duties deceptively. Odysseus, after all, manages, using clever but deceitful tactics, to win Penelope at no cost.

Once he joins the expedition, Odysseus becomes an active player. First of all, there is some suggestive evidence that he becomes a recruiter himself. The D scholia on *Il.* 19.326 (*Cypria* fr. 22 Bernabé = fr. 19 West) report that, according to the Cyclic poets, Odysseus exposes by stratagem and enlists Achilles, who is hiding among the daughters of Lycomedes on Scyros.²⁷ The recruitment of Achilles would,

²⁴ Cf. CINGANO 2005: 127, who allows for this possibility.

²⁵ This is a prominent characteristic of the personality of Autolycus, Odysseus' maternal grandfather: see discussion below, pp. 175-78.

²⁶ Cf. STANFORD-LUCE 1974: 18.

²⁷ Cf. [Apollod.], *Epit.* 3.9, where Odysseus, together with Menelaus and Talthybius, visits Cinyras, a king of Cyprus, asking for his help.

of course, come naturally in the *Cypria*, which deals with what leads up to the war, but, as has been argued, the story of his transvestism was presumably not included in the poem's version of the enlistment of the hero,²⁸ who, as can be inferred from *Il.* 9.252-59 and 11.765-91, is probably recruited by Odysseus (and Nestor) in the customary manner.²⁹ Moreover, although Odysseus is not mentioned by Proclus, evidence from Ps.-Apollodorus (*Epit.* 21-22) suggests that the hero has some involvement in the events leading up to the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, which eventually allows Agamemnon's ships to sail to Troy, as it is Odysseus whom Agamemnon sends to Clytemnestra to ask for Iphigeneia, making a false promise of marriage to Achilles. According to Ps.-Apollodorus (*Epit.* 3.27), too, when, as in the *Cypria*,³⁰ Philoctetes is bitten by a snake and is left behind on account of the foul smell of his wound, it is Odysseus who "on Agamemnon's instructions [puts] him out on Lemnos with the bow of Heracles" (trans. Frazer 1921: 195). The abandonment of Philoctetes is a ruthless way to deal with a free ally and shows lack of scruple on the part both of Agamemnon and of Odysseus. Similarly, though the goal that Agamemnon and Odysseus pursue, to get to Troy in order to avenge the reckless actions of Paris and Helen, justifies the means of sacrificing Iphigeneia, the act still bespeaks especially the latter's ruthless manipulateness. If Odysseus' involvement in these two episodes was part of the tradition that is now represented in the *Cypria*,³¹ then, though these would not be the hero's worst offences in his non-Homeric career, they would certainly not present him as a loyal ally nor point to an especially noble character.

Suggestive evidence also indicates that Odysseus participates in another episode of the *Cypria* which bespeaks the hero's firm commitment to the welfare of the Greeks. The scholiast on *Od.* 6.164 reports that Odysseus together with Menelaus

²⁸ See discussion in FANTUZZI 2012: 23-26.

²⁹ See WEST 2013: 103, who also admits that, though in his Loeb edition the D scholia on *Il.* 19.326 appear as fr. 19 of the *Cypria*, "there is insufficient warrant".

³⁰ Procl., *Chr.* 41.50-52 Bernabé = *Cypria* arg. 9 West.

³¹ Sophocles takes Philoctetes' hostility towards Odysseus for granted (see esp. *Philoct.* 116-18, where Philoctetes recalls his cruel abandonment by Odysseus). The fact that, in his fifty-second oration, Dio Chrysostom does not signal that Aeschylus or Euripides differed on this point perhaps suggests that the hostility between the two and therefore Odysseus' involvement in Philoctetes' abandonment were already established features in the tradition.

goes to Delos for the daughters of Anios, the Oinotropoi,³² thus procuring supplies for the army.³³ But the first prestigious task that the Ithacan king undertakes is the first embassy to the Trojans, whose aim is to demand the return of Helen and the property. In the summary of the *Cypria* Proclus refers to the embassy without specific reference to Odysseus.³⁴ But, based on *Il.* 3.205, where Antenor recalls that “once in the days before now brilliant Odysseus came [in Troy] with warlike Menelaus, and the embassy was for [Helen’s] sake”,³⁵ we can reasonably suppose that it is Odysseus who leads the embassy together with Menelaus.

Next in the narrative sequence of the Cyclic epics comes the *Aethiopis*, where, according to the Proclan summary, Odysseus has three dignified appearances. First, proving himself to be committed to the continuation of the war, he accompanies Achilles to Lesbos, where he purifies him from the killing of Thersites.³⁶ His role, which is instrumental in sorting out the dispute that, as we have seen, erupts among the Greeks over the killing of Thersites,³⁷ parallels his participation in the voyage to Chryse in *Iliad* 1, where he returns Chryseis and propitiates Apollo (cf. *Il.* 1.308-11 and 430-74), as well as his contribution to the restoration of the unity and cohesion of the Greek army after the *Diapira* scene in *Iliad* 2.³⁸ The second time that Odysseus appears in the *Aethiopis* is when, after Paris and Apollo kill Achilles, a fierce battle breaks out over the body. Odysseus fights the Trojans off, while Ajax

³² On the daughters of Anios, see above, p. 76 n. 25.

³³ See also the scholia on Eur., *Hec.* 41 (= *Cypria* fr. 34 Bernabé), according to which, in the *Cypria*, Odysseus, together with Diomedes, wounds and kills Polyxena, the youngest daughter of king Priam, perhaps in an attempt to secure a fair wind for the Greeks to sail home. Cf. *Sack of Troy* arg. 4 West = Procl., *Chr.* 89.22-23 Bernabé, where, according to Proclus, after the city of Troy was set on fire, Polyxena was slaughtered at Achilles’ tomb. The *Cypria* apparently related an episode which, at least in the form in which we now have the poem, goes beyond its scope. As ROBERTSON 1990: 64-65 argues, the death of Polyxena was presumably narrated in digression and perhaps in relation to the death of Troilus. On the characterisation of Odysseus in the episode, see also discussion below, pp. 158-59.

³⁴ Procl., *Chr.* 42.55-57 Bernabé = *Cypria* arg. 10-11 West.

³⁵ As we shall see below (p. 155), there is some suggestive evidence that the first embassy of Menelaus and Odysseus was also mentioned in the *Little Iliad*. Cf. Bacchylides Ode 15 (Dithyramb 1) and [Apollod.], *Epit.* 3.28-29.

³⁶ Procl., *Chr.* 67-68.4-10 Bernabé = *Aethiopis* arg. 1 West.

³⁷ See above, pp. 100-1.

³⁸ See above, pp. 116-17.

carries the body of Achilles back to the ships.³⁹ But, when the Greeks organise an athletic contest and offer Achilles' armour as the prize for the outstanding hero,⁴⁰ a “quarrel” (*stasis*) arises between Odysseus and Ajax (περὶ τῶν Ἀχιλλέως ὄπλων Ὀδυσσεῖ καὶ Αἴαντι στάσις ἐμπίπτει)⁴¹ –probably a climactic exchange of heated speeches.⁴² Since they both played the leading role in the battle over Achilles' arms and corpse, they both claim the armour for themselves as recognition for their efforts.

The Proclan summary of the *Little Iliad* begins⁴³ with the Ὀπλων κρίσις, the “Judgement of the Arms”, and the suicide of Ajax:

ἡ τῶν ὄπλων κρίσις γίνεται καὶ Ὀδυσσεὺς κατὰ βούλησιν Ἀθηνᾶς λαμβάνει. Αἴας δ' ἐμμανῆς γενόμενος τὴν τε λείαν τῶν Ἀχαιῶν λυμαίνεται καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἀναιρεῖ.⁴⁴

The awarding of the armour takes place, and Odysseus gets it in accord with Athena's wishes. Ajax goes insane, savages the Achaeans' plundered livestock, and kills himself.

³⁹ Procl., *Chr.* 15-18 Bernabé = *Aethiopsis* arg. 3 West. Cf. Σ (A) *Il.* 17.719 (= *Cypria* fr. 3 West & Bernabé) together with [Apollod.], *Epit.* 5.4. See, also, *Od.* 24.37-42, where the ghost of Agamemnon tells the ghost of Achilles about the long and fierce battle that the Greeks went through in order to recover his body, and *Od.* 5.308-10, where Odysseus wishes that he had died when the throngs of the Trojans hurled upon him spears, while fighting around the dead Achilles. For possible pictorial representations of the scene, see WEST 2013: 152. For sources that depict Odysseus carrying away the body and Ajax fighting off the Trojans, see WEST 2013: 176 n. 11.

⁴⁰ Cf. [Apollod.], *Epit.* 5.5-6.

⁴¹ Procl., *Chr.* 69.19-24 Bernabé = *Aethiopsis* arg. 4 West.

⁴² There is some evidence that a debate between Ajax and Odysseus was part of Aeschylus' lost tragedy *Hoplion Krisis*: see fr. 175 and 176 Radt together with FITZPATRICK 1999 for a discussion and further bibliography. Cf., also, Pindar, *Isth.* 4.34-36, *Nem.* 7.23-27, and *Nem.* 8.23-27; Antisthenes' declamations *Ajax* and *Odysseus*. Several Attic red-figure vases also seem to represent this debate: see GANTZ 1993: 632-33.

⁴³ In the form in which we now know the Cyclic epics, the *Aethiopsis* ends with the quarrel and the *Little Iliad* begins with the adjudication of the arms and Ajax's suicide. However, as has been convincingly shown (see WEST 2013: 159), there is good reason to believe that both the *Aethiopsis* and the *Little Iliad* narrated the whole story, which, in turn, suggests that Proclus split the episode into two self-contained scenes in order to avoid overlap.

⁴⁴ Procl., *Chr.* 74.4-10 Bernabé = *Little Iliad* arg. 1 West.

Presumably, soon after Odysseus and Ajax come forward and each makes his case, the contest reaches an impasse. The scholiast on Aristophanes' *Knights* 1056a (= *Little Iliad* fr. 2 West & Bernabé) sheds some light on the procedure through which Odysseus is proclaimed the winner of the armour. In the *Little Iliad*, he reports, when a dispute erupts between Odysseus and Ajax over the armour of Achilles, Nestor advises the Greeks to send some men to eavesdrop what the Trojans think about the bravery of the two heroes. They overhear some girls arguing. One girl says that Ajax is much better than Odysseus, because he carried the body of Achilles out of the battle during the rescue operation. But another girl retorts, on Athena's inspiration, saying that even a woman, who couldn't fight, could do that, implying that Odysseus was better than Ajax, because he was a better warrior. The *Odyssey's* version is slightly different. In the *Nekyia*, Odysseus encounters the ghost of Ajax (*Od.* 11.543-47), who "stood apart, still full of wrath for the victory that [Odysseus] had won over him in the contest by the ships for the arms of Achilles, whose honoured mother had set them for a prize; and the judges were the sons of the Trojans and Pallas Athene [547: παῖδες δὲ Τρώων δίκασαν καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη]." The text implies, as has been rightly noted, "a formal decision by a jury, with Athena somehow involved."⁴⁵ But it is still "the sons of the Trojans", presumably Trojan prisoners (cf. Σ (HQV) *Od.* 11.547), who decide the winner.

In Pindar, there is a significant departure from the way the issue was decided in the epic tradition. The Greeks, here, deceived by the shifty falsehood of an envious Odysseus, proclaim the hero the winner through a secret ballot.⁴⁶ It has been argued that the versions of the *Little Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, by having the Trojans deciding the issue, strive to purge Odysseus of the traditional (it has been claimed) suspicion that the hero tricked the Greeks into favouring him.⁴⁷ This supposition, however, is untenable, as in the extant epic tradition not even the slightest shadow is cast over Odysseus' handling of the issue, and so there is no evidence to suppose that the story of Odysseus' deceptive lies dates from the period before the fifth century. It would seem, of course, that the Greeks err in their decision to give Odysseus the armour,

⁴⁵ WEST 2013: 175

⁴⁶ See Pind., *Nem.* 8.23-34 (cf. *Isth.* 4.34-36 and *Nem.* 7.23-27), on which see discussion in KYRIAKOU 2011: 236-37. In Sophocles' *Ajax* 1135f., Teucer claims that the Greeks manipulated the vote to cheat Ajax out of the Arms.

⁴⁷ See MARONITIS 1969: 34-44.

for, according to Homer, Ajax is the “bulwark of the Achaeans” (*Il.* 6.5) and the second mightiest Achaean warrior after Achilles (*Il.* 2.768f. cf. 13.321-25 and 17.78-80). So, without being reprehensible, the adjudication would seem to be unfair. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that, realising that they cannot bring Troy down by the conventional methods used so far, the Greeks vote to give the prize to Odysseus, who, with his resourcefulness, could provide them with the winning edge, as he does (see below). But whether the adjudication of Achilles’ arms to Odysseus is factually right or wrong is a different matter. Nothing in the *Little Iliad* or the *Odyssey* suggests that Odysseus lies to win. On the contrary, in both the *Little Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the adjudication of the arms to Odysseus becomes formal recognition either of the hero’s martial prowess so far (more probable) or of his resourceful cleverness that will enable the Greeks to capture Troy (less probable, but still likely).

Odysseus also plays a distinguished role in the rest of the *Little Iliad*.⁴⁸ Perhaps at the suggestion of Calchas,⁴⁹ he captures Helenus, son of Priam and seer, who makes a prophecy about the capture of Troy.⁵⁰ Diomedes fetches Philoctetes from Lemnos to Troy, probably because, as in Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* 610-13, Helenus prophesies that the participation of Philoctetes, who possessed Heracles’ bow, is a necessary precondition for the sack of Troy.⁵¹ In all likelihood, apart from the return of Philoctetes, Helenus makes two more prophecies concerning the preconditions for the fall of Troy, first, that Neoptolemus must join the war, and, second, that the Greeks must remove the Palladium, the wooden statue of Pallas Athena.⁵² This could account for the fact that Odysseus brings Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, from

⁴⁸ Procl., *Chr.* 74.6-14 Bernabé = arg. 2-4 West.

⁴⁹ In Sophocles, Odysseus ambushes Helenus in a night raid (*Philoct.* 694-99), perhaps at the suggestion of Calchas, who, according to the Hypothesis on *Philoctetes*, advises the Greeks that the Trojan prophet knows under what circumstances the Greek forces could take Troy. WEST 2013: 180-81 attempts to reconstruct the episode.

⁵⁰ WEST 2013: 183 rightly suggests that Helenus was perhaps not so cooperative with the Greeks, as it seems, but he probably defied them by pointing out the impossible preconditions for the fall of Troy.

⁵¹ The *Iliad* seems to know the story: see *Il.* 2.716-25 together with WEST 2013: 184.

⁵² Cf. [Apollod.], *Epit.* 5.9-10, where a fourth precondition is that the bones of Pelops should be brought back to Troy. Cf. Pap. Rylands 22 (in BERNABÉ 1987: 75), where Helenus prophecies about the Palladium.

Scyrus,⁵³ and, together with Diomedes, steals the Palladium from Troy. Before the stealing of the Palladium, moreover, Odysseus disfigures himself and enters Troy as a spy,⁵⁴ presumably to find out where the Palladium is. After he is recognised by Helen and confers with her about the taking of Troy, he kills some Trojans and returns back to the ships.⁵⁵ Then, together with Diomedes, he re-enters the city and removes the Palladium.

Hesychius connects the proverbial expression Διομήδειος ἀνάγκη, “Diomedian compulsion”, with an incident in the tradition of the *Little Iliad* that occurs during the stealing of the Palladium (δ 1881 = *Little Iliad* fr. 25 Bernabé = fr. 11 West): Διομήδειος ἀνάγκη· παροιμία. (...) ὁ (...) τὴν μικρὰν Ἰλιάδα φησὶν ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ Παλλαδίου κλοπῆς γενέσθαι. (“Diomedian compulsion”: a proverbial expression. [...] The author of the *Little Iliad* connects it with the theft of the Palladium.) The connection can perhaps be better explained in the light of an episode reported by Pausanias (*Att.* δ 14):

Διομήδειος ἀνάγκη· παροιμία [...] οἱ δὲ ὅτι Διομήδης καὶ Ὀδυσσεὺς τὸ παλλάδιον κλέψαντες νυκτὸς ἐκ Τροίας ἐπανήεσαν, ἐπόμενος δὲ ὁ Ὀδυσσεὺς τὸν Διομήδην ἐβουλήθη ἀποκτεῖναι· ἐν τῇ σελήνῃ δὲ ἰδὼν τὴν σκιὰν τοῦ ξίφους ὁ Διομήδης, ἐπιστραφεὶς καὶ βιασάμενος τὸν Ὀδυσσεῖα ἔδησε καὶ προάγειν ἐποίησε παῖων αὐτοῦ τῷ ξίφει τὸ μετάφρενον. τάττεται δὲ ἐπὶ τῶν κατ’ ἀνάγκην τι πραττόντων.

“Diomedian compulsion”: a proverbial expression [...] Others say that Diomedes and Odysseus were on their way back from Troy at night after stealing the Palladium, and Odysseus, who was behind Diomedes, intended to kill him; but in the moonlight Diomedes saw the shadow of his sword, turned round, overpowered Odysseus, tied him up, and forced him to go ahead by beating his back with his sword. The expression is applied to people who do something under compulsion.

⁵³ See *Little Iliad* fr. 24, 5, and 23 Bernabé = fr. 4, 5, and 31 West. Cf., also, *Il.* 19.326-27 and 24.467.

⁵⁴ Cf. Σ *Od.* 4.258 (*Little Iliad* fr. 9 Bernabé & West) together with WEST 2013: 196-97 *ad loc.* According to Tzetzes on Lyc., *Alex.* 780 (*Little Iliad* fr. 7 Bernabé = fr. 8 West), it is Thoas who wounds Odysseus as they are going to Troy together.

⁵⁵ *Od.* 4.244-64 presupposes some version of the same story.

According to Pausanias, Odysseus, after stealing the Palladium, plots against Diomedes. As he is walking behind Diomedes, he raises his sword to stab the hero in the back, but the latter, when he sees the shadow of Odysseus' sword in the moonlight, becomes aware of the danger, disarms Odysseus, and drives him before him, beating his back with his sword.⁵⁶ In that sense, Odysseus acts under Diomedes' compulsion.⁵⁷ Pausanias does not mention Odysseus' motive, but the particular circumstances of time and place suggest that Odysseus attempts to gain full and exclusive possession of the Palladium, thus claiming for himself all the credit for gaining it. In sharp contrast with rest of the epic tradition (in the *Doloneia* and elsewhere), where much emphasis is placed on the close cooperation between Odysseus and Diomedes,⁵⁸ the intended killing of Diomedes shows us an Odysseus who is prepared to murder his closest ally in what has been rightly described as a "story of cowardice, treachery and deceit".⁵⁹ In the events that follow, however, the hero's role is probably instrumental to the success of the expedition.

As soon as Epeius builds the Wooden Horse, Proclus tells us, the Greeks put the leading heroes into it.⁶⁰ In Ps.-Apollodorus (*Epit.* 5.14-15), it is Odysseus who selects and persuades the doughiest to enter into the horse, which tallies well with the fact that, in *Od.* 8.491-95, while Odysseus is entertained by Alcinous on Scheria, he asks Demodocus to sing of "the building of the horse of wood, which Epeius made with Athene's help, the horse which once Odysseus led up into the citadel as a thing of guile, when he had filled it with the men who sacked Ilium." Likewise, in *Od.* 11.523-25, Odysseus recalls that "when [...] the best of the Achaeans were about to go down into the horse which Epeius made, [...] the command of all was laid upon [him], both to open and to close the door of their stout-built ambush."⁶¹

⁵⁶ Cf., e.g., Suda δ 1164 and Eust. on *Il.* 10.530f. (for a full list of all sources that report the same version, see BERNABÉ 1987: 82 on *Little Iliad* fr. 25). Conon, a Greek grammarian and mythographer between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD, is the only source to report a divergent version, that it is Diomedes who attempts to deceive Odysseus, who, in turn, forces Diomedes to go ahead by beating his back with his sword: see Phot., *Bibl.* 137a8 (= *Little Iliad* fr. 25 (II) Bernabé).

⁵⁷ The incident goes unmentioned in Homer, but there are no reasons to doubt that it was narrated as part of the tradition of the *Little Iliad*; cf. GRIFFIN 1977: 46 and SEVERYNS 1928: 349ff.

⁵⁸ For an overview, see DUÉ-EBBOTT 2010 and HAINSWORTH 1993 on *Il.* 10.243.

⁵⁹ DAVIES 1989: 67.

⁶⁰ Procl., *Chr.* 75.19 Bernabé = *Little Iliad* arg. 5 West.

⁶¹ Cf. *Od.* 4.265-89.

But, Odysseus must have been instrumental not only in completing the stratagem of the Trojan Horse but also in conceiving the idea. In Ps.-Apollodorus (*Epit.* 5.14), it is Odysseus who invented the construction of the Trojan Horse and suggested it to Epeius, which agrees well with *Od.* 22.230, where Athena reminds Odysseus that “by [his] counsel [*boulêi*] the broad-wayed city of Priam was taken”, as well as with an anonymous verse (Epic adesp. 11 West), quoted by Strabo (1.2.4) and others,⁶² according to which Odysseus took Ilion βουλῆ καὶ μύθοισι καὶ ἠπεροπηίδι τέχνῃ, “by his counsel and persuasion and art of deception”. The verse quite possibly belongs to the *Little Iliad*, especially to the episode of the Wooden Horse, where the hero plays the leading role throughout.⁶³

Proclus’ summary of the *Little Iliad* ends with an awkward cliffhanger. After a small handpicked body mans the Wooden Horse, the Greeks set fire to their camp and sail off to Tenedos. The Trojans, believing that the Greeks have departed for good, they bring the horse inside, breaching part of their city wall, and celebrate their apparent victory over the Greeks.⁶⁴ Proclus does not mention the fall of Troy. There are, however, a number of testimonies and surviving fragments suggesting that, in fact, the poem covered events that go beyond the scope of the Proclan summary.⁶⁵ One such testimony is Pausanias 10.26.8 (*Little Iliad* fr. 12 Bernabé = fr. 22 West), who reports that, when Odysseus wounds Helicaon in the night fighting, he recognises him and leads him out of battle alive in a sign of friendship and gratitude for the fact that Antenor, Helicaon’s father, entertained Menelaus and Odysseus on their first embassy for the recovery of Helen and the property that forms part of the *Cypria*.⁶⁶ The fact that, under these abnormal circumstances, Odysseus still shows considerable respect for the law of hospitality anticipates (in terms of epic chronology) his ruthless punishment of the suitors in the *Odyssey* for presenting demands that violate the bounds of *xenia*.

⁶² See WEST 2003a: 292.

⁶³ Cf. WEST 2013: 194.

⁶⁴ Procl., *Chr.* 75.19-23 Bernabé = *Little Iliad* arg. 5 West.

⁶⁵ Some argue for a substantial overlap with the *Sack of Troy*: see, e.g., DAVIES 1989: 60 and WEST 2013: 168-69, 224.

⁶⁶ See above, p. 149. There is also some evidence that Odysseus and Menelaus recognised and saved Glaukos in the *Sack of Troy*: see discussion in WEST 2013: 234.

In another *Little Iliad* fragment quoted by Tzetzes (Σ Lyc., *Alex.* 1268 (cf. Σ on 1232) = fr. 21 Bernabé = fr. 29 West), Neoptolemus appears to have ruthlessly killed Astyanax, the son of Hector:

αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλῆος μεγαθύμου φαίδιμος υἱὸς
 Ἴκτορέην ἄλοχον κάταγεν κοίλας ἐπὶ νῆας,
 παῖδα δ' ἑλὼν ἐκ κόλπου ἐϋπλοκάμοιο τιθήνης
 ῥῖψε ποδὸς τεταγὼν ἀπὸ πύργου, τὸν δὲ πεσόντα
 ἔλλαβε πορφύρεος θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταιή. 5

But great-hearted Achilles' glorious son
 led Hector's wife [...] to the hollow ships;
 her child he took from the bosom of his lovely-haired nurse
 and, holding him by the foot, flung him from the battlement,
 and crimson death and stern fate took him at his fall.

Neoptolemus seizes the child from the bosom of his nurse and, holding him by the foot, flings him from the city wall. As has been pointed out, the death of Astyanax is described “in a dry, dull manner, as if it were a sack of potatoes, rather than a human being, that was being dumped over the walls.”⁶⁷ In the *Sack of Troy*, however, it is Odysseus who appears to have killed Astyanax (καὶ Ὀδυσσέως Ἀστυάνακτα ἀνελόντος),⁶⁸ and, although Proclus does not elaborate on the exact circumstances, there is some suggestive evidence that the death of Hector's son at the hands of Odysseus is as brutal as his death at the hands of Neoptolemus in the *Little Iliad*. The scholiast on Euripides' *Andromache* 10 (*Sack of Troy* fr. 5 Bernabé = fr. 3 West) notes: καὶ τὸν τὴν Πέρσιδα συντεταχότα κυκλικὸν ποιητὴν ὅτι καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ τείχους ῥιφθεὶ· ᾧ ἠκολουθηκέναι Εὐριπίδην (“The Cyclic poet who composed the *Sack* [records] that [Astyanax] was in fact hurled from the wall, and Euripides has followed him.”)⁶⁹ Neoptolemus is regarded as especially brutal not only in the *Little Iliad*, where he murders Astyanax the way he does, but also in the *Sack of Troy*, where he kills Priam, defenceless and unarmed, at the altar of Zeus Herkeios.⁷⁰ It

⁶⁷ DAVIES 1989: 70.

⁶⁸ Procl., *Chr.* 89.20 Bernabé = *Sack of Troy* arg. 4 West.

⁶⁹ The horrifying death of Astyanax at the hands either of Neoptolemus in the *Little Iliad* or of Odysseus in the *Sack of Troy* is anticipated in *Il.* 24.734-36.

⁷⁰ See above, p. 138.

appears, however, that Odysseus, in killing Astyanax ruthlessly in the *Sack of Troy*, is his equal, in at least one strand of the tradition.

In Euripides' *Troades* 1119-22, it is "the Greeks" who carry out the brutal act. However, as Talthybius, the chief herald of the Greek army, reluctantly informs Andromache, it is on Odysseus' suggestion that the Greeks decide to hurl Astyanax from the Trojan battlements (*Tr.* 719-25):

ΤΑΛΘΥΒΙΟΣ
κτενοῦσι σὸν παῖδ', ὡς πύθη κακὸν μέγα.
ΑΝΔΡΟΜΑΧΗ
οἴμοι, γάμων τόδ' ὡς κλύω μεῖζον κακόν.
ΤΑΛΘΥΒΙΟΣ
νικᾷ δ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐν Πανέλλησιν λόγῳ ...
ΑΝΔΡΟΜΑΧΗ
αἰᾷ μάλ'· οὐ γὰρ μέτρια πάσχομεν κακά.
ΤΑΛΘΥΒΙΟΣ
... λέξας ἀρίστου παῖδα μὴ τρέφειν πατρὸς ...
ΑΝΔΡΟΜΑΧΗ
τοιαῦτα νικήσειε τῶν αὐτοῦ πέρι.
ΤΑΛΘΥΒΙΟΣ
ῥῆψαι δὲ πύργων δεῖν σφε Τρωικῶν ἄπο.

TALTHYBIUS
To tell you the terrible truth, they are going to kill your son.
ANDROMACHE
Ah, ah! This is the worst news than even my marriage!
TALTHYBIUS
Odysseus won the day, speaking in the assembly of the Greeks ...
ANDROMACHE
Ah, ah once more! The misfortunes I suffer are beyond all measure!
TALTHYBIUS
... telling them that they should not raise to manhood the son of a noble father ...
ANDROMACHE
May some one be similarly persuasive concerning *his* sons!
TALTHYBIUS
... but should hurl him from the Trojan battlements.⁷¹

⁷¹ Trans. Kovacs 1999: 86-87.

According to Talthybius, Odysseus persuaded the Greeks that “[Astyanax] must be thrown from Troy’s battlements” (725) by pointing out that “they should not rear so brave a father’s son” (723).⁷² The message clearly presupposes a formal debate among the Greeks about the future of Astyanax, as the herald mentions that Odysseus spoke to the assembled Greeks and his opinion prevailed (721). There is some suggestive evidence that a similar, perhaps less formal, debate was already part of the epic tradition. The argument of Odysseus in the *Troades* carries echoes of a hexameter verse that is quoted by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 6.19.1):

νήπιος, ὃς πατέρα κτείνας παῖδας καταλείπει.

He is a fool who kills the father and spares the son.

Clement attributes the verse to Stasinus, by implication, to the *Cypria*,⁷³ but it is difficult to locate in the *Cypria*’s plot.⁷⁴ Instead, it would certainly make more sense if the verse belonged in a speech of Odysseus in the *Sack of Troy*. If that is the case, then, Odysseus in this poem is not only the one who carries the brutal killing of Astyanax through but also the one who, as in the *Troades*, conceives of the idea and, perhaps, the manner of his death.

As Proclus tells us, the *Sack of Troy* ends with the burning of Ilion and the slaughter of Polyxena on the tomb of Achilles.⁷⁵ There is some evidence that, in the *Cypria* (in prolepsis, perhaps), it is Odysseus who, together with Diomedes, kills Polyxena.⁷⁶ Polyxena’s death in both the *Sack of Troy* and the *Cypria* is probably motivated, as in Euripides’ *Hecuba* 35-41 and 107-115, by an attempt to secure a fair wind for the Greeks to sail home (Polyxena as a doublet of Iphigeneia). In Euripides, Polyxena is slaughtered at Achilles’ tomb by Neoptolemus, following perhaps the *Sack of Troy*’s version. But, if the *Cypria* anticipates the fate of Polyxena at the hands of Odysseus and Diomedes, then it is possible that, in the *Sack of Troy*, the

⁷² Cf. Odysseus’ dialogue with Andromache in Seneca’s *Troades* 589-93.

⁷³ In the editions of WEST and BERNABÉ, the verse appears as the *Cypria*’s fr. 31 and 33, respectively. Note that the verse is quoted by many other authors without ascription: see WEST 2013: 128.

⁷⁴ For a discussion of possible contexts, see WEST 2013: 128 and 240.

⁷⁵ Procl., *Chr.* 89.22-23 Bernabé = *Sack of Troy* arg. 4 West. Cf. [Apollod.], *Epit.* 5.23 and Pausanias 10.25.10.

⁷⁶ See above, p. 149 n. 33.

two heroes do have some involvement in her sacrifice, which, though cruel, is necessary for the Greek fleets to set sail back to Greece. This would once more prove that Odysseus belongs among the leading spirits of the Trojan expedition.

The *Returns* begins, according to Proclus' summary,⁷⁷ with a quarrel that Athena incites between Agamemnon and Menelaus over whether to sail off and also with Agamemnon's decision to keep the army back in order to propitiate Athena.⁷⁸ In *Od.* 3.134-57, we are told that Agamemnon wishes to stay longer and appease Athena by a sacrifice of hecatombs, while Menelaus argues that they should sail for home straight away, so half of the host remains with Agamemnon, and the other half embarks and sails off. Proclus mentions that Diomedes and Nestor reach their homes safely,⁷⁹ which is also consistent with the Homeric account. According to *Od.* 3.157-87, those who sail off come to Tenedos, where they offer sacrifice to the gods, but, again, Zeus provokes strife, so some of the Greeks, following Odysseus, return to Troy and Agamemnon, while Menelaus, Diomedes, and Nestor, continue their journey home. The only one instance where Odysseus appears in the Proclan summary of the *Returns* is when Neoptolemus, on Thetis' advice, makes his way back home by foot. Proclus tells that, when Achilles' son comes to Thrace, there he finds Odysseus at Maronea.⁸⁰ But, although, on the face of it, it seems that Odysseus has no special role in the *Returns*, it is more plausible that the story of Odysseus' journey back to Ithaca was elided either from the poem or from the summary of Proclus on the basis of coherence with the *Odyssey*.⁸¹

Odysseus is certainly the main character in the final poem of the Epic Cycle, the *Telegony*, which covers the hero's life after his return from Troy, his death, and the future of Penelope and his sons, in sharp contrast with the *Odyssey*, where we are given the impression that Odysseus' prolonged suffering comes to an end and will

⁷⁷ Cf. [Apollod.], *Epit.* 6.1.

⁷⁸ Presumably because of Locrian Ajax's assault on Cassandra, Priam's daughter. In the *Sack of Troy* (Procl., *Chr.* 89.15-18 = arg. 3 West), Ajax drags Cassandra off by force, while she clings to Athena's wooden statue, and he pulls it along with the princess. The story is perhaps alluded to in *Il.* 23.773 and is popular among later writers: see discussion in DAVIES 1989: 72-73.

⁷⁹ Cf. [Apollod.], *Epit.* 6.1.

⁸⁰ Procl., *Chr.* 95.13-16 Bernabé = *Returns* arg. 4 West.

⁸¹ See above, p. 14.

eventually be succeeded by a peaceful family life on Ithaca. According to Proclus,⁸² after the suitors are buried by their families, Odysseus sacrifices to the Nymphs (cf. *Od.* 13.356-60), inspects his herds at Elis (cf. *Il.* 2.615-24 and Tz. on Lyc., *Alex.* 815), where he is entertained by Polyxenus,⁸³ and returns to Ithaca, where he performs sacrifices according to the prophecy of Teiresias (cf. *Od.* 11.132-34). Then,⁸⁴ he travels to Thesprotia (here, according to Ps.-Apollodorus (*Epit.* 7.34), he performs sacrifices to Poseidon; cf. *Od.* 11.121-31), where he marries the Thesprotian queen Callidice and leads the Thesprotian war against the Bryges. After the death of Callidice, her son from Odysseus, Polypoites, becomes king in her place, and Odysseus returns to Ithaca (here, according to Ps.-Apollodorus (*Epit.* 7.35), he finds out that Penelope has borne to him Ptoliporthes).⁸⁵ The next episode in the *Telegony* is the killing of Odysseus by Telegonus, his son by Circe.⁸⁶ In search for his father, Telegonus arrives at Ithaca and ravages the island, when Odysseus comes out to defend it, and his son kills him in ignorance.⁸⁷ The *Telegony* ends up with the double marriage of Telegonus and Penelope and of Telemachus with Circe.⁸⁸ Telegonus, recognising his mistake, brings his father's corpse, together with Telemachus and Penelope, back to his mother Circe, who makes them all immortal, while Telemachus marries Circe, and Telegonus marries Penelope. It is, therefore, difficult to escape the conclusion that the *Telegony*, compared with the *Odyssey*,

⁸² Procl., *Chr.* 101-2.3-8 Bernabé = *Telegony* arg. 1 West.

⁸³ Cf. *Telegony* fr. 1 Bernabé & West (= Ath., *Deipn.* 10.412d), which perhaps belongs to the *xenia*-scene.

⁸⁴ Procl., *Chr.* 102.8-14 Bernabé = *Telegony* arg. 2 West.

⁸⁵ Cf. *Telegony* fr. 3 West (= Paus. 8.12.5), according to which Penelope bore Odysseus Ptoliporthes in a poem called the *Thesprotis*. “Thesprotis” may be an alternative name for the “Telegony” or may refer to the part of the *Telegony* that deals with the adventures of Odysseus in Thesprotia: see discussion in WEST 2013: 299.

⁸⁶ Procl., *Chr.* 102.14-16 Bernabé = *Telegony* arg. 3 West.

⁸⁷ In *Od.* 11.134-37, Teiresias prophesies that “death shall come to [Odysseus] away from the sea [ἐξ ἁλός], the gentlest imaginable, that shall lay [him] low when [he is] overcome with sleek old age, and [his] people shall be dwelling in prosperity around [him].” There has been a long debate about whether ἐξ ἁλός means “away from the sea” or “from the sea”, an allusion to the *Telegony*, where, as Σ *Od.* 11.134 (*Telegony* fr. 4 Bernabé = fr. 5 West) suggests, Odysseus is killed with the barb of a sting ray which was the point of Telegonus’ spear. For a comprehensive overview of the discussion, see WEST 2013: 301-3 and 307-10.

⁸⁸ Procl., *Chr.* 102-3.17-20 Bernabé = *Telegony* arg. 4 West.

places significantly *less* emphasis on the homeland-mindedness of Odysseus and on the primary family triad Odysseus-Penelope-Telemachus (marriage with Callidice, Polypoites from Callidice, Ptoliporthos from Penelope, and double marriage between Penelope-Telegonus and Circe-Telemachus).

A close examination of the fragments and summaries of the Epic Cycle reveals that the overall characterisation under the name of Odysseus is not only complex but noticeably oscillates between glorious heroism and unmitigated villainy. For the most part, Odysseus features as an active participant on the front lines as an intelligent, articulate, and resourceful first-rank hero, often motivated by or exhibiting devotion to the public good. An outstanding moment of his Cyclic career is his leading role in inventing and carrying through the stratagem of the Trojan Horse. There are, however, incidents which do not really reflect honour upon Odysseus, such as his feigned madness (treachery, deceitfulness, untrustworthiness, and manipulateness), the murder of Palamedes (treachery and malice), the attempted killing of Diomedes during the stealing of the Palladium (treachery, malice, untrustworthiness, thievery, and manipulateness), the atrocious murder of Astyanax during the sack of Troy (callous and cold-blooded savagery), and –if already part of the *Cypria* tradition, then– the manipulation of Iphigeneia and the abandonment of Philoctetes on Lemnos (ruthlessness and unscrupulousness). All these acts, as we have seen, survive in a very fragmentary state, and this obscures whether they earned Odysseus negative comment in the poems in which the cyclic traditions containing these acts came to crystallise. Yet, if the hero in the society depicted in the epics is someone who by his deeds seeks to win prestige and honours, as the Homeric epics so articulately describe, then clearly many of his acts not only bring no honour on Odysseus but also fall short of the heroic standards set out by the Homeric text.

3.2 Homer vis-à-vis the Epic Tradition

3.2.1 Toning Down Odysseus: the *Iliad*

As stated in the introduction, the second part of CHAPTER THREE primarily aims to measure the Odyssean persona of Odysseus against the less uniform portrayal of the hero in the wider epic tradition. Discussing the Odyssean Odysseus, however, would be incomplete without discussing first the portrayal of Odysseus' persona in the *Iliad* with particular emphasis on the way in which the Iliadic conceptualisation of the Ithacan hero engages with the –sometimes unflattering– complexity that, as the discussion above has sought to show, permeates the hero's characterisation in non-Homeric epic.

We start with the undeniable fact that the Iliadic Odysseus is, first and foremost, a frontline warrior. On the first day of combat, as soon as the Greeks and the Trojans join battle, and the first individual encounters take place, Odysseus avenges the death of his comrade Leucus killing Democoon, Priam's bastard son, and drives the Trojan front-fighters back (*Il.* 4.488-507). Later on, together with the Ajaxes and Diomedes, he rouses the Greeks to fight (*Il.* 5.519-20), and, when Tlepolemus is wounded by Sarpedon, he ponders, eager for action, whether he should pursue Sarpedon or take the lives of more Lycians (*Il.* 5.671-76). But, since Sarpedon is not destined to die at his hands, he slays many of the rest of the Lycians, and, though Hector stems the tide of his onslaught (*Il.* 5.674-80), Odysseus manages to kill Pidytes with his spear (*Il.* 6.30). He also volunteers to face Hector in single combat, but Ajax is selected by slot (*Il.* 7.123-205). On the third day of combat, after Odysseus calls for Diomedes' aid (*Il.* 11.312-15), they fight together as a pair and slay several Trojans (*Il.* 11.320-400; see esp. *Il.* 11.321-26 and 335). Diomedes encourages Odysseus to face Hector (*Il.* 11.346), and Odysseus defends Diomedes when he becomes disabled (*Il.* 11.396ff.). The Ithacan hero ends up being isolated and surrounded by Trojans (*Il.* 11.401-2 and 411-20), when in a monologue he ponders whether he would stand or withdraw, concluding that "it is the cowards who keep clear of fighting while the brave man in battle has every duty to stand his ground in strength, and kill, or be killed." (*Il.* 11.403-10, esp. 408-10) But, though he slays several Trojans, he is wounded by Sokos and is finally saved by Menelaus (*Il.* 11.420-88).

Odysseus is for most of the poem the epitome of the ideal hero, who, according to the *Iliad*, must exhibit two virtues, both bravery and eloquence.¹ The Ithacan king is not only a warrior of the first rank but also an articulate speaker (see esp. *Il.* 2.273). In the *Diapheira* scene of *Iliad* 2, for instance, he manages, using persuasive language, to check the flight of the Achaeans (*Il.* 2.188-206).² Then, he addresses them with a calming speech and boosts their morale, urging them strongly to continue the war against the Trojans (*Il.* 2.284-335).³ Also, during the so-called *Teichoskopia* or “Viewing from the Walls” (*Il.* 3.161-246), Antenor recalls an embassy led by both Menelaus and Odysseus for the sake of Helen, noting that, when Odysseus began to speak, his words were like snowflakes and were beyond comparison, while everyone marveled at his manner (*Il.* 3.206-24; cf. 11.138-42). Eloquence is arguably the skill that makes Odysseus both a good diplomat and a good counselor.

Odysseus’ role as *chargé d’affaires* is well-documented in the *Iliad*. The first reference to Odysseus as an emissary is found in *Iliad* 1. In *Il.* 1.144-46, Agamemnon considers Odysseus as a potential candidate to lead the return of Chryses to her father, and, in *Il.* 1.311, the resourceful (πολύμητις) Odysseus is mentioned as the head of the embassy (*Il.* 1.430ff.). Although there is no reference to the reason why Agamemnon chooses him, it may be the case that “Odysseus with his knowledge and resourcefulness [...] was the obvious choice when it came to the point.”⁴ It is perhaps not insignificant that the first time that Odysseus is called πολύμητις is now, in his Iliadic debut, when he is given command of the embassy (note πολύμητις again at 440). As has been pointed out, Odysseus propitiates Apollo with a prayer (*Il.* 1.440-445) that is “compact and to the point”.⁵ In doing so, he carries out a delicate task and deals with an issue of crucial importance for both the safety of the Greek army and the continuation of the war. Competence to cope effectively with critical or delicate situations seems to be Odysseus’ defining feature.

Odysseus undertakes his most important task as an ambassador in *Iliad* 9. After Agamemnon admits his folly, Nestor suggests that they should send an embassy of

¹ See above, p. 97 n. 84.

² See above, pp. 94-96.

³ See above, pp. 116-17.

⁴ KIRK 1985 on *Il.* 1.308-11.

⁵ KIRK 1985 on *Il.* 1.442-45.

Achilles, but it is Agamemnon's proposals that he reports. Who, then, is the hypocrite in the eyes of Achilles? Agamemnon or Odysseus?

Nestor blamed Agamemnon for his folly in insulting Achilles and proposed that they make amends and win him over with kindly gifts and gentle words (cf. *Il.* 9.96-113, esp. 112-13: φραζώμεσθ' ὥς κέν μιν ἀρεσσάμενοι πεπίθωμεν / δώροισίν τ' ἀγανοῖσιν ἔπεσσί τε μειλιχίοισι). In reply, Agamemnon accepted his responsibility and listed a spectacular range of gifts as the price he is prepared to pay (*Il.* 9.115-57). However, he finished his apology by saying (*Il.* 9.158-60):

δηθήτω -Αἴδης τοι ἀμείλιχος ἦδ' ἀδάμαστος·
τοῦνεκα καί τε βροτοῖσι θεῶν ἔχθιστος ἀπάντων-
καί μοι ὑποστήτω, ὅσσον βασιλεύτερός εἰμι. 160

Let [Achilles] yield –Hades, to be sure, is ungentle and unyielding,
and for that reason he is most hated by mortals of all gods–
and let him submit himself to me, since so much more kingly am I.

Though he admits his folly in depriving Achilles of honour and appears to be resolved to restore the situation, Agamemnon concludes that Achilles must yield and submit to him in that he is the greater king (160), namely, that Achilles must accept the amends and return to the battle out of *respect* for the greater king. As has been rightly pointed out, Agamemnon “is being made to insist on those claims of rank which Achilles had pointedly flouted in the quarrel”.⁷ Achilles does not know this, of course, but it seems that he expects it from Agamemnon. For, after he reiterates once more his annoyance at the fact that, though he is a better warrior than Agamemnon (*Il.* 9.316-36), his reward is always far smaller, he eloquently states that it is pointless for Agamemnon to try to persuade him, because he knows him well (*Il.* 9.345): μή μεν πειράτω εὔειδότης· οὐδέ με πείσει. (“Let [Agamemnon] not tempt me who know him well; he will not persuade me.”)

If Achilles knows Agamemnon so well, as he claims, then he presumably surmises that the Achaean leader is insincere in his apology and insists publicly on his claims of rank. But, though Agamemnon may be part of the target, it is difficult to believe that the recipient of his assertion of his own unswerving honesty is chosen

⁷ HAINSWORTH 1993 on *Il.* 9.308-14.

at random. There must be a special point in his choice of this addressee, Odysseus, who is the arch dissembler. His knowledge of Agamemnon perhaps leads the hero to suspect that Odysseus has not reported the arrogant nature of Agamemnon's overture, which would make Odysseus, too, a dissembler, a "man who hides one thing in his mind and says another" (313). If that is the case, then, in Achilles' eyes, Odysseus hypocritically tries to persuade him by reporting the magnificent gifts that Agamemnon offers in recompense *and* suppressing Agamemnon's demand for respect on the grounds of social eminence, as he knows that this is a thorny issue for Achilles, who is a fervent proponent of status on the grounds of martial eminence. The present context, however, leaves little doubt that Odysseus simply overplays his hand, manipulating the situation to make sure that the embassy is effective. This is about tactful diplomatic manipulation, diplomatic cunning, and diplomatic deviousness,⁸ the positive aspect of Odysseus' selfish indirectness in the cyclic tradition (cf. the madness-episode in the *Cypria*). The scene, therefore, signals Homer's subtle gesture towards the traditional persona of a manipulative Odysseus but in a way which lacks the negative dimension that characterises the hero's presence in the broader epic repertoire.

Apart from being a good diplomat, Odysseus is a persuasive advisor. On the third day of combat, Nestor meets with the wounded leaders, Diomedes, Odysseus, and Agamemnon (*Il.* 14.65-108). The latter proposes retreat, but Odysseus objects rigorously to the flight, emphasising that "no man would in any way allow [these words] to pass through his mouth at all, no man who has understanding in his senses to utter things that are right, and who is a sceptred king whom so many men obey." (*Il.* 14.91-94) Agamemnon is persuaded and retracts. Similarly effective is the advice of—a supremely pragmatic—Odysseus to both Agamemnon and Achilles the next day (*Il.* 19.145-275). Odysseus emphatically insists on food before the long day's fighting,⁹ but, whereas Agamemnon agrees, Achilles does not agree with the delay, as he is eager to enter the battle as soon as possible in order to avenge Patroclus (he eventually lets the men eat). The exchange is set up as a confrontation between ways of seeing and doing. Odysseus is sensible and pragmatic, whereas Achilles is spirited and impetuous.

⁸ RUTHERFORD 1992: 18 calls the diplomatic indirectness of Odysseus "rhetorical insincerity".

⁹ On Odysseus and food in the Homeric epics, see STANFORD 1963: 67-71.

Particular emphasis is given to Odysseus' role as outstanding player on the Greek side in the *Doloneia* episode in *Iliad* 10. After Nestor proposes that they should obtain information about the enemy and its intentions, Diomedes is the only hero who responds to his call for a volunteer, and Odysseus, in turn, responds, among other heroes, to the call of Diomedes for another volunteer (*Il.* 10.203-53). Here, the Homeric narrator draws attention to Odysseus' marvelous capacity for endurance (*Il.* 10.231-32): "eager too was the steadfast [τλήμων] Odysseus to enter into the throng of the Trojans, for [always] bold was the spirit in his breast." Likewise lavish with his praise is Diomedes, when he chooses Odysseus as his companion for the ensuing nighttime spying expedition (*Il.* 10.244-47): "[Odysseus'] heart and gallant spirit are beyond all others eager in all manner of toils [...]. If he follows with me, even out of blazing fire we might both return, for wise above all is he in discernment." Both the Homeric narrator and Diomedes describe Odysseus as a superlative leader.

That Odysseus is a prominent hero is also confirmed retrospectively by the descriptions that Menelaus, Nestor, Diomedes, and Agamemnon, make of the ideal hero that could undertake the spying expedition. Menelaus says that the man who would undertake the difficult task should be "bold-hearted" (*Il.* 10.41: θρασκευάρδιος). Also, Nestor, when he calls for a volunteer to spy out the Trojan intentions, looks for a man "who would trust his own venturesome spirit" (*Il.* 10.204-5: πεπίθοιθ' ἔφ' αὐτοῦ / θυμῷ τολμήεντι). This man, if successful, would win great glory and honourable gifts and would always have his place at feasts and banquets of the Achaeans (*Il.* 10.212-17). Finally, Agamemnon urges Diomedes to choose as his companion "the best of these that offer themselves" (*Il.* 10.236: φαινομένων τὸν ἄριστον).

The generous presentation of Odysseus in the *Doloneia* reaches its climax in the hero's own reply to the lavish praise of Diomedes (*Il.* 10.249-50):

Τυδεΐδη, μήτ' ἄρ με μάλ' αἶνεε μήτε τι νείκει·
εἰδόσι γάρ τοι ταῦτα μετ' Ἀργείοις ἀγορεύεις.

Son of Tydeus, praise me not too much, nor blame me:
for you announce these things to Argives who know.

Odysseus, by using the polar expression μήτε αἶνεε - μήτε νείκει (249), presumably reminds Diomedes emphatically that there is no time to waste in idle discussion. He

goes on, however, to say that there is no need for either praise or blame, precisely because the Greeks already know (250). Odysseus' statement is semantically ambiguous. What do the Greeks know? Do they already have good or bad opinion of Odysseus? It has been argued that, as a meta-poetic comment on the part of the *Iliad*, Odysseus' reply implicitly restates what the Greeks / audience know(s), namely, that *Achilles is the best of the Achaeans*.¹⁰ Would that, however, make absolute sense in the present context? If the *Iliad* has Odysseus asking Diomedes not to exaggerate, since all the Greeks know that Achilles is the best of the Achaeans, then the poem downplays the significance of the hero who in the ensuing episode is about to play the most important role, which is contrary to Homeric practice, which is to emphasise the significance of a hero who is about to excel. It would, therefore, seem that Odysseus modestly disclaims Diomedes' praise, but he is covertly proud of himself and suggestively asserts that his worth is self-evident. The Greeks already have a good opinion of Odysseus, as well as knowing that Achilles is the best of the Achaeans. If so, then Homer here allows us a meta-mythopoetic glimpse into the wider epic tradition –and perhaps into the nascent tradition of the *Odyssey*–, which gives us an Odysseus who is one of the major figures in heroic legend and is in many respects on a par with Achilles, thereby tacitly inviting us to read Odysseus' role in the *Doloneia* against this tradition.

The central episode of *Iliad* 10 portrays Odysseus as a very calculating and manipulative character. While Odysseus and Diomedes, encouraged by a favourable omen, set out to spy on the Trojans, the Trojan spy Dolon sets off for the Achaean camp (*Il.* 10.254-338). Odysseus is the first to see Dolon coming, a significant detail that shows his alertness (cf. *Il.* 10.224-26), and identifies him as a spy (*Il.* 10.339-48). As soon as they intercept and capture him, Odysseus reassures him that he will be safe (*Il.* 10.383): “Take heart, and let not death be in your thoughts.” In doing so, Odysseus tricks Dolon into disclosing that the target of his mission is to spy out the Greek intentions (*Il.* 10.389-99). Then, the Ithacan hero smiles at Dolon (*Il.* 10.400: τὸν δ' ἐπιμειδήσας προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς) and goes on to extract a great deal of inside information about the Trojans, especially about the newly-arrived

¹⁰ See NAGY 1999: 34 (Ch. 2, §9): “It is as if [Odysseus] were saying: ‘The Achaeans are aware of the tradition, so please do not exaggerate.’ With the words of Odysseus himself, the epic tradition of the *Iliad* has pointedly taken Odysseus out of contention.”

μή τίς τοι φεύγοντι μεταφρένω ἐν δόρυ πήξῃ.

95

ἀλλὰ μὲν', ὄφρα γέροντος ἀπόσομεν ἄγριον ἄνδρα.”

ὡς ἔφατ', οὐδ' ἐσάκουσε πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,

ἀλλὰ παρήϊξεν κοίλας ἐπὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν.

Τυδεΐδης δ' αὐτός περ ἐὼν προμάχοισιν ἐμίχθη.

And now would the old man there have lost his life,
had not Diomedes, good at the war cry, been quick to notice;
and he shouted with a terrible shout, urging on Odysseus:

“Zeus-born son of Laertes, Odysseus of many wiles,

Where are you fleeing with your back turned, like a coward in the throng? / Watch out that as you flee some man does not plant his spear

in your back. / But hold your ground, so that we may thrust back from

old Nestor this wild warrior.” / So spoke, but much-enduring noble

Odysseus heard him not, / but dashed by to the hollow ships of the

Achaeans. / But the son of Tydeus, alone though he was, mixed with the

foremost fighters.

Diomedes, who is “good at the war cry” (91), urged Odysseus “with a fearful shout” (92), but the latter οὐδ' ἐσάκουσε (97) and ran for the hollow ships of the Achaeans (98). Deliberate or not, the absence of response on the part of Odysseus is without parallel and also contrasts sharply with *Il.* 11.462ff., where Menelaus comes immediately to Odysseus' aid after the latter, in a manner similar to that of Diomedes, “shouted three times with all the voice a man can hold” (*Il.* 11.462-63). Did Odysseus deliberately not heed Diomedes' appeal for help, or did he not hear it in the confusion of the battle? As has been rightly pointed out, “Homer's own intention is hidden in ambiguity.”¹² It has been argued that “it is better to choose the latter sense, especially since, a few hours later, Diomedes selects Odysseus as his comrade ... (10.243-47)”.¹³ The emphasis, however, that the *Iliad* places on the dynamic of Diomedes' shout is very suggestive, since it prompts its audience / readers to doubt that a fearful shout like that goes unheard. It is also extremely important that Diomedes already in his fearful shout criticises Odysseus for “fleeing with [his] back turned, like a coward in the throng” (94). So, in fact, it makes little difference whether Odysseus “did not heed” or “did not hear” Diomedes' appeal for help. By the time that Odysseus οὐδ' ἐσάκουσε, Diomedes had already formed the

¹² STANFORD 1963: 72.

¹³ COLEMAN-NORTON 1927: 78.

impression that Odysseus was trying, in a cowardly manner, to flee from danger. To put it differently, Diomedes' disparaging remarks (94-95), preceding Odysseus' reaction to the shout, seem to be motivated by the fact that Odysseus *is* reluctant to come to the aid of Nestor, unlike Diomedes himself, who goes on to join the "foremost fighters" (99). From this point of view, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that, in this episode, however much a frontline hero he may be in other respects, Odysseus exhibits a concern for his own safety at the cost of others, which sets him apart from the other fighters on the heroic field of battle. One could argue that his reluctance is a sign of "prudence – an ability to assess the situation and act accordingly".¹⁴ Yet, the fact remains that Diomedes does "read" –without response– Odysseus' disinclination to commit himself as verging on cowardice and invites the audience –albeit fleetingly– to see it as such. No doubt, therefore, Odysseus' status as eminent frontline warrior suffers a momentary blow, as the subtle ambiguity of the episode leaves a shadow on his reputation. That being said, however, this element of un-heroic reluctance can ultimately have only a negligible effect on the overall characterisation of the hero in the light of the overwhelming evidence that the *Iliad* provides for the hero as a frontline warrior.

In CHAPTER TWO, we argued that the *Iliad* engages in a sub-textual –but constant– play with the inherent tendencies in the traditional characterisation of Achilles and hence with the audience's expectations about the hero. In the person of Achilles, as we have seen, Homer, in exploring the limits of the heroic commitment to *kleos*, depicts the heroic ideal with an austere and limpid clarity. He creates an extreme heroic figure, single-minded in his pursuit of personal honour, significantly less capable of *eros* and purged of both extreme generosity and indiscriminate brutality alike. Surprisingly, this desire for a more austere model of heroism seems also to impact on the depiction of Odysseus, one of the most complex heroes in the tradition, though to a lesser extent and though Odysseus is not the poem's main character. In focusing on Odysseus as a πρόμαχος, the *Iliad* generates and establishes continuity with the wider epic tradition, in which the king of Ithaca, for the most part, features as a first-rank hero. His heroic endurance is reflected in the use of epithets, such as τλήμων, τλήμονα θυμὸν ἔχων, and πολύτλας, his unusual mental capacity in πολύμητις, πολυμήχανος, ποικιλομήτης, δαΐφρων, and Διὶ μῆτιν

¹⁴ FOLZENLOGEN 1965: 35. Cf. STANFORD 1963: 72-73.

ἀτάλαντος, and his heroic glory in πολίπορθος, δουρικλυτός, πολύαινος, and μέγα κῦδος Ἀχαιῶν.¹⁵ As we have seen, however, there is one instance in *Iliad* 8 where Homer creates an open narrative with room for multiple interpretation of Odysseus' motivation. In doing so, Homer sub-textually recognises Odysseus' inclination to treachery and malice, which in non-Homeric epic appear as less favourable features in the characterisation of a more villainous Odysseus. Yet, at the same time, ambiguity in the context invariably prevents these features from becoming quintessential characteristics of Odysseus' Iliadic persona. The result is a significant rapprochement of Odysseus towards the Iliadic Achilles, though, as we can judge from *Iliad* 9, where Achilles suggestively reacts against Odysseus' hypocritical behaviour, and *Iliad* 19, where there is a heated debate between the two heroes over food, Odysseus' nature does still remain in many respects very different from the Achillean temperament. In the *Odyssey*, as we shall now see, there is a significant strategic difference, as the careful selective strategy that we meet in the Iliadic portrayal of Odysseus is combined with a more sustained and systematic engagement with the traditional persona of the hero that includes a subtle but still noticeable rewriting of it.

¹⁵ For a comprehensive account of the epithets applied to Odysseus, see COLEMAN-NORTON 1927: 74.

3.2.2 Refashioning Odysseus: the *Odyssey*

The *Odyssey* from its very beginning introduces its resourceful protagonist, Odysseus, as (one of) the conqueror(s) of Troy (*Od.* 1.1-2): ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ / πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσεν.¹ By doing so, it starts weaving an idea that resonates throughout the poem: “Resourceful Odysseus-The Sacker of Troy”. Odysseus puts on his armour on impulse in the Scylla and Charybdis episode, in a context where conventional warfare is unthinkable and even absurd (*Od.* 12.222-34), or he contemplates heroic use of force when trapped in the Cyclops’ cave (*Od.* 9.299-302) and allows his heroic instincts to predominate in the games at Scheria (*Od.* 8.186-233) and in the boxing match with Iros (*Od.* 18.90-99). Nestor, Menelaus, and Helen, also provide firsthand experience of his heroic deeds at Troy (see *Od.* 3 and 4, esp. 4.265-69), and, upon proud Odysseus’ own request during his stay among the Phaeacians, the singer Demodocus entertains his audience with a vivid recount of the story of the Wooden Horse –the famous stratagem by which Troy was sacked– and the hero’s significant part in that story (see *Od.* 8.491-95; cf. *Od.* 11.523-25). Athena even invites us to see Odysseus as the mastermind behind the ruse of the Wooden Horse (*Od.* 22.230: “by [his] counsel the broad-wayed city of Priam was taken.”). Nowhere in the *Odyssey* do we find any direct reference, even briefly, to the (otherwise well-attested) episode where Odysseus cunningly pretends lunacy in order to avoid conscription for the Trojan War. Nor do we find the use of violence against friends, unlike the Cyclic accounts of Odysseus’ murder of Palamedes or attempted murder of Diomedes. So, the reader of the *Odyssey* is left with no doubt that the Odyssean Odysseus is an honourable hero, both formidable and resourceful.

Though Odysseus’ feigned madness in the *Cypria* is certainly a strikingly memorable debut in the story of the Trojan War, it is unsurprising that it receives no mention in the *Odyssey*. The episode simply sits uncomfortably alongside the poem’s overall consistent presentation of the hero.² Perhaps not so much because Odysseus’ motivation in the incident was morally ambiguous (his motivation could have been

¹ Cf. *Od.* 1.238 (πόλεμον τολύπευσεν), 8.3 and 24.119 (πτολίπορθος).

² For Aristotle (*Poetics* 1451a), Homer leaves out the story of the feigned madness for the sake of a unified plot structure (*mia praxis*).

Agamemnon's ghost recalls that the conscription of Odysseus was not an easy task. Hardly did he and Menelaus manage to wheedle the hero into participating in the Trojan expedition (119: σπουδῆ παρπεπιθόντες).⁷ The difficulty which the ghost of Agamemnon admits that he experienced in enrolling the hero no doubt suggests an Odysseus far less firmly committed to the war than the Homeric Odysseus and the Odysseus we meet in the Epic Cycle, by and large. For an audience immersed in the epic tradition, such as the original audiences both of the monumental poet and subsequent archaic re-performances, the reluctance of Odysseus perhaps carried echoes of the story of hero's feigned madness, evoking thus a maliciously manipulative and –eventually– murderous Odysseus, a characterisation that is arguably alien to the conceptualisation of the Odyssean Odysseus. In *Odyssey* 24, therefore, the Homeric audience probably feels momentarily the deep, sub-textual power of the tradition. This, however, prompts the question, why should the *Odyssey* want to acknowledge even indirectly an element of the tradition unfavourable to its hero? There are, as we shall see below, strong grounds to believe that the *Odyssey* poet seeks to present a unified characterisation of Odysseus by subjecting the complex and manifold mythopoetic traditions that he inherits to a refining and distillation process. But, as well as filtering out less favourable aspects of the tradition, the Homeric strategy, as our discussion of the Iliadic Achilles has shown, indispensably includes –even oblique– acknowledgement of the complexity embedded in the received characterisation of Odysseus in non-Homeric epic.

In and of itself, perhaps, the very unobtrusive reminder of Odysseus' malicious deceitfulness and manipulateness in *Odyssey* 24 is not very remarkable, but it is striking in connection with Odysseus' kinship with Autolycus, his maternal grandfather,⁸ who is a diabolic deceiver and manipulator *par excellence*. After Odysseus takes on the role of a beggar and enters his own palace, Eurycleia bathes him and recognises him by a scar just above his knee. There follows a long

probably means that Agamemnon and his companions had taken a month altogether (πάντα?) over their mission, their journey to Ithaca, the stay there (with the difficult task of persuading Odysseus to take part in the campaign), and the return journey [...]. It is improbable, as some have suggested, that the μνηὶ δ' ἐν οὔλῳ refers only to σπουδῆ παρπεπιθόντες.”

⁷ Cf. *Il.* 23.35-37, where the kings of the Achaeans lead Achilles to Agamemnon σπουδῆ παρπεπιθόντες (“persuading him only with difficulty”), since he is so angered at heart for Patroclus.

⁸ See *Od.* 19.395; cf. 24.333-35.

delude his victims.¹³ Autolycus' excellence in κλεπτοσύνη, which also implies his ability to deceive, can also be taken with ὄρκος (“oath”) to form a quasi-hendiadys; taken together, they perhaps denote Autolycus' ability “to steal and to swear deceptive oaths”.¹⁴ However, the meaning may be something more than “breaking an oath” or “swearing a false oath”, i.e., perjury,¹⁵ which Homer normally expresses differently.¹⁶ It may be about swearing an oath in ambiguous terms that allow room for interpretation, or about breaking cunningly an oath without seeming to break it, as Odysseus attempted to do in the *mania*-episode of the *Cypria*.¹⁷

In the second part of the digression, we learn that, when Autolycus came to Ithaca and Eurycleia asked him to find a name to give to his newborn grandson, he described himself as a *persona non grata* (*Od.* 19.407-9):

πολλοῖσιν γὰρ ἐγὼ γε ὀδυσσάμενος τόδ' ἰκάνω,
 ἀνδράσιν ἠδὲ γυναιξὶν ἀνὰ χθόνα πουλυβότειραν·
 τῷ δ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ὄνομ' ἔστω ἐπώνυμον.

Inasmuch as I have come here as one that has [quarreled with] many,
 both men and women, over the fruitful earth,
 therefore let the name by which the child is named be Odysseus.

Autolycus, being himself ὀδυσσάμενος ἀνδράσιν and γυναιξὶν, gives his grandson the name Ὀδυσσεύς. From our evidence, we can reconstruct a present middle form **odussomai*,¹⁸ which usually takes a dative object and means “to be at odds with”,

¹³ Hes., *Cat.* fr. 68 Most = 67b M-W is quoted by *Etym. Magn.* s.v. αἰδέλον, where it is pointed out that “[Autolycus] would steal horses and made them different in appearance; for he changed their colors.” (trans. Most 2007: 133) Cf. Tz. on Lyc., *Alex.* 344.

¹⁴ It is not a proper hendiadys, since κλεπτοσύνη retains its own force, but it also influences the interpretation of ὄρκω.

¹⁵ See DAWE 1993 on *Od.* 19.396.

¹⁶ Homer uses the verb ἐπιόρκέω, “to swear falsely” (see *Il.* 19.118), the adj. ἐπίορκος, “falsely sworn” (see *Il.* 19.264), and the neut. adj. ἐπίορκον as adverb (see, e.g., *Il.* 3.279, 19.260, and 10.332).

¹⁷ See discussion above, pp. 146-47.

¹⁸ In Homer, the verb is used eight times in the aorist and once in the perfect (four times in the *Iliad* and five times in the *Odyssey*): 2 sing. aor. ὠδύσασο (*Od.* 1.62), 3 sing. aor. ὠδύσατο (*Il.* 18.292 and *Od.* 5.340), 3 pl. aor. ὠδύσαντο (*Il.* 6.138 and *Od.* 19.275), aor. participle ὀδυσσάμενος (*Od.* 19.407), aor. participle ὀδυσσαμένοιο (*Il.* 8.37 and 468), and 3 sing. perfect ὠδώδυσται (*Od.* 5.423). For

“to be angered with”, “to quarrel with”.¹⁹ So, it seems that Autolycus, because of his preeminent skill in κλεπτοσύνη and ὄρκος, that is, because of the opportunistic use of his intelligence, “is at odds with” (**odussetai*) many, and hence he is widely resented and has many enemies.²⁰

By giving the name “Odysseus” to his grandson, Autolycus presumably wants to keep alive the memory of himself being the bane of many people, which suggests that he is very proud of himself and takes pleasure in using his devious intelligence. More to the point, however, the name-giving also invites us to believe that Autolycus wants his grandson to be like him, a replica of himself, an Autolycus-like Odysseus. The name-giving, in other words, prompts us to see Odysseus as the heir of Autolycus or Autolycus as the prototype of Odysseus, to think that Odysseus inherits from Autolycus a similarly cunning intelligence in line with non-Homeric epic, which, as we have seen, is distinguished by its heterogeneity in the characterisation

examples of scholarship which mistakenly take ὀδυσσάμενος to be a passive, see KÖHNKEN 2009: 57 n. 40.

¹⁹ All the instances of the root have to do with anger and quarrel. *Object expressed with a dative*: (a) τί νύ οἱ τόσον ὠδύσσαο; (*Od.* 1.62): “Why are you so angry with him, Zeus?” (by Athena to Zeus on Odysseus); (b) τίπτε τοι ὄδε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων / ὠδύσαι' ἐκπάγλω; (*Od.* 5.339-40): “Why is Poseidon the earth-shaker so frightfully angry with you [...]?” (by Ino-Leucothea to Odysseus); (c) οἶδα γάρ, ὡς μοι ὀδῶδυσται κλυτὸς ἐνοσίγαιος. (*Od.* 5.423): “For I know that the famous earth-shaker is angry with me.” (Odysseus to himself on himself); (d) ὀδύσαντο γὰρ αὐτῷ / Ζεὺς τε καὶ Ἡέλιος. (*Od.* 19.275-76): “At odds with him were Zeus and the Sun.” (by disguised Odysseus to Penelope on himself); (e) τῷ μὲν ἔπειτ' ὀδύσαντο θεοὶ ῥεῖα ζῶοντες. (*Il.* 6.138): “he was hated by all the immortal gods” (by Diomedes to Glaucus on Lycurgus). Cf. Hes., *Th.* 616-17: Ὀβριάρεω δ' ὡς πρῶτα πατὴρ ὠδύσσατο θυμῷ / Κόττω τ' ἠδὲ Γύγη... (“When first their father became angry in his spirit with Obriareus and Cottus and Gyges ...”). *Object implied*: (a) βουλὴν δ' Ἀργείοις ὑποθησόμεθ' ἢ τις ὀνήσει, / ὡς μὴ πάντες ὄλωνται ὀδυσσαμένοιο τεοῖο. (*Il.* 8.37-38 and 467-68): “But we will put saving advice in the minds of the Argives, so that not all of them perish under your anger.” (by Athene and Hera, respectively, to Zeus); (b) νῦν δὲ δὴ ἐξαπόλωλε δόμων κειμήλια καλά, / πολλὰ δὲ δὴ Φρυγίην καὶ Μηονίην ἐρατεινὴν / κτήματα περνάμεν' ἔκει, ἐπεὶ μέγας ὠδύσατο Ζεὺς. (*Il.* 18.290-92): “And now this great treasure has vanished from our houses, and many of our possessions have been sold and gone to Phrygia or lovely Maionia, after great Zeus's anger fell on us.” (by Hector to Polydamas).

²⁰ In the name “Odysseus”, one may discern both the anger of Odysseus against his enemies and the anger of the gods against the hero: see *Od.* 1.62, 5.339-40, 5.423, and 19.275-76 (see n. 19 above); cf. MARONITIS 1969: 14-25 and KÖHNKEN 2009: 57 n. 40. For a comprehensive discussion of the name of Odysseus, see RUSSO 1992 on *Od.* 19.407.

of an Odysseus who apart from being a warrior of the first rank can also be ruthlessly malevolent. The undeniable fact, however, is that the *Odyssey*, though it foregrounds Odysseus' Autolycean features, systematically turns them, as we shall see, to positive use.

In the very first line of the *Odyssey*, the poet asks the Muse to tell him of “the man of many devices”, *polútropōn ándra*,²¹ and it is true that much of Odysseus' resourcefulness is due to his art of trickery, as can be inferred from the hero's self-characterisation in *Od.* 9.19-20:

εἴμ' Ὀδυσσεὺς Λαερτιάδης, ὃς πᾶσι δόλοισιν
ἀνθρώποισι μέλω, καί μευ κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει.

I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, known to all men
for my stratagems, and my fame reaches the heavens.

Odysseus' guilefulness is also acknowledged by Nestor, the wise old man of the Achaean army, who, in *Od.* 3.121-22, says that Odysseus was far superior “in all kinds of tricks” (*pantoíōisi dólōisi*). There is nothing inherently evil or morally reprehensible about using guile. In fact, it is through guile that Odysseus re-establishes his identity on Ithaca. Athena, after she points out Odysseus' penchant for artful deception, that is, tricks (*dólōs*), guile (*apátē*), and deceitful tales (*klópioi múthoi*), advises the hero to use his intelligence to punish the suitors, who have been misusing his home and wife (*Od.* 13.291-310). So, although the invocation of the history of Autolycus' devious intelligence, *kleptosúne*, does place Odysseus' own cunning in a continuum that stretches back through several generations and sub-textually invites us to see the hero as a ruthless guileful trickster like his grandfather, and though the Odyssean Odysseus can definitely be cunning, this cunning has limits. The *Odyssey*, as we shall see, by and large foregrounds Odysseus' Autolycean deceitfulness and manipulateness, yet it purges them for the most part of malice and villainy. A case in point is the way Odysseus handles the situation in the Scylla and Charybdis episode.

²¹ One should, however, note that in *Od.* 1.1 the epithet *polútropōs* could have double meaning, both literal and metaphorical (“man of many journeys” and “man of many turns of mind”, respectively): see, e.g., PUCCI 1987: 24 and 49, 1998: 23-29; contrast PFEIFFER 1968: 4.

Circe forewarns Odysseus that not even a god could save him and his companions from Charybdis and advises that together with his crew he should “hug” Scylla’s rock and with all speed drive his ship through. It would be far better for him, she says, to lose six of his comrades than risk his whole crew and himself (*Od.* 12.101-10). Circe gives no advice on how Odysseus should handle his companions, but, as he narrates to the Phaeacians later on, he provides them with the absolute minimum of advance warning (*Od.* 12.223-25):

Σκύλλην δ’ οὐκέτ’ ἐμυθεόμην, ἄπρηκτον ἀνίην,
μή πῶς μοι δείσαντες ἀπολλήξειαν ἑταῖροι
εἰρεσῆς, ἐντὸς δὲ πυκάζοιεν σφέας αὐτούς. 225

But of Scylla I did not go on to speak, an unpreventable disaster,
for fear that my comrades, seized with terror, should cease
from rowing and huddle together in the hold.

Odysseus deliberately avoids mentioning Scylla –and the certain death of six of his comrades–, fearing that, in their panic, his men might stop rowing and huddle below decks. Instead, as they approach Scylla and Charybdis, and his men lose their oars in fear, he tries to inspire courage in them with deceptive words (*Od.* 12.208-21). He avoids being straightforward, manipulating them into thinking that “this evil that besets [them] now is no greater than when the Cyclops penned [them] in his hollow cave by brutal strength” (*Od.* 12.209-10). Numerically speaking, their current bane is worse, and Odysseus knows it beforehand. Scylla will devour at least six of his men, whereas Cyclops devoured four (cf. *Od.* 9.299 and 344). Indeed, Scylla seizes six of the crew, while they shriek and stretch out their hands to Odysseus in their last desperate throes (*Od.* 12.245-57). Odysseus admits, in hindsight, to the Phaeacians that this is the most “pitiable sight” (*oiktiston*) that he ever witnessed (*Od.* 12.258-59). On the face of it, Odysseus’ personal survival comes at a cost which he readily accepts, but it may be more complicated than that.

One cannot fail to notice that Odysseus operates as a scheming manipulator who applies his clever tactic not only towards the enemy, Scylla and Charybdis, whom he tries to evade, but also towards his companions, from whom he deliberately withholds information. Yet, in reality, the *Odyssey* gives him no other choice. He asks Circe if he could steer clear of Charybdis and ward off Scylla when she would

attack his six comrades (*Od.* 12.112-13), but Circe advises him that there is no defence against her and that the best course of action would be flight. If Odysseus were to waste his time in putting on his armour, Scylla might dart out once more and snatch another six of his comrades (*Od.* 12.120-23). So, in fact, Odysseus' manipulation of his companions, however cruel it may seem to be, becomes the only tool that enables the hero to save most of them, very much the same way as the manipulation of Thoas by "Odysseus" in the tale that Odysseus –in the guise of a certain Cretan– tells to Eumaeus (*Od.* 14.468-502) delivers a good result for his Cretan friend, who is freezing to death, because he has no cloak. In both cases, the end justifies the means. The *Odyssey*, therefore, presents an Odysseus who is capable of being calculatingly manipulative, but whose actions, unlike Autolycus or the Cyclic Odysseus, are not motivated by malice but are based on desire to serve the common good. And the refining process does not stop here.

There is an easily discernible attempt on the part of Odysseus to do more than what the situation allows. In spite of being forewarned that Scylla is ἄπρηκτος ἀνίη (*Od.* 9.223), a "bane against which nothing can be done", and that the death of six of his comrades is a necessary evil, Odysseus does not surrender without a fight. He puts his famous armour on and seizes his spears hoping to attack Scylla (*Od.* 12.226-33), but to no avail, as she is preparing disaster for his crew (*Od.* 12.228-31). In other words, Odysseus on impulse puts on his armour in a context where conventional warfare is unthinkable or even absurd. So, the emphasis shifts from Odysseus' cunning prevailing over his comrades to his overwhelmingly heroic willingness to prevail over untamable Scylla in order to save their lives. The *Odyssey*, therefore, not only refines Odysseus' deceitfulness and manipulateness by giving him motivation that is undoubtedly noble but also, in presenting the hero going above and beyond the call of duty, aligns itself with the specific aspect of the traditional characterisation of Odysseus as a first-rank hero, as manifested in the *Iliad* and largely in the Epic Cycle.²² All things considered, then, it is plausible to argue that the refining and distillation process that the *Odyssey* develops in presenting a unified characterisation of Odysseus includes both an acknowledgement

²² Also, as HEUBECK 1989 on *Od.* 12.226-35 notes, "the heroic gesture against an ἄπρηκτος ἀνίη (223) in a world where there is no place for the heroic, is here almost grotesque, but also vividly illustrates the tragedy of the hero with his limited outlook, and the incommensurability of this fabulous world and that of the *Iliad*."

αἰγείην κυνέην κεφαλῇ ἔχε, πένθος ἀέζων.
 τὸν δ' ὡς οὖν ἐνόησε πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
 γήραϊ τειρόμενον, μέγα δὲ φρεσὶ πένθος ἔχοντα,
 σταὺς ἄρ' ὑπὸ βλωθρὴν ὄγχην κατὰ δάκρυον εἶβε.
 μερμήριξε δ' ἔπειτα κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμὸν 235
 κύσσαι καὶ περιφῶναι ἐὸν πατέρ', ἠδὲ ἕκαστα
 εἰπεῖν, ὡς ἔλθοι καὶ ἴκοιτ' ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
 ἧ̃ πρῶτ' ἐξερέοιτο ἕκαστά τε πειρήσαιτο.
 ὧδε δέ οἱ φρονέοντι δοάσσατο κέρδιον εἶναι,
 πρῶτον κερτομίους ἐπέεσσιν πειρηθῆναι. 240

But he found his father alone in the well-ordered vineyard,
 digging about a plant; and he was clothed in a dirty tunic,
 patched and wretched, and about his shins he had bound
 stitched greaves of oxhide to guard against scratches,
 and he wore gloves upon his hands because of the thorns, and on his
 head / a goatskin cap, nursing his sorrow.
 Now when much-enduring noble Odysseus saw him,
 worn with old age and laden with great grief at heart,
 he stood still beneath a tall pear tree, and shed tears.
 Then he debated in mind and heart whether
 to kiss and embrace his father, and tell him all,
 how he had returned and come to his native land,
 or whether he should first question him, and test him in all points.
 And, as he pondered, this seemed to him the better course,
 to test him first with mocking words.

Odysseus becomes reluctant to carry out the “test” because of the miserable situation in which he finds his father. Seeing him suffering greatly (227-29), his intention to “test” his father momentarily turns into a dilemma. He ponders whether he should kiss and embrace his father, i.e., to reveal his identity without a test – a *straightforward* recognition (236-37), or whether he should “question” and “test him thoroughly” (238: ἐξερέοιτο ἕκαστά τε πειρήσαιτο), literally “prove him in each thing”.²⁴ But, for a reason which is not spelled out, he finally thinks it is “advantageous” (239: κέρδιον) to begin by “testing” (240: πειρηθῆναι) his father with “mocking / teasing words” (240: κερτομίους ἐπέεσσιν).²⁵ So, although he

²⁴ Cf. *Od.* 4.19.

²⁵ Cf. the use of κερτομίους with ἐπέεσσιν in *Il.* 4.6 and 5.419 and without ἐπέεσσιν in *Il.* 1.539, *Od.* 9.474, and *Od.* 20.177. The adjective κερτόμιος is cognate with the noun κερτομίαι (=insult) in *Il.* 20.202 and 433 and *Od.* 20.263.

vacillates after seeing his father's misery, he still proceeds with something that is also described in the language of *peira*.

Odysseus certainly has no concern for the emotional impact of his testing on Laertes. First, he insults his father by treating him as a slave (*Od.* 24.257): “whose slave are you, and whose orchard do you tend?” Second, by recalling his guest-friendship with “Odysseus”, he reminds him of his lost son (*Od.* 24.262-79). Laertes is moved to weep and obliquely identifies himself with the father of Odysseus (*Od.* 24.288-90): “How many years have passed since you entertained [...] my son –if he ever existed– my ill-fated son?” Then, Odysseus awakens Laertes’ hope by mentioning a good omen for the hero’s return, but he instantly thwarts it by saying that five years have passed since then (*Od.* 24.309-14). Five years is quite a long time, and Odysseus is dead for sure. The reaction of Laertes to the news is overwhelming (*Od.* 24.315-17):

ὥς φάτο, τὸν δ’ ἄχεος νεφέλη ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα· 315
ἀμφοτέρησι δὲ χερσὶν ἐλῶν κόνιν αἰθαλόεσσαν
χεύατο κακ κεφαλῆς πολιῆς, ἀδινὰ στεναχίζων.

So he spoke, and a black cloud of grief enfolded Laertes,
and with both his hands he took the sooty dust
and poured it over his gray head, groaning without pause.

In what strikes the modern reader –and possibly the Homeric audience– as a gratuitously ruthless manner, Odysseus withholds his identity until Laertes is reduced to extreme grief. It is only then that he springs towards his father, clasps him in his arms, kisses him, and reveals his identity (*Od.* 24.318-28). This is a remarkably unfeeling treatment of an elderly parent in mourning.

Odysseus has no personal experience so far of his father’s miserable existence. During the hero’s *katabasis*, however, Anticleia speaks of a Laertes who has withdrawn to the countryside and lives in squalor. In the winter, he sleeps with the slaves in the ashes by the fire, and, in the summer and autumn, he lies down on fallen leaves, sorrowing and grieving greatly for Odysseus’ return, as old age presses hard upon him (*Od.* 11.187-96). Odysseus keeps this in mind and, after spending a night with Penelope when he returns to Ithaca, announces that he will visit his grieving father (*Od.* 23.359-60): “but I, you must know, will go to my well-wooded

farm to see my good father, who for my sake is full of distress (ὁ μοι πυκνῶς ἀκάχηται).” The fact that Odysseus *is* to some extent already *aware* of his father’s dependency makes his test even more ruthless.

The test also shows little sensitivity to what the audience already knows about Laertes. Athena-Mentes says that he has retired to his farm and lives a miserable existence suffering woes, with an old woman-servant attending him when weariness seizes his limbs, as he drags himself up and down his vineyard (*Od.* 1.189-93). Also, according to Eumaeus (*Od.* 16.139-145), when Telemachus set out on his journey to Pylos and Sparta, Laertes changed and his distress was increased. Before that, for all his great grief for Odysseus, he used to keep an eye on the farm and eat and drink with the slaves in the house. Now, he no longer eats and drinks, as in the past, nor supervises the work on the farm, but he sits groaning and moaning, and his flesh withers away. In addition, Penelope’s weaving a shroud for Laertes evokes a cumulative empathetic response towards the old man.²⁶ The Homeric audience is thus prompted to empathise with a Laertes who is so profoundly distressed at the loss of Odysseus. Therefore, the sense of cruelty that permeates Odysseus’ *peira* of his father is sub-textually magnified because of the note of sympathy that the *Odyssey* emphatically strikes for the old man.

“Testing” in the *Odyssey* is a recurrent theme and is normally associated with Odysseus’ necessity to know who he can trust after twenty years. The hero withholds his identity before his revelation both to his servants, Eumaeus and Philoitius, and to Penelope, until he is sure of their *loyalty* that is crucial to his victory over the suitors.²⁷ In the *peira* of Laertes, by contrast, there is no *finis ultimus*. Given that there is no genuine doubt of his loyalty, and since the poem is reaching its end, with the suitors dead and Odysseus facing no further risk,²⁸ the hero’s intention to put his

²⁶ See *Od.* 1.99-100, 19.144-45, and 24.134-35.

²⁷ See, e.g., *Od.* 14.459-61 (Eumaeus), 15.303-6 (Eumaeus), 19.44-46 (Penelope), and 21.188-90 (Philoitius and Eumaeus). On the recurrent theme of “testing” in the *Odyssey*, see THORNTON 1970: 47-51. The theme of “testing” forms part of the major theme of “recognition”, on which see GAINSFORD 2003: 41-59.

²⁸ See PAGE 1955: 111-12: “There is no good reason why [Odysseus] should not at once explain who he is; and indeed time is pressing [cf. *Od.* 24.324], for danger threatens at home. But instead he indulges in an aimless and heartless guessing-game. [...] He plays upon his father’s emotions until

father to the test is, in teleological terms, unnecessary and purposeless and hence gratuitously heartless. This sits rather uncomfortably alongside Odysseus' emotional reaction to the sight of a despondent Laertes, when the hero "stood still beneath a tall pear tree, and shed tears" (234) and contemplated straightforward recognition (235-37). So, what sort of picture do these considerations allow us to construct about the Homeric characterisation of Odysseus?

By having Odysseus turning to a cruel test, Homer acknowledges the traditional persona of an Odysseus who is capable of being calculatingly and ruthlessly manipulative. Yet, at the same time, he pointedly rewrites it in a similar way to the refining process that we meet in the Scylla and Charybdis episode. The test, albeit cruel, generates a *peripeteia* that gradually leads up to the climactic moment of the episode, when, upon recognising Odysseus, Laertes throws his hands around his son and passes out apparently from overwhelming joy (*Od.* 24.347-48). So, the narrative uses the unexpected reversal of a straightforward *anagnorisis* to heighten the grief and pathos amid which Odysseus reveals his identity and, in doing so, adds substantial emphasis on the eventual joy and pleasure of Odysseus' reunion with his father. It can, therefore, be argued that, by presenting the emotional pain caused as the means through which Laertes feels greater pleasure and excitement, Homer guides his audience to interpret Odysseus' capability of being manipulative in a more positive way, purged of the negative (Autolycaean) element that characterises Odysseus' persona in the larger tradition.

Apart from being ruthlessly deceptive and manipulative, the non-Odyssean Odysseus can also be, as we have seen, violent and unscrupulous. Several episodes in non-Homeric epic suggestively portray a markedly brutal and inhumane Odysseus not only towards the enemy, as is the cold-blooded murder of Astyanax, but also towards fellow fighters, such as the murder of Palamedes and the intended killing of Diomedes, or suggest the hero's callous indifference to the suffering of his comrades, as is the abandonment of Philoctetes on the island of Lemnos (perhaps already part of the *Cypria* tradition).²⁹ Against this background, the *Odyssey* strategically develops Odysseus' justifiable ruthlessness towards mythical creatures

the old man is almost insensible from sorrow: then suddenly he springs the truth upon him." Cf. THORNTON 1970: 118.

²⁹ See above, p. 148 together with n. 31.

and monsters or towards the shameful actions of the suitors, who invade his house, eat his food, drink his wine, woo his wife, and maliciously plan his son's death. Up to this point all is well. Even the arguably ruthless and pitiless handling of Eurycleia in *Od.* 19.479-90 can be justified on the grounds that Odysseus *has to* silence her to stop her crying out, when she recognises his scar.³⁰ There is, however, one Odyssean episode, the appalling punishment of Odysseus' servants in *Odyssey* 22, which, by pointing implicitly to Odysseus' morally complicated brutality, acknowledges the traditional persona of Odysseus and simultaneously by acknowledging refines it away with great subtlety.

When Melanthius the goatherd is caught supplying the suitors with arms from the storehouse, Odysseus gives instructions to Eumaeus and Philoitius on how to punish him (*Od.* 22.173-77). The proposed method for punishment is cruel and degrading. After they twist back his feet and his arms above, the servants should throw him into the store-room and tie boards (174: *σανίδα*) behind him, presumably to maximise the pain. Then, they should fasten a twisted rope from him and pull him up a tall pillar, bringing him close to the beams. Odysseus makes it clear: Melanthius must be left there suspended alive for a long time in order to suffer severe pains (177: *ὄς κεν δηθὰ ζωὸς ἐὼν χάλειπ' ἄλγεα πάσχη*).

As the narrator points out, Eumaeus and Philoitius obey faithfully Odysseus' orders (*Od.* 22.178-93; see esp. ll. 190-93). As soon as Melanthius steps out of the door, they leap on him, seize him, and drag him by the hair back into the store-room. Then, they throw him on to the ground (188: *ἐν δαπέδῳ δὲ χαμαί*),³¹ while his heart is grieving (188: *ἀχνύμενον κῆρ*), they tie his feet and hands with bonds painful to his spirit (189: *θυμαλγῆϊ δεσμῶ*) and bind them firmly behind his back, presumably behind the plank to which he is lashed (cf. 174 above). After they tie a woven rope to him, they string him up a tall pillar close to the roof-beams (187-93),³² and Eumaeus

³⁰ Cf. *Od.* 10.228-48, where Odysseus contemplates use of violence against Eurylochus, who exhibits distrust in Odysseus, when the hero asks his comrades to follow him in Circe's halls.

³¹ FERNÁNDEZ-GALIANO 1992 on *Od.* 22.188 suggests that "the pleonastic expression is deliberate, underlining Melanthius' helplessness."

³² See FERNÁNDEZ-GALIANO 1992 on *Od.* 22.173-93: "[They] tie a stout rope to one end of the plank, throw it over one of the roof-beams close to the central pillar where it is free of the ceiling and haul the plank up until Melanthius is suspended high on the column, hitching the free end of the rope to a nail or boss on the wall."

seizes the opportunity to treat Melanthius with contempt (*Od.* 22.195-99): “Now in very truth, Melanthius, shall you watch the whole night through, lying on a soft bed, as befits you, nor shall you fail to see the early Dawn, golden-throned, as she comes up from the streams of Oceanus, at the hour when you drive your she-goats for the suitors, to prepare a feast in the halls.” So, Melanthius is left suspended, not only utterly helpless, as the narrator notes (200: ὥς ὁ μὲν αὔθι λέλειπτο, ταθεὶς ὀλοῶ ἐνὶ δεσμῶ), but also utterly humiliated.

After the punishment of Odysseus’ women-servants (see below), the two servants, together with Telemachus this time, turn their attention to Melanthius anew (*Od.* 22.474-79). They bring Melanthius out of the house, presumably for public shaming, and, in their fury (476), they cut off his nose and ears, rip off his genitals as raw meat for the dogs, and lop off his hands and feet. By doing so, they subject Melanthius to a slow, painful, miserable, death. As we shall see, Melanthius’ amputation and castration have wider implications for Odysseus’ Odyssean characterisation.

The cruel punishment of Melanthius intersects with the similarly ruthless punishment of Odysseus’ servant-women, who die “an unusually odious death”.³³ After giving the suitors what he thinks they deserve, Odysseus asks Eurycleia to name those women who dishonour him (*Od.* 22.417-18). When she points out twelve out of fifty female servants that show no respect either to her or to Penelope (*Od.* 22.421-27), he orders her to call those women who in the past devised “disgraceful deeds” (*Od.* 22.431-32). As soon as Eurycleia leaves the room in order to give the message to the women, Odysseus gives instructions to Telemachus, Eumaeus, and Philoitius, on how to punish the disloyal maids (*Od.* 22.437-45). They should involve the faithless maids with the gruesome procedure of carrying out the dead bodies of the suitors, and, when the whole palace is restored to order, they should take them out of the hall and murder them with their *swords* (443: ξίφεσιν). The death penalty, Odysseus says, will make the women forget the pleasures of Aphrodite that they enjoyed mingling in secret with the suitors (443-45).

The women come all in a bunch (22.447) αἴν’ ὀλοφυρόμεναι, θαλερὸν κατὰ δάκρυ χέουσαι (“wailing terribly and shedding big tears”), but the executors of Odysseus do carry out faithfully his instructions –almost, as we shall see, to the

³³ SAïD 2012: 367.

letter– (*Od.* 22.448-60). While the women carry out the corpses and place them under the portico of the court propping them against each other, Odysseus oversees the process, giving orders and urging them on (450-51). Then, the women clean the tables and chairs with water and porous sponges,³⁴ and, after Telemachus together with Eumaeus and Philoitius scrape the floor of the house, they carry and put outside the scrapings. As soon as the hall is restored to order, the helpers of Odysseus lead the women out of the hall³⁵ to a place between the round-house and the fence of the court and press them into a narrow space from which there is no possibility for them of escape. However, although the direction of Odysseus is to put the women to the sword (443), Telemachus has a different opinion (*Od.* 22.462-64):

μη μὲν δὴ καθαρῷ θανάτῳ ἀπὸ θυμὸν ἐλοίμην
τάων, αἱ δὲ ἐμῆ κεφαλῇ κατ’ ὄνειδεα χεῦαν
μητέρι θ’ ἡμετέρη παρά τε μνηστῆρσιν ἴαυον.

Let it be by no clean death that I take the lives of these women,
who on my own head have poured reproaches
and on my mother, as they continually slept with the suitors.

Telemachus raises a strong objection to a *katharós thánatos* (lit. “clean death”) by sword (462-63),³⁶ because he feels that these women, in sleeping with the suitors, poured scorn on both his mother and himself. Instead, he proceeds with hanging the disloyal maids (*Od.* 22.465-73). After fastening the cable of a ship to a pillar of the round-house, Telemachus flings it round the building (namely, he puts it round the women), stretching it on high, lest any of them reach the ground with their feet. The narrator—in a significant way, as we shall see—³⁷ compares the hanging of the women to the pitiful death of snared birds (468-70). As thrushes and doves, while they try to reach their nests, fall into a snare and a hateful resting place receives them, so the

³⁴ The picture of the maids when they wail and clean up the bodies and blood of their dead lovers contrasts emphatically with their giggling and joking before or after they have sex with the suitors: see *Od.* 20.6-8.

³⁵ Presumably for public shaming; cf. Melanthius above.

³⁶ The Optative in *Od.* 22.462 is strongly assertive (μη μὲν δὴ ... ἐλοίμην): see FERNÁNDEZ-GALIANO 1992 on *Od.* 22.462. On the strong denial μη μὲν, see STANFORD 1948 *ad loc.*

³⁷ See below, pp. 199-200.

servant-women, with nooses being laid round their necks, die contemptibly and in the most pitiful way (472: ὅπως οἴκτιστα θάνοινεν).

Since the proposed death by sword is considered by Telemachus to be *katharós*, the method of punishment eventually chosen, namely, a “death by hanging”, can be understood as a *non-katharós* death. However, how can we understand the difference between a *katharós* and a *non-katharós thánatos*? Since in the Homeric diction *katharós* always refers either to clothing which is “physically clean”³⁸ or to space which is “empty”,³⁹ it is less probable that *katharós* here has any religious significance. Besides, if *katharós* had a religious significance, a death by sword could not be considered by Telemachus to be *katharós*, since the shedding of blood would necessitate further purification.⁴⁰ Rather, as has been suggested, *katharós* points to “a ‘clean’, in the sense of ‘quick and easy’, death”.⁴¹ Although the narrative makes it clear that the women’s death by hanging is “quick” too (cf. *Od.* 22.473: “they writhed a little while with their feet, but not for long”), it is, arguably, slower in comparison to the sword and, in that respect, more “difficult”. In the eyes of Telemachus, however, a death by sword perhaps also resembles a heroic and decent death and, as such, seems to him to be an undeservedly generous treatment. In hanging the maids with a rope, he presumably feels that he subjects them to an un-heroic, undignified death. If so, then the difference between a *katharós* and a *non-katharós thánatos* is, also, one of honour.⁴² These observations lead us to assume that a *katharós thánatos* probably points to a decent, quick, and easy death and a *non-katharós thánatos* to a dishonourable, namely, humiliating and miserable, slow, and difficult death.

The punishment of Odysseus’ servants is, no doubt, a long-anticipated and hence unsurprising event. From Book 16 onwards, it is carefully presented as a natural culmination of a long series of thoughts and incidents that expose some of Odysseus’ servants –especially Melanthe and her brother Melanthius– as morally corrupt and increasingly awaken the need *within Odysseus himself* to get revenge against them. When Odysseus proposes that he and Telemachus should test the loyalty of the

³⁸ See *Od.* 4.750 (= 17.48), 4.749 (= 17.58), and 6.61.

³⁹ See *Il.* 8.491 (= 10.199) and 23.61.

⁴⁰ Cf. FERNÁNDEZ-GALIANO 1992 on *Od.* 22.462.

⁴¹ FERNÁNDEZ-GALIANO 1992 on *Od.* 22.462.

⁴² Cf. HALM-TISSERANT 1995: 293.

women and the men servants (*Od.* 16.304-7), his son says that it is first necessary to put all the *women* to the test (*Od.* 16.316-19; see esp. 317). In doing so, he suggestively draws the attention of his father to the immorality of some of the female servants in his absence. Eumaeus, also, points out to the disguised Odysseus the fact that some of the maids skip out on their duties (*Od.* 17.318-21), attributing the very poor condition of Argos, Odysseus' dog, to the indifference of the women slaves with a generalisation similar to our "when the cat's away, the mice will play". In addition, Penelope describes to Odysseus the unfaithfulness of her maids (*Od.* 19.151-55), mentioning that some unfaithful maids, "shameless creatures and reckless" (154: κύνας οὐκ ἀλεγούσας),⁴³ revealed her shroud trick to the suitors.⁴⁴

Odysseus can himself confirm through first-hand experience that all the information that he gleans from Telemachus, Eumaeus, and Penelope, about his servants is accurate. For example, he witnesses the servant-women making each other laugh and feeling in good spirits, before or after they make love with the suitors (*Od.* 20.5-13).⁴⁵ In addition, when Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, prompts (in fact, orders) the maids to go and entertain Penelope in her chamber and leave the company of the suitors (*Od.* 18.306-19), his prompting raises a laugh amongst them (*Od.* 18.320) and incites one of them, Melantho, to abuse him verbally in violation of guest law (*Od.* 18.327-36).⁴⁶ The introductory portrayal of Melantho by the Homeric narrator is no less unfavourable (*Od.* 18.321-25). Although Penelope looked after her as though she were her own daughter, the maid repaid her "maternal care" with indifference and became mistress to Eurymachus (325: Εὐρυμάχῳ μισγέσκετο καὶ φιλέεσκεν),⁴⁷ one of the two leading suitors of Penelope, the other being Antinous. Melantho's inability to be generous and courteous towards Penelope squares with the maltreatment of "Odysseus" as a guest and the disrespect she shows towards the law

⁴³ Cf. *Od.* 19.372, where Eurycleia calls the maids κύνες, because they violate guest law.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Od.* 24.144, where Amphimedon, one of the suitors of Penelope, says that τις ἔειπε γυναικῶν, ἧ σάφα ἦδη ("one of her women who knew all told them").

⁴⁵ That Odysseus' maids are engaged in sexual relationships with the suitors is also evident in *Od.* 18.325, 22.443-45, and 22.464.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Od.* 19.65-69, where Melantho is likewise insulting towards Odysseus and disrespectful of the law of *xenia*.

⁴⁷ Melantho compares unfavourably with other maids of Odysseus who are *forced* to sleep with the suitors: see *Od.* 20.318-19 (Telemachus to Ctesippus) and 22.37 (Odysseus to the suitors).

of *xenia* –so powerful a theme in the *Odyssey*–, in general. The introductory portrayal of Melanthe and her ensuing attack on Odysseus both show her in an unfavourable light. Melanthe essentially epitomises the “bad” female servant.⁴⁸

Similar is the conduct of Odysseus’ goatherd Melanthius, brother of Melanthe.⁴⁹ When Odysseus in disguise, together with Eumaeus, encounters Melanthius on his way into Ithaca, Melanthius abuses him both verbally and physically, unaware that he is dishonoring his master (*Od.* 17.215-35; see esp. ll. 215-26 and 233-34).⁵⁰ In addition, when Eumaeus prays to the Nymphs of the Fountain to bring Odysseus back, Melanthius (the binary opposite of Eumaeus) threatens to pack the swineherd off from Ithaca and wishes that Apollo shoots Telemachus down that very day or the suitors murder him (*Od.* 17.238-53). Later on, when Odysseus finally arrives at the palace, and while the suitors give some food to the stranger and wonder who he is and where he has come from, the evil goatherd maliciously informs them that the stranger is brought into the palace by Eumaeus the swineherd, thus inciting Antinous against Eumaeus (*Od.* 17.367-79). The disloyalty of Melanthius towards his absent master is also reflected in the emphasis that the *Odyssey* places on his close relationship with the suitors. He provides their table with the best goats of the herd (*Od.* 20.174f.), he pours them wine (*Od.* 20.255), and, on Antinous’ order, he lights fire in the hall (*Od.* 21.181f.; cf. *Od.* 21.175f.).⁵¹ For all these reasons, the suitors seem to like him a lot. After his encounter with the disguised Odysseus on his way to the palace, Melanthius takes a seat opposite Eurymachus, whom he “loves best of all”, and joins the suitors for dinner at Odysseus’ hall (*Od.* 17.256-60; see esp. l. 257).

Odysseus soon reaches the conclusion that, apart from Eumaeus and Philoetius, all other servants would not be happy at all with his return (*Od.* 21.209-11): “And I know that by you two alone of all my slaves is my coming desired, but of the rest have I heard not one praying that I might come back again to my home.” And, although the Ithacan king has enough self-control to restrain himself and to postpone

⁴⁸ On the contrast between Melanthe and faithful Eurynome, the waiting woman of Penelope, see THALMANN 1998: 71.

⁴⁹ They are both the children of Dolius, a slave of Penelope: see *Od.* 17.217 and 18.322.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Od.* 20.177-82, where Melanthius is again disrespectful towards the disguised Odysseus.

⁵¹ Also note that, later on, Melanthius is caught by Eumaeus and Philoetius trying to steal weapons and armour for the suitors: see *Od.* 22.135-69.

the punishment of his disloyal servants in order to avoid jeopardizing the larger plan, to take revenge on the suitors, he does come very close to killing them.⁵²

The necessity of the punishment of Melanthius and the maids can be explained variously, first of all, in terms of their social status. Odysseus is the master, whereas they are chattel slaves owned by Odysseus and his household. Both Melanthius and the maids, as a result of voluntarily becoming the suitors' accomplices, as is suggested in their behaviour and actions, violate Odysseus' ownership and, in doing so, make themselves liable to punishment. Even the fact that the maids sleep with the suitors is a "blow at Odysseus' property".⁵³ The maids' sexual misconduct lashes Odysseus into a fury (*Od.* 20.5-30), and Telemachus, sensitive to the fact that the maids sleep with the suitors, changes the method of their punishment, as we have seen, from a *katharós* to a *non-katharós thánatos*. The impulsive and vehement reactions of both Odysseus and Telemachus suggest that they might have rightfully engaged in sexual relations with *their* maids,⁵⁴ which points to the fact that the women's sexual "infidelity" is essentially an infringement of Odysseus' and Telemachus' exclusive right to having sex with them that needs to be punished. Second, the women-servants specifically must receive punishment, since they caused through their sexual disloyalty damage to the honour of the household. Telemachus goes for a more severe punishment, as very suggestively he feels that the maids with their sexual misconduct dishonoured not only himself but also his *mother* (cf. *Od.* 22.463-64), which points to the fact that, as in societies which resemble the Homeric one, Odysseus' household honour is susceptible to female sexual conduct. Third, the punishment of the servants is necessitated by reason of the fact that, in conniving with the suitors, Melanthius and the maids threaten Odysseus' physical existence, when the hero returns to Ithaca. The case of Melanthius is perhaps more straightforward than that of the maids. Not only does he side with the suitors, while his master is away, but he also provocatively fights on their side, even after Odysseus reveals his identity. Therefore, the servants' collusion with the suitors hurts the dignity of Odysseus as master of the household in his absence as well as poses a threat to his physical existence after his return. Their misconduct is a

⁵² See *Od.* 17.235-38 (Melanthius) and 20.9-21 (servant women). Cf., also, 20.183-84 (Melanthius).

⁵³ THALMANN 1998: 72.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Od.* 1.430-33, where it is said that, though Laertes treated Eurycleia as his wife, he never lay with her in love so as to avoid the wrath of his real wife, Anticleia.

betrayal from *within* his household, an internal treachery which parallels the external threat as embodied by the suitors. In this light, there are sufficient grounds to see the punishment of Odysseus' faithless and wicked servants as both part and reflex of Odysseus' re-establishment within his *oikos* as master over those who are altogether subservient to him, as well as there can be little doubt that one function their public and violent execution serves is to provide a prescriptive exemplum for other servants, who are prone to disobedience and lack of discipline.

One could argue, as the Oxford commentator does,⁵⁵ that the women's punishment is permeated with "strange and unwarranted cruelty" on the grounds that their "illicit intercourse with the suitors [...] played no part in the events of the story". But the moral corruption of the maids as well as of Melanthius is, as we have seen, so carefully adumbrated that we and possibly the Homeric audience, as the main characters do, look forward to their punishment.⁵⁶ The rhetoric of the repetition of their misbehaviour does make their punishment even by death seem justifiable enough and, as such, both understandable and desirable.⁵⁷ With that being said, however, there is, as we shall see, good reason to believe that the ruthless nature of the punishment that they eventually suffer is likely to stimulate mixed responses from the original audiences.

In the initial phase of his punishment, as we have seen, Melanthius suffers intense physical and mental pain. Being lashed with his back to a plank and strung up alive,⁵⁸ he is subjected to a cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishment "without the

⁵⁵ FERNÁNDEZ-GALIANO 1992 on *Od.* 22.441-73.

⁵⁶ And as we do with the suitors; the parallelism is an important part of the overall ethical-emotional response.

⁵⁷ Cf. HUNNINGS 2011: 65-66: "It is no surprise that as a slave owner Odysseus wishes to exact a punishment for the perceived misdemeanours of his household slaves, even though he uses what to a modern audience may seem to be extreme violence. Owner/slave violence serves to reiterate the 'rightful' polarity between the two parties, to forcibly remind the slave that he or she is subservient, subject to whims and domination of the master, and that perceived transgressions will be answerable physically. Death is at the extreme end of the spectrum of this violence." A parallel from the historical period is the role of *basanos* in Athenian trials, on which see THÜR 1977.

⁵⁸ This method of punishment is nowhere else attested in Homer but resembles (cf. HALM-TISSERANT 1995: 288-90) a torture well-known as *apotympanismos*, which, from the pre-Solonian era down to the fourth century in Athens, is normally reserved for *kakoúrgoi*, "malefactors" (on *apotympanismós*,

heroic equipment of bow, swords, and spears, and with a crude method of incapacitating [...] that contrasts with the heroic repertory of wounds.”⁵⁹ But there is nothing reprehensible about the chosen method of punishment. What is problematic, however, is what follows in the second phase of his punishment. Unlike the suitors, whose deaths “follow the pattern of killing in heroic battles”,⁶⁰ Melanthius is emasculated and has his ears, nose, hands, feet, severed.⁶¹ This is not about corpse mutilation, that is, maltreatment of an already dead body. It is about *death by mutilation*. The fact that there is a certain lack of specificity as to *when* Melanthius dies⁶² (note that, in the previous scene, he is left suspended to suffer) makes it seem that, as has been rightly pointed out, the goatherd is given “the most ghastly and humiliating punishment of all, to be, for general ridicule, a limbless, *living corpse*.”⁶³ More importantly, however, there is, as we shall see below, some suggestive evidence to believe that the death that Odysseus’ disloyal goatherd suffers is not only gruesome but also morally complex.

In *Odyssey* 18, when Irus the beggar challenges the disguised Odysseus to fight but, stunned at the hero’s physique, soon regrets, Antinous urges him on with threats for the sake of the suitors’ entertainment (*Od.* 18.83-87):

αἶ κέν σ’ οὗτος νικήσῃ κρείσσων τε γένηται,
πέμψω σ’ ἠπειρόνδε, βαλὼν ἐν νηὶ μελαίνῃ,
εἰς Ἔχετον βασιλῆα, βροτῶν δηλήμονα πάντων, 85
ὅς κ’ ἀπὸ ῥίνα τάμησι καὶ οὔατα νηλεῖ χαλκῷ,
μήδεά τ’ ἐξερύσας δῶη κυσὶν ὠμὰ δάσασθαι.

see, eg., KERAMOPOULLOS 1923 and TODD 2000). There is a difference however. The *apotympanismós* is an execution method involving death by exposure.

⁵⁹ THALMANN 1998: 95. Cf. HALM-TISSERANT 1995: 294.

⁶⁰ THALMANN 1998: 95.

⁶¹ The mutilation of Melanthius resembles the *maschalismos* of the tragedians (see Aesch., *Choeph.* 439-44, and Soph., *El.* 444-46), i.e., the dismemberment of the corpse that renders the dead incapable of haunting the living: see HALM-TISSERANT 1995: 290 and FERNÁNDEZ-GALIANO 1992 on *Od.* 21.474-77; for a comprehensive discussion of *maschalismos* and further bibliography, see GARVIE 1986 on Aesch., *Choeph.* 439. It is, however, important to note that the *maschalismós* is a practice that is normally applied to dead bodies, whereas here Melanthius is still alive.

⁶² Cf. FERNÁNDEZ-GALIANO 1992 on *Od.* 21.474-77 and DAVIES 1994: 534.

⁶³ DAVIES 1994: 534 (emphasis added).

If this fellow [i.e., the disguised Odysseus] conquers you and proves the better man, / I will throw you into a black ship and send you to the mainland / to King Echetus, the maimer of all men, who will cut off your nose and ears with the pitiless bronze, and will tear out your genitals and give them raw to dogs to eat.

Antinous threatens Irus with a barbarous mutilation (amputation and castration), similar to the punishment of Melanthius, at the hands of a certain king named Echetus. In *Od.* 21.295-309 (see esp. ll. 308-9), the suitor utters the same threat against Odysseus, who, in the guise of a beggar, is about to take part in the archery competition for Penelope's hand. Like Melanthius, Irus and the disguised Odysseus are low-status figures. The fact that death by mutilation is reserved as possible form of punishment only for them perhaps suggests that it is the kind of degrading punishment that in the world of the *Odyssey* is restricted to lower-class figures only.⁶⁴ But, more to the point, the fact that, apart from the case of Melanthius, death by mutilation is foregrounded only as an abhorrent threat of punishment at the hands of the abominable king Echetus (85: βροτῶν δηλήμονα πάντων; cf. *Od.* 18.116 and 21.308), a mythical folklore wicked figure,⁶⁵ who here plays the role of the boogeyman, probably reflects the abhorrence of the original audiences towards the practice, which can be inferred from later sources, too.

Apollo's abuse of the savage Erinyes in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* 185-97 exudes a profound aversion to the practice of mutilation:

οὔτοι δόμοισι τοῖσδε χρίμπεσθαι πρέπει·	185
ἀλλ' οὔ καρανιστῆρες ὀφθαλμωρύχοι	
δίκαι σφαγαί τε, σπέρματός τ' ἀποφορᾶ	
παίδων κακοῦται γλοῦνις, ἠδ' ἀκρωνία	
λευσμός τε, καὶ μύζουσιν οἰκτισμὸν πολλὸν	
ὑπὸ ῥάχιν παγέντες. ἄρ' ἀκούετε	190
οἴας ἐορτῆς ἔστ' ἀπόπτυστοι θεοῖς	
στέργηθρ' ἔχουσαι;	
[...]	
ποιμνης τοιαύτης δ' οὔτις εὐφιλῆς θεῶν.	197

⁶⁴ Cf. THALMANN 1998: 227.

⁶⁵ See RUSSO 1992 on *Od.* 18.85. Cf. HALM-TISSERANT 1995: 291.

It is not fitting you should come to this house [i.e., to my sanctuary];
 your place is where sentence is given to lop off heads and gouge out
 eyes, / where murders are, and by destruction of the seed
 the manhood of the young is ruined, and there are mutilations
 and stoning, and men moan in long lament,
 impaled beneath the spine. Do not hear
 what sort of feast it is that you so love
 that the gods detest you?
 [...]
 Such a herd is loved by none among the gods.⁶⁶

The god emphatically orders the Erinyes to go to places that are ferocious and barbarous in their customs, such as mutilations, including castration (186-88). It is very probable that Aeschylus here, alluding to Persian savage practices of punishment,⁶⁷ expresses the Hellenic abhorrence. Herodotus records three instances of punishment by mutilation. The first is about Pheretima, the Cyrenaean queen, who ordered the Barcaean wives' breasts to be cut off in order to avenge her son's murder at the hands of the Barcaeans (4.202). The second is about Amestris, wife of Xerxes, who tortured and mutilated the wife of Masistes (brother of Xerxes), because her daughter, Artaynte, became Xerxes' lover. She cut away her breasts and threw them to dogs, and then she cut off her nose, ears, lips, and tongue, and sent her back home (9.108-12; see esp. 112). The third is about the young boys of Miletus. In 493 BC, the Persians, in order to stamp out the Ionian revolt, chose the most handsome boys, castrated them, making them eunuchs, and sent them away to the king (6.32). Herodotus does not pass judgement on these three stories. In a more straightforward manner, however, he characterises Hermotimus' castration by Panionios of Chios as ἔργον ἀνοσιωτάτων, "the most impious deed" (8.104-6; see esp. 8.105.1). Panionios makes his livelihood from castrating beautiful boys and selling them to Sardis and Ephesus, where "eunuchs are held in higher value" (8.104.5).⁶⁸ As has been pointed out, this is one of the very few instances in which Herodotus expresses his distaste for the foreign customs he reports.⁶⁹ In some post-Homeric sources, therefore, one

⁶⁶ Trans. Podlecki 1989: 22-23.

⁶⁷ Cf. VERRALL 1908, PODLECKI 1989, and SOMMERSTEIN 1989 on Aesch., *Eum.* 186-90.

⁶⁸ For a full discussion of the story, see HORNBLLOWER 2003: 37-57.

⁶⁹ See BOWIE 2007 on Hdt. 8.105.1: "[I]t is a mark of [Herodotus'] cultural broad-mindedness that he does not in general pass adverse judgement on the many foreign customs he records. Two further

can infer a revulsion towards certain forms of physical mutilation. And, although there is a relatively large chronological (and not only) gap between Homer and Aeschylus or Herodotus, the fact that the *Odyssey* opens in the mouth of Antinous the possibility of a similar form of punishment at the hands of an abhorrent mythical figure, which is suggested but never realised, encourages us to believe that the audience would similarly be appalled at the violence of Melanthius' amputation and castration; or, at least, that the goatherd's ruthless punishment would elicit mixed reactions from the audience.⁷⁰ Similarly mixed, as we shall see, would probably be the audience's response to the ruthless punishment of the twelve maids.

However paradoxical it may appear, the *Odyssey* does arouse, though in an unobtrusive manner, feelings of both pity and sympathy for the executed maids through the final simile of Book 22. As mentioned above, their hanging is compared to the pitiful deaths of snared birds (*Od.* 22.468-73):

ὥς δ' ὅτ' ἂν ἦ κίχλαι ταυυσίπτεροι ἢ ἐπέλαιαι
 ἔρκει ἐνιπλήξωσι, τό θ' ἐστήκη ἐνὶ θάμνω,
 αὐλὴν ἐσιέμεναι, στυγερός δ' ὑπεδέξατο κοῖτος, 470
 ὡς αἶ γ' ἐξείης κεφαλὰς ἔχον, ἀμφὶ δὲ πάσαις
 δειρῆσι βρόχοι ἦσαν, ὅπως οἴκτιστα θάνοιεν.
 ἦσπαιρον δὲ πόδεσσι μίνυνθά περ οὐ τι μάλα δῆν.

And as when long-winged thrushes or doves
 fall into a snare that is set in a thicket, / as they seek to reach
 their roosting place, and hateful is the bed that gives them welcome,
 even so the women held their heads in a row, and round the necks of all
 nooses were laid, that they might die most piteously.
 And they writhed a little while with their feet, but not for long.

The *Odyssey* inserts into the narrative a highly suggestive comparison. As thrushes and doves, while they try to reach their nests, fall into a snare and a loathsome

exceptions are his extreme distaste for Babylonian ritual prostitution of women at 1.199.1 (“most shameful”) and disapproval of circumcision at 2.37.2 (“they put cleanliness before appearance”); [...] [Herodotus] is aware that different customs fit different races. [...]”

⁷⁰ Some aspects of the Homeric society remain unchanged over time, while the culture changes drastically. One example is the practice of *xenia*, which dates back to Homeric society and, despite some shifts in emphasis, remains a prominent feature of society in Archaic Greece and continues into Classical period: see, e.g., HERMAN 1987, KONSTAN 1997, and MITCHELL 1997.

resting place receives them (468-70), *so* the servant-women, with nooses being laid round their necks, die contemptibly and in the most pitiful way (471-72). As has been noted,⁷¹ it is not very easy to figure out the exact parallelism between the hanging of the women and the trap of the birds in physical terms. Besides, the mechanisms used in either case are unclear, which further obscures the exact correspondence. A closer reading, however, suggests that the connection point is not the *cause* and *mechanism* of either death but the *nature* of the pitiful death birds and maids die, respectively. The text does not say “*as* birds fall into a snare and a loathsome resting place receives them, *so* the women...” but “*as*, when birds fall into a snare, a loathsome resting place receives them, so the women had their heads in a row and nooses are laid round their necks so that they would die in the most pitiful way.” The comparison, therefore, suggestively points to the fact that both the birds and the women die a poignant death. This, however, raises the question of how this comparison might affect the audience reception of the incident.

We have seen that the *Odyssey* develops an over-meticulous rhetoric in its presentation of the maids’ despicable actions and the subsequent well-deserved punishment. One would expect, after all, that the only “Odyssean” response to their death would be satisfaction. It is, however, striking that their death is compared to the death of the birds, whose death is capable of arousing sympathetic sadness and compassion. As has been rightly pointed out, “in [deservedly] punishing the women, Telemachus hangs [the maids] like thrushes or doves who fall into a snare, a simile from the world where man hunts small helpless animals as a normal pursuit involving no risk or danger to the hunter”.⁷² Hence, though it is intended / supposed to evoke satisfaction, the scene of the hanging of the women, fraught with brutality, in all likelihood inspires mixed satisfaction *and* pity. Through the simile, in other words, the *Odyssey* implicitly injects the scene of the death of the maids with unanticipated pathos for their hopeless situation.⁷³ We cannot say, of course, whether

⁷¹ See SCOTT 2009: 116 n. 92.

⁷² SCOTT 2009: 116. SAÏD 2012: 367 points out that “elsewhere, in similes and omens, the doves and other small birds are always portrayed as victims”.

⁷³ Cf. SAÏD 2012: 368: “The emphasis put here on [the maids’] odious death ([472:] ὄπως οἴκτιστα θάνοινεν) that may appear as a just retaliation for their sleeping together with the suitors seems mitigated with pity through their identification with helpless birds and the description of their short struggle against death.”

the way the maids finally receive their punishment, a ruthless death by hanging, is as shocking for the Homeric audience as is for a modern reader. The simile, however, offers good reason to suggest that, notwithstanding the fact that their death is so carefully anticipated as a well-deserved sort of punishment, the ruthless manner of their violent execution together with the bird imagery used in the description perhaps make the Homeric audience similarly feel appalled and sub-textually casts a shadow over the moral appropriateness of the punishment, by implication, over the moral appropriateness of Telemachus' brutality. It is, therefore, very likely that, as in the case of Melanthius, the punishment of the maids invites and opens space for mixed reactions from the audience.⁷⁴ This is a crucial point which should be examined in relation to fact that, as we shall see, Odysseus is, to a large extent dissociated from both incidents.

The *Odyssey* narrative makes us expect that it is Odysseus himself who will brutally punish both Melanthius and his maids, as he comes twice very close to killing them. The first time is when Melanthius lashes out with his foot at the groin of Odysseus, while the latter is disguised as a beggar (*Od.* 17.233-38; see esp. 235-38): "Odysseus pondered whether he should leap upon him and take his life with staff, or pick him up by the ears and dash his head upon the ground. Yet he stood it, and contained himself." The hero has enough self-control to restrain himself and postpone the punishment of Melanthius in order not to jeopardise the punishment of the suitors.⁷⁵ The opening scene of Book 20, even more powerful and memorable, is very suggestive of Odysseus' compressed and suppressed rage towards his female servants (see *Od.* 20.5-21). As THALMANN describes it,⁷⁶ "when he sees [his maids] on the way to their lover's beds [...] his heart barks like a bitch defending her

⁷⁴ It is important to note that the *Odyssey* often likes to retain this ambiguous tone. For example, it creates sympathy for Leodes, a diviner and suitor of Penelope, who is decapitated by Odysseus while pleading desperately for his life (*Od.* 22.310-29). It also creates sympathy for the brutal Cyclops by having him thinking that his king ram must be sympathising with his master because of his mutilated eye (*Od.* 9.447-60). Another example is the death of Amphinomos, who is murdered by Telemachus (see *Od.* 22.489-96), although he twice tried to dissuade the other suitors from killing the Ithacan prince (*Od.* 16.393-406 and 20.244-46). Cf. the lost marriage hopes of Nausicaa in *Odyssey* 6: see discussion on p. 77 together with n. 29.

⁷⁵ Cf. *Od.* 20.183-84, where Odysseus "ponders evil in the deep of his heart", when Melanthius abuses him verbally.

⁷⁶ THALMANN 1998: 71.

puppies and his body tosses like a pudding full of blood and fat on a fire.” But, again, Odysseus restrains himself from killing them, though “in utter disobedience his heart remained sternly enduring” and “he himself lay tossing this way and that” (*Od.* 20.22-24).⁷⁷

In light of the above, it is paradoxical that in the end Odysseus is only distantly involved with the punishment of his servants. He orders his trusted men to bind and string Melanthius up and also to put the twelve maids to the sword. But in neither case does he carry out the punishment himself. In fact, it is Telemachus who hangs the twelve maids, –ignoring the instructions of Odysseus for a more heroic killing with the sword, as well as participates in the most savage part of Melanthius’ punishment, his amputation and castration, which also goes beyond Odysseus’ instructions. As we will see, however, the fact that Odysseus does not participate fully in the execution of the punishments does not altogether dissociate him from the brutality of the episode.

In *Od.* 18.338-42, Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, witnesses the corrupt behaviour of his maids, especially Melanthe’s, whom he forewarns that he will prompt Telemachus to dismember her as punishment:

“ἢ τάχα Τηλεμάχῳ ἐρέω, κύον, οἷ’ ἀγορεύεις,
κεῖσ’ ἐλθὼν, ἵνα σ’ αὖθι διὰ μελεῖστί τάμησιν.”
ὡς εἰπὼν ἐπέεσσι διεπτοίησε γυναικας. 340
βὰν δ’ ἴμεναι διὰ δῶμα, λύθεν δ’ ὑπὸ γυῖα ἐκάστης
ταρβοςύνη· φὰν γάρ μιν ἀληθέα μυθήσασθαι.

“Presently I shall go to Telemachus and tell him, bitch, what sort of things you are saying, / so that on the spot he may cut you limb from limb.” / So he spoke, and with his words scattered the women.
Through the hall they went, and the limbs of each were loosened
beneath her / in terror, for they thought that he spoke the truth.

The promised dismemberment is, in fact, as horrifying and gruesome as the ruthless punishment that Melanthius and the twelve maids eventually receive. So, the *Odyssey* here, apparently in anticipation of the later incidents, invites us to believe

⁷⁷ See HUNNINGS 2011: 63: “It takes a palpable psychological effort for Odysseus to gain control over his emotions and to refrain from killing the girls there and then, unaided, before he is truly prepared; it takes the intervention of Athene truly to master this onslaught of emotion.”

that Odysseus not only would consent to any form of brutal punishment of his unfaithful servants but would also encourage it. But what is even more important is the fact that Odysseus makes it explicit that, when Telemachus punishes the servants, he acts *on his father's behalf* (*Od.* 19.85-88):

εἰ δ' ὁ μὲν ὧς ἀπόλωλε καὶ οὐκέτι νόστιμός ἐστιν, 85
ἀλλ' ἤδη παῖς τοῖος Ἀπόλλωνός γε ἔκητι,
Τηλέμαχος· τὸν δ' οὐ τις ἐνὶ μεγάροισι γυναικῶν
λήθει ἀτασθάλλους', ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι τηλίκος ἐστίν.

But if, even as it seems, he is dead, and is no more to return,
yet now is his son by the favour of Apollo such as Odysseus was,
his son Telemachus. Him it does not escape if any of the women in the
halls / are sinning; he is no longer the child his was.

Here, the disguised Odysseus once more forewarns Melanthe that, even if “Odysseus” is not likely to return in order to restore the palace to order, there is behind a “son like Odysseus” (86: παῖς τοῖος), Telemachus, who will undertake the punishment. Odysseus claims that the apple did not fall far from the tree, which is, in fact, evident throughout the *Odyssey*. It has been pointed out that, “when reading the *Odyssey* we do indeed have a distinct feeling that [Odysseus] and [Telemachus] share similarities, not only in form and shape, as Mentor, Helen, and Menelaus testify, but in character as well.”⁷⁸ This has already been noted by Athenaeus (*Deipn.* 5.182a): [...] Ὅμηρος ὡςπερ ἀγαθὸς ζωγράφος πάντα ὅμοιον τῷ πατρὶ τὸν Τηλέμαχον παρίστησι. (“[L]ike a good painter, Homer presents Telemachus as being exactly like his father.” (Trans. Olson 2006: 403))⁷⁹ In some respects, Odysseus and Telemachus do share the same ability to manoeuvre and manipulate the people and situations. One of the most noticeable examples is Telemachus’ tactful refusal of Menelaus’ hospitality in *Od.* 4.595-601: “[T]ruly for a year would I be content to sit in your house, nor would desire for home or parents come upon me; for wondrous is the pleasure I take in listening to your tales and your speech. But even now my comrades are chafing in sacred Pylos, and you are keeping me long here. And

⁷⁸ ROISMAN 1994: 1.

⁷⁹ Cf. CLARKE 1967: 30-69, AUSTIN 1969: 45-63, ROISMAN 1994: 1-22, OLSON 1995: 65-90, BECK 1998-99: 121-41, HEATH 2005: 79-118.

whatever gift you would give me, let it be some treasure; but horses I will not take to Ithaca...". As has been correctly noted, "we ... know that those nameless comrades waiting in Pylos are nothing to Telemachos while his family is everything."⁸⁰ One might, therefore, argue that distancing of Odysseus from the brutal punishment of his servants is reduced by the fact that he suggestively designates Telemachus, whom he recognises as the mirror image of himself, as his surrogate. However, the one undeniable fact still remains, that it is Telemachus who is given the last word on the ruthless deed.

The *Odyssey* certainly presents an Odysseus who *is* capable of being violent, as he contemplates ruthless punishment for his wicked servants. But nonetheless it is Telemachus, together with Eumaeus and Philoitius, who eventually mete out the excruciating, brutal, and cruel, mutilation of Melanthius and the mass execution by hanging of the twelve disloyal slave-girls, and it is also true that the mutilation of Melanthius clearly goes beyond the directions of Odysseus, and it is Telemachus who eventually changes the proposed death of the maids by sword to the more "appropriate" mass execution by hanging. For the modern reader, however, and most likely for the Homeric audience as well, in *Od.* 18.338-42 and 19.85-88, Odysseus "appoints" Telemachus as a replacement for himself and, by a sort of prolepsis, delegates him with the task to exact harsh punishment from the disloyal maids. Given that, like certain incidents in the Cyclic career of Odysseus, the moral complications of the execution of Melanthius and the twelve maids probably elicit mixed responses from the original audiences of the *Odyssey*, can we assume any special significance in the fact that Homer, though he raises the expectation that it is Odysseus who will brutally punish his corrupt servants, eventually displaces responsibility for the savage acts onto Telemachus? This paradoxical reversal can perhaps tell us much about the Odyssean engagement with the traditional persona of Odysseus, as it invites the reader / audience to think that Telemachus implements what the Odyssean conventionalisation of the hero restrains him from doing, namely, from extracting his revenge in the meanest possible way he could think of. On this reading, the *Odyssey* through the sophisticated presentation of the appalling punishment of Odysseus' servants and the hero's involvement in it sub-textually generates a point of simultaneous continuity with, and deviation from, the more

⁸⁰ AUSTIN 1969: 51.

inhumane and unscrupulous Odysseus of the wider epic tradition. It provides a narrative which systematically presents us with an Odysseus purged of the more contentious characteristics or, to put it more accurately, with an Odysseus whose contentious characteristics are cast in more favourable light, but a narrative which does constantly allow the reader / audience to get a glimpse of what Odysseus is potentially capable of doing outside Homer, inviting them to measure the Homeric against the non-Homeric Odysseus. Was Homer unique in his elaborate handling of the traditional persona of Odysseus? This is impossible to answer, of course, but, given that in the ancient scholia we do find some meagre but intriguing evidence for a Cyclic *Odyssey*,⁸¹ it would certainly be interesting to know what other versions of the story of Odysseus made of the complex characterisation of Odysseus in the wider mythopoetic tradition.

⁸¹ See BERNABÉ 1987: 99-100. For a concise discussion of what the Cyclic *Odyssey* could contain, see CAREY 2015 (forthcoming).

Conclusions

This thesis was undertaken to assess Homer's engagement with the broader mythopoetic tradition. By its very nature, a project like this contains a high level of speculation. We have two monumental epics with their origins in late Geometric Greece, and the performative tradition from which they emerged is only at best dimly recoverable, since whatever poetry existed before Homer has not survived. Even the post-Homeric narrative poems of the so-called Epic Cycle, which to some extent give us a more comprehensive view of the non-Homeric mythopoetic range, have been lost in the early centuries of the Christian era.

We hope, however, to have shown that the cultural context is to some extent recoverable, if only at the level of probability. The combination of evidence provides some support for the often taken-for-granted conceptual premise that the compositional process is driven by competition dynamics. SCODEL is right to urge caution to apply a crude competition model, but it remains the case that competition here as often elsewhere in Greek poetic performance is an embedded feature. The study has also gone some way towards reconstructing and enhancing our understanding of the role of an oral poet within his context. We hope to have adjusted the image of the anonymity of the oral poet. We are usually told the names of mythical singers, except for occasional names in the late archaic period, such as Cynaethus of Chios, but we have sought to show that early Greek epic singer-poets, though they are anonymous to us as they were to the Greeks in the Classical period and after, have enjoyed in their time and space both status and a degree of *kleos*, even widespread fame as the *apthiton kleos* of Ibycus, for example. The more a travelling singer-poet proves his compositional and performative capacities, the more he achieves fame and enjoys a highly recognisable status, both of which assist him in widening the range of future performance opportunities and in acquiring further commissions. So, a bard's *kleos* looks backward as well as forward, since it not only reflects a singer-poet's competency but also functions as a continuous and vital catalyst activator of his itinerancy. Therefore, striving for a competitive advantage in a highly competitive market entails achieving *kleos* through performance.

The main purpose of the current study was to describe and systematise the way in which Homer interacts with the wider epic tradition in relation to the characterisation of his protagonists, Achilles and Odysseus. The absence of the Epic Cycle makes the project of identifying the Homeric engagement with the tradition a necessarily fraught process. But, though opinions may be different on specific points, the Homeric epics do engage with the tradition very visibly. They make choices within the tradition and, in the process, produce a more clearly defined construct, a more nuanced and unified surface narrative, thus achieving something distinct and ambitious that stands out against the tradition. In the process of exploring this interaction, we have sought to refine and move away from the Neanalytic source-and-recipient model to a more subtle way of interaction, thus adding to a growing body of literature which has drawn attention to the fact that Homer employs the epic tradition in order to fulfill its thematic and dramatic purposes. The broad thrust of this thesis is that it illustrates and seeks to substantially add to our understanding of the sophistication of this engagement.

What both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* offer, as we have seen, is the distillation of archetypal heroes through a process of refining that includes strategic narrative selection and exclusion. But, as far as the characterisations of Achilles and Odysseus are concerned, the poetic strategy of the Homeric epics goes beyond simple selection and exclusion, as it also draws on the allusive potential of the Homeric narrative that becomes another significant parameter in the sophisticated construction of these characterisations. Mythopoetic traditions which are incongruous with the overall Homeric presentation of Achilles and Odysseus are by and large elided from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* but not fully, as what is excluded still hovers over the Homeric narrative. For an audience immersed in the living mythological traditions, allusions open a certain horizon of expectations shaped by inherent tendencies in the traditional characterisation of Achilles and Odysseus, which, nevertheless, are never allowed to grow much to disturb the overall consistent Homeric conceptualisation of the two heroes. The Homeric strategy, then, is both sophisticated and self-reflexive. It is sophisticated because, in a strikingly dexterous manner, what is filtered out is, in fact, implicitly acknowledged through elaborate allusive constructions in order to be pointedly refuted. And it becomes self-reflexive because, in employing this subtle process of exclusion, it sub-textually gives prominence to the distinctive characterisation of the Homeric Achilles and Odysseus. So, where Ibycus and other

later poets emphasise their part of the work proclaiming bluntly their own fame, Homer –and possibly other early epic singer-poets whose names are now lost– obliquely foregrounds his individuality through the sophisticated self-referentiality of his own poetic strategy. After all, the Homeric engagement with the mythopoetic tradition is refined to such an extent that it allows us to see it as a reflex of Homer’s highly ambitious positioning of himself within an intensely agonistic professional arena.

Due to space restrictions, this project mainly focused on early epic interaction from the perspective of Homer, but certainly further work needs to be done to assess how specific narrative patterns and methodology at work in the Homeric poems find their way into the texture of the post-Homeric poems of the Epic Cycle. The literary reception of Homer in various periods of antiquity as well as in different genres, for example, in lyric poetry and tragedy, has been well studied. The fact, however, that so little of the early epic survives intact prevents us from fully appreciating the reception of the Homeric epics in the archaic period and in the boundaries of the same genre. Nonetheless, our evidence, such as it is, suggests that it is possible to talk about reception, even about different modalities of reception. Achilles’ “rendezvous” with Helen in the *Cypria*, which, as we have seen, possibly restates Achilles’ susceptibility to *eros*, a less prominent strand of the hero’s characterisation that we meet in the tradition outside Homer, is a case in point. We see, therefore, that the Cyclic epics, readily dismissed by many modern scholars who remain under the influence of Aristotle, have themselves some interest. And, though establishing their quality may not be the primary aim, it is perhaps time for further study along the lines of the work of BURGESS and others, which takes the Epic Cycle a bit more seriously.

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