IV SOME MEMORABLE SCENES

In the remaining pages I offer some more detailed comments on a number of passages from both epics. Besides allowing slightly more attention to stylistic matters than was possible in the earlier chapters, this procedure also gives an opportunity to comment on some specific problems, and on a number of other approaches which have not been discussed so far.

1. Paris' bedchamber (*Iliad* 3.424–47)

And Aphrodite, smiling goddess, herself took up a chair for Helen, and brought it and placed it in front of Alexandros [Paris]. There Helen, daughter of Zeus who wields the aegis, took her seat, turning her eyes aside, and spoke slightingly to her husband: 'You came back from the fighting, then. I wish you had died there, brought down by a man of strength, who was once my husband. Oh, before now you used to boast that you were superior to the warrior Menelaus in strength and power of hand and spear. Well, go now, challenge the warrior Menelaus to fight you again face to face. But no, I would advise you to stop now, and not pit yourself against fair-haired Menelaus in warfare or combat without thinking – you might well be brought down by his spear.'

Paris then answered her: 'Wife, do not deride my courage with these hard taunts. This time Menelaus has beaten me with Athena's aid, but another time I shall beat him: there are gods on our side too. No, come, let us enjoy the bed of love. Never before has desire so enveloped my heart, not even on that first time when I stole you away from lovely Lacedaimon and sailed off with you in my seafaring ships, and lay with you in love's union in the island of Kranae – even that was less than the love and sweet desire for you that comes over me now.'

So he spoke, and led the way to their bed: and his wife followed.[1]

Later readers thought it implausible that a ten-year war should be undertaken to recover a faithless wife, and in Greek lyric and tragedy Helen generally receives unfriendly treatment.[2] The Trojan elders gaze admiringly at her as she appears on the walls, but their attitude is divided: it is no cause for reproach that Greeks and Trojans should fight over such a woman, and yet it would be better if she left and returned home. Helen herself comments that the women of Troy, not surprisingly, regard her with deep hostility (3.411–2; 24.768–70,

[1] Translation from Hammond 1987.

[2] Cf. Hdt. 2.113–20, esp. 120.1–2, for scepticism; for disapproval, see Alcaeus 42, 283 Lobel and Page; Aesch. *Agam.* 62, 225, 448, 681–716; Eur. *Andr.* 590–69; *IT* 356, 438–55; *Cyc.* 179–87 (!), etc.

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774–5). But Helen's own attitude has been found ambiguous by many. Uncertainty surrounds the original flight with Paris: was she abducted against her will, or did she come with him voluntarily? The repeated line in which Greeks speak of 'avenging the struggles and moaning of Helen' (2.356 = 590), though it can be twisted to mean their own struggles over her, is more naturally read as implying that she left Sparta reluctantly; but it is possible that this is a misguided opinion, even a kind of wishful thinking, on the part of the speakers. That Paris was also able to carry off much treasure (e.g. 7.363–4) suggests that the 'abduction' was not a violent or rapid process but involved cooperation on Helen's part. Most important of all are Helen's own comments on her actions. In each of the three episodes in which she appears, she blames herself and wishes that she had died before she came to Troy; although she speaks with respect and affection to Priam and Hector (and values their gentle treatment of her), she is bitter and contemptuous towards Paris. All of this suggests that she feels considerable responsibility and guilt over her original departure – that, in short, she was sufficiently infatuated with Paris to make what has proved to be a disastrous choice, abandoning her husband and child for a lesser man.[3]

The extract above follows on Aphrodite's rescue of Paris from seemingly certain death at Menelaus' hands. His efforts on the field were inglorious, his 'withdrawal' seems to ensure a Greek victory, given the terms laid down for the duel. Helen comes to him reluctantly: Aphrodite has first cajoled and then, meeting a defiant reply, has threatened her, effectively forcing her to come to Paris' bedchamber. Aphrodite is in control of the situation, acting to bring pleasure to Paris, her favourite. Helen's distaste is indicated by her turning her eyes away, and by the sharpness of her opening line; her repeated references to her former husband make clear that she is still, as earlier in the episode, full of longing for the past that she has left behind in Greece (cf. 3.139–40, 173–80, 232–3, 236–44).

In view of this, it is surprising that some readers have detected a change of tone at 433 ('But no, I would advise you…'), assuming that this represents a softening on Helen's part: yes, Menelaus is the better man, and yet her love is still for Paris.[4] Is her conclusion a sign

[3] On Helen, see also Reckford 1964; J. T. Kakridis 1971: 25–53; Reichel 1994: 264–71 (with bibliography). On this episode, see Lendle 1968.

[4] See e.g. the notes in Hooker's (1980) and Willcock's (1978) commentaries on the scene; also the older edition, Leaf 1900–2. Kirk 1985: 327 sits on the fence.

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of resurgent affection and concern, or a sarcastic and sceptical comment ('no, I don't think you would be wise to do that')? We should note the disparaging adverb 'foolishly' in 436 (Hammond's 'without thinking' is probably too mild); this, and the fact that Paris himself refers to her speech as 'hard taunts' (438), seem to support the latter interpretation. It is Paris who is passionate in this scene; Helen in his chamber remains as reluctant as when she spoke out against Aphrodite. Paris is the comical, lustful figure, in contrast with Helen, a tragic victim.

The other reading, which sees Helen as overwhelmed by passion and returning willingly to Paris' arms, is undoubtedly influenced by the presence of Aphrodite throughout the episode. The goddess of love, it is argued, must have the power to alter a mortal woman's feelings; is this not what Aphrodite does here with Helen? Important for this argument is the line which follows Aphrodite's approach to Helen on the walls: 'thus she spoke, and stirred *thumon* [emotion? enthusiasm?] in her [Helen's] breast' (3.395). What emotion is kindled here – desire or anger? Parallel passages give limited help here: elsewhere, it is true, this expression seems to indicate that the listener is convinced or stimulated to do what the speaker has advised,[5] but it is not certain that this must be the case wherever the line is used: moreover, this is a less straightforward situation, as in the other cases the speaker is a mortal addressing a mortal, and there is normally no reason to doubt that the other will respond (11.803 is perhaps the closest analogy to the present passage). Perhaps it is a mistake to try to identify the emotion precisely: does the line mean more than 'Thus Aphrodite spoke, and Helen was moved by what she said'?

A subtle and ingenious interpretation, which owes something to the school of 'neo-analysis' discussed below (p. 118), sees this scene as a re-enactment of Helen's original crime.[6] As Aphrodite prompted her to leave with Paris in the first place (or, in human terms, in the same way that she fell in love with her glamorous foreign guest), so now, though years afterwards, despite Helen's longing for Menelaus, Aphrodite brings her back to Paris' bed. This theory gains some support from the fact that Aphrodite at first takes the form of an old woman, a wool-worker, who served Helen in Sparta: perhaps she

[5] A point stressed by Kirk 1985 ad loc. Almost identical lines are found at 4.208; 11.803; 13.468. Compare also 2.142; 3.395; 14.459; 17.123.

[6] Kullmann 1960: 250–1, who regards the scene as indebted to the Cyclic poem the *Cypria*; cf. e.g. M. W. Edwards 1987a: 196.

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played the part of a go-between at the time of the original seduction? The parallelism would be a further example of the way in which episodes of the early years of the war are recalled or remoulded in the early books of the *Iliad* (see p. 44 above). But in the absence of a narration by the *Iliad* poet of the seduction, the theory must remain speculation. Even if the parallel is allowed, the differences between the scenes are at least as important. If line 395 does imply some renewal of Helen's desire for Paris, it is swiftly dispelled; Aphrodite's influence upon her emotions is ineffectual, and the goddess must resort to threats. If Helen does soften and go willingly to bed with Paris, the poet gives us no clear indication of this: the final line of the scene is carefully neutral (447). When we next see Helen with Paris, he is cheerfully playing with his armour rather than putting it on, and she is again bitter in reproach of herself and her lover (6.321–2, 343–58). While it may be wrong to deny any hint whatsoever of erotic attraction on Helen's side, any such passion on her part is short-lived and joyless.

This scene, then, is a particularly complex test case for discussion of the interplay between human psychology and divine intervention, a topic treated in Chapter 2. I have argued that Helen's emotions are her own, and that she no longer feels any emotional involvement with Paris. Other positions are possible, and this may be a case where the poet has deliberately allowed some ambiguity. It remains important that Helen tries to reject Aphrodite's overtures, and is critical of Paris. If this were not so, she would be a much less sympathetic character.

Lighter aspects of the scene may be found in the reaction of Paris to Helen's rebuke. His declaration that Menelaus has won 'with Athena's aid', while he will have his chance another day, is particularly shameless from one who only escaped death through Aphrodite's aid; nor did the poet give us any hint of Athena's involvement in Menelaus' onslaught. The reference to Paris' passionate desire for Helen, which led him to make love to her at the first opportunity 'on a rocky island',[7] humorously enhances our sense of his frivolous sensuality. The scene is a close relation of the amorous encounter between the lustful Zeus and the less enthusiastic Hera in Book 14 (cf. esp. 3.442–6 with 14.315–28); but there the goddess is deliberately setting out to deceive her husband, whereas here the woman has no power to resist.[8] Moreover, the whole scene is a witty

[7] In 445 it is unclear whether Kranae is a proper name (as we might speak of the island of Rockall) or an adjective. Even if the former is right, the name suggests the discomfort of the lovers.
[8] Cf. Macleod 1983: 10.

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inversion of a 'typical' situation in Homeric epic. It is common for a woman to restrain a man, trying to prevent him from going out to battle or into danger.[9] Thus Andromache does her best to induce Hector to remain in Troy, and Hecuba begs Priam not to go to confront Achilles; in the *Odyssey*, Eurycleia tries to persuade Telemachus not to set out in search of his father. In all these cases the man resists these overtures and shows himself a hero. But in Book 3 the motif is reversed, for Helen, disgusted at Paris' poor showing in battle, tells him to go out and fight like a man, whereupon he replies that he will not go, and urges her to come to bed (see also 6.337–8). Comic and enjoyable in itself, the scene gains in sophistication if we see it as a clever adaptation of familiar material.

2. Phoenix's memories (*Iliad* 9.478–97)

And away I fled through the whole expanse of Hellas
and gaining the good dark soil of Phthia, mother of flocks,
I reached the king, and Peleus gave me a royal welcome.
Peleus loved me as a father loves a son, I tell you,
his only child, the heir to his boundless wealth,
he made me a rich man, he gave me throngs of subjects,
I ruled the Dolopes, settling down on Phthia's west frontier.
And I made you what you are – strong as the gods, Achilles –
I loved you from the heart. You'd never go with another
to banquet on the town or feast in your own halls.
Never, until I'd sat you down on my knees
and cut you the first bits of meat, remember?
You'd eat your fill, I'd hold the cup to your lips
and all too often you soaked the shirt on my chest,
spitting up some wine, a baby's way. . .a misery.
Oh I had my share of troubles for you, Achilles,
did my share of labour. Brooding, never forgetting
the gods would bring no son of mine to birth,
not from my own loins. So you, Achilles –
great, godlike Achilles – I made you my son, I tried,
so someday *you* might fight disaster off my back.
But now, Achilles, beat down your mounting fury!
It's wrong to have such an iron, ruthless heart. . .[10]

[9] See especially J. T. Kakridis 1971: 68–75; also Griffin 1980: 6–8.
[10] Translation from Fagles 1990.

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The long speech of Phoenix, Achilles' mentor, has already been mentioned in Chapter 1 (p. 8 above). He is the second of the embassy to make an appeal to Achilles, coming between Odysseus and Ajax. His is the longest speech: like Nestor, he tends to garrulousness. Whereas Odysseus had used arguments based on profit and prestige, Phoenix addresses his former protégé in emotional and personal terms, narrating his own life history, recalling the bonds between him and Achilles, producing moral arguments backed up by quaint allegory, and telling the story of Meleager as a warning to Achilles: his example shows the dangers of intransigent anger.[11] The rather sentimental tone evident in this extract annoys Achilles ('do not try to disturb me by weeping and complaining'; 612), and he resents the fact that Phoenix of all people should be siding with his enemy (613–14); but he does make a concession in replying to Phoenix. Whereas in his answer to Odysseus he had declared that he would set off home next day, he now says that in the morning 'we shall consider whether to go back to our own lands or to remain' (618–19). In reaction to Ajax's short and contemptuous speech he goes still further. Phoenix, therefore, has an important part to play in Book 9. Particularly important is the prominence of the father–son theme in his speech: he treats Achilles as the son he never had (note especially 'dear child'; 437), and Achilles responds with the pet name *atta* ('dadda'; 607). The failure of Phoenix, an old man who has been like a father to Achilles, is countered in Book 24 by the success of Priam, a still more pitiful old man who wins over Achilles by comparing himself with Peleus, the hero's father (24.486–506).[12]

There is, however, a problem surrounding the membership of the embassy, and this is a case where the difficulties felt by the analysts cannot be waved away by either unitarian or oralist critics. It is not simply that Phoenix is a character unmentioned before Book 9: new characters are often introduced according to the poet's needs. Nestor refers to the embassy as consisting of Phoenix, who is to be the leader, Ajax, and Odysseus (they are to be accompanied by two heralds). But when they are proceeding along the shore, and when they arrive in Achilles' encampment, the ambassadors are repeatedly referred to in the dual form ('the two of them') – nine times in less than twenty

[11] On Phoenix's speech, see further Lohmann 1970: 245–76; Rosner 1976; Scodel 1982; Brenk 1986. On the Meleager paradigm, see above pp. 8–9.
[12] Macleod 1982: 34.

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lines (182–99).[13] Soon afterwards the poet mentions Odysseus (218); and in line 223 all three names appear ('Ajax nodded to Phoenix; but godlike Odysseus noticed...'). From that point on the episode unfolds without difficulty; but we remain baffled by the shift between an embassy of three and one of two (most interpreters agree that the heralds can be ignored).[14] The conclusion seems inescapable that a version once existed which involved only two ambassadors, and the majority of critics think of Phoenix as the interloper. The analysts simply assumed that a later hand had added Phoenix; the elaborate theory of Page, in fact, identifies at least four layers: an *Iliad* without any embassy, then an embassy of two, then the version with Phoenix, then the addition of Book 19 (there are further subtleties). But Phoenix is more important and less easily dispensable than Page maintained: even without looking outside Book 9, if we omit the speech of Phoenix and Achilles' reply, the latter's concession to Ajax becomes inexplicably sudden. A different approach, starting from the assumption that a master-poet lies behind the work as a whole, is to see the *Iliad* as gradually developing in Homer's hands: the embassy book evolved, and Phoenix, while a later addition, was still added by the monumental poet, and integrated in the poem.[15] On this argument, the duals offer us a glimpse into 'Homer's workshop'.[16] That argument gains some support from the fact that Achilles' instructor is elsewhere said to have been Chiron the centaur, a supernatural figure (11.832; cf. 16.143 = 19.390), whereas here he is given a human teacher. As we have seen elsewhere, it seems to be characteristic of Homer, and especially the *Iliad*, to play down the more exotic features of heroic mythology.

While it may be correct to see the *Iliad* as developing throughout the poet's career, and it is certain that many of the objections to Phoenix's presence are outweighed by the positive contribution his speech makes, it remains peculiar that the poet should have overlooked the cluster of duals in a short section of text. Nowhere else does Homer nod in quite

[13] For obvious reasons, translations often gloss over this, translating the duals as plurals: e.g. Hammond 1987. Fitzgerald 1974 even inserts at 182 '*Following Phoenix*, Aias and Odysseus walked together...'! Exceptions include Lattimore 1951 and Fagles 1990.

[14] For a fuller account of the difficulties, see Hainsworth 1993: 57, 85–7; Griffin 1995: 51–3. In English the major analytic discussion is Page 1959: 297–315 (older treatments are listed by Motzkus 1964: 97). For subsequent argument see e.g. Segal 1968 (unpersuasive); Wyatt 1985; M. W. Edwards 1987a: 218–19, 228–30.

[15] Reinhardt 1961: 212–42, endorsed by Hainsworth 1993: 57.

[16] A phrase used by Willcock 1976: 99 and by Hainsworth 1993: 57; see also M. L. West 2011c: 13.

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so marked and localized a fashion: there is nothing quite so strange as the problem of the duals elsewhere in the epic. Perhaps this is one case in which 'analytic' arguments may still have some validity, but not when directed at the existence of Phoenix. Rather, we might turn the problem on its head and consider the possibility that the passage in which the embassy is despatched has been interfered with by some post-Homeric rhapsode. A possible motive might be the oddity of Phoenix being present in Agamemnon's camp: this was, perhaps, accepted casually by the main poet, but seemed anomalous to a successor, for is not Phoenix part of the entourage of Achilles? Like Patroclus, he should be attendant upon the hero, listening to the embassy, eventually goaded into utterance when he hears Achilles speaking so rashly and with such hostility. (His protests can in fact be seen as a less successful anticipation of Patroclus' appeal in Book 16.[17]) If this hypothesis is correct, then the later poet would not be an interpolator but an imperfect editor, who, having decided that Phoenix ought to be in Achilles' camp already, changed Homer's plurals into duals accordingly, but overlooked the line in which Nestor appoints Phoenix as a member of the embassy (168) – the only line which makes it obvious that Phoenix is in Agamemnon's camp. It is easier still to suppose that he missed the later references to making up a bed for Phoenix (617–18, 620–2, 688). Problems, of course, remain, as with all discussion of this puzzling crux; but the false note is more plausibly ascribed to a later bard than to Homer himself.[18]

3. Patroclus brought low (*Iliad* 16. 777–800)

So long as the sun was climbing still to the middle heaven,
so long the thrown weapons of both took hold, and men dropped under them;
but when the sun had gone to the time for unyoking of cattle,
then beyond their very destiny the Achaeans were stronger
and dragged the hero Cebriones from under the weapons
and the clamour of the Trojans, and stripped the armour from his shoulders.
And Patroclus charged with evil intention in on the Trojans.
Three times he charged in with the force of the running war god,

[17] E.g. M. W. Edwards 1987a: 228, on whose discussion I am building here.

[18] See now S. West 2001, whose solution is similar to mine, but supported with new arguments involving the original form of Phoenix's autobiographical tale. For a different approach, see Scodel 2002: 160–71.

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screaming a terrible cry, and three times he cut down nine men;
but as for the fourth time he swept in, like something greater
than human, there, Patroclus, the end of your life was shown forth,
since Phoebus came against you there in the strong encounter
dangerously, nor did Patroclus see him as he moved through
the battle, and shrouded in a deep mist came in against him
and stood behind him, and struck his back and his broad shoulders
with a flat stroke of the hand so that his eyes spun. Phoebus
Apollo now struck away from his head the helmet
four-horned and hollow-eyed, and under the feet of the horses
it rolled clattering, and the plumes above it were defiled
by blood and dust. Before this time it had not been permitted
to defile in the dust this great helmet crested in horse-hair;
rather it guarded the head and the gracious brow of a godlike
man, Achilles; but now Zeus gave it over to Hector
to wear on his head, Hector whose own death was close to him.[19]

The description of the coming of evening not only marks the passage of long hours of fighting but also anticipates the downfall of Patroclus: the setting sun symbolizes the hero's decline in fortune.[20] More generally, we recall that this will mark the end of Hector's day of success (11.191–4; see p. 66 above). In this final moment of his *aristeia* Patroclus' prowess reaches supreme heights: his onslaught slays twenty-seven men. Similarly the Achaeans are on the verge of achieving the impossible, contrary to what is destined (780). Their champion is described in godlike terms: 'with the force of the running war god' (784), 'like something greater than human' (786); but as always with such comparisons there is the implication that he remains less than a god.[21] The sequence 'thrice. . .and then the third time' is ominous, regularly anticipating a change or reversal of fortune.

The way in which the poet addresses Patroclus (the device called 'apostrophe') has aroused much comment. The technique has already been used at earlier points in the book (lines 20, 584, and esp. 692–3: 'whom first, whom last did you slay, Patroclus, when the gods summoned you to your death?'). In passages such as these the emotional involvement of the poet is exceptionally prominent. The use of the vocative may have originated as a metrical convenience, and in some cases elsewhere seems relatively colourless (esp. 15.582), but the ancient commentators regarded it as a deliberately pathetic device,

[19] Translation from Lattimore 1951.
[20] See further Fenik 1968: 216; Willcock 1976: 126, 189; Taplin 1992: 156.
[21] See Griffin 1980: ch. 3.

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and most recent discussions agree.[22] The fact that Homer uses it most with sympathetic characters, especially Menelaus and Patroclus, supports this view.[23] It is poignant that the poet anticipates Patroclus' demise while speaking to his own character; the effect resembles the scenes in which Zeus, with similar detachment and compassion, speaks pityingly to mortals who cannot hear his words (esp. 17.201–8, addressing Hector).

The intervention of Apollo is momentous but invisible to Patroclus: he comes upon his victim suddenly and violently, 'dangerously' (789; more literally, 'terrible'). Here, again, a stylistic device which often has little or no significance is deployed powerfully, with the adjective *deinos* held back to the beginning of line 789.[24] The actions of Apollo are described in a lengthy passage, extending beyond the section quoted: the effect is almost that of seeing a sequence of events in slow motion. Both the direct action of a god and the prolonged narration of the attack enhance Patroclus' status. The whole episode is unusual in that three agents are involved in Patroclus' death: Apollo stuns the victim and strips off Achilles' armour, Euphorbus wounds him, Hector finishes him off.[25] The whole process from the beginning of this passage to the bold response of Hector to the dying man's words occupies nearly 100 lines. As elsewhere, the poet emphasizes important scenes by amplification and elaboration of detail.

The inner eye of the audience is directed not so much toward the bewildered Patroclus as to the armour falling from his body. This is the armour of Achilles, in which he had come forth to battle in the hope that the Trojans would be deceived. But Patroclus is an inadequate substitute for his friend, and the original arming scene in which he donned the greater man's armour is perhaps mirrored by the 'disarming' scene here, in which Patroclus is stripped of his defences. (It has also been suggested that the armour of Achilles may have been traditionally invulnerable, so that it had to be removed before the wearer could be slain; if so, this is another case of Homer's

[22] For the scholia, see N. J. Richardson 1980: 272. For modern discussion see e.g. A. Parry 1972: 8–22; Janko 1992 on 13.602–3.

[23] In the *Odyssey* the situation is less clear: there the device is exclusively reserved for the swineherd Eumaeus.

[24] For scepticism about the significance of this kind of placing of words, see Bassett 1926; M. W. Edwards 1966: 139–40; contrast Tsagarakis 1982: 10–31. There is a thorough investigation of this question in Higbie 1990.

[25] Janko 1992: 408–10 explains this in neo-analytical terms, according to which the episode is modelled on the death of Achilles.

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preference for a less magical style of narrative.[26]) Divine armour befits a godlike hero: hence as long as Achilles wore this armour it was not fitting for it to be sullied by dirt and blood. The contrast between Patroclus and Achilles is emphasized again through the change in the condition of the helmet, now stained or 'defiled': the verb is tellingly repeated (795, 797). Glorious past is contrasted with ignominious present ('before this time. . .but now'); beauty and distinction are brought low, in both man and armour. Soon it will be Patroclus who is defiled in the dust. The final lines of the extract look to the future: Hector, favoured by Zeus, may now wear this helmet, but for a brief time only: his own death is near. The last line quoted above falls into two halves: the first completes the summing up of Hector's triumph; the second shows us a glimpse of his future defeat, implicit in his victory.[27]

This last point is reinforced by Patroclus' dying words, close to the end of book 16 (852–4):

> 'You yourself are not one who will live long, but now already
> death and powerful destiny are standing beside you,
> to go down under the hands of Aiakos' great son, Achilles.'[28]

When Homer comes to narrate the death of Hector and the dragging of his corpse, he is concerned to recall many aspects of Patroclus' death, and some of the same motifs of dust and defilement reappear. Especially close are 22.401–4:

> A cloud of dust rose where Hector was dragged, his dark hair was falling
> about him, and all that head that was once so handsome was tumbled
> in the dust; but at this time Zeus gave him over
> to his enemies, to be defiled in the land of his fathers.[29]

In both cases, a hero who was once triumphant and magnificent is laid low; in both, beauty is marred by dust and dirt; in both, the all-embracing power of Zeus is at work. The verbal techniques through which Homer arouses pity for his characters are as vital as his

[26] P. J. Kakridis 1961. The situation in the *Iliad* is complicated by the fact that Achilles at different stages has two separate sets of divine armour, the first being seized by Hector. See further Janko 1992 on 16.130–54.

[27] Compare the comment by J. Griffin, in his contribution to the joint article by Griffin and Hammond 1982, at 142 n. 17: '"Half-lines in Homer" is a less obvious title than "Half-lines in Virgil", but it might make an interesting study.'

[28] Translation from Lattimore 1951.

[29] Translation from ibid., modified. Also relevant are 16.638–40; 17.51–2, 439–40. See also Fenik 1968: 163; Segal 1971b: 41–2; Griffin 1980: 134–8.

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unobtrusive but far-reaching control over the plot and thematic structure of his narrative.

4. The horses of Achilles, gifts of the gods (*Iliad* 17.426–53)

But the horses of Achilles Aeacides were still far from the combat weeping, ever since they had first learned that their rider lay in the dust, fallen thanks to Hector slayer of men. Indeed, Automedon brave son of Diores kept whipping and lashing them over and over with his swift whip, and many times he pleaded softly with them, and many times uttered threats. But still the two of them refused to move either towards the ships and the broad Hellespont or back into the conflict to join the Achaeans. Instead they stood there, as a pillar stands firm, one that is fixed on the burial mound of a man or a woman who has perished – so they stood firm, still fastened to the beautiful chariot, and their heads drooped down to the soil; hot tears welled forth from their eyes and dropped to the earth as they grieved, out of longing for their charioteer, and their rich manes were defiled falling forth on either side of the yoke.

And as they mourned there, Zeus son of Cronos saw and pitied them both, and shaking his head he reflected aloud: 'Poor creatures, why did we give the two of you to king Peleus, a mortal man, while you are both ageless and deathless? Was it so that you might suffer misery along with wretched mankind? For there is nothing at all more woeful than man, of all creatures that breathe and creep upon the earth. But even so, Hector Priam's son is not going to ride with you and your ornate chariot. For that I shall not allow. Is it not enough that he has the armour and exults in it as he does? No, I shall put strength in your limbs and your hearts, that you may carry Automedon to safety, out of the war and back to the hollow ships...'[30]

The faithful dog Argos is not the only animal in Homer with almost human emotions. Horses are prominent in the *Iliad*, and some are given names by their masters (e.g. Hector: see 8.184–97). The horses of Achilles, of immortal birth, are not unique (Zeus gave immortal horses to Tros in recompense for Ganymede), but they are more conspicuous in the narrative than any other steeds. In this passage, the noble beasts weep for their former charioteer, the dead Patroclus (whose special care for them is mentioned elsewhere, 23.281–2), paying no attention to Automedon's efforts to guide them back to the Greek camp. Ordinary horses are subordinate to their human owners, but these deathless horses are superior to mortals, although they feel distress at the loss of a good master. The inclusion of Zeus as compassionate observer enriches the scene still further: he pities not Patroclus,

[30] My translation.

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who is dead, but the horses, who cannot die but must live among mortal kind. The tableau brings out in a novel way that central Iliadic theme, the gulf between the divine and the human world.[31]

This scene provides a starting point for an exploration of one strand of the mythological tradition. In line 443 Zeus asks why the gods gave these horses to Peleus, a mortal. This is one of several references to the gifts which Peleus received from the gods, some of which are explicitly said to have been given on the day of his wedding to Thetis;[32] in particular, the divine armour which Hector has just stripped from Patroclus (see 17.194–7, and esp. 18.84–5, where the wedding is mentioned). Another such gift is the great spear which only Achilles can now wield (16.140–4). In Book 24 (61–3) it is said that all the gods attended Peleus' wedding, a sign of exceptional favour. The occasion was popular in art from the early sixth century.[33]

M. L. West in a recent book comments that 'It looks as if P [his name for the *Iliad* poet] knows a poetic account of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis.'[34] Perhaps so, but the point deserves fuller consideration. Both the poet's and the audience's knowledge of and ability to draw on mythological data are in question. The wedding was a focal point of the myths relating to the Trojan War. At least as early as the *Cypria*, it was the occasion when a contest of beauty arose among Athena, Hera and Aphrodite, which had to be settled by the Judgement of Paris. We do not know whether Homer associated this dispute with the wedding; the judgement is mentioned only once, and elliptically.[35] If he did, the wedding would already have the potent ambiguity that it possesses in many later texts from Pindar onwards[36] – on the one hand, a moment of supreme felicity, when a man is privileged to wed a goddess who will give birth to the greatest of heroes, but, on the other, an occasion at which the seeds of sorrow are sown, with conflict among the gods leading to war and death among mortals, including the death of that unborn son. It is at any rate clear that the marriage of Thetis to Peleus was doomed to end badly;[37] by the time

[31] For more detailed discussion of this scene, see Schein 2002.

[32] In Book 23 Poseidon is said to have been the one who gave the horses (276–8); he is of course traditionally associated with horses.

[33] E.g. the Sophilos *dinos* and the François vase (T. H. Carpenter 1991: plates 38 and 1), *c.*580 and 570 respectively.

[34] M. L. West 2011c: 413, on 24.60–3.

[35] See above p. 44, n. 3.

[36] [Hes.] *Cat.* fr. 211; Pind. *Pyth.* 3.92–103; Eur. *IA* 1036–79; and of course the much-discussed ambiguities of Catullus 64.

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of the *Iliad* they are living apart and, whereas Peleus is described as bowed down by grief and age, Thetis remembers with resentment how she was forced by Zeus into marriage to a mortal, against her own wishes (18.429–35). Homer may or may not have known a poem that recounted the wedding of Peleus (as opposed to its being an element in the mythical tradition), but he certainly found it a convenient symbol for the way in which human hopes can be disappointed even when the gods seem most favourable.

All of this makes good mythological sense in itself, but there are further ramifications. Why did Zeus make Thetis marry Peleus in the first place? According to later accounts, Zeus and Poseidon were both attracted by the notion of taking Thetis as their bride (in Zeus's case, one of many consorts), but changed their minds on learning of a prophecy that the son of Thetis would be more powerful than his father.[38] She was therefore married off to a deserving mortal. But the motive of the prophecy is first attested in Pindar and the *Prometheus Bound*; it cannot be established for early epic.[39] Indeed, there is an early testimony that Thetis declined Zeus's overtures to avoid giving offence to Hera ('Hes.' fr. 210; the source also refers to the *Cypria*, fr. 2).

There are still further complications. It seems that Thetis' marriage also served Zeus's purposes in other ways: his intention in starting the Trojan War was to bring the age of heroes to an end and to reduce the overpopulation of the earth (these motives are brought in by the Iliadic scholia, again referring to the *Cypria*, fr. 1). According to some critics, we should see all the early poets as working within this framework (most explicitly presented in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*): the Trojan War brings the heroic age to an end, and already in the *Odyssey* that age is fading into memory. After this time, there will no longer be interaction between man and god, and no more heroes or 'demi-gods' will be born of divine parentage.[40] Here caution is in order: we cannot be certain that the developed chronological conception found in the *Catalogue* is to be read back into Homer, and in

[37] Cf. Gantz 1993: 230–1, citing schol. A *Il.*16.22, 18.57, 60; Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.869–79.

[38] There are analogies here with the succession to Cronos, where another female (Rhea) gives birth to the usurper. Compare the danger from Metis in Hes. *Theog.* 886–900, with West's note (M. L. West 1966).

[39] Pind. *Isthm.* 8.26–47 (cf. and contrast *Nem.* 5.34–7); later see esp. *PV* 755–68.

[40] [Hes.] *Cat.* F 1 and 204.95–104 (many uncertainties of text); M. L. West 1997a: 480–2. Clay's work has been influential here (e.g. 1983, 1989, and 2011); see also Graziosi and Haubold 2005: 35–45 on 'cosmic history'.

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general we should not assume that each poet worked with the same mythical palette, still less that there was an orthodox chronology from which they could not deviate.

A minimalist reading, then, will take the marriage of Peleus and Thetis as a mythical datum which does not require justification and background, but which in later poetry generated further elaborations and explanations. A bolder approach, not necessarily well founded, sees Thetis as a more important figure in mythology than she seems to be in the *Iliad*, and assumes that these other accounts were known to Homer, so that we can detect undercurrents or resonances that are not made explicit in the text.[41] The attraction of this approach is that it helps explain why Thetis seems to have so close a bond with Zeus: there does seem to be a history there. (Achilles refers to her having assisted Zeus during conflicts among the gods, though Thetis does not in fact use this argument in her appeal; and Hera is clearly resentful and suspicious of Thetis's intimacy with her husband.) Little is certain here, but it does look as if Homer knew more about Thetis than is recounted in the *Iliad*.

5. News comes to Achilles (*Iliad* 18.15–37, 50–1)

While he was pondering this in his mind and his heart, the son of proud Nestor came up close to him with his warm tears falling, and gave his painful message: 'Alas, son of warrior Peleus, there is terrible news for you to hear, which I wish had never happened. Patroclus lies dead, and they are fighting over his body. It is naked now – Hector of the glinting helmet has his armour.'

So he spoke, and the black cloud of sorrow enveloped Achilles. He took up the sooty dust in both his hands and poured it down over his head, spoiling his handsome face: and the black ashes settled all over his sweet-smelling tunic. And he lay there with his whole body sprawling in the dust, huge and hugely fallen, tearing at his hair and defiling it with his own hands. And the serving-women that Achilles and Patroclus had won in war shrieked aloud in their hearts' grief, and ran out to flock round the warrior Achilles: all of them beat their breasts with their hands, and the strength collapsed from their bodies. And to one side Antilochus mourned with his tears falling, and he held the hands of Achilles as his glorious heart groaned: he was afraid that Achilles might take a knife and cut his own throat. Achilles gave out a terrible cry, and his honoured mother heard him, where she sat by the side of her old father in the depths of the sea, and she wailed loud in response. And the goddesses gathered round her, all the

[41] Slatkin 1991 (discussed by D. Cairns in his introduction to Cairns 2001: 45–8). An interesting development of this approach for Hera and Athena can be found in Kelly 2007b: 422–5.

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daughters of Nereus... The silvery cave filled with them; and they all beat their breasts together...[42]

This is the most painful moment for Achilles in the entire poem – the moment in which he discovers that by persevering in his wrath and sending Patroclus out in his place he has doomed his beloved friend. The fact that Patroclus himself bears some responsibility, stressed in Book 16 by the poet and briefly implied in Achilles' earlier speech of misgiving (12–14), is ignored in the flood of emotion which overwhelms the hero. From Antilochus' tears and from the opening words of his speech it is clear that he brings bad news, and he makes no effort to delay or conceal it. Achilles' failure to reply indicates the enormity of his grief: Homer here anticipates one of the dramatic devices of Greek tragedy, the momentous silence.[43]

This passage, and the scene which follows, forms one of the chief examples put forward by critics practising what has been rather unsatisfactorily called 'neo-analysis'. The label associates this approach with the older methods of the analysts, but the similarity is not very great. Both schools have attempted to discern different layers or stages in the compositional processes, but, whereas the analysts normally tried to divide the poem into strata, the neo-analysts are concerned more with the influence of earlier versions on the surviving epics.[44] As for the passage quoted, it has been persuasively argued that the poet is deliberately composing this scene in such a way as to remind the audience of an epic narration of Achilles' own death. The most important points supporting this argument are: (a) the similarity of the expression in line 22 ('the black cloud of sorrow...') to familiar formulae for death, combined with Achilles' prostrate position in the following lines; (b) the lamentation of Thetis and the Nereids, who are listed at considerable length: their intense grief would be appropriate for the death of Thetis' son, rather than the death of the mortal Patroclus; (c) the use of the phrase 'Thetis began the lament' (18.51), language elsewhere

[42] Translation from Hammond 1987.

[43] Cf. esp. Achilles himself in Aeschylus' *Myrmidons*, as shown by Ar. *Ran.* 832–4, 912 and scholia, with Taplin 1972. For other cases see N. J. Richardson 1974 on *Hymn to Demeter* 197–201; cf. N. J. Richardson 1980: 281; de Jong 1987b.

[44] Fundamental treatment by J. T. Kakridis 1949, esp. 65–95; the authoritative collection of material is Kullmann 1960. More recent discussions include Kullmann 1981 and 1984 (both reprinted in Kullmann 1992); M. W. Edwards 1991: 15–19; Dowden 1996. M. E. Clark 1986 provides a bibliographical survey; for an excellent synthesis see Willcock 1997. For an attempt at a rapprochement between neo-analysis and oral theory see Burgess 2006.

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applied to mourners over a dead man;[45] (d) the way in which Thetis cradles her son's head in her arms, a gesture associated with the mourner at a death-bed (18.71; cf. 23.136, 24.724);[46] (e) the parallels between this scene and the detailed description of Achilles' funeral in the *Odyssey* (24.41–92). A particularly interesting parallel is the use of the phrase in line 26, 'huge and hugely fallen', used in the same passage of the *Odyssey* of Achilles, and elsewhere only of another dead man, Cebriones (*Od.* 24.39–40; *Il.* 16.775–6). All of these points seem to suggest that Achilles' death is foreshadowed here: the reason is obvious, since the decision he is about to make will ensure the death which he has previously been able to avoid. Thetis' words as she prepares to join her son emphasize this inevitable outcome.

If these arguments are accepted, it follows that Achilles' death and funeral had been described in earlier epic, whether by the *Iliad* poet himself or by his predecessors. An important distinction needs to be made, however. The *Iliad* could be making conscious use of (and allusion to) earlier poetry without necessarily drawing on any of the specific epic poems about which we have evidence. The neo-analysts have often marred their case by insisting on the priority of a specific poem in the so-called Epic Cycle: in this case, it was often assumed that the poem which we know to have narrated the death of Achilles, namely the *Aethiopis*, was the 'source' for this passage of the *Iliad*. Sceptics can simply declare that the evidence suggests that the *Aethiopis* is in fact later than Homer, or may insist that the two poems are quite independent. It is preferable to leave the specific relationship between Homer and the Cycle out of the picture, and to think rather in terms of a tradition about the death of Achilles, which the *Iliad* presupposes and exploits. That tradition may well have included many of the elements mentioned by Proclus in his summary of the *Aethiopis*, but it is not necessary to assume that one poem is solely dependent on the other.[47] The important point is that it seems likely that the simpler, more obvious use of these motifs – in a description of Thetis mourning

[45] See 18.316 = 23.17 (Achilles over Patroclus); 24.723, 747, 761 (the women at Hector's funeral).

[46] J. T. Kakridis 1949: 65–6; illustration in Vermeule 1979: 15.

[47] For more extended discussion, see Currie 2012 and Kelly 2012b, the former arguing for allusive intertextuality, the latter strongly opposed to such an approach in dealing with oral poetic tradition. To my mind Currie makes a convincing case that such allusion can indeed exist even between oral poems. Of course, those who accept that the poets were literate do not face the same objections.

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for Achilles – came first, whereas the *Iliad*'s more subtle redeployment of language and situation is a secondary development.[48] Like many other passages discussed in this Survey, the opening of Book 18 effectively contradicts Erich Auerbach's famous account of Homer's narrative style, according to which everything is on the surface, and there is no room for complexity, mystery or 'multilayeredness'.[49]

The role of Antilochus as messenger to Achilles is also of interest in this connection.[50] Even without neo-analytical theories it is clear that Antilochus, youthful son of Nestor, is a figure of some importance in the last six or eight books of the poem: he is one of the last to hear of Patroclus' death, Menelaus breaks the news to him in an emotional speech, he seems to be the obvious person to take the news to Achilles. Later he is prominent in the funeral games, a hot-headed competitor who nevertheless knows when to concede in the face of objections from his elders. Achilles seems to show him special favour; he smiles at Antilochus' enthusiastic protestation of his rights – the only place in the poem where Achilles does smile (23.555–6). It is as though Achilles responds to Antilochus' impulsiveness: indeed, the latter's indignation at being deprived of his prize seems to be a small-scale parallel to the great wrath of Achilles (see esp. 1.29 ~ 23.553).[51] But whereas Agamemnon's grasping ill-will brought forth the momentous anger of Achilles, in Book 23 Achilles is the generous peace-maker, and both Menelaus' bad temper and Antilochus' pique are appeased.

It is not going too far to say that Antilochus is almost becoming a substitute for Patroclus – and in the *Odyssey* the two men are named together as part of Achilles' entourage in the underworld (11.468; 24.16, cf. 77–8). Neo-analytic critics see this as having additional significance in view of the parallels between Patroclus' role in the *Iliad* and Antilochus' role in the *Aethiopis* and possibly in earlier versions of the same tale. Just as Hector killed Patroclus, so in the lost epic Memnon killed Antilochus; in both cases Achilles exacted revenge. Strictly speaking this is difficult to reconcile with the *Iliad*'s version, since we are told that Achilles' doom awaits him 'immediately after Hector', and at the end of the poem we assume that his death is

[48] Similar argument in Seaford 1994: 154–9, with criticism of the sceptics.

[49] Auerbach's essay 'Odysseus' scar', the first chapter in Auerbach 1953, has often been reprinted. For criticism see Köhnken 1976; de Jong 1987a: 22–3; Lynn-George 1988: 2–27.

[50] See further Willcock 1973 and 1983a. M. L. West 2003c argues against this, because he takes a different view of the content of the source poem.

[51] Macleod 1982: 28–32, esp. 30.

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imminent, at most a few days away. Here again it can be argued that the story-line of the *Iliad* is a later development, that Achilles' revenge on Hector is modelled on Achilles' revenge on Memnon, hard though it is for moderns to accept that so central a part of the plot should be derivative.[52] This argument may well be found less persuasive than the neo-analytic account of Book 18, and its implications for our appreciation of the *Iliad* are less clear. Further explorations of Homer's 'sources', however fascinating, would take us into still more uncertain territory.

6. The pride of Ajax (*Odyssey* 11.543–67)

Other souls of the dead and gone still stood there sorrowfully, each of them questioning me on whatever touched him most. Only the soul of Ajax the son of Telamon kept aloof, nursing anger still at my victory in the contest when beside the ships I made my claim for the armour of Achilles, whose goddess-mother offered the prize. Would I had never won that prize! Because of it, the earth closed over heroic Ajax, who alike in presence and in prowess surpassed all other Danaans after the matchless son of Peleus. To him I now spoke appeasing words:

'Ajax, son of the noble Telamon, is it then a thing beyond all hope that in death at least you should set aside your wrath against me for the winning of those hateful arms? The prize that the gods there offered was to bring distress on all the Argives when the tower of strength that you had been was forever lost to them. Ever since you perished, our grief for you has been like the grief for the son of Peleus, Achilles himself; and no other was the cause of all this but Zeus; he it was who bore hate unbounded against the host of Achaean spearsmen, and because of that decreed your doom. Come to me now, Lord Ajax, and hear the words that I wish to speak; conquer your spirit and pride of heart'.

So I spoke, but he made no answer to me, only followed to Erebus the other souls of men dead and gone.

Then, despite his anger, he might still have spoken to me, or I to him, but my heart was eager to see the souls of the other dead.[53]

In the land of the shades, far from normal human existence, Odysseus has spoken with the ghosts of Agamemnon and Achilles. Other comrades flock around him and speak with him; only Ajax stands aloof, unable to forget or forgive his rival in the contest for Achilles' divine armour. Here Odysseus tries to make amends, not without a few subtle touches of flattery: in particular, by declaring that 'our grief for you has

[52] See further Kullmann 1960: 37–8, 311; Seaford 1994: 154–6.
[53] Translation from Shewring 1980, with slight modifications.

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been like the grief for the son of Peleus'. Traditionally, in the *Odyssey* and elsewhere, Ajax is second-best to Achilles.[54] Again, we should note the way in which Odysseus seeks to slide responsibility for all the disastrous affair of the arms on to the gods ('no other was the cause of all this but Zeus...'; 558–9; cf. 555). This speech, like Priam's words to Helen in *Il.* 3.164, represents delicacy and tact, not strict theological doctrine. Odysseus' tone is predominantly one of compassion and regret, but he concludes by inviting Ajax to come closer and listen to his story: as usual, he is eager to be the centre of attention. But Ajax is not to be persuaded, and his silent, unreconciled withdrawal shows us the kind of hero that he is: it expresses a kind of resolution and strength which Odysseus will never have and perhaps does not want. In his famous chapter on Homer, Longinus commented that Ajax's silence was far more impressive than any words could have been (*On the Sublime*, 9.2).

The lines which follow, however, may seem startling and incongruous. 'And then nevertheless he would have spoken to me, or I to him. But my heart in my breast was anxious to see the souls of others among the dead' (565–7). Editors since antiquity have cut out this conclusion to the episode, wishing to leave Ajax's silent, disdainful exit unqualified. Surely, they argue, Ajax would not have given in, and in any case what a shocking attitude for Odysseus to adopt ('well, sorry Ajax, I really don't have the time...').[55] But we must remember that it is Odysseus who is telling the story at this point, and that here as elsewhere in the first-person narrative he may be trying to put himself in a good light. On this reading, the final comment can be seen as bravado on Odysseus' part. We know, and in his heart he knows, that he could never have prevailed on Ajax to give way: but he is not prepared to admit it to the admiring Phaeacian audience. 'Or I to him', an inappropriate alternative in the circumstances, is a stumbling give-away.[56]

This interpretation of the passage in question is reinforced by detailed study of the narrative technique of Odysseus' account of his own adventures, in an important paper by Irene de Jong.[57] Her article establishes that the vocabulary and style of the hero's narrative differs

[54] Cf. 470, 550–1, Alcaeus 387, Soph. *Ajax* 1340–1, *PMG* 898. Similarly in the games of *Iliad* 23, Ajax enters three contests and comes first in none of them.

[55] See e.g. Page 1955: 26–7.

[56] So esp. Eisenberger 1973: 184 (independently e.g. A. Parry 1981: 29), endorsed by de Jong 1992: 5 and Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 85.

[57] De Jong 1992 (cf. already Suerbaum 1968). See also R. B. Rutherford 1986: 150 n. 33.

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from the normal manner of the poet, who narrates his tale in less emotional terms and with greater detachment. Thus Odysseus emphasizes the folly of his companions and his own quick wit, and lays stress on the sufferings endured and the ingenuity with which they are surmounted; he is proud of his own foresight in bringing strong wine with him when exploring the Cyclops' territory; he makes sure that the audience do not miss the point about the size of the stag he slew and carried back to his camp (10.168, 171, 180), or the magnitude of the terrible rock that closes off the cave of Polyphemus; and he singles out the loss of six companions to Scylla as 'the most pitiful thing that I saw' (12.258–9; see below). The technique heightens our involvement and establishes the emotional tone of the hero's narrative as distinct from that of the poet's own tale.

7. Monster and man (*Odyssey* 12.243–59)

We had looked that way [i.e. towards the whirlpool Charybdis] with the fear of death upon us; and at that moment Scylla snatched up from inside my ship the six of my crew who were strongest of arm and sturdiest. When I turned back my gaze to the ship in search of my companions, I saw only their feet and hands as they were lifted up; they were calling out to me in their heart's anguish, crying out my name for the last time. As when a fisherman on a promontory takes a long rod to snare little fishes with his bait and casts his ox-hair line down into the sea below, then seizes the creatures one by one and throws them ashore still writhing; so Scylla swung my writhing companions up to the rocks, and there at the entrance began devouring them as they shrieked and held out their hands to me in their extreme of agony. Many pitiful things have met my eyes in my toilings and searchings through the sea-paths, but this was the most pitiful of all.[58]

Scylla, the hideous sea-monster with six heads on long necks, immortal and invulnerable, was described in horrific terms by Circe earlier in the book (73–100), where Odysseus was warned that he could not hope to evade her entirely, but must content himself with losing no more than six men. This inhuman being combines the terrors of nightmares with the tall stories of seafarers: few passages in the poem have a more spine-chilling effect. Odysseus' narration lays stress on the pain he feels at the loss of his comrades: as elsewhere, it is made clear that his homecoming, though in the end successful, involves suffering and loss. The

[58] Translation from Shewring 1980.

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episode is also used to show Odysseus' continuing efforts to deal with the weird world of the wanderings in conventional heroic terms: despite Circe's warnings that any such attempt is futile, he hopes to repel Scylla, and dons his 'glorious armour' in preparation for her assault. In fact, not only does he fail even to see her sudden attack, but he could not slay her if he tried: 'Scylla is not of mortal kind; she is a deathless monster, grim and baleful, savage, not to be wrestled with' (Circe's words again, 118–19). He admits in retrospect that he forgot Circe's advice; but to ignore divine warnings can lead to disaster, as we see again when his companions kill the cattle of the sun.

There is a double lesson here for Odysseus: he must be prepared to follow the instructions of the gods (as he follows Athena's in the second half), and he must also recognize that in some circumstances the old heroic ethic of confronting one's enemy in open combat is ineffective. In one respect, however, he already possesses some of the skills he will need in future: he can keep his own counsel. In giving directions to his men earlier, 'I had stopped short of mentioning Scylla, an inexorable horror: the crew in fear might have left their oars and have huddled down in the hold' (12.223–5). Secrecy and self-restraint will be the keynotes of his behaviour in the Ithacan narrative which is to follow.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the passage quoted is the simile comparing Scylla to a fisherman drawing in his catch. Like many similes which are applied to supernatural beings, it makes an extraordinary event more vivid and imaginable.[59] More important, it does so by a kind of inversion of normality: whereas the poet and his audience are familiar with the sight of a man catching fish, Odysseus witnesses a creature of the sea 'catching' men. In the strange and remote world of the wanderings, man is confronted by impossible beings in unnatural settings: heroic valour, as we have seen, is futile against natural force or immortal monster.[60] Similarly on land, the gigantic Laestrygonians are seen spearing men as if they were fish (10.124). Another parallel comes in Book 5, where the poet is recounting Odysseus' storm-tossed

[59] For fuller discussion of Homer's similes, see Fränkel 1921; Scott 1974 (including full lists), 2009; Moulton 1977; Macleod 1982: 48–50; M. W. Edwards 1987a: ch. 12 and 1991: 24–41; R. B. Rutherford 1992: 73–7; Buxton 2004.

[60] Cf. and contrast Kirk 1970: 162–71, who interprets the Cyclops myth along structuralist lines as a nature vs. culture story: primitive man-eating monster vs. shrewd intelligent human armed with a quick wit, wine, and fire. Note also the similes at 9.384–8, 391–4, both applied to Odysseus as he proceeds with the perilous act of blinding the Cyclops. Both describe his action in terms of human craftsmanship: ship-building and the work of a bronze-smith, techniques of a civilized society.

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journey from Calypso's island: 'as when many pebbles stick to the suckers of an octopus when he is dragged out of his lair, so the skin was stripped off his [Odysseus'] hands against the rocks' (5.432–5).[61] There Odysseus, out of his element, is helpless and injured whereas the sea-creature is not. Another common feature in the fisherman simile is that it describes something everyday, a timeless scene involving an ordinary man rather than a hero (and indeed the heroes generally do not eat fish except in extreme circumstances).[62] The ordeal of the epic hero is contrasted with the simplicity and order of 'normal' life; at the same time, similes like this also sometimes serve to remind us of the very humanity of the heroes. Especially memorable is the simile which compares Odysseus' nocturnal restlessness with the cooking of a haggis-like dish over a fire (20.22–30) – a startling comparison, but one which reminds us of the emphasis laid elsewhere in the *Odyssey* on the hero's appetite.

The simile in this extract has a further parallel – possibly even a counterpart – in a much later passage, where Odysseus stands triumphantly in his own palace, with the suitors lying dead before him.

> He saw the suitors, one and all, lying huddled in blood and dust. They were like the fish that fishermen with their close-meshed nets have drawn out from the whitening sea on to the curving beach; they are all heaped upon the sand, longing for the sea waves, but the sun beats down and takes their lives. So did the suitors lie in heaps, one upon another. (22.384–9)[63]

With Odysseus back in his own rightful place, the 'natural' order is re-established, and the man becomes the fisherman.[64]

There is certainly similarity of subject, but does this count as an echo? As we have seen, much recent criticism of Homer has found extensive cross-reference and interconnection between different parts of the poems, often convincingly; similar attention has been focused on the similes, with rather less success. 'Linked' similes certainly exist, but are perhaps most persuasively identified when they occur in swift succession.[65] Thus, in *Iliad* 2, three similes are used to describe the motion of the Achaean army in terms of the movement of the sea

[61] See Macleod 1982: 49.
[62] See Griffin 1980: 19 on heroic diet: add Pl. *Resp* 3. 404b and context; N. J. Richardson 1975: 73 n. 6.
[63] Translation from Shewring 1980.
[64] For other reversals, see R. B. Rutherford 1992 on 20.356–7, and 1986: 152 n. 40.
[65] See further Moulton 1977: ch. 1 and 133–9 (sometimes over-subtle).

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(144–7, 209–10, 394–7): it is not necessary, but certainly possible, to see these as planned in a sequence. In Book 16 of the *Odyssey*, we first find Eumaeus' joy at the safe return of Telemachus compared with that of a father tearfully welcoming home his son after many years (this while the true father, Odysseus, is present in disguise). Shortly afterwards, when Odysseus has revealed himself, father and son weep together, and another simile compares them with birds who have lost their young unfledged (*Od.* 16.14–21, 216–19). There is a thematic analogy, but the passages seem too different in subject to speak of a close connection. Other suggestions, however ingenious, are often very implausible. But the possibility of very long-range 'linking' of similes can hardly be denied in view of the famous case describing Odysseus' and Penelope's reunion (23.231–40, quoted on p. 95 above), which recalls the actual experiences of Odysseus in Book 5 and seems also to pick up the themes of a simile there (5.394–9).[66] None of these cases, however, demands actual knowledge of the other passage, and there is never an explicit cross-reference; consequently, it may be better to speak in terms of recurring subject matter or thematic concerns. At a minimum, Homer often shapes his similes for more than mere ornamentation, and linguistic study has suggested that here at least we may see the hand of the individual poet at work, rather than the stock material of the tradition.[67]

8. Travel and adventure (*Odyssey* 14.196–293 [extracts])

I might well enough spend a year recounting the sorrows of my spirit and still not come to an end of them – all the sorrows that I have toiled through because the gods willed it so. Wide Crete is the home I boast of, and I was a rich man's son. He had many other sons as well, bred in the house and born in wedlock. My own mother was a concubine, bought as a slave; yet I, no less than the true-born sons, was given regard by my father, Castor son of Hylax... But the death-spirits carried him down to Hades' home, and his haughty sons divided his substance up, casting lots for it. To me they gave a house and very little besides, but by my own merits I won for wife a daughter of very wealthy parents, because I was no fool and no coward... Work on the land I was never fond of, or such care of the household as brings up children in prosperity. The things that

[66] Moulton 1977: 128–9.

[67] Shipp 1972: 208–22, argues on linguistic grounds that the elaborated similes are late in date, and this has been generally accepted (see e.g. Janko 1992: 12, though contrast his p. 9). It is striking, in poems so rich in formulaic material, that similes are so rarely repeated, even when the same subject matter is involved. Is this a sign of Homer's relative independence of the tradition?

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I loved were ships and oars and battles and gleaming spears... Even before the sons of the Achaeans ever set foot on the land of Troy, I had nine times had under my command men and swift ships to sail against foreign shores, and hence much booty reached my hands...the people began to urge myself and Idomeneus to lead an expedition of ships to the war at Troy. To deny what they asked was not possible, the people's voice was too compelling... [and after the Trojan War] for a month, no more, I stayed at home and enjoyed myself there with my children and my wedded wife and my possessions; then impulse urged me to fit out vessels and sail to Egypt with my heroic comrades... [but after his comrades recklessly raided Egyptian farms] the Egyptians killed many of us with the keen bronze, others they took inland alive to labour for them in slavery... I dashed the wrought helmet from my head, I threw down the shield from my shoulder, the spear from my hand; I ran to meet the king's chariot and I touched and kissed his knees. He had compassion, and rescued me, gave me a place in his own chariot and took me in tears back to his palace, fearing the wrath of Zeus who protects strangers... In that place I stayed for seven years, and I gathered much wealth among the men of Egypt, because they all made me gifts. But when the eighth year came, there came with it a cunning-witted Phoenician, a rogue who had done harm enough in the world already. He won me over with his craftiness and took me away with him to Phoenicia...then he put me aboard a ship that would sail the sea to Libya. His plan in this was a treacherous one; I was to help him to take the cargo there, but he hoped to sell me myself and get a huge price for me. Though I had misgivings, I had no choice but to go aboard with him...[68]

This is enough to give the flavour of Odysseus' longest lying narrative, the tale he spins to the loyal swineherd, who listens with fascination (see 361–2 and 17.518–21).[69] It is superfluous to comment on the hero's marvellous fluency in invention, but we may note that none of the yarns he spins is precisely the same, though there are common elements. In his lies he regularly portrays himself as a Cretan, and it is tempting to think of the saying 'all Cretans are liars', though that may itself arise partly from the stories in the *Odyssey*! He clearly suits his tale to his addressee: Eumaeus too was carried away by villainous Phoenicians[70] and sold as a slave, as we learn when he recounts his life-story in Book 15 (351–484, esp. 415–84). It is natural to suppose that Odysseus really knows this already;[71] and indeed he draws a comparison later between Eumaeus' experiences and his own tale.

This speech can be studied in various ways. One procedure, now out of favour, is to try to reconstruct from the lies the 'real' adventures of

[68] Translation from Shewring 1980.
[69] For bibliography on the lies see above p. 79, n. 9.
[70] There has been a great deal written about the Phoenicians in the archaic period: see e.g. Aubet 1993; López-Ruiz 2011.
[71] For a different view, see Stewart 1976: 90–1.

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Odysseus or of some real person on whom he is based; more plausibly, some have argued that parts of the lies preserve valuable clues to other, probably older poetic versions of the travels of Odysseus.[72] An illuminating approach is to study the thematic material, comparing the other lies and the rest of the poem's narrative.[73] What emerges is that a great deal of the speech consists of elements redeployed in various contexts: thus the disastrous raid on the Egyptians resembles the raid by Odysseus' men on the Cicones, the first of his adventures after leaving Troy, and the seven-year stay in Egypt is paralleled by Menelaus' sojourn in the same country. We see also that Odysseus here, as in the longer narrative to the Phaeacians, takes care to build up his own image: he is a fearless and inexhaustible fighter, ever game for adventure; it was his comrades who behaved foolishly in the Egyptian episode and who then panicked, whereas he has the initiative to throw himself on the king's mercy; he is quick-witted enough to suspect the Phoenician's motives, and so forth. The ethical outlook of the false tale also corresponds to that of the *Odyssey* as a whole: compassion and respect for suppliants or strangers are admirable qualities (as the honourable actions of the king of Egypt show); gathering gifts and booty, if it can be done safely, is always desirable; and violent action is not the answer to everything, so that one must sometimes cut one's losses and live to fight another day. In the lies as in the main plot, Odysseus is a survivor.

Finally, there is the historical dimension of the lies, and of the *Odyssey* more generally. We can take it for granted that no wandering sailor ever encountered a Cyclops or visited the land of the dead, but in the lies which Odysseus narrates there is nothing physically impossible or intrinsically improbable. We are not here concerned to recover the actual experiences of a traveller, but to gain some idea of what Homer's audience thought of as 'typical' of sea-voyaging and adventures abroad. Even here we should make some allowance for epic amplification: it is perhaps unlikely that a single leader made nine successful raids, and we may feel sure that an invader-turned-suppliant would have been speared by subordinates before he got anywhere near the physical person of the king of Egypt. Yet many elements of

[72] The first approach is pursued with perverse determination by Woodhouse 1930, esp. chs. 17–18; for emphatic rejection see Fenik 1974: 171 n. 69. The second, which concentrates especially on Odysseus' account of his experiences in Thesprotia, is expounded by S. West 1981 (cf. e.g. Danek 1998: 214–20; Malkin 1998: 126–34).

[73] Here the work of Fenik 1974: 167–71 is virtually definitive.

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Odysseus' narrative seem entirely realistic: the bastard son of a rich man, favoured by his father but treated less well by the legitimate sons; disgruntlement over inheritance (we naturally think of Hesiod); the bold entrepreneur, scorning the easier life at home and loving the excitement of sea travel.[74]

Thucydides remarked on the way in which Homer treats piracy and looting as normal, almost a familiar profession and certainly not something to which a man might be ashamed to admit (Thuc. 1.5): this was characteristic, as he deduced, of the unstable and warlike conditions of earlier times. Kidnapping and abduction went along with looting, as Herodotus' opening chapters also imply (1.1–4; cf. Eumaeus' tale, *Od.* 15.425–9, 449–53). But it was not only looting which might take a man abroad: the Phoenician trader is sailing all the way to Libya with his unnamed cargo, and Athena, seeking a plausible excuse for her disguised appearance in Ithaca, adopts the identity of Mentes from Taphos, carrying a cargo of iron to the city of Temese which he wishes to exchange for copper. Herodotus mentions a real-life equivalent, the Samian merchant Kolaios, a figure of the mid-600s, who was on his way to Egypt when he was carried off course by storms and ended up in Tartessos, north of Cadiz (Hdt. 4.152).[75] He was renowned as the richest merchant of his time. Trading is normal, though there are signs elsewhere that it is not quite the done thing for an aristocrat (*Od.* 8.159–64). The knowledge in our passage of Egypt and the Nile also anticipates historically attested campaigns: surviving graffiti carved on the colossal statue of Rameses II at Abu Simbel show that Greek mercenaries were in service to the Egyptian king Psammetichus II around 600 BC.[76]

The *Odyssey* thus yields much evidence to the social historian, provided it is recognized that epic narrative needs to be handled with some care. Another aspect is the Greek expansion overseas, as population growth, social dissension, or trading aspirations drove the various communities to establish colonies in far-flung areas of the Mediterranean.[77] According to tradition the process began in Sicily,

[74] See Purcell 1990, who touches on Homeric matters only in passing, but presents a stimulating picture of the Mediterranean background. See also Strasburger 1953; Lane Fox 2008 (whose travels take him a long way from Homer: chs. 19–21 are the most relevant).

[75] See Boardman 1999: 114.

[76] ML no. 7; Boardman 1999: 115–16, with illustrations. See also M. L. West 1997a: 617.

[77] Schaefer 1960, Graham 1964, 1982; Boardman 1999 (much-expanded revision of a 1964 book). For a briefer treatment see Jeffery 1976: 50–7.

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with Naxos colonized from Euboean Chalcis, and Syracuse from Corinth in about 735, probably within a generation of the *Odyssey* poet's lifetime. It is remarkable that Alcinous assures Odysseus that his people's ships can transport him home with ease, 'even if it is very much further away than Euboea' (*Od.* 7.321).[78] Epic heroes provided precedents and legitimation for these overseas settlements.[79]

Echoes of this movement have been detected elsewhere. In Book 9, Odysseus' description of the island off the Cyclopes' coast gives a strong impression of an opportunity missed: it has woods, vines, arable land, a good harbour, 'but the Cyclopes have no red-cheeked ships, or shipwrights' (*Od.* 9.105–41). Here as in other respects the Cyclopes are defined in opposition to humankind, as primitive and antisocial, unpolitical beings.[80] The opening of Book 6, which describes how Alcinous' father moved to Scheria in order to escape the maraudings of other Cyclopes, lays down the minimal formula for establishing a colony: 'he ringed the city with a wall, built houses, gave the gods temples, apportioned land for tillage' (7–9). Later in the same book the city is described at greater length by Nausicaa (262–9); it is clearly a Greek-style *polis*. The same may be confidently assumed of the community surrounding Odysseus' palace on Ithaca, and is probable even of Troy: arguments that Homer portrays some form of pre-*polis* society are difficult to sustain.[81] Reverting to the passage under discussion, a final point which indicates future political developments occurs in the lines which speak of 'the people's voice', the *dēmou phēmis*, as putting pressure on Idomeneus and others to marshal a force against Troy.[82] Kings and nobles make the decisions, but the people have some influence on their deliberations. This balance of political forces is in accord

[78] Interpretations of this reference vary: Garvie 1994 ad loc. suggests that 'to an Ionian poet Euboea itself seemed to be on the western edge of the known world, so that Scheria must be an unimaginable distance beyond it'. M. L. West 1988: 172 argues that the *Odyssey* may itself have been composed in Euboea; so also Powell 1997.

[79] Malkin 1998; Dougherty 2001. Lane Fox 2008: 382 offers an extended *tour d'horizon* of the Mediterranean world in or around the time of Homer, but strangely insists that the *Odyssey* predates the colonizing movement (suggesting a date of 760–740).

[80] See Vidal-Naquet 1981: 84, 85–7.

[81] Extended argument and bibliography on this debate in Raaflaub 1993. Seaford 1994: chs. 1–2 argues that the *polis* is emergent in Homer, but still weaker and less important than the *oikos*. The subject is also treated by Scully 1990 (somewhat diffuse).

[82] See further Raaflaub 1993: 54–9. On the use of the term *demos* in archaic Greece, see e.g. Donlan 1970, 1973. We note incidentally that here, as in the *Iliad*, there is no trace of the more romantic notion that the Greek leaders, who had all been suitors of Helen, were now bound by an oath to aid her wronged husband. See Taplin 1990: 68–9, who argues that the three possible hints of this oath in the *Iliad* are not significant.

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with the 'meritocratic' air of a society in which a bastard son (admittedly, the son of an eminent man, like Archilochus of Paros) with a small inheritance can make a good marriage and rise to wealth and fortune.[83] Archilochus too was a survivor, prepared to drop his shield and fight another day.[84]

Odysseus' account of his expedition to Egypt and his subsequent tale of how he escaped from the Phoenician are a world away from the isle of Calypso and the rock of six-headed Scylla. While they cannot be safely trawled for historical dates and facts, the 'lies' shed indirect light on attitudes, values, and expectations. Something of the pessimistic tone of an authentic beggar sustains the sombre morality found elsewhere in the *Odyssey*, with its emphasis on the instability of fortune and the blindness of men to the future.[85] But there is also a note of exuberance and confidence, which reminds the reader that life is exhilarating, and the world large and full of new surprises, new experiences. It is not too imaginative to see here a reflection of the spirit of some of the Greek settlers and travellers as they set out to explore, sometimes to exploit, the Mediterranean and beyond. Theirs was a simpler world. Yet we can still enjoy and learn from Homer's vision of the greatness, the baseness, the hopes, and the follies of humankind.

[83] For a short but lively account of Archilochus' career and poetry, see Jeffery 1976: 181–3; more detail on history in Graham 1978; on poetry in Burnett 1983: part 1.

[84] Fr. 5 West; cf. fr. 114 on the right sort of general.

[85] See e.g. in this speech 14.198, 213–15, 235–6, 243, 274–5, 310, 338. Elsewhere see esp. 18.130–50 (Odysseus to Amphinomus); 19.363–9; 20.194–6.

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