SHORTER NOTES

SWORD-FIGHTING IN THE *ILIAD*: A NOTE ON *ΕΛΑΥΝΩ*[1]

Homeric fights are made up of one or more attacking moves, such as throwing a javelin or slashing with a sword, between two named fighters. Archery is at long range and is described as single attacking episodes. Otherwise the attacks are at short range (thrusting-spear, sword, axe) or medium range (javelin, thrown rock). Such duels may consist of single attacking moves, or more often of several moves alternating between the duellists.

For each fight, Homer supplies the names of the two fighters, and for each move he gives the weapon, a verb of striking if the blow connects, and the place where the blow lands. There are few exceptions to this scheme.[2] He then describes in widely varying detail the result of the blow. He may, for example, give the subsequent path of the weapon, whether it is frustrated by shield or helmet, whether it causes a wound, and whether the wound is trivial or fatal. There are in the *Iliad* 202 attacking moves of this type; 147 produce wounds of some sort and 34 are frustrated by shield, helmet, or body armour.[3] On 21 occasions, the attacker misses completely.

If we return to the strike-verbs which form part of the basic structure, we find a well-known distinction between missiles (arrow, javelin, rock) and hand-held weapons (thrusting-spear, sword, axe). Aristarchus first noted that the strike-verb for missiles is *βάλλω*; indeed, we use this sometimes to distinguish between attacks with a javelin and a thrusting-spear (henceforth spear). Within the 147 wound-producing strikes, 76 are from missiles, and all except two of these use *βάλλω*.[4] Of the 34 strikes frustrated by armour, 18 are from missiles and there is one exception to the use of *βάλλω*.[5] For hand-held weapons, Homer uses a variety of strike-verbs, most frequently *οὐτάζω*, *νύσσω*, and *ἐλαύνω*.[6]

[1] I am grateful to Professor P. E. Easterling and Professor M. M.Willcock for helpful suggestions and corrections. A version of this paper was given at the meeting of the Classical Association at Leeds, April 2004.

[2] They are enumerated in K. B. Saunders, 'Frölich's table of Homeric wounds', *CQ* 54 (2004), 1–17, Table 2.

[3] Ibid., Table 2, lines (a)–(e).

[4] The exceptions both involve Pandarus. When he shoots his arrow at Menelaus, Athene directs it (*ἰθύνω*) away from vital areas, and it hits (*ἐμπίπτω*) his belt (*ζωστήρ*) at 4.130–4. When Diomedes casts his javelin at Pandarus (5.290–6) Athene diverts it (*ἰθύνω* again) so that it hits his face beside the nose, goes through his teeth and his tongue, and comes out under the chin.There is no convincing strike-verb here.

[5] The exception is Hector, at 14.402, where he casts his spear at Ajax (*ἀκόντισε*)—'nor did he miss' (*οὐδ' ἀφάμαρτε*), at the point where the sword-belt and shield-belt cross. There is no strike-verb. There are other exceptions to Aristarchus' rule outside the parts of the text considered here. They are listed in Saunders ([n. 2], 5, n. 11).

[6] The full list is, in order of frequency, *οὐτά(ζ)ω*, *νύσσω*, *ἐλαύνω*, *πλήσσω*, *(ἐμ)πήγνυμι*, *τύπτω*, *θείνω*, *ὀρέγομαι*, *πείρω*, *ἐνελαύνω*, *κόπτω*.

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ἐλαύνω as a strike-verb in the duels

When I was compiling these lists, it became apparent that *ἐλαύνω* was a verb associated with the sword, not the spear. In eight of eighteen sword-wounds, and one of three hits foiled by armour, the strike-verb is *ἐλαύνω*, but in only one of forty-five spear-wounds,[7] and none of thirteen frustrated spear-thrusts.[8]

Attacking with a long spear[9] must involve a forward thrusting motion, whereas a blow with a slashing sword will often involve a downward strike. I started from the hypothesis that where *ἐλαύνω* means 'strike' in Homer (LSJ s.v. II.2), it means a downward movement of the hand, probably from a level above the head. However, although this would be appropriate for a sword-blow to the head, and perhaps neck, it would not be so for a belly-wound, where a sideways slash would be required. Of five head-wounds,[10] all use *ἐλαύνω*. Of three belly wounds,[11] none uses *ἐλαύνω*. Ten are to the neck or shoulder, where a vertical or an oblique blow might be required. Three of these use *ἐλαύνω*. In three frustrated sword-blows, two are to the head. One of these uses *ἐλαύνω*, the other *πλήσσω*. The only other weapon where a downward strike is used is the axe. There is only one axe-blow in the *Iliad*, at 13.614. The strike-verb is *ἐλαύνω*. It would be difficult to imagine a more positive result.

ἐλαύνω as a strike-verb elsewhere

In the battle of the gods, Athene vs. Aphrodite,

> *Ἀθηναίη δὲ μετέσσυτο, χαῖρε δὲ θυμῷ,* 21.423
> *καί ῥ' ἐπιεισαμένη πρὸς στήθεα χειρὶ παχείῃ*
> *ἤλασε· τῆς δ' αὐτοῦ λύτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ.*

Athene, delighted, sped after Aphrodite, closed with her, and struck her on the breast with her fist. Then and there Aphrodite gave up and collapsed.[12]

This is no girly slap. Athene's hand is raised. *χειρὶ παχείῃ* ('thick hand') is a troublesome phrase, often taken as formulaic, but not here, where it clearly indicates the clenched fist.[13] She strikes downwards onto Aphrodite's chest and smashes her to the ground. It is to me an unpleasant picture, but Homer's gods were not nice people.

Four times Homer uses the aorist of *ἐλαύνω* to describe a smith beating out or hammering bronze.[14] LSJ take this as metaphorical (s.v. III.1), following their radical sense of 'drive or set in motion', but this seems, first, a poor metaphor and, second, unnecessary. The movement of the smith's arm and hammer is the same as for a down-going sword or axe.

[7] A special case, the fatal thrust to Hector's neck at 22.326, is considered in detail below.

[8] *θείνω* (×2) and *κόπτω* (×1) are also confined to sword-wounds, but the low frequency does not permit further analysis.

[9] Homer does not recognize a short stabbing-spear like the Zulu assegai.

[10] 5.584, 11.109, 13.576, 13.614, 20.475.

[11] 4.531, 20.469, 21.179.

[12] Translations are from *Homer:* The Iliad, trans. E. V. Rieu (Harmondsworth, 1950), rev. P. Jones (London, 2003).

[13] A. C. Schlesinger, 'Penelope's hand', *CP* 64 (1969), 236–7. He was working with concordances, not computer searches. Ironically, he missed this single example at 21.424, which is also the best example to support the point he was making. (He also wrongly cites 10.454 as 10.385.)

[14] 7.223, 12.296, 18.564, 20.270.

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Odysseus uses Agamemnon's sceptre to belabour the fleeing Greeks:

> ὃν δ' αὖ δήμου τ' ἄνδρα ἄδοι βοόωντά τ' ἐφεύροι, 2.198
> τὸν σκήπτρῳ ἐλάσασκεν . . .

When he saw any ordinary warrior shouting his companions on, he struck him with the sceptre . . .

This is perhaps a more violent scene than translations in general suggest. Odysseus is not just beating them—he is hammering them. Later (2.265) he again uses the sceptre to beat Thersites, but this time the strike-verb is not ἐλαύνω but πλήσσω. Thersites is still upright, and to beat him on the back and shoulders, Odysseus uses a sideways stroke.[15]

Driving horses, chariots, a mule wagon, and flocks

This is the most frequent use of ἐλαύνω in the Iliad (×48). LSJ take this as the 'radical sense' of the verb, 'drive, set in motion, of driving flocks . . . frequently of horses, chariots'. But these are driven with whips, or sticks in the case of livestock, with the same arm action as for the sword, axe, and hammer. It is worth examining the words that Homer uses for 'whip' or 'lash'.

μάστιξ, μαστίζω. The whip is often mentioned, and twice (15.352 and 23.500) with a description of the act, μάστιγι κατωμαδὸν ἤλασεν and μάστι δ' αἰὲν ἔλαυνε κατωμαδόν 'with a downward blow from the shoulder'. This phrase occurs only with ἐλαύνω, not when other strike-words are used with μάστιξ, namely ἐπιμαίομαι (5.748, 8.392, 17.430) and ἱμάζω (11.532). Turning to the corresponding verb μαστίζω, we find it three times associated with ἐλαύνω as μάστιξεν δ' ἐλάαν (5.366, 8.45, 22.400).

ἱμάσθλη, ἱμάς, ἱμάσσω. The first of these occurs only three times and is associated with μάστιξεν δ' ἐλάαν at 8.43–5, with βῆ δ' ἐλάαν at 13.25–7, and with ᾗ περ τὸ πρόσθεν ἔλαυνες at 23.582–3, so it seems a straightforward equivalent of μάστιξ. ἱμάς in the *Iliad* generally means thong, strap, girdle, or tether for horses, but it means reins at 23.324, and the thongs of the whip at 23.363—μάστιγας ἄειραν, πέπληγόν θ' ἱμᾶσιν—but ἐλαύνω is not involved. ἱμάσσω occurs six times. Twice it refers to Zeus 'lashing the land' with his thunderbolts (2.782) and threatening to lash Hera if she does not comply with his commands (15.17). Four times it refers to driving horses: at 5.589, where it is associated with ἐλαύνω; at 11.531, where it is done with a μάστιξ; and at 11.280 and 17.624, where it is not further qualified.

In general the five words of this group share a largely overlapping semantic field, but it is the word ἐλαύνω that is specifically described as involving a downward blow.

[15] Agamemnon's sceptre has attracted much scholarly attention, which is not surprising since it comes at the beginning of any consideration of the development of both religious and temporal power. See e.g. F. M. Combellack, 'Speakers and scepters in Homer', *CJ* 43 (1948), 209–17; H. Mackie, *Talking Trojan: Speech and Community in the* Iliad (London, 1996), 25–6; P. E. Easterling, 'Agamemnon's *Skeptron* in the *Iliad*', in M. M. Mackenzie and C. Roueché (edd.), *Images of Authority* (Cambridge, 1989), 104–21; G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore, 1999), 179–80. It seems to be generally accepted that the sceptre is an archetypal 'staff of authority'. But it has a pedigree (2.101), takes part in an 'arming scene' (2.46), and is twice used as a weapon, as recounted above. I suspect it is the archetypal weapon, the original 'big stick', and that its close modern equivalent is the ceremonial mace, as Easterling conjectures (see her n. 1).

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LSJ and the classification of ἐλαύνω

I propose that LSJ have got this verb the wrong way round, in that the radical sense of the verb is a simple downward blow. This covers sword, axe, and hammer specifically (LSJ's classification of the last as metaphorical is quite unnecessary), and may reasonably be extended to Agamemnon's sceptre and the fist of Athene. I suggest that it also includes the downward blow of the charioteer's whip hand.

It is at this stage that the the sense of 'drive, cause to move' comes in and it is a secondary meaning.

The course of the weapon after the strike: διὰ . . . ἐλαύνω

It is this secondary meaning that Homer uses to describe where the spear or arrowhead goes after it hits the target. For example,

τόν ῥα κατ' ἀσπίδα δουρὶ βάλε κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων· 5.537
ἡ δ' οὐκ ἔγχος ἔρυτο, διαπρὸ δὲ εἴσατο χαλκός,
νειαίρῃ δ' ἐν γαστρὶ διὰ ζωστῆρος ἔλασσε·

Lord Agamemnon hit him on the shield. It failed to protect him. The bronze spear pierced it and drove on through the belt into his abdomen.

Here ἐλαύνω is not the strike-verb: βάλλω is.

τῷ δὲ μεταστρεφθέντι μεταφρένῳ ἐν δόρυ πῆξεν 8.258
ὤμων μεσσηγύς, διὰ δὲ στήθεσφιν ἔλασσεν·

As he turned, (Diomedes) stabbed him with his spear in the middle of the back between his shoulders and drove it on through his chest.

The strike-verb is ἐμπήγνυμι in tmesis.

There are seventeen such uses of διὰ . . . ἐλαύνω.[16] Twice in addition the compound διελαύνω is used similarly. Only once does διά follow the verb (δύω μὲν ἔλασσε διὰ πτύχας at 20.269). There can be no confusion in the fight scenes with ἐλαύνω meaning strike, since this is used only of swords, and Homer never recounts the path of the sword after impact, only the paths of javelin (×8), throwing spear (×10), and arrow (once). LSJ clearly differentiate διὰ . . .ἐλαύνω in this context, for they state categorically that ἐλαύνω meaning strike is never used of a missile.[17] They must take a

[16] The other 15 are at 4.135, 5.41, 5.57, 11.448, 13.388, 13.595, 13.607, 13.647, 15.342, 16.309, 16.821, 17.519, 17.579, 20.269, 22.284; διελαύνω at 13.161 and 16.318. There are two further examples of διελαύνω referring to driving horses at 10.564 and 12.120.

[17] When these passages were tabulated a surprising fact emerged. For one axe- and nine sword-blows, the aorist form of ἐλαύνω is augmented six times and unaugmented in the remainder. For the seventeen examples of διὰ . . . ἐλαύνω, the verb form is invariably unaugmented. (All four aorists of διελαύνω are augmented.) While this shows a morphological difference between ἐλαύνω 'strike' and διὰ . . . ἐλαύνω 'drive through', to add to the semantic difference just described, its significance is difficult to assess. The highly skewed distribution of augments between the two constructions seems unlikely to be due to metrical convenience alone. The general linguistic feature of conjunction reduction discussed by P. Kiparsky ('Tense and mood in Indo-European syntax', *Foundations of Language* 4 [1968], 30–57) may be contributing. There is a long-standing argument about a possible semantic content of the augment, most recently that it has to do with narrative foregrounding, for which see E. J. Bakker, 'Pointing to the past: verbal augment and temporal deixis in Homer', in J. N. Kazazis and A. Rengakos (edd.), *Euphrosyne: Studies in Ancient Epic and its Legacy, in honour of Dimitris N. Maronitis* (Stuttgart, 1999), 50–65. Further discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.

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similar view of *ἐν . . . ἐλαύνω*, which occurs twice: at 5.399, *αὐτὰρ ὀϊστὸς / ὤμῳ ἔνι στιβαρῷ ἠλήλατο*, of an arrow in Hades' shoulder, and at 20.259, *ἦ ῥα καὶ ἐν δεινῷ σάκει ἤλασεν ὄβριμον ἔγχος*, of Aeneas' spear in the shield of Achilles. The latter they take as *ἐνελαύνω* in tmesis.

Driving men out ἐκ/ἐξ . . . ἐλαύνω

This construction is used when humans are driven out, for example when Proetus drives Bellerophon from the land at 6.158, and when Patroclus drives the Trojans from the ships at 16.293.[18]

Unusual and metaphorical uses of ἐλαύνω

In a simile at 7.4, Hector and Paris go out to battle, and the sight of them is as welcome to the Trojans as a fair wind to sailors, *ἐπεί κε κάμωσιν ἐϋξέστῃς ἐλάτῃσι πόντον ἐλαύνοντες*, 'when they are tired of beating the sea with polished oars of fir'. The oars of a galley seen directly approaching do indeed seem to rise and fall vertically. Perhaps it is this precise description that is intended rather than a metaphor within the simile. But there are clear metaphors such as at 1.575, *ἐν δὲ θεοῖσι κολῳὸν ἐλαύνετον* '(if you two) set the gods at loggerheads' (literally drive a brawling).[19] Finally, there is an extended use in the sense of driving, that is digging, a trench around the Greek wall (7.450, 9.349, 12.6), and of driving a swathe on the cornfield (11.68).

The death of Hector

τοῦ δὲ καὶ ἄλλο τόσον μὲν ἔχε χρόα χάλκεα τεύχεα, 22.322
καλά, τὰ Πατρόκλοιο βίην ἐνάριξε κατακτάς·
φαίνετο δ' ᾗ κληῖδες ἀπ' ὤμων αὐχέν' ἔχουσι,
λαυκανίην, ἵνα τε ψυχῆς ὤκιστος ὄλεθρος·
τῇ ῥ' ἐπὶ οἱ μεμαῶτ' ἔλασ' ἔγχεϊ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς,
ἀντικρὺ δ' ἄπαλοῖο δι' αὐχένος ἤλυθ' ἀκωκή·
οὐδ' ἄρ' ἀπ' ἀσφάραγον μελίη τάμε χαλκοβάρεια,
ὄφρα τί μιν προτιείποι ἀμειβόμενος ἐπέεσσιν.

Hector's body was completely covered by the fine bronze armour he had taken from great Patroclus when he killed him, except for the flesh which could be seen at the windpipe, where the collarbones hold the neck from the shoulders, the easiest place to kill a man. As Hector charged him, godlike Achilles drove at this spot with his spear, and the point went right through Hector's soft neck, though the heavy bronze head did not cut his windpipe, and left him still able to speak.

This project started because I was unable to interpret *ἔλασ'* in line 326: it is undoubtedly the most difficult use of the verb in the *Iliad*.

There is a difficulty with the weapon. I have argued that javelins and thrusting spears are radically different weapons[20] and here the javelin which Athene returned to Achilles has turned into a thrusting-spear. I now think that, to Homer, all spears are long and may be thrown or thrust. This is not realistic but, in the context of heroic battle, unimportant. Then in Achilles' long *aristeia*, where he throws a spear seven times and thrusts seven times, it is always the great ash spear of Pelion. Nevertheless,

[18] Further examples at 6.529, 16.87, and 21.217. The compound *ἐξελαύνω* is used six times of horses, once of a donkey, and three times of men.
[19] Other examples at 16.388, 16.518, 13.315, 19.423 and 24.532.
[20] Saunders (n. 2). 13.

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it is odd and significant that whenever that spear is specified by name, three times he misses with the throw.[21]

The difficulty with *ἔλασ'* in 326 is that it looks like the strike-verb, and there is no sword. There is no candidate for the strike-verb other than *ἔλασ'*. Either it is a simple exception to the principles set out at the beginning of this paper, and this is an exceptional use of a spear with a sword-verb, or perhaps it is metaphorical and Achilles 'hammers' his spear into Hector's neck. The second possibility is more interesting, but the first, I think, more likely.

Homer has one more card to play, with *μελίη* in line 328, a word that specifies the great ash spear. It was guilty of three misses in the past, but has found its destined mark at last. It is the last we hear of the great Pelian spear, and the end of the fighting in the *Iliad.*

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[21] Ibid. 17.

HORN AND IVORY, BOW AND SCAR: *ODYSSEY* 19.559–81*

Skilful critical hands have attempted to unwrap the complicated layers of *Odyssey* 17–21 in the past, because these books have been thought to demonstrate inconsistencies,[1] and Book 19 has a special place among them. One of its problematic features is the notorious dream-gates of horn and ivory, woven by Penelope into the larger context of the book, a context made dreamlike by the manner in which she discusses her life, by the processes of recognition that move the narrative forward obliquely, and by the book's nighttime setting. There has been no attempt to reconcile Penelope's description of the dream-gates with her description in the same speech of the contest of the bow,[2] even though Russo's[3] definition of the gates as

* I would like to thank Dr Bruce King, Professor Gareth Williams, and the anonymous reviewer for their helpful suggestions.

[1] M. A. Katz, 'Homecoming and hospitality: recognition and the construction of identity in the *Odyssey*', in S. M. Oberhelman, V. Kelly, and R. J. Golsan (edd.), *Epic and Epoch: Essays on the Interpretation and History of a Genre* (Lubbock, TX, 1994), 114ff. and J. Russo, 'Interview and aftermath. Dream, fantasy, and intuition in *Odyssey* 19 and 20', *AJPh* 103 (1982), 4–18 at 4, n. 1 provide valuable distillations of these approaches.

[2] For a summary of attempts to explain the gates, including her own, see A. Rozokoki, 'Penelope's dream in Book 19 of the *Odyssey*', *CQ* 51 (2001), 1–6, at 5–6, and A. Amory, 'The gates of horn and ivory', YCS 20 (1966), 3–57, at 4ff. (i) Based on etymology: *ἐλέφας–ἐλεφαίρομαι* and *κέρας–κραίνω* (A. H. M. Kessels, *Studies on the Dream in Greek Literature* [Utrecht, 1978], 97, 121, n. 44; R. B. Rutherford, *Homer: Odyssey, Books 19 and 20* [Cambridge, 1992], 194–5; K. Pollman, 'Etymologie, Allegorese und epische Struktur. Zu den Toren der Traüme bei Homer und Vergil', *Philologus* 137 [1993], 233; U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die Heimkehr des Odysseus. Neue homerische Untersuchungen* [Berlin, 1927], 87; J. Hundt, *Der Traumglaube bei Homer* [Greifswald, 1935], 78–81; L. Rh. Rank, *Etymologiseering en verwante verschijnselen bij Homerus* [Assen, 1951], 105; E. L. Highbarger, *The Gates of Dreams: An Archaeological Examination of Vergil, Aeneid VI.893–99* [Baltimore, 1940]; and Russo [n. 1]). (ii) Horn is associated with Odysseus, ivory with Penelope: horn equals complete knowledge, ivory

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