

AGAMEMNON'S APOLOGY AND THE UNITY OF THE *ILIAD**

Agamemnon's apology (*Il.* 19.95ff.), in particular that portion which relates the story of Zeus and Ate, contains a number of oddities and peculiarities. This was recognised in antiquity, as various remarks in the Homeric scholia testify. Further inconcinnities have been unearthed by more recent scholars, who by and large belonged to the school of Homeric analysts. Although the presuppositions of this school are now generally regarded as outmoded and inappropriate, we should not underestimate the services of the scholars who drew the relevant unique features to the world's attention. Ways of explaining the oddities may have changed, but the oddities themselves are still well worth considering.

[I]

We may begin with a feature which may seem bizarre but not particularly instructive, trivial but not easy to explain. Why, when Zeus hurls Ate from Olympus (v. 126), does he choose to grasp her by the hair (and oily hair at that)? Ate is not the only deity to be flung from the heavens by the Iliadic Zeus, but Hephaestus was (on his own account) picked up by the foot (1.591). Astyanax's death, cast from the Trojan battlements, is anticipated by Andromache at *Il.* 24.735 where she envisages him as being seized by the hand (or arm [χειρός]). The scholia on our line, which quote these contrasting passages, rightly scout the desperate suggestion that the κεφαλῆς λιπαροπλοκάμιοιο in question is Zeus' own from which he plucks Ate (cf. v. 93 κατ'... κράατα [scil. Ἀτῇ] βαίνει) and conclude that it would be 'unbecoming' (ἄτοπον) to pick up and throw a woman by her foot.¹ This is approved by Edwards in his recent commentary, but I find it difficult to be impressed by it or by Edwards' ancillary observation that λιπαροκρήδεμνος (only here in Homer) somehow emphasizes 'Zeus' unusually violent action in grabbing [Ate] by' the hair. Is grabbing hold of the hair innately more violent than seizing hand or foot?² Is grabbing hold of the hair innately less 'becoming' than seizing the hand? At any rate the detail is odd and striking.

Moving on to wider-scale problems, the question of how Agamemnon (as opposed to the—divinely inspired—narrator) comes to know of events (and even speeches)

* The following works are referred to by author's name alone below:

M. W. Edwards, *Commentary on Iliad 17–20* (Cambridge, 1991).

W. Leaf, *Commentary on Iliad 13–24* (London, 1902).

D. L. Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad* (Los Angeles/Cambridge, 1959).

¹ For this nuance of ἄτοπος see LSJ s.v. 1.3 ('unnatural...'). A similar usage, for instance, at ΣΤ 107: ψευστήσεις: ψεύσεις: ἄτοπον γὰρ λέγειν Διὶ 'ψεύστης εἶ'.

² Perhaps the answer is 'yes'. See the anecdote preserved in James McNeish, *Fire under the Ashes: The Life of Danilo Dolci* (London, 1965), p. 141 of an event in Palermo: 'There was one terrible row...I suddenly forgot myself...I remember picking up a woman by the hair and swinging her...' More importantly, the seizing (and swinging) of a woman by the hair is probably meant to be perceived in the context of Olympian burlesque as basically comic. For the gods, such knock-about violence as this, the boxing of Artemis' ears (*Il.* 21.489ff.) or the earlier mistreatment of Hephaestus (*Il.* 1.595ff.) is amusing in a way that cannot apply for humans. See further below n. 24, and on 'Olympian burlesque', R. Muth's book of that name.

on Olympus already troubled scholars of antiquity³ and has continued to trouble their modern counterparts, though few have expressed themselves as forcefully as Page: 'contrary to the custom of the Greek Epic, Agamemnon is made to repeat verbatim what the gods said to each other. He knows what words the gods used in Olympus on that occasion, and we are grateful for the disclosure, while the laws of the Epic art lie in fragments about our feet.' Too strong, perhaps, but the reason for the divergence from custom might be worth considering.

Finally the unHomeric nature of the allegory (if that is the right word) has been observed. I am worried, however, about the potential anachronism involved in using that particular term to describe the process whereby 'the personification is drawn out with more detail than usual... a process in which the poet was fully conscious of the difference between the *thing*... and the *persons* that he was imagining'.⁴ The term 'parable' has recently been preferred⁵ but here too there are problems. Nevertheless, the unHomeric nature of the phenomenon (whatever name we give it) is unmistakable.

Leaving aside these problematic terms we may perhaps win more general assent if we describe the tale as a variety of *aition*.⁶ As it now stands, the story supplies an explanation both for (i) how Heracles came to be subservient to his far inferior cousin Eurystheus and (ii) how Ate came to exercise power over men on earth. Those scholars are likely to be right⁷ who suggest that (i) can originally have existed without Ate's rôle. That rôle is likely to be Homer's own elaboration, as, therefore, is the whole of (ii). Furthermore (i) and (ii) seem to have been reworked by Homer in order to provide a paradigmatic parallel between Agamemnon and Zeus, a parallel already detected in antiquity.⁸

The term *aition* (especially as it relates to [ii]) raises the important issue of the *Hesiodic* character of the story of Zeus and Ate.⁹ For on a general level the supplying of an explanation for a permanent and distressing feature of human existence is far

³ Σβ (BE³) T 101: πῶς δὲ τὰ παρὰ θεοῖς οἶδε γινόμενα; ῥητέον δὲ ὅτι κοινὸν ὄντα τὸν μῦθον παρείληφεν. The following quotation is from Page, p. 313. There is a parallel for the rare technique of direct speech within a mythological *paradeigma* at *Il.* 6.164–5 (from the story of Bellerophon). But there the words quoted come from a human, and the audience can more easily imagine how Glaucus came to know the words of Anteia (cf. Irene J. F. de Jong, *Narrators and Focalizers* [Amsterdam, 1987], pp. 168ff.). The closest Odyssean parallel is 8.266ff. (Demodocus' song), where carefree gods act as foil to mortals' suffering.

⁴ D. B. Monro's commentary *ad loc.* 'Allegory' is problematic not only because of the 'allegorisation' of Homer by later scholars (see, e.g., N. J. Richardson, *PCPS* 21 [1975], 65ff.) but because the term has a different signification in later literature (see, for instance, D. A. Russell, *Criticism in Antiquity* [London, 1981], Index s.v.).

⁵ G. F. Held, *CQ* 37 (1987), 252–3. To many the term 'parable' may primarily suggest the discourses of Christ in the New Testament, simple stories which are a world apart from the subtle and sophisticated tale of Zeus and Ate.

⁶ On the related issue of 'aetiological narratives' in folk-tales see the remarks of Lutz Röhrich in his important book *Märchen und Wirklichkeit*³ (Stuttgart, 1979), p. 41 = *Folktales and Reality*, p. 27: 'We find this need for causality in even the most basic realms of human life. An older, purely historical-mythical question may have concerned humanity before this rational question of "rerum cognoscere causas". Was it always so? What was it like before? The question of cause develops only out of this interest in origins: Why did it change?'

⁷ See Edwards on 19.95–133. For other scholars who conclude that Ate's rôle is Homer's own invention cf. Robert J. Rabel, *GRBS* 32 (1991), 113 and n. 26.

⁸ Σβ (BE³) T 95: καὶ ἐν οἷς ἐλλεινολογείται ὑψοὶ ἑαυτὸν εἰκάζων τῷ μεγίστῳ θεῷ. The situation is, of course, more complex than this, not least because the associated picture of the greater hero subservient to the lesser (Heracles to Eurystheus) evokes the parallel picture of Achilles' subservience to the inferior Agamemnon and thus undercuts the comparison with Zeus (see O. M. Davidson, *Arethusa* 13 [1980], 200).

⁹ Already observed by, for instance, La Roche's commentary *ad loc.*

more Hesiodic than Homeric. Hesiod (in *Theogony* and *Works and Days*) regularly seeks a simple (perhaps simplistic) but satisfying explanation of such complex and baffling issues as the phenomena of suffering and death on earth. Pandora's jar, Prometheus' deceit of Zeus in connection with the practice of sacrifice, and his theft of fire, are the *aitia* which Hesiod invokes to explain permanent features of human existence.¹⁰ Homer, by contrast, normally eschews such simple explanations of profound and puzzling features of life. Like Herodotus and Sophocles he 'saw that in this world the innocent suffer as well as the guilty, and refused to explain away what was inexplicable'.¹¹ To such an extent, indeed, that he even avoids mentioning some of the *aitia* for the Trojan War which provide the background to his poem: no all-encompassing Διὸς βουλή, therefore, such as featured in the *Cypria* (F1) and remarkably little in the way of allusion to the Judgement of Paris.¹² The reasons for this crucial disparity between the two earliest extant poets of Greece are numerous, differences in genre and *Weltanschauung* being merely the two most obvious.¹³

Still, there are exceptions to this general picture, and the story of Zeus and Ate which Agamemnon relates is one of them. Here, in the Hesiodic manner, there is an attempt to explain, in simple and easily grasped form, why it is that mortals are sometimes so morally blinded as to act in ways that are obviously ruinous both for themselves and for others. Like Hesiod's Prometheus and Pandora, Homer's Ate provides a neat explanation for those who are easily satisfied. The mention of Prometheus is by no means an idle one, for Agamemnon's speech provides (over and above the general similarities just suggested) some very specific analogies with the account of Zeus' tricking by Prometheus which we find in the *Theogony's* account of the origins of sacrifice (535ff.). Compare in particular *Il.* 19.106 τὸν δὲ δολοφρονέουσα προσήυδα πότνια "Ἥρη with *Th.* 550 φῆ ῥα δολοφρονέων (of Prometheus' deceit). Note too the way in which both narratives are introduced by καὶ γάρ (*Il.* 19.95 ~ *Th.* 535).¹⁴ Even the relative brevity of the speeches of Hera and Zeus (largely explicable in terms of their being speeches within Agamemnon's speech) is more reminiscent of the type we find in Hesiod's *Theogony* ('curt little affairs, devoid of Homeric rhetoric, and quaintly formal')¹⁵ than the more elaborate Homeric norm. The potentially

¹⁰ Compare the remarks of Röhrich (sup. cit. [n. 6]) p. 61 = p. 49 on that variety of the aetiological narrative which he terms 'folktales without the happy ending': in these we find presupposed 'the former existence of an ideal...state of nature...The tale attributes a permanent feature of today's environment to an earlier, one-time occurrence...a negative event leads to a lasting state of nature'. The relevance of this to *Iliad* 19's tale of Zeus and Ate is obvious, though there is little emphasis here on the folk-tale idea of the original happier state.

¹¹ How and Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus* (Oxford, 1912), i.50. Compare Claus Westermann's observations on the serpent's rôle in *Genesis* 3 (Commentary, Engl. transl. i.239): when the author 'allows the man and the woman to be led astray by the clever snake, creature of God, he is saying that it is not possible to know the origin of evil. We are at a complete loss in the face of the fact that God has created a being that can lead people to disobedience. The origin of evil remains a complete mystery. The most important thing...is that there is no etiology for the origin of evil; a mythical explanation which pinpoints the origin would destroy this' (cf. *ib.* p. 256 on *Gen.* 3.13: 'the serpent should now say why it led the woman to eat the fruit. But that does not happen. The serpent is not interrogated. The intention of the narrator is clear: the origin of evil cannot be explained').

¹² See below n. 23.

¹³ Compare K. J. Dover (*Archiloque Entretiens Hardt* 10 [1964]), 198 = *Greek and the Greeks* p. 106) on the differences between Hesiod and Archilochus: 'the alternative hypothesis would regard [them] as two different personalities through whom, shortly after the introduction of writing, poetic genres of long standing found expression at a very high artistic level.'

¹⁴ On the use of these particles to introduce an *exemplum* illustrative of a preceding generalization see, e.g., Ed. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford, 1957), p. 185f.

¹⁵ M. L. West's commentary on Hesiod's *Theogony* (Oxford, 1966), p. 74.

misogynistic¹⁶ slant given to the story (Ate is female and of Hera's deceit we are told at the start of the tale ἀλλ' ἄρα καὶ τὸν | "Ἡρῇ θήλυς ἐοῦσα δολοφροσύνης ἀπάτησεν (96–7)) reminds one of the rôle of Pandora in *Theogony* (570ff.) and *Works and Days* (81ff.). There too the stress is on woman's *guile* (*Th.* 589 = *Op.* 83 δόλον αἰπύν, ἀμήχανον ἀνθρώποισιν). In the Iliadic passage, since the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon broke out over a woman, the slant is appropriate. In both cases a grim feature of everyday life is explained by the motif of the gods sending a female down to earth (for the reversal of the motif compare the Aratean notion of Dike as returning to Olympus from earth because of the widespread wickedness of mankind).

Underlying the story of Zeus and Ate is the folk-tale motif (itself another rarity in *Iliad*) of the rash promise unwittingly uttered and then irreversible in its effect.¹⁷ A particularly relevant parallel occurs in the story of Zeus and Semele, where the disguised Hera fatally suggests to the latter that she extract a general promise from the former and use it to obtain the god's apparition in all his splendour. The analogies here to the story in *Iliad* 19 are interesting: in both cases the intervention of Hera, the wife whose jealousy has been roused by her husband's infidelity, is central, and its at least partly successful aim is the harming of her husband's mistress and child.

[II]

The wish to make a wider sense of Agamemnon's narrative is surely not unreasonable. Scholars have already recognized analogies between it and other portions of the *Iliad*. For instance, (i) 'the similarity of this personification of Ate to the allegory of the Λιταί' (in *Il.* 9.502–12) 'is very striking' according to Leaf *ad loc.*, who adds the opinion that 'it seems necessary to class them together among the very latest parts of the poems'.¹⁸ A further resemblance to (ii) the passage in *Il.* 24.518ff. dealing with the *πιθοί* standing on the floor of Zeus' palace, from which he allots a good or bad fate (or an admixture of the two) has been observed in a recent article¹⁹ by G. R. Held entitled 'Phoenix, Agamemnon and Achilles: Parables and Paradeigmata'. Over and above the parallel with Pandora's jar evoked by this last passage, all three might be termed 'Hesiodic' rather than 'Homeric' in the sense considered above, that is, in their attempt to provide simple *aitia* and explanations for negative features of human existence. But given the different character of the Homeric epics, all three passages belong to *speeches* in which mortal characters (as opposed to the poet himself) may be observed trying to make sense of the suffering that has come upon them.²⁰ A

¹⁶ On the notion of misogyny in Greek literature see, for instance, H. Lloyd-Jones, *Females of the Species* (London, 1975), pp. 22ff., M. R. Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth* (London, 1986), 112ff. The rôle of Eve in *Genesis*' account of the garden of Eden and of the woman who seduces Enkidu in the epic of Gilgamesh is often compared (cf. Claus Westermann's commentary on *Genesis* 3.6 [Engl. transl., i.250]).

¹⁷ On this motif of the rash vow see, for instance, S. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*² C68, J. G. Frazer, Loeb Apollodorus ii.394ff.

¹⁸ As regards the close connection of the passages in question, Page (p. 332 n. 22) notes 'the curious iteration of βλάπτουσ' ἀνθρώπους' in 9.507 = 19.94 'though this was athetized'. (On Aristarchus' deletion of the latter see now D. Lührs, *Untersuchungen zu den Athetesen Aristarchs in der Ilias und zu ihrer Behandlung im Corpus der exegetischen Scholien* (Beitr. zur Altertumswiss. 11 [1992]), 64–67.

¹⁹ See above n. 5.

²⁰ And doing so by placing these personal sufferings in a broader context that evokes the sufferings of others. This process shares features both with (i) Homer's use of paradigmatic myth to 'effect the transformation of single events into variants of a timeless pattern' (Ø. Andersen, in *Homer: beyond Oral Poetry* (Amsterdam, 1987) p. 3: for Agamemnon's apology as combining paradigmatic myth with 'parable' see Held (as cited in n. 5, 252)) and (ii) the general technique of *consolatio* (see my note on Soph. *Trach.* 126ff.).

further feature shared by two out of those three passages is their employment of *personification* (Λιταί and Ἄτῃ) and *physical description* of the personified entities, both features, again, being Homeric rarities.²¹ Perhaps 'physical description' is something of an exaggeration, since the aim and effect seem to be not exhaustive presentation but suggestive (and bizarre or piquant) details: the lame and wrinkled Λιταί, or Ἄτῃ with her greased locks (and soft feet).²²

There are other passages in the *Iliad* which share similarities with Agamemnon's narrative. Hypnos' speech at *Il.* 14.249ff. recalls how Zeus *would have* hurled that personified deity from the sky into the sea had not Night intervened. The cause for his anger was again harm done to Heracles by Hera, and the context of the speech is of course the Διὸς ἀπατή, involving further deceit on Hera's part. The motif of Zeus actually hurling an offspring out of Olympus to earth is to be found again (with Hera very much in the immediate background) at *Il.* 1.585ff. (where the result of that hurling is the lameness which Hephaestus shares with the Λιταί of *Iliad* 9).

In this last passage, as is now generally accepted, Hephaestus intervenes to calm a quarrel on Olympus which is causally linked to (but also contrasted with) the quarrel on earth between Achilles and Agamemnon that starts the whole poem. The quarrel on earth leads to the death and suffering of countless Achaeans and Trojans, while its immediate sequel in heaven is easily resolved and ends in laughter and feasting and song. In an earlier article²³ I suggested that a parallel scheme obtains at the end of the epic, so that we find a deliberate contrast with the opening. In *Iliad* 24 Achilles' resentment is finally assuaged and his wrath ends: so much for events on earth, but in heaven divine resentment (a motif conjured up by the work's sole explicit reference to the Judgement of Paris) lingers on to issue in further suffering and death on earth with the sack of Troy and its sequels.

This interpretation seems to me to be both supported and anticipated by the effect of Agamemnon's apology in *Iliad* 19. Here Achilles' anger and resentment are officially and partially resolved by the formal compensation which Agamemnon supplies. The grudge which, paradoxically, caused the deaths of so many *Greeks* is at an end. And by the unorthodox means of the narrative concerning Zeus and Ate which Agamemnon delivers, this grudge and quarrel on earth is once more juxtaposed and contrasted with an event (in this case a past event) on Olympus, where a quarrel between gods not only fails to be resolved but lingers on and festers. Indeed, it leads to two catastrophes for mankind: (i) the paradoxical subservience of Heracles to Eurystheus (the better mortal to the worse), the continuance of which is emphasised by the frequentative verb στενάχεσχε (v. 132) used of Zeus' constant lament on seeing his son's degradation; (ii) even worse, longer lasting and embracing far more individuals, the presence of Ate on earth, which finally led Agamemnon to quarrel with Achilles.

²¹ It is well known that Homer gives no detailed physical descriptions of his characters (be they men or gods) except in very special cases (such as Thersites in *Iliad* 2). I am reminded that the third passage may also employ personification, if βούβρωσις at *Il.* 24.532 means 'ravening hunger' (see Richardson *ad loc.* [p. 331]).

²² Very much at home in this sphere of ideas is the grotesque picture of the Moirae with the wool sticking to their parched lips which we find in Catullus 64.316.

²³ *JHS* 101 (1981) 56–62. I find little to retract here (though on pp. 61–2 cf. D. Feeney, *CQ* 34 [1984], 179ff., esp. 184–5) but wish I had remembered, in connection with one aspect of my argument (the postponement of explicit mention of the judgement) to quote F. Solmsen's remarks à propos of the Hesiodic Shield (*Hermes* 93 [1965], 3 n. 4 = *Kl. Schr.* i. 18 n. 4): 'I consider it just possible that the reserving of important information to the end is a deliberate technique. The reason for Apollo's hatred of Cynus is disclosed only in the last lines of the poem... although the enmity as such has played a part in the story.'

In a sense, then, the wheel has come full circle. Just as, in *Iliad* 1, the quarrel on earth spreads to Olympus (where, however, it is cut short, with Zeus subordinating Hera to his will), so in *Iliad* 19, in the context of a terminated dispute among men, a quarrel on Olympus, with Hera triumphing over Zeus, spreads (thanks to Ate) to earth, where one of its numerous consequences will ultimately be the very quarrel that breaks out in *Iliad* 1. The use of comic elements (or of elements that in the world of the Olympian gods rank as comic, in contrast to the grimmer world of humans) is also common to both scenes. The mistreatment of Ate and of Hephaestus is meant to be, on a certain level, funny. The parallels between Books 1 and 19 are so numerous and so close that it is perhaps surprising that they have not received more comment. And there may be one more. Is it entirely coincidental that, when Zeus in *Iliad* 19 hurls Ate from Olympus to earth, he grabs her hair, and that when Athena in *Iliad* 1 swoops down from Olympus to earth to prevent the quarrel there from ending in bloodshed she should seize Achilles by his ... hair?²⁴

[III]

That Books 1 and 24 of the *Iliad* contain various correspondences with each other has long been recognized. On the interpretation sketched above, Books 9 and 19 contribute further to a symmetrical patterning which recurs at roughly equal intervals throughout the epic, dividing it into three approximately equipollent blocks.²⁵ That the *Λιταί* passage in 9 and the *Ἀτη* passage in 19 also contain a high proportion of 'late' linguistic features, 'untraditional words and forms, etc.', 'a novel and untraditional style', has also long been recognized, in particular by Page.²⁶ But there need be nothing sinister or suspicious about these features if one sees them (in the light of the above discussion) as originating with the poet who finally set his mark upon pre-existing and traditional material by imposing on it the pattern we have just analysed.

A similar approach might be adopted to meet the same scholar's observations about the moral presuppositions of these two Iliadic episodes. For instance, according to Page, the words *ὑπερβήη καὶ ἀμάρτη* at 9.501 'imply a conception of moral conduct entirely foreign to the rest of the *Iliad*' and the reference to Ate at 9.512 is likewise remarkable, since 'nowhere else in the *Iliad* is the infliction of injury regarded as a punishment for wrongdoing'. On his interpretation it follows that in Phoenix's speech and in that speech alone we find 'the expression of a totally different outlook on life [from that elsewhere in the *Iliad*], including such modern terms as "transgress" and "sin" and "make amends", ... an entirely novel outlook on the

²⁴ That the seizing of Ate by the hair is (on the level of Olympian carefree existence) basically comic, while the seizing of Achilles by the hair is a matter of life and death (both for him and for Agamemnon) in no way undermines this comparison. On the contrary, it fits perfectly within the context of contrast between gods and mortals here outlined. Zeus can (at least temporarily) settle some problems or relieve his feelings by hurling other deities about. The same easy solution would not work in the Greek camp (with the significant exception (cf. n. 21) of Thersites). Achilles picks up Lycaon by the foot at *Il.* 21.120 when he has killed him and is hurling him into the Scamander, but this is part of the god-like behaviour of the hero at this stage of the narrative, behaviour soon to be thwarted by the intervention of Scamander himself.

²⁵ This is not the time or place to examine in detail the issue of the *Iliad*'s structure which has recently been handled, e.g. by O. Taplin, *Homeric Soundings* (Oxford, 1992) and K. Stanley, *The Shield of Homer: Narrative Structure in the Iliad* (Princeton, 1993).

²⁶ Not all Page's observations have stood the test of time (e.g. on the alleged false Ionicism *ἡλιτόμηρον* at 118 cf. W. F. Wyatt, *Metrical Lengthening in Homer* (Rome, 1969), p. 75 arguing analogy from *νηλείτιδες* and *ἀλείτης*).

universe'. Again it could be argued that, like the linguistic features, this is a late importation from the poet responsible for the final architectonic form of the whole epic. But we should perhaps be a little more cautious. After all, as we saw above, it is, strictly speaking, Phoenix, a character in the poem, and not the poet himself, who expresses the views in question. And there are good grounds for supposing the distinction thus drawn to be by no means pedantic.

When he composed *King Lear*, Shakespeare, as J. C. Maxwell observes,²⁷ wrote 'a Christian play about a pagan world... The fact that Shakespeare can assume in his audience a different religious standpoint from that of any of his characters gives him a peculiar freedom, and makes possible an unusual complexity and richness'. Part of this complexity lies in the various (incompatible) views of the world which the play is thus able to encompass. Gloucester's despairing

As flies to wanton boys, are we to th' Gods;
They kill us for their sport (4.i.36-7)

is balanced by Edgar's

The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to plague us (5.iii.170-71)

but we should not take either as encapsulating the play's 'message', still less as representing the poet's own viewpoint. Similarly in the *Iliad*. Because Homer (no less than Shakespeare) is composing a *tragedy*, an interpretation explicitly invoking terms such as justice or crime followed by punishment is eschewed in the narrative itself. But characters who wish to make sense of their (and others') suffering are free to give voice to interpretations of that suffering in terms and concepts which the poet and his audience would have recognised. This is what we find Phoenix doing in Book 9, Agamemnon in Book 19,²⁸ and Achilles in Book 24. Each interprets events in the light of his own past experiences and present dilemma. The poet is not bestowing his own authority on any of these interpretations, but he is creating a unity for his epic.

The subtlety of this achievement of unity perhaps requires stressing (it may have militated against earlier discovery of the device). And the stress may come by invoking a fragment from the Epic Cycle that has already been used to produce illuminating contrasts with Homer's finer technique. A unity of sorts seems to have been obtained by the author of the *Cypria* when he inserted near the start of his poem the motif of Zeus' decision to cause the Trojan War as a means of relieving the burdened earth (F1). The effect is teleological and determinative: as part of an independent narrative itself, the story bears the marks of the poet's own authority, and, given its dominating position, decisively influences and determines the audience's interpretation of the whole poem. It would be instructive to imagine a reworking of the content of Agamemnon's apology to produce a similar effect. In theory, Homer could have re-interpreted the events of the *Iliad* in this way, beginning the epic with a pompous prelude on Olympus to depict the deceit of Zeus that, years later, had such baleful consequences for the Greeks at Troy. It is easy to see what would be lost by

²⁷ *Modern Languages Review* 45 (1950), 142.

²⁸ Even so, I do not think I should wish to go as far as Robert J. Rabel (as cited in n. 7) p. 104, who sees in Agamemnon's speech a 'panoramic summary of the *Iliad* from [Agamemnon's] own *idiosyncratic* [my italics] viewpoint' [cf. p. 111: a 'veiled criticism of Achilles... subtly generalised in a string of remarks about proper etiquette in the assembly']]. But I approve his idea (though it functions differently from my approach) that we have to do with a 'grand architectural design' on Homer's part which involves (*inter alia*) correspondences between Books 1 and 19 of the *Iliad*.

this cruder technique. Even the *Odyssey*, with its more overt moralisation, has its initial ‘programmatic’ remarks on human suffering as due to human crime set in the mouth of one of its characters (Zeus himself). The subtler postponement of material from the past is perhaps reminiscent of the *Iliad*’s own treatment of the Judgement of Paris, the combination of such postponement with status as direct speech similar to the *Odyssey*’s treatment of its hero’s wanderings. And the employment of such speeches to voice a character’s (as opposed to the poet’s) own view of events is one of the less obvious but no less important ways in which the world of Homeric epic looks forward to tragedy.²⁹

St. John’s College, Oxford

MALCOLM DAVIES

²⁹ I am grateful to Mr. Y. Sano for detailed discussion of the issues raised in this article.